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MOORLAND & VALE-LAND  
FARMING IN  
NORTH-EAST YORKSHIRE

THE MONASTIC CONTRIBUTION  
IN THE THIRTEENTH AND  
FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

*by*  
BRYAN WAITES



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RIEVAULX ABBEY

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## THE MONASTIC CONTRIBUTION IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

by

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KENDAL

"I find no terror in the hard mountain steeps,  
nor in the rough rocks nor in the hollow places  
of the valleys, for in these days the mountains  
distil sweetness and the hills flow with milk and  
honey, the valleys are covered over with corn,  
honey is sucked out of the rock and oil out of  
the flinty stone, and among the cliffs and mountains  
are the flocks of the sheep of Christ . . ."

*St Bernard*

ABBREVIATIONS USED

A.J.	<i>Archaeological Journal</i>
B.M.	British Museum
B.P.C.	<i>Chartulary of Bridlington Priory</i> , ed. by W. T. Lancaster (Leeds, 1912)
C.A.R.	<i>Cartularium Abbatiae de Rievale</i> , Surtees Society, vol. 83 (1889)
C.A.W.	<i>Cartularium Abbatiae de Whiteby</i> , Surtees Society, vol. 69 (1879)
C.B.M.	<i>Chapters of the English Black Monks (1215-1540)</i> , 3 vols. ed. by W. A. Pantin: Camden Third Series, vols. 45, 47, 54 (1931-7)
C.C.R.	<i>Calendar of Close Rolls</i>
C.I.P.M.	<i>Calendar of Inquisitions Post Mortem</i>
C.P.G.	<i>Cartularium Prioratus de Gyseburne</i> , Surtees Society, vols. 86, 89 (1889, 1894)
C.P.R.	<i>Calendar of Patent Rolls</i>
E.Y.C.	<i>Early Yorkshire Charters</i> , Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series. Extra Series
Inq.	<i>Yorkshire Inquisitions</i> , vols. 1-4, Yorkshire Archaeological Record Series, vols. 12, 23, 31 and 37
M.A.	<i>Monasticon Anglicanum</i> , Sir William Dugdale (London, 1817-30)
N.I.	<i>Nonarum Inquisitiones</i> , Record Commission (London, 1807)
N.R.R.S.	<i>North Riding Record Series</i>
P.R.O.	Public Record Office
V.E.	<i>Valor Ecclesiasticus</i> , Record Commission (London, 1825)
Y.A.J.	Yorkshire Archaeological Journal
Y.A.S.R.S.	Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series

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MOORLAND AND VALE-LAND FARMING IN NORTH-EAST YORKSHIRE: THE MONASTIC CONTRIBUTION IN THE THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

The North-east of Yorkshire is a region of contrasts; its central core of highland, which reaches a height of over 1500 feet in the north-west, is in itself a variety composed of dale and barren moor, peat-bog and fertile limestone soils. Besides this, there is the contrast between the highland and the lowland which surrounds it. To the north and west a great scarp marks the sudden change from the North York Moors to the flat Cleveland Plain and the Vale of York. To the south, the contrast is less striking: the 'moorlands dip gently southward to the Vale of Pickering; on whose verge rise abruptly a range of thin-soiled limestone heights; which, in a similar manner shelve gently into the Vale; forming its northern margin.'<sup>1</sup> (*Pl. I.*)

The Vale is 'a basin, formed by eminences on every side, save one narrow outlet of the waters collected within its area, and upon the adjacent hills . . .'.<sup>2</sup> The scarp of the Wolds forms its southern boundary, together with the Howardian Hills. To the north is the great bastion of the North York Moors. The Vale is perfectly flat — because it was once a glacial lake — and there are several significant differences in the soils composing it.<sup>3</sup>

The major difference is between the central parts and the margins of the Vale. The former consists mainly of warp and alluvial soils which towards the eastern end become inferior because of the difficulty of drainage. In consequence the areas which are not marsh or carr-land are usually heavy peaty soils. In contrast, the margins of the Vale consist of a sound deep loam, which on the south is a raised bench of chalky-gravel soils, providing an area of great fertility and concentrated settlement.<sup>4</sup> The fact that these soils are raised above the level of the Vale by about 30 feet has been a crucial factor in their value. At Pickering, and in the Seamer district, patches of gravel soils, also above the general level of the Vale, have provided attractive sites to settlers, away from the marshy land of the

<sup>1</sup> W. Marshall, *The Rural Economy of Yorkshire* (London, 1788) vol. 1, pp.6-7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p.7.

<sup>3</sup> Glacial history given in P. F. Kendall, 'A System of Glacier Lakes in the Cleveland Hills', *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Society* vol. 58, part 3 (August 1902).

<sup>4</sup> 'The soils at the foot of the north margin consists of an hazel loam upon a clay bottom, or a deep warp or silt upon gravel and clay . . . these are soils of extraordinary fertility', J. Tuke, *General View of the Agriculture of the North Riding of Yorkshire* (1794) pp.15-16. Some very interesting soil profiles for the district are given in C. Fox Strangeways, *Water Supply of the East Riding of Yorkshire* (London, 1906).

central Vale and yet near enough to exploit it. The Hertford and Derwent rivers flow through the middle of the Vale and leave it through the Malton-Kirkham gorge. On their journey they collect a large number of rivers and becks which issue mainly from the high moorland to the north, though hardly any from the chalk Wolds.

The northern boundary of the Vale of Pickering is marked by a range of hills which, because of their flat-topped appearance, have been named the Tabular Hills. These are composed of grit-stones and limestones mostly grouped under the term Corallian. The Corallian limestone provides a very fertile soil. The Hambleton Hills mark the western limit and here a height of over 1,200 feet is reached; however, the height declines to the east. The Tabular Hills have a north-facing scarp which overlooks a narrow, but clearly defined, vale of Oxford clay extending from west to east. This is sometimes called the Vale of Lasingham and is about a mile wide. The highest point of the scarp is over 1,000 feet but to the south this slopes down to the Vale of Pickering. Because many moorland streams cut through the Tabular Hills, forming deeply-incised valleys, these hills have been severed into blocks, which on the map resemble flat-irons.

The Tabular Hills and Lasingham Vale are, then, the southern part of the moors. North of them the High Moors are the most dominant and characteristic part of the region. Reaching from the great Stokesley-Broughton embayment across to the coast at Robin Hood's Bay, the Cleveland anticline is highest west of Newtondale. In this region it comprises two main masses which are separated by a narrow belt of lower land—Westerdale Moor. On either side of this the land exceeds 1,400 feet and is composed of infertile Jurassic sandstones.<sup>5</sup> This highland is the major watershed of the whole North York Moors. Since it performs this function its appearance is correspondingly altered. It has been extensively cut into by the streams flowing from it. In the south, Rosedale, Farndale, Bransdale and Bilsdale; in the north, Glaisdale, Danby Dale, Westerdale and Fryupdale have cut deeply into the moorland and left as interfluvies the typical 'riggs' or ridges which themselves often rise over 1,000 feet and reach out like fingers. The characteristic view of the moorlands is not one of jagged and broken mountain sides but rather of flat uninterrupted horizons.

The valleys or dales within the moorland are extremely important. Much of the colonisation and exploitation of the High Moors originated from them. Eskdale and its southern tributaries are the most penetrating of the valley systems, but the southerly trending dales, such as Rosedale and Farndale, also extend far into the moors. All the dales consist of heavy

<sup>5</sup> 'The immediate subsoil is generally sand; which in some places is formed into a pan or crust resembling rusty half-decayed iron rather than an earthy substance; being almost as impervious by water as an iron vessel.' Marshall, *op. cit.* vol. 2, p.276.

clay-land;<sup>6</sup> in Eskdale, boulder clays and elsewhere, Liassic clays. These soils are of varying fertility, but in such a barren moorland area even partially fertile soils become enhanced in value. The dales vary in shape though 'the bottoms are mostly narrow, seldom more than 200 yards'.<sup>7</sup> In Tuke's day 'The cultivated dales situate amongst the moors are pretty extensive, some of them containing from five to ten thousand acres; and Eskdale, and Bilsdale much more . . . the land is generally cultivated from half a mile to a mile up the hills though the surface is in many places irregular'.<sup>8</sup>

The North York Moors are flanked on their eastern coastal side by boulder clay deposits which form, north of the Peak, a plateau area, and, south of the Peak, an area of plain. The plateau stretches north-west from Hawsker and varies from one mile to more than four miles in width. The relief is almost everywhere over 200 feet rising to 600 feet at the junction between the boulder clay and the moorland. A series of coastal denes have dissected the plateau, sometimes across the whole of its width (e.g. Roxby Beck, Kilton Beck, Sandsend Beck). Though not large, these valleys are deeply cut and consequently have acted as an impediment to movement northwards along the plateau.

The coastal boulder clay between Cloughton and Scarborough is almost entirely below 200 feet and has the characteristics of an undulating plain. Glacial sands and gravels make noticeable features near to the moor edge (e.g. in Sea Cut Valley and in Harwood Dale). The region is a small one, being no more than six miles from north to south. It has affinities with the area south of the plain.

The coastal denes and the Peak have tended to isolate settlement to certain sections along the coast such as the Cloughton-Burniston area, Robin Hood's Bay, Eskdale mouth and Loftus. The soil varies greatly in fertility; and it is 'in some valleys west of Whitby, a deep rich loam'<sup>9</sup> but elsewhere it may be a brownish clay, a clayey loam or a lightish soil upon alum shale. The greatest drawback to any form of cultivation throughout this region is its situation, exposed to the full force of easterly winds; and its liability, during early summer, when crops inland are able to enjoy the full benefit of the sunshine, to sea-fogs.

Few areas of England were as intensively settled by great monastic houses as the North-east. This settlement included monasteries which represented most orders: Whitby Abbey was one of the most important Benedictine houses in Yorkshire and still retained much of the prestige of

<sup>6</sup> 'In the valleys, particularly towards their heads, are peat bogs of several feet deep, buried in which trees of great size have sometimes been found.' *ibid.* p. 277.

<sup>7</sup> Tuke, *op. cit.* p.17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp.11-12.

the older Saxon foundation of St. Hilda; the priories at Guisborough, Newburgh, Bridlington and Kirkham were, even at the Dissolution, foremost among Augustinian houses in England. Rievaulx and Byland, in numbers, wealth and influence were among the leading Cistercian monasteries: Rievaulx especially, held a spiritual leadership directly derived from Cîteaux and Clairvaux, which was amplified by the saintliness and influence of Ailred, one of its early abbots. Malton Priory was one of the wealthiest of the few Gilbertine houses in the country. Besides major houses, however, there were a number of smaller priories and abbeys which provided a background and contrast and also played an active part in the exploitation of the land.<sup>10</sup>

Though the North-east contained Whitby Abbey, re-founded towards the end of the eleventh century, it was notably a centre for the monasteries of the new orders. Guisborough (1119), Bridlington (1113-14), and Rievaulx (1131) were among the earliest houses of their respective orders to be founded in England.

Within fifty years of the Domesday Survey the major houses had become well established. They had acquired lands over a wide area and had already begun to devise and apply efficient methods for exploiting their possessions.

Of the three most important houses, Whitby, Guisborough and Rievaulx, the first, though holding some lands at a great distance from the abbey, had the greatest concentration in the mouth of Eskdale, around Hackness and in the Cleveland Plain. Guisborough's lands and granges were even more concentrated between the Tees, the Cleveland Hills and the sea, with an extension towards and in Upper Eskdale. Rievaulx had the greatest concentration in and around the Vale of Pickering, below the western scarp of the North York Moors, in parts of Teesdale and in certain moorland areas such as Bilsdale, Raisdale, and Westerdale.<sup>11</sup> Such an extension of monastic influence had been established by the end of the twelfth century.

What was the landscape like when the surge of monastic colonisation first began? The landscape portrayed by the Domesday Survey offered a great opportunity for settlement, especially by the monasteries. Large areas still remained unreclaimed; parts of the land which had been recovered and tilled before 1069 had reverted to waste through depopulation of the district. The moors themselves were not settled and scarcely used: a large part of the Vale of Pickering was marshland, often

<sup>10</sup> See D. Knowles and R. N. Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses* (London, 1953) for further details.

<sup>11</sup> B. Waites, 'The monastic settlement of North-east Yorkshire', *Y.A.J.* vol. 40 (1962) pp.478-95; also *idem*, 'The monastic grange as a factor in the settlement of Northeast Yorkshire', *ibid.* pp.627-56.

at best providing occasional pasturage: extensive areas of woodland yet remained to be cleared, especially along the clay-land of the coast and in the Vale of York. The opportunity for an expansion and reconstruction of settlement was almost unlimited. Even by 1086 much of the settled area had not recovered from the devastation of 1069.<sup>12</sup> The way was open for a new era in settlement, and it is one of the most significant facts in history that the rise of the new orders of monasticism should follow so closely upon the devastation of Yorkshire.

Undeniably, the monasteries were to the forefront in the re-settlement of the area. The coincidence of places waste in 1086 and later monastic granges is so notable that it seems such sites were just what the monks wanted. A benefactor would be more willing to part with the waste lands he owned if he had not the resources to utilise them himself. For their part, the monasteries, especially the Cistercian ones, welcomed donations which they could use unimpeded by feudal restrictions, where a completely fresh start was possible.

Many instances occur of entire villages, wholly or partially waste in 1086, becoming monastic granges. This happened at Griff, Stilton, Deepdale and Loftmarshes, for example. Elsewhere granges were established alongside restored villages, as at Great Broughton and Wintringham. How much of this restoration was brought about by the monasteries will, perhaps, never be known. It is certain, however, that the large extent of waste in the North-east must have been the most important single factor determining the site and proliferation of lay donations to the monasteries. In this respect it is worthwhile to compare maps showing *Domesday Waste* and *Monastic Settlement*.<sup>13</sup> Looking at the North-east as a whole it is plain that monastic lands and granges were most highly concentrated in just those areas having a large amount of waste in 1086. (Pl. 2).

Having inherited such a landscape and making quick progress in acquisition and exploitation of the land, how did the monasteries contribute to the farming of the Moorlands and the Vale of Pickering during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries?

<sup>12</sup> H. C. Darby and I. S. Maxwell, *The Domesday Geography of Northern England* (Cambridge, 1962). Also, T. A. M. Bishop, 'The Norman Settlement in Yorkshire', *Studies in Medieval History Presented to F. M. Powicke*, ed. R. W. Hunt, W. A. Pantin and R. W. Southern (Oxford, 1948).

<sup>13</sup> To be found in Maxwell, *op. cit.*, and Waites *op. cit.*

## ARABLE FARMING

### I. THE MOORLANDS

'The Moorlands' comprised very varied land-forms. The major contrast was between the High and Low Moors. The former were more than 1,000 feet high and composed very largely of infertile sandstones which had in most places developed a podsolised surface capable of sustaining only heather. The Low Moors, however, were more fertile. The so-called Tabular Hills, for instance, were mostly well below 1,000 feet and composed mainly of Corallian limestones (this was the dip slope region north of the Vale of Pickering). A narrow clay vale separated the High and Low Moors along much of their length. This vale stretched in a discontinuous belt from Ryedale eastwards to the complex valley system of Hackness. On its northern side the High Moorlands rose gradually as a heather-clad mass; to the south an abrupt scarp face frowned over the small vale. This marked the edge of the Low Moors, but it belied their real nature, for once the scarp had been ascended and its belt of woodland passed, there was a gradual slope of mainly fertile soils falling gently southwards to the Vale of Pickering. The distinction between High and Low Moors had been real in mediaeval times: in 1351, for example, the Abbot of Whitby had granted pasture 'in les hautes mores'<sup>14</sup> and the accounts of the Duchy of Lancaster contain several references to 'agistamento averiorum in alta mora' during the fourteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

Besides the broad distinction between High and Low Moor, the dales must be considered. They were especially significant because they were the only areas of cultivation within the High Moors during mediaeval times.<sup>16</sup> Their soils were either Lias clays or, in Eskdale, boulder clays and gravels. Although by no means ideally suitable for arable cultivation they were farmed because there was nowhere else to farm. At Domesday the dales had been largely woodland and, except for Eskdale, most had been devoid of village settlement.<sup>17</sup> The extent of cultivated land in the eleventh and early twelfth centuries consequently must have been very

small. Even the entry of monastic settlers to the areas did little to extend arable cultivation, for the monks were interested mainly in the value of the dales for pasture or iron working. Thus Guisborough Priory, despite its varied interests in Eskdale, ranging from the iron workings of Glaisdale to the cattle farm of Dephill Bridge, had no substantial arable holding there. What arable land there was existed to supply the requirements of the animal-keepers or smelters and was very subsidiary to these concerns. This was typical of most of the monastic settlements in the dales. Rievaulx, for instance, was granted extensive pasture rights in Farndale and Bransdale but no mention is made of arable land and, so far as it is known, no abbey granges were ever established in these places.<sup>18</sup> In Westerdale too, where the monks had a lodge to superintend their animal farming, only about two bovates of land was attached.

The dales remained largely woodland even until as late as the sixteenth century, although complaints about the destruction of the woods, especially by smelters, became more and more frequent during Elizabeth's reign.<sup>19</sup> The extent of woodland had had a great deal of influence on the type of arable holding and farming in the dales from Domesday times. Thirteenth century evidence shows that this contributed to two major trends in dale agriculture: fragmentary or dispersed holdings and early enclosures.

The villages were, of course, centres of cultivation. In 1272 Danby in Eskdale had at least 100 bovates of land being worked by villeins and freemen; at Westerdale 60 tenants farmed 53 bovates.<sup>20</sup> However, land was being worked in many places outside the fields of the villages. Many freemen were working land within Danby Forest, each having mainly about 20 acres or less. For example, Rodger de Middleheved held 19 acres of land and 4 acres of meadow for 12s. 4d. The total land worked by the tenants of Peter de Brus in 1272 in the forest was 149 acres. The value per acre was moreover as good and sometimes better than that of Danby or Lealholm fields.<sup>21</sup> At Aislaby, a long list of closes in the hands of tenants at will showed that a fragmentation of holding occurred there; Johanridding, Rughclose, le Westclose, Terricroft, Amouzhill, Blapit, Synfield, Laximancroft, le Couclose and le Park.<sup>22</sup> In Farndale in 1276,

<sup>14</sup> C.A.W. no. 475 (Grant to the Burgesses of Whitby).

<sup>15</sup> N.R.R.S. (New Series) vol. 4, p.200 (Ministers' Accounts and Duchy Coucher Book).

<sup>16</sup> I include the interior vale of Oxford clay in the category of the dales.

<sup>17</sup> Robert de Sturville had granted to Keldholme Priory the bark of trees in the forest of Bransdale (1154-66), E.Y.C. vol. 9, p.92. Roger de Mowbray granted to Rievaulx two woodlands in Farndale, at Middlehead and Dowthwaite (before 1155), *ibid.* Timber was to be taken from Spaunton Forest to repair Kirby Misperton Mill (1140-55), *ibid.* vol. 1, p.476. There are many such indications that forest in the dales was extensive in the twelfth century and later. Details of Danby Forest in 1272 in *Inq.* vol. 1, p.139.

<sup>18</sup> The monastic unit of 'exploitation' in such areas was probably the 'cote' or sheep-house, dependent on a more distant grange but allowing the shepherds shelter for a night or so. Skiplam Grange might have been the headquarters for Farndale and Bransdale sheep farming as it was conveniently situated for them.

<sup>19</sup> The abundance of wood was, incidentally, a principal reason for the iron-working in the dales (plus ore, of course): B. Waites, 'Mediaeval Iron Working in Northeast Yorkshire', *Geography*, vol. xlix (January 1964), pp.33-43.

<sup>20</sup> *Inq.* vol. 1, p.139 *et seq.* See also the Extent for Westerdale, 1335; P.R.O. C.135/44/6; also Ministers' Account, c. 1318, P.R.O. S.C.6/835/2.

<sup>21</sup> *Inq.* vol. 1, p.139 *et seq.*

<sup>22</sup> C.L.P.M. vol. 12, p.219.

545 acres were 'per bovatum terre non tenentes set secundum majus et minus'.<sup>23</sup> They were held in separate plots in various places. Some tenants held waste places also in separate localities. At nearby Douthwaite (apparently not a village but just an area worked by scattered holdings) certain men held plots of land variously distributed in the moor. The great amount of assarting which took place in some of the dales during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries contributed to scattered arable holdings. This was particularly so in Rosedale. The Coucher Book of the Duchy of Lancaster shows that assarting was frequent at Cropton, Tranmire and Hartoft in the early fourteenth century, for example. Much of the land must have been marginal in character and, if left unenclosed, liable to revert to moorland again. Most of the assarts were small — about 9 acres usually — and sown with oats as their first crop. Sometimes greater amounts of land were assarted — almost 500 acres at Goathland and Allantofts, for instance.<sup>24</sup>

No indication was given that there was any normal field-system in some of the dales. Farndale and Bransdale, for example, within the manor of Kirby Moorside, had a total population of more than 150 in 1282, yet no reference to a village community was made.<sup>25</sup> Instead, the usual description was 'in a certain dale called Farndale' or some such equivalent, when the tenants were being referred to; never 'in the village of'. This, too, suggests that settlement and arable farming in the dales was scattered, and not nucleated.

In fact, just as assarting implied enclosures, so the preponderance of meadow land implied the same thing in the dales.<sup>26</sup> Once a man had cleared an area of woodland it was logical for him to enclose it to keep out prowling animals and the renewed spread of surrounding wood. This had evidently been generally true of the dales, because references to enclosed plots, whether for pasture or arable, were very many in the thirteenth century. Those at Aislaby have been mentioned, but they occurred at Danby, too e.g. 'quoddam clausam vocat Le Heved', Horsehouse close, 20 acres of meadow.<sup>27</sup> The extent of such lands must have been great; in the forest near Lealholm, for example, Peter de Brus held 114 acres of demesne meadow, much of it in separate places, in 1272, and at Danby considerable amounts of meadow occurred in clearings within the forest, for example 80 acres in Selythwaite, 40 acres in Yarlethwaite, 60 acres in

<sup>23</sup> *Inq.* vol. 1, p.167 *et seq.*

<sup>24</sup> Duchy of Lancaster, Coucher Book, P.R.O. Exchequer Q.R. Misc. Books, vol. 8. Extracts printed in *N.R.R.S.* (New Series) vols. 2 and 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Inq.* vol. 1, p.249.

<sup>26</sup> 'The more pasture predominates, the less the common field arable is able to resist the tendency to enclosure.' G. Slater, *The English Peasantry and the Enclosure of the Common Fields* (London, 1907).

<sup>27</sup> P.R.O. C.135/44/6.

Sourbylaunde, 120 acres in Westmanhouthwaite ('thwaite' = clearing).<sup>28</sup> Many of the freemen in the forest of Danby had, in fact, assarted land for arable and meadow: William Harkel held nine acres of land and eight acres of meadow for 12s. 2d.; Lyolph del Dale held four acres meadow and one waste place of a certain bercary for 8s. 6d. in 1272.<sup>29</sup> Such small, scattered holdings, usually enclosed from the forest, seem to have been typical of the dales. Cultivated land took, then, two forms; it was concentrated in village fields, where villages existed, but mainly it was scattered in various places within the extensive woodlands of the dales. This latter was typical of an area in the process of becoming settled and cultivated.<sup>30</sup>

The Low Moors — the most important area of arable cultivation in the entire moorland — were a different proposition. There settlement, in the form of villages and monastic granges was much more profuse than it was in the dales. There was a series of villages perched on the scarp top of the Corallian; Gillamoor, Spaunton, Cropton, Cawthorn, Newton, Lockton; and more villages were located further south, on the dip slope: Carlton, Pockley, Fadmoor, Appleton le Moor, Kingthorpe. These were all, of course, the principal areas of lay cultivation; but the presence of large numbers of monastic granges had extended this area. Rievaulx Abbey, in particular, had several granges in the region (for example, Griff, Stilton, Newlathes, Skiplam and Sproxtton) but other houses had granges at Murton, Old Byland, Snileswith, Appleton, Spaunton and Kingthorpe. The granges situated in this area were the largest and relatively the most prosperous of all monastic granges in the North-east. This can be assessed from the contributions to the 1301 Subsidy. The acreage can be estimated from various sources: at Griff, for example, the monks had 4 carucates given to them in their foundation grant.<sup>31</sup> Presumably all this was arable land; at least, in 1341, there were 4 carucates 'in agricultura' here.<sup>32</sup> The Dissolution Accounts give more details; the total holding was just over 490 acres, of which 206 acres were arable and 284 pasture.<sup>33</sup> This is a high amount of arable, considering that the trend of sixteenth-century farming had been towards pasture.

At Stilton the extent of arable was greater; 5 carucates, that is about 600 acres.<sup>34</sup> However at Newlathes the arable and pasture totalled just over

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.* also *Inq.* vol. 1, p.139 *et seq.*

<sup>29</sup> *Inq.* vol. 1, p.139 *et seq.*

<sup>30</sup> Note that enclosure was also an early feature of the central Vale of Pickering, especially the Marishes. Both the Marishes and the moorland dales were mainly pastoral, in the process of settlement, largely woodland or marshland — both in fact were very marginal areas.

<sup>31</sup> *C.A.R.* p.16.

<sup>32</sup> P.R.O. E.179/211/19, m.20.

<sup>33</sup> *C.A.R.* pp.312-13.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p.16.

half that, namely 374 acres.<sup>35</sup> It is evident that these granges were very large arable farms, especially early in their history.<sup>36</sup> Details about the other granges are unfortunately not forthcoming. The form of the description given by the Dissolution Accounts provides some interesting suggestions about the grange lands of Griff and Newlathes, which could throw light on two obscure questions: whether the monks had a distinctive field system on their granges and whether their lands were more completely enclosed than those of laymen.

A full answer is too much to hope for, but a few clues can be found. The first is straightforward: at both granges almost all the land, whether it was arable or pasture, appeared to be enclosed in 1538. The enclosures varied very much in size: Fogg Close was a pasture close of only 10 acres at Griff; Fatte Close was also for pasture but its area was 24 acres; Stoke Ing was 40 acres. Certain land was described as 'field'; for instance at Griff the following occurred:<sup>37</sup>

1 field or flat land (arable)	northside of lathgarth	30 acres	
1	" " "	Mortempo	6 acres
1	" " "	Coote Flat	6 acres
1	" " ?	Abbot Hagg	60 acres
1 field of arable land	Jodicefield	60 acres	
1 field called	Tlysteleyfield	40 acres	

The acreage of the areas described as 'fields' is 130. By a strange coincidence the acreage of the 'fields' of Newlathes grange was also 130:

1 pasture called Lyngery	Field	30 acres	
2	" "	Thistleley Field	40 "
1	" "	South Field	40 "
1 close	" "	Coneygarth Field	20 "

Could it be that there were remnants of the earlier system of tillage adopted by the monks on their granges? The individual acreages for each field was as follows:

at Newlathes they were	30.	40.	20	
at Griff	they were	30.	60.	40. (omitting the dubious areas).

There is a great similarity between them. Could it be that the monks divided their holding into fields on a similar basis to the village fields? This fragmentary evidence seems to suggest this as a possibility. The monks could not have been following a previously established field pattern at Newlathes because it had never been the site of any previous

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* pp. 313-14.

<sup>36</sup> For example, there were at least fifteen plough beasts working at Griff Grange about the middle of the thirteenth century which were pastured in Sproxtun, a few miles away. *C.A.R.* p. 293.

<sup>37</sup> From Dissolution Accounts, *C.A.R.* p. 312 *et seq.*

settlement. Griff had been mentioned at Domesday as waste and it is unlikely that any field system remained as a basis there.<sup>38</sup>

This evidence by itself is inconclusive, especially because it is so late, although it is surprising how accurately the sixteenth-century accounts portrayed the size of the grange land in earlier times. This was proved by comparing earlier sources; might it not be as accurate for the amounts enclosed and the system of tillage adopted? It is worthwhile remembering that monastic lands remained remarkably stable after the middle of the thirteenth century. The suggestion that the largest monastic granges devoted to arable farming were organised on a three-field system, similar to that of village economy, requires a great deal of examination. Little or nothing is known about how the monks organised their grange land in areas which had never been settled. Much regional and detailed work may provide an answer which is impossible to deduce from scanty sources available in the North-east.

Although little detailed information is available to give a full picture of arable farming in the moors, certain conclusions are possible. Arable cultivation was not extensive. It was confined to the dip slopes of the Low Moors and the dales within the moorland. In the former, the arable farm or grange developed to a great size and lay farming was very important: in the latter, monastic arable farming was at a minimum and lay farming was characteristic of a recently settled forested area. That is to say it was generally scattered in small plots within the woodland areas and enclosure was common. The village farming area was more important in Eskdale than in the southern dales because, in the latter, the separate homestead seems to have been the substitute for the village community.

## 2. THE COASTAL PLATEAU<sup>39</sup>

This region appeared one of the low agricultural prosperity in 1341. The reasons for this are not far to seek; in fact the Inquisition taken in 1342 supplies some of them. Loftus and Easington parishes were largely moorland where 'the parishioners lived for the most part by sheep' which they kept.<sup>40</sup> The land which was cultivated was marginal and liable to revert to waste. This seems to be the main explanation for the great amount of land out of cultivation in 1341. A great part of the cultivated land in Easington parish lay untilled; three parts of Loftus, three parts of Lythe, four parts of Skelton, half the arable of Whitby

<sup>38</sup> Dissolution evidence elsewhere leads to similar conclusions: at Kerkmarsh Grange, for instance, all the land appeared to be enclosed and there was also a 'great field called East Field' though no indication was ever given that Kerkmarsh was a village at any time after 1069. Here is evidence again of a field system on what appeared to be always monastic property, cf. information from Abbey leases: *C.A.R.* p. 349 *et seq.*

<sup>39</sup> The small area of coast plain in Scalby parish is not included in this section.

<sup>40</sup> *N.I.* p. 231.

parish — and so the list goes on, describing land out of cultivation, which had at one time been worked. The total value of this land if it had been cultivated would have been £226 7. 0.<sup>41</sup> This was a substantial loss. The explanation appears to be the marginal character of arable farming in the area, as the Inquisition itself suggested.<sup>42</sup> What other causes could there be? The effect of the plagues of the mid-fourteenth century had not yet been felt along the coast. For instance, John de Fauconberg had 24 bovates of poor moorland in demesne at Skelton which was worth £4 16. 0. 'before the mortality of men in these parts this year'.<sup>43</sup> The date is significant; 1350, later than the Inquisition of 1342. Even so, the effect of the plague when it did arrive does not seem to have been great in this remote area. Its incidence, too, was least in the highland districts, as A. H. Thompson has shown from a study of benefices in the diocese of York between 1348 and 1369.<sup>44</sup>

The effect of Scottish raids could be a more plausible explanation of land uncultivated in 1341. The Scots certainly reached the area; John de Eune, for example, had a vaccary or cattle farm worth 30s. a year in peacetime but in 1326 worth nothing 'because of the destructions of the Scots'.<sup>45</sup> Whitby Abbey had complained in 1316 that their 'corn and victuals . . . have been destroyed as well by the frequent inroads of the Scots as by accidents so that the Abbot and Convent have had to seek sustenance elsewhere'.<sup>46</sup> Later, in 1323, the monks received a mandate to appropriate the church of Seamer, worth 80 marks, because 'they suffer from the barrenness of the soil, and the incursions of the Scots'.<sup>47</sup> By 1328 some of the Abbey's benefices had been destroyed by the Scots and the Archbishop appointed 'some trustworthy men' to survey the damage.<sup>48</sup> The reassessments of benefices throughout the whole of the area in 1318 resulted in great differences from the 1292 *Valor* of Pope Nicholas IV.<sup>49</sup> The value of the church of Easington fell from £20 in 1292 to £12 in 1318; Lythe church and chapels were reduced from £33 6. 8. to £13 6. 8.; Skelton from £17 6. 8. to £7 6. 8. However the coastal district, despite all this, did not appear to be among the hardest hit parts of the North-east. It was out of the main line of advance of

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* p.231 *et seq.*

<sup>42</sup> A. R. H. Baker, 'Evidence in the *Nonarum Inquisitiones* of Contracting Arable Lands in England during the early Fourteenth Century', *Economic History Review*, Second Series, vol. XIX, no. 3, (December 1966). Good discussion of 'half-wanted lands'.

<sup>43</sup> *C.L.P.M.* vol. 9, p.177.

<sup>44</sup> 'The Pestilences of the Fourteenth Century in the Diocese of York', *A.J.* vol. 71, pp.97-154.

<sup>45</sup> *C.P.G.* vol. 1, pp.103-4.

<sup>46</sup> *C.P.R.* (1316) p.389.

<sup>47</sup> *Calendar of Papal Letters* vol. 2 (1305-42).

<sup>48</sup> *C.C.R.* (1328) p.280.

<sup>49</sup> The reliability of the 1292 and 1318 Assessments is discussed by R. Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies*, (London, 1929) pp.271-301.

the Scots, which was through the Vale of York. The damage might have come from irregular visits of raiding parties. Since no land was described as uncultivated because of the Scots devastations by the parishioners on oath in 1342, it seems likely that by this time the effect was small. The parishioners would have been ready enough to forward it as a reason for their lower assessment, if they could.

The arable land of the Coastal Plateau seems to have been, like that of the moorland region, very marginal. Besides the evidence of 1341, several Inquisitions and Extents indicate the same thing. In 1279, for instance, Peter de Malo Lacu had one third of his arable land in Lythe uncultivated, one quarter uncultivated at Cucklet Nook, and more than one fifth uncultivated at Goldsborough.<sup>50</sup> This was rather odd in a period when demesne farming was increasing. No reason was given for the land being uncultivated but it seems quite obvious that some would have been fallow and the rest had been allowed to revert to moorland because of its poorness. The land at Cucklet Nook, for instance, was on the very edge of the clay soils of the plateau and verged on the moorland. It was, besides, at a height of 650 feet; very high for cultivation in such an exposed district.

Nearly every village in the area, too, had a great deal of assarted land attached to it. At Skiningrove there were 'tofts and crofts with assarts' and three assarts in Playgreve worth 2s. 1d.; at Girrick (around 700 feet high) there were two assarts worth 12s. and 14s.; at Skelton, Moorsholm and Stanghow the number of assarts was even greater.<sup>51</sup> Obviously such land would be in and out of cultivation very frequently: it could not always be relied upon for cultivation. The marginal character of arable farming was emphasised by the high level of most of the settlements and the cultivation.<sup>52</sup> Of course 600-700 feet may not seem very high, but it is the limit for successful arable production. There are very few areas cultivated at that height in England today, despite the fact that the present-day farmer can use many advantages denied to his predecessors, such as seed specially selected and adaptable to varying climatic conditions.

It is all the more surprising, then, to notice that much of the arable land of the Coastal Plateau was above 500 feet in the thirteenth century. Peter de Brus had 382 acres of arable at Brotton, for example, in 1272, and at Skelton he had 567 acres in arable demesne.<sup>53</sup> Peter de Malo Lacu

<sup>50</sup> *Inq.* vol. 1, p.191 *et seq.* Reference to uncultivated demesne land is a rarity in the Extents examined for other places in the North-east in the last quarter of the thirteenth century.

<sup>51</sup> *Inq.* vol. 1, p.139 *et seq.*

<sup>52</sup> Several villages were located on the gravel which was interspersed with the boulder clay in certain places.

<sup>53</sup> *Inq.* vol. 1, p.139 *et seq.*

had 160 acres arable at Cucklet Nook in 1279, and at Goldsborough 307 acres arable in demesne.<sup>54</sup> Besides, although some villages e.g. Mickleby, Barnby, were located in valleys, a line of settlements followed the boundary between the clay plateau and the moorland at a height of about 600 feet or more. These were all, of course, areas of arable cultivation though the amount varied at each. At Moorsholm and Stanghow it was about 37 bovates, for example.<sup>55</sup> In fact, the coastal area was well settled despite its bleakness and none-too-fertile boulder clay soils (which were often very wooded, especially in the coastal dunes, which cut deeply into the plateau in several places). This was mainly because of the variety of occupations which were possible in the area. Sheep could be kept, fishing engaged in, and some arable farming, too; one occupation could make up for the deficiencies of the other. Fishing thus became important in the coastal villages. Peter de Brus had a fishery worth 4s. at Skiningrove in 1272, and at Sandsend the sea fishery was worth 13s. 4d. a year.<sup>56</sup> Villages further inland, too, such as Moorsholm, also had a hand in the fishing. This was typical of an area in which so much of the arable was marginal, localised and unreliable.

The suggestion so far has been that arable farming was very localised in this area during the middle ages. The emphasis seemed to be more on sheep farming, sometimes associated with fishing. The *Valor Ecclesiasticus* (1535) seems to support this. The following list shows the percentage corn, hay and livestock (i.e. wool, lamb and calf tithes) tithes were of the total agricultural tithe.

Benefice	% of Total Agricultural Tithe <sup>57</sup>	
	Corn-hay tithe	Wool-lamb-calf tithe
Lythe	54	46
Loftus	69	31
Hinderwell	60	40
Sneton	44	56
Easington	63	37

Corn and hay tithes were generally rather low, with the exception of Loftus. At Sneton, in fact, the animal tithe exceeded the corn tithe. It was almost as much in Lythe parish and well over half as much in Easington and Hinderwell. These figures show a remarkable contrast to the figures for the Vale of York. There, the tithes from arable production were very high and those from livestock correspondingly

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.* p.191 *et. seq.*

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.* p.139 *et. seq.*

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.* p.139 and p.191 *et. seq.*

<sup>57</sup> The total Valor only is given for other parishes in the region (i.e. Whitby, Fyling and Skelton) so no tithe percentages can be worked out for them.

low.<sup>58</sup> A study of the value in 1535 gives the impression that pastoral farming was as significant as arable in some parishes, although in a few it was of greater overall importance. This supports the impression derived from earlier evidence: the importance of pastoralism had been evident from the tithe values quoted by the Inquisition of 1341. Clearly the area of arable farming was restricted. Besides, the lack of any reference to the Coastal Plateau as a source of corn for the King's Wars between 1298 and 1360 appears to substantiate the idea that arable cultivation was not as important in this region as it has been shown to be elsewhere (for example, in the Wolds).<sup>59</sup> It is possible that in an area like the Coastal Plateau, where arable farming was often marginal in character, there would have been very little surplus for marketing.

It remains to be seen whether the monastic farmers in this region followed the same trend away from arable farming. Whitby Abbey, it will be recalled, had a great deal of property in the region. In 1301 it had at least seven granges here:

Grange	Fifteenth contributed to 1301 subsidy <sup>60</sup>
Eskdale	6s. 11d.
Stakesby	41s. 8d.
Whitby Lathes	11s. 5d.
Lairpool	11s.
Fyling	13s. 9d.
Hawsker	10s. 2d.
Normanby	14s.

As the table shows, the contributions were, with the exception of Stakesby, low: low, that is, in comparison with the other granges of the North-east which were mainly devoted to arable farming (e.g. the 'limestone' granges of Rievaulx). This implies that the granges of Whitby were less prosperous in terms of agricultural production.

In fact, arable farming was more important on the Whitby granges than this suggests. As late as 1366, for instance, when there is evidence of much leasing of monastic property over most of England, the monks of Whitby still held three of their granges in their own hands.<sup>61</sup> Stakesby had four ploughs working there; Whitbylathes, three; Fyling, two. Besides, the monks were working land at Lathgarth (called a grange in 1394) and Middlewood: there were two ploughs at each of these places.

<sup>58</sup> For example, Kirby Wiske: 96% corn-hay tithe; 4% wool-lamb-calf tithe. For a full discussion of this see B. Wailes, 'Aspects of Medieval Arable Farming in the Vale of York', *Ryedale Historian*, no. 2 (April 1966) pp.5-11.

<sup>59</sup> There was one reference to 100 quarters of oats going from Lythe to Whitby in 1298.

<sup>60</sup> *Y.A.S.R.S.*, vol. 21.

<sup>61</sup> *C.B.M.*, vol. III, pp.63-8.

Except at Stakesby, and perhaps Whitbylathes, it is unlikely that arable farming was of great importance at this time. The abbey at any rate needed to spend over £250 on the purchase and carriage of corn in 1366, so that their own production seems to have been well below their requirements.<sup>62</sup>

The collection of corn-tithes supplemented the personal efforts of the monks at several of their granges. An interesting document, which gives details of the corn at some of the abbey granges in 1394, can throw some light on the importance of arable farming there.<sup>63</sup> At the abbey grange, for example, there were 13 quarters of corn and 79 quarters of malt, barley and oats in store; at Stakesby there were 58 quarters of corn (62% of which was oats); at Lathgarth 122 quarters of corn (of which 74% was oats); at Whitbylathes 120 quarters of corn (of which 66% was oats). This corn was derived from the grange land and from tithes and so gives some idea of the significance and character of arable farming in the area. The granges nearest to the abbey seemed to be most important as arable farms, and oats, as might be expected in a coastal region of high land, was the predominant crop.<sup>64</sup> However, wheat was sown; 17 acres at Stakesby, 30 acres at Lathgarth, and 30 acres at Whitbylathes were sown in 1394. It was here that most ploughs were at work and the arable farming of the monks most pronounced. Although the monastic grange in the Coastal Plateau region did not appear so important as an arable farm compared to the granges in other regions, its importance in a district where arable farming was not emphasised strongly should not be forgotten. At least the Whitby granges showed that arable farming achieved a certain standard despite the monks' constant complaint of the barrenness of their land. If information were available for the period before 1301 it might well show that such farming was more intensified because then the abbey was at the apogee of its development.

The canons of Guisborough Priory had not much interest in the greater part of the region, except for a few places. Apparently they had only one grange in the region, at Brotton, although the extent of lands owned by them at Ugthorpe and Loftus suggests that granges might have been established there. The prior owned a great deal of arable land at Skelton; at least 28 bovates at Loftus, as well as 300 acres of moor; and at least 5 bovates, 128 acres of land in Moorsholm.<sup>65</sup> He held more scattered

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Officio Instauri Monasterii, C.A.W.* vol. I, pp.318-20.

<sup>64</sup> Throughout the history of all the monasteries the granges nearest the mother house were always the most important and usually the last to be leased (if leased at all).

<sup>65</sup> C.P.G. The Priory had at least 15 messuages, 19 tofts, 28 bovates and 30 acres of land in North Loftus in 1362 (C.C.R. p.367), but it had additional lands in Loftus, apparently reckoned separately. The Dissolution Accounts show that the Priory had a total of 45 bovates, 10 messuages and 4 cottages.

lands elsewhere in the region, but those at Skelton, Loftus, Moorsholm and Ugthorpe were the most extensive. It was in these places that the canons cultivated land. There is no evidence to show the scale of character of their exploitation, except at Ugthorpe. Here, an interesting series of cartulary documents indicate that arable farming was important in and around Ugthorpe.<sup>66</sup>

The canons had acquired land in the vill during the twelfth century. In 1161, for example, William de Hamby had demised two carucates to the canons: a few years later they had two bovates from William de Argentum for a yearly payment of 2s. Land acquisitions continued into the thirteenth century; sometimes they were purchased.<sup>67</sup> It is in the middle of the thirteenth century that more detail can be found. In 1254 Guisborough Priory, with Handale Priory, a small nunnery nearby, partitioned the waste of the manor of Ugthorpe between them. Guisborough obtained most of this and the purpose was for cultivation; enclosures were made and Guisborough even set up its own windmill to grind the produce. Later the canons obtained all the waste and in 1262 also obtained a lease of Handale's land in the valley of Ugthorpe. Seven years later another lease was secured for 'quadam summa pecunie quam praeftati Prior et Conv. praedictis Sanctimonialibus prae manibus dederunt'. This expanded the already extensive possessions of the canons in Ugthorpe to include much of the land in nearby Percybiggin. Finally, in 1280, the canons acquired all the rights in the manor of Ugthorpe from Peter de Malo Lacu. Thus in little more than twenty years the canons had vastly extended their lands in the area.

What is the significance of this in the arable farming of the Coastal Plateau? Once again, the theme of high level cultivation is illustrated. The canons' land was mostly above 600 feet. It is interesting to see not only intensive arable farming here, but actual increases in the cultivated area by reclamation of waste land on a fairly extensive scale.<sup>68</sup> This might have been carried out by the canons at Loftus, too, where they owned such a large portion of the moor. This was important in a region which, generally speaking, was not the scene of the large monastic arable granges, and in which pastoralism was dominant.

The Coastal Plateau, was then, generally unsuited to cultivation on a large scale. It was an area of varied economies, but sheep farming was dominant. Much of the arable land was confined to particular areas, and because most of these were at a high level, sometimes near the moorland

<sup>66</sup> C.P.G. nos. 668, 668a, 668b, 943, 944, 945, 946, 947b, 988, 989.

<sup>67</sup> Robert de Ugthorpe sold certain land to the canons; C.P.G. no. 985.

<sup>68</sup> The Dissolution Accounts (P.R.O. S.C.6/Hen.8/4636) show that by 1540 most of the Priory land in Ugthorpe was enclosed; evidence of earlier enclosures into the moor itself was clear — e.g. 'le intak on the moor called Leith Hill . . . one close called le moore close'.

edge, much of the arable was marginal in character. Land values were frequently less than in other regions. Monastic activity seemed to reflect the lay picture, with however a few notable exceptions. These exceptions were at Ugthorpe, Loftus, Stakesby, Whitbylathes and Lathgarth, where Guisborough Priory and Whitby Abbey held and worked large arable farms. But apart from these, the value of granges in the coastal region, in so far as this can be estimated from the Subsidy of 1301, was generally much less than that of granges in other regions (such as on the Corallian dip slope). This, it is suggested, was a reflection of the minor role played by arable farming in the region.

### 3. THE VALE OF PICKERING

As a region the Vale stood high in agricultural prosperity. Together with the Vale of York it was the richest in the whole of the medieval North-east. At first sight this appears paradoxical: the greater part was marsh, mere, forest or ill-drained land. Lacustrine clays intermingled with patches of sandy alluvium and these were further diversified, especially in the eastern half of the Vale, by areas of heavy, boggy, infertile peaty soils utilised, if at all, only for the turves they provided. The remarkable flatness of the Vale floor was an impediment to natural drainage in the area. The River Derwent had been unnaturally diverted from its old, direct course to the sea by glacial interference. Instead of flowing a few miles to join the sea near Scarborough it ran all the way along the Vale to Malton through the Kirkham Gorge and joined the Ouse in the vicinity of Selby, thence flowing to the sea via the Humber estuary.<sup>69</sup> Though this diversion had occurred in the distant past, its influence on subsequent settlement and land use in the Vale was profound. Thus, the Derwent assumed a doleful and uncertain course, to be joined by many moorland streams, which added to the difficulties, already great, of drainage.

North of the Vale too, were moorlands, unsuited, except in certain places, for arable cultivation. Even the fertile limestone of the Low Moors appears to have been partly covered by woodland. How did it come about then, that the Vale of Pickering could be so predominant in terms of agricultural prosperity?

First, it should be explained that sheep farming was a large element in this prosperity. Parishes on the north and south margins of the Vale were strip parishes and thus included either wold pasture or moorland pasture. Arable cultivation, equally important, occurred mainly along the margins of the Vale. The significance of the marginal settlements has been mentioned. The line of villages which surrounds the central Vale was

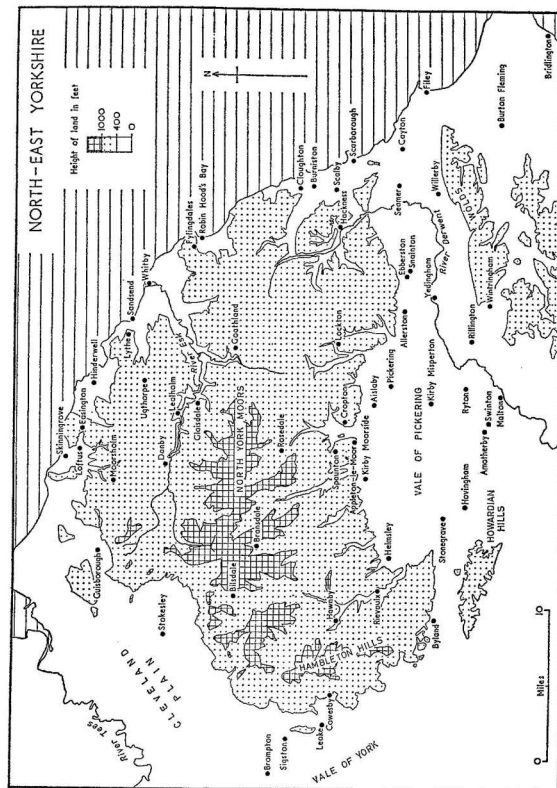


Plate I

<sup>69</sup> Kendal, *Q.J.G.S.* vol. 58.

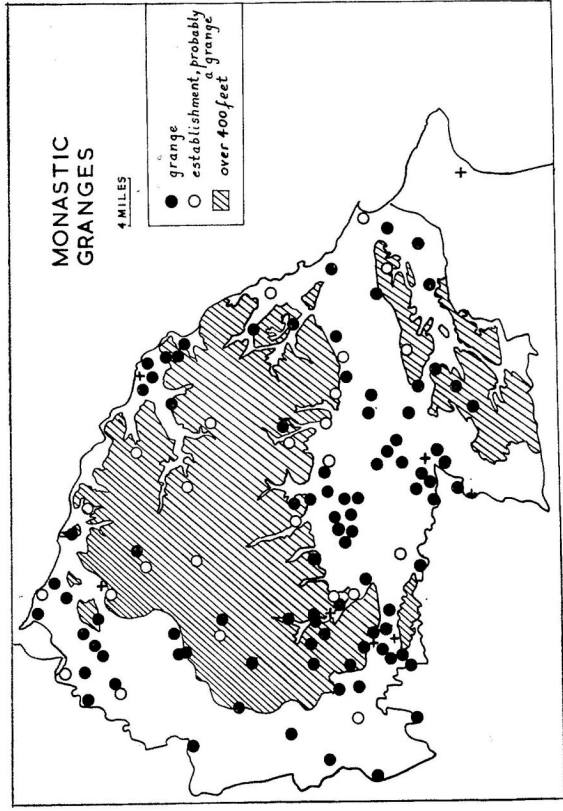


Plate 2

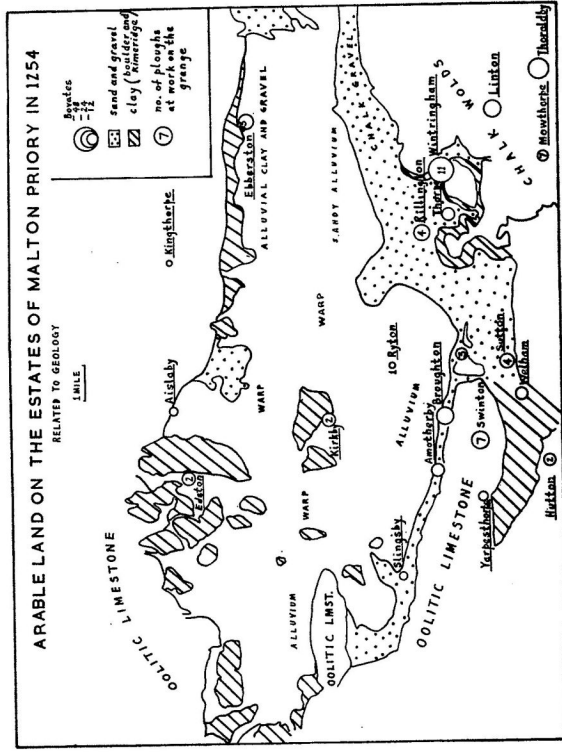


Plate 3

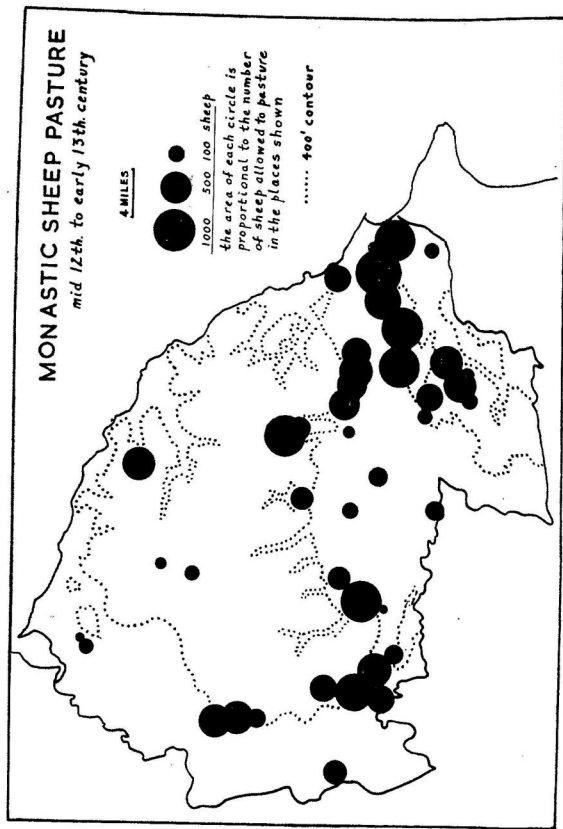


Plate 4

continuous. Their sites were particularly favourable to arable farming: on the southern margin the area of fertile gravels extending from Stonegrave via Hovingham to Malton and thence along the foot of the Wold scarp varied in width from half a mile to two miles. It was raised above the level of the marshy Vale, so that it was a well drained platform, at a height of about 100 feet. On the northern margin similar conditions prevailed: there were large patches of gravel soils at Seamer and Pickering, though no continuous platform as on the south. Instead, the settlements were situated at the foot of the limestone dip slope, which in places was diversified by Kimmeridge clay. Both margins, then, were outlined by a series of settlements all the more significant because they followed the junction between contrasting areas.

Field investigations as well as documentary evidence have shown that the village open fields lay upon the peripheral areas described and that the three-field system was typical.<sup>70</sup> This was usual in a highly arable area though it provided an interesting contrast with field systems on the nearby Wolds. Here, in the few instances where information was available, a two-field system seemed to prevail.<sup>71</sup> The high value of the peripheral Vale was emphasised in 1301 and 1341, but as late as 1535 it was evident that this was the main area of corn production. More detailed information about arable farming in these areas is given by a list of the possessions of Thomas de Westhorpe of Brompton.<sup>72</sup> This man was an important wool-grower and dealer in the district during the fourteenth century. He also participated quite strongly in the farming activities of the northern Vale at Brompton, Snainton, Sawden and Ebberston. His emphasis was on sheep and cattle farming and in both he achieved a prominence equal to some of the larger monasteries in this area. For instance, his total stock of sheep was more than 2,700 in 1366 and he had at least 468 cattle on all his lands in the same year. His arable holdings were also extensive and provided a pointer to the basis of cultivation in the Brompton area in 1366.

Thomas had 183 acres of land sown with crops in Brompton, Snainton and Sawden and 55½ acres in Ebberston. Barley and wheat were sown in more than three-quarters of his Brompton lands, and at Ebberston they were equally predominant. The total value of the sown land was high; £46 10. 0. at Brompton and £17 10. 0. at Ebberston. Together this amounted to £64, about one-eighth of his entire possessions which were

<sup>70</sup> e.g. at Scampston, *C.I.P.M.* (1935-36) p.476.

<sup>71</sup> e.g. at Burton Fleming, *B.P.C.* pp.66-8.

<sup>72</sup> P.R. O. L.T.R. Memoranda Rolls, E.368/139 (1366-67)

See B. Waites, 'A Yorkshire Farmer in the Memoranda Rolls', *Y.A.J.* vol. 42 (1965) pp.445-8.

Also *idem*. 'The Memoranda Rolls as a Source of Medieval History', *The Amateur Historian*, vol. 5 (Summer 1963) pp.242-6.

valued at £512 16. 7. The value of wheat and barley was great. In fact, out of the total value of £64 for sown land, these cereals together comprised £54 14. 0. Although the emphasis in cultivation was strongly in favour of wheat and barley, it was not exclusively so. Rye, oats, beans and peas were also grown. No mention is made of ploughs used or expenses entailed, but the importance of arable farming is evident from this single example. An examination of monastic evidence serves to emphasise the importance of the margins of the Vale in arable cultivation.<sup>73</sup>

The Inquisition for the Ninth of 1341 showed that the monastic share in the prosperity of the Vale settlements was large. At Pickering, one-sixth of the tax came from monastic corn, wool and lambs in the parish, at Helmsley one-seventh and at Appleton le Street, one fifth, but almost every parish could show similar figures. In fact, a large number of granges were located on the rich soils of the north or south margins of the Vale. It was here that some of the largest, most highly organised and successful arable holdings in the North-east were situated. The Malton Priory granges, for example, in the middle of the thirteenth century, show this clearly.<sup>74</sup>

Wintringham, Swinton, Sutton and Rillington were all situated on the fertile gravels of the southern Vale. The amount of arable land being worked at each was great, much greater than that of the pastoral granges of the central Vale and the moors. In 1254, for instance, Wintringham had 46 bovates, Swinton 26½, Sutton 16 and Rillington 22. However, in effect the arable land being worked was often greater than these figures suggest, because the Priory owned lands near the granges, and worked in unison with grange land. Rillington grange, for example, appeared to work 14 bovates in Thorpe, a village only half a mile away. The grange at Swinton probably worked the 12 bovates at Amotherby and 34 bovates at Broughton which the Priory owned.<sup>75</sup> Both these places were soon to develop into granges themselves; in fact, by 1301 Amotherby and Broughton were among the richest of all the Priory granges. By 1257, however, they were still not granges.

The greater part, then, of the arable land worked by the canons was on the gravel bench of the southern Vale. It was in this area that Prior

<sup>73</sup> A great deal of lay demesne arable was farmed in this area too. There were, for instance, 380 acres arable on the Stutville manor of Kirby Misperton in 1276; Roger de Mowbray had 245 acres arable on his Hovingham manor in 1298; Robert de Everingham had 166 acres arable in Sherburn manor in 1287; Matthew de Loveyn had 117 acres arable on Fryton manor in 1302. *Inq.* vols. 1, 2, 3 and 4.

<sup>74</sup> See Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies*, pp. 247-70.

<sup>75</sup> An Inquisition (1255-56) showed that Malton Priory had 32 bovates 'tene de proprio' and 2 bovates 'de firma' in Broughton. William Luvel appeared to have the rest, namely, 30 bovates. B. M. Cotton MS. Claudius D.XI, fol. 76.

William had, between 1234 and 1256, acquired the greatest amount of land. At Swinton and Amotherby he had accumulated 16 bovates and at Rillington and Thorpe 24 bovates. It is known that the Prior spent great sums on buying land at this time.<sup>76</sup> He was, it seems, especially anxious to expand the possessions of his house, and in particular the arable lands, situated along the southern edge of the Vale of Pickering where the soils were so fertile.

All the available statistics emphasise that the granges of this area were, and continued to be long after the middle of the thirteenth century, very important arable farms.<sup>77</sup> It quickly becomes evident that the granges situated along the gravel soils were well developed arable farms. The total number of ploughs in use on these granges was 29; that is, roughly three-quarters of the total ploughs owned by the Priory on all its granges. Individually, it will be seen that granges such as Wintringham (with 11 ploughs), Swinton (7), Rillington (4) and Sutton (4) had the highest number of ploughs working in 1244. They, too, had more workers employed than granges situated elsewhere. The expenses for hired labour at Wintringham, for instance, were 176s. 10d. for the year — more than ten times similar expenses on Ryton grange in the central Vale.

Arable cultivation occurred also on the fertile soils of the northern periphery of the Vale. *Pl.* 3 shows that in 1254 Malton Priory had a good deal of arable at Eberberston, Aislaby and certain other places. Some time between 1223 and 1234 this Priory established a grange at Eberberston, which had three ploughs working by 1244 and which, by 1301, had become the most valuable of all the Priory granges. At Allerston, the Templars had at least 16 bovates in 1246; much of this land, at least 114 acres, was sown with wheat in 1307. Nearby, the gravel soils of Seamer provided admirable conditions for corn cultivation. The Whitby Cartulary shows that the abbey had 274 quarters of corn at Seamer and Cayton which had derived from the tithes due to the monks in the parish in 1394.<sup>78</sup> Lay farming it follows must have been largely occupied with arable production in this area; growing wheat, barley, oats, rye and peas, with particular emphasis on wheat, barley and rye.

The significance of the fertile soil belts fringing the Vale of Pickering could be illustrated almost *ad infinitum*. Several examples have been given,

<sup>76</sup> Graham, *op. cit.* pp. 247-70.

<sup>77</sup> Dissolution Accounts show that even in the sixteenth century many granges remained large arable farms, e.g. Griff grange had about 206 acres arable and 284 pasture; C.A.R. pp. 312-13.

<sup>78</sup> *Officio Instauri Monasterii* (1394), C.A.W. pp. 318-20.

The Abbey accounts (1394-97) add some interesting details. Between November and May 1394-95, 87 quarters of corn, almost all barley, were sold from the tithes of Seamer. This fetched £16.0.0. Barley sold from the tithes between November and June 1396-97 fetched £22.6.10.

however, which show that in medieval times the most important areas of arable cultivation were on the margins of the Vale. This applied to monastic and lay farmers alike. As usual the clearest evidence comes from the monastic archives. To the monasteries in the area, the fertility of the peripheral zones was a fundamental factor of their economy, and in particular of their arable production. However, the abundance of monastic evidence should not hide the importance of lay arable farming here. Villages and fields were many along the Vale margins; sometimes the area between villages was almost a continuous cultivated stretch. The fields of Wilton, Allerston and Eberston were so close to each other, for example, that an almost continuous belt of arable land extended for three miles between them. Besides, as the example of Thomas de Westhorpe showed, the lay farmer, too, could sometimes operate on a large scale.

The central areas of the Vale provided very different conditions, however. Where reclamation of marshland had occurred (as in Pickering Waste, undertaken by Rievaulx) cultivation became possible, though the heavy damp clays typical of the central parts were not always suitable. Consequently such cultivation as there was became localised, and pastoral farming seems to have been the chief occupation. The details of arable farming are few but they are none the less significant: the Templars, for example, had part of their land at Foulbridge sown with wheat in 1307. They had a granary there which contained 124 quarters of corn, so presumably cultivation occurred directly alongside the River Derwent at Foulbridge.<sup>79</sup> The value of the site was increased because it was one of the few bridging points of the river in the area.<sup>80</sup> The largest arable holdings in the central Vale appear to have been the two granges of Rievaulx Abbey situated in Pickering Marshes — Loftmarsh and Kekmarsh granges. Extensions of the farming area within the marshes had been going on since the middle of the twelfth century. By 1206 cultivation at Kekmarsh seems to have become quite extensive, for the monks owed a considerable amount in tithes to the Dean of York in that year.<sup>81</sup> Later, in 1220, the monks came to an agreement with the Dean that a composition fee of 66s. 8d. a year would be paid in lieu of tithes on Kekmarsh and Loftmarsh.<sup>82</sup> Again this high figure suggests that farming had become very extensive in the former waste of Pickering. Expansion continued: in 1240 Abbot Adam promised to pay tithes to Pickering church on the

<sup>79</sup> P.R.O. Ancient Extents: possessions of the Knights Templars (1307), E.142/13/10. Nearby, also by the River Derwent, cultivation occurred at Yedingham. There was a three-field system here and lay farming was apparently extensive; *M.A.* vol. 4, p.273 *et. seq.*

<sup>80</sup> Other bridging points in the Vale were Yedingham, and Friars Bridge over the Costa Beck, linking Malton and Pickering by road.

<sup>81</sup> *C.A.R.* p.255.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid.* pp.255-6.

lands he would acquire within the marsh,<sup>83</sup> and even in 1335 the Abbot of Rievaulx was still claiming his right to build houses and sheepfolds and bring land into cultivation.<sup>84</sup> By 1274 the grange of Kekmarsh had 300 acres of arable and 300 acres of pasture;<sup>85</sup> and by 1308 seven carucates were being cultivated by Rievaulx in Thornton Marshes alone.<sup>86</sup> Moreover, the high contributions these granges made to the Subsidy of 1301 was comparable with that of the largest arable granges of Rievaulx Abbey situated on the limestone soils of the dip slope (e.g. Griff, Newlathes).

Granges elsewhere in the central Vale do not appear to have been such large arable holdings. This seems to be reflected in the relative contributions, in 1301, from monastic granges in the Vale of Pickering. It will be recalled that the Subsidy was levied on moveables, principally animals and crops. It thus gives a good and almost direct impression of relative agricultural prosperity of the granges in the lowland Vale and on the more fertile peripheries:

Grange Contributions to the Fifteenth (1301)*			
Central Vale		Peripheral Vale	
Marshland Granges		Gravel/Limestone Granges	
Loftmarsh	25s. 1d.	Griff	61s. 4d.
Kekmarsh	38s. 8d.	Newlathes	46s. 4d.
Lund	15s. 6d.	Welburn	35s. 3d.
Newhouse	16s.	Broughton	32s. 8d.
South Marton	22s. 2d.	Swinton	27s. 10d.
Edston	5s. 10d.	Eberston	37s. 5d.
Ryton	7s. 1d.	W. Newton	24s. 6d.
Selleybrig	7½d.	Aislabey	(10s. 8d.½)
Kirby Misperton	6s. 8d.	Amotherby	14s. 4d.
Rook Barugh	8s. 8d.	Skiplam and Skiplam Cote	21s. 5d.
Normanby	12s. 9d.	Wombledon	18s. 4d.
		Kingthorpe	17s. 5d.
		Simmington	10s. 2d.

Loftmarsh and Kekmarsh were the highest contributors among the marshland granges. This no doubt reflected the greater emphasis on

\* Compiled from 1301 subsidy printed in *Y.A.S.R.S.* vol. 21.

<sup>83</sup> *ibid.* p.201.

<sup>84</sup> *N.R.R.S.* (New Series), vol. 3, p.90.

<sup>85</sup> *Rotuli Hundredorum*, vol. 1, p.107. Certain granges of Rievaulx had been despoiled by the Burgesses of Scarborough in 1274 and lost 78 quarters of corn. The granges concerned were probably those in the eastern marshes; *ibid.* p.131.

<sup>86</sup> *Register of Archbishop Greenfield*, vol. 5, p. 239. (Surtees Society, vol. 153). In 1278-79 there was a dispute over 2 messuages and 40 bovates of arable land in Thornton Marshes which Rievaulx possessed. William de Wyvill claimed them; *C.A.R.* pp.402-3. The area of arable production was obviously increasing very much in the Vale during the thirteenth century.

arable farming, as the high contributions of the peripheral granges did.<sup>87</sup> However, whereas the peripheral granges, with very few exceptions, showed consistently high assessments, the marshland granges had much lower ones. The contrast between the groups emphasised the attraction of the fertile gravel/limestone soils of the periphery for the monastic farmer. In fact, arable farming on the marshland granges, excluding Loftmarsh, Kekmarsh and possibly South Marton, never was great, though it certainly existed. Though the monks of Rievaulx owned 3 carucates of land at Lund grange in 1308 they had only two ploughs at work there in 1341.<sup>88</sup> The grange might have been more important as a sheep farm. Cultivation by the Abbey was still going on as late as the sixteenth century. Robert Gamble of Kirby Misperton, aged 78, gave testimony in a tithe cause in 1572, 'that he did knowe the Abbey [of] Rivoxx xxtie yeres before it was suppressed and Did then knowe the grange or lounde house articulate and the groundes belonging the same . . . and haith sene the servantes of the saide abbates of Ryvvox kepe and fede the cattell of the saide abbates and convent in the said groundes pertheyning . . . and likewise Did till the groundes of the said lounde house to those of the said Abbates and convent of this examinate certyne sighte and knowledge'.<sup>89</sup>

The marshland granges of Malton Priory, too, did not show a marked emphasis towards arable farming. At Ryton, for example, the Priory had only 2 bovates of arable land in 1254, with one plough to work it. Almost fifty years later, in 1308, the Priory had only increased the arable land appurtenant to the grange to 4 bovates. At Kirby Misperton grange the extent of arable was the same in 1254 and in 1308 — 16 bovates; but despite the larger amount of arable at Kirby only two ploughs tilled it between 1244 and 1257. Similarly at Edston grange, where the amount of arable was about the same, only two ploughs were at work in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>90</sup> On this evidence alone it would be legitimate to conclude that the purpose of most of these granges in the marshland was not to be arable farms, but cattle or sheep stations.

Whatever arable farming there had been in the Vale east of Pickering Beck was mainly the work of the monasteries. West of Pickering Beck, however, areas of lay cultivation became more important. This was largely because of the topographical differences between the two halves of the Vale. In the east, the marshland had only one village in it — Yedingham, on the main road across the Vale; this was largely

<sup>87</sup> The contribution of Griff grange (about 490 acres) and Broughton grange (34 bovates), both peripheral, reflected their importance as arable farms.

<sup>88</sup> See note 86 above; P.R.O. E.178/211/19 m.109.

<sup>89</sup> Borthwick Institute, York: R.VII.G.1628. It was very significant that although the grange was worked by the monks for so long, leasing never appears to have occurred. This was not so on all the Abbey granges.

<sup>90</sup> Reg. *Greenfield*, vol. 5, pp.224-5.

monopolised by Yedingham Abbey. Both vill and abbey owed almost everything to the fact that the Derwent was bridged and ferried at that point. Most of the eastern marshlands, in which Yedingham (otherwise called Little Mareis) was situated, were waterlogged carr-land, at the best; more usually they were complete marsh or lake. As late as 1447 it was found necessary to retain Flixton Hospital 'for divers lieges of the King passing at night . . . in winter, unless they be entertained there, would be in danger of water, marshes and swamps'.<sup>91</sup> Leland too, found a great mere to the south-west of Seamer where there is none today.<sup>92</sup> The condition of this part of the Vale in earlier times was worse. Thus lay settlement had found little to attract it there and any exploitation of the area was made from the peripheral villages.<sup>93</sup> The western Vale had held more promise for the early settlers, however. 'Islands' of clay stood out above the general level of the marsh or carr-land; about 100 feet above it. These provided a nucleus for settlement on a dry site free from flooding, which could be ploughed. Almost all the villages in this area were to be found on such sites, e.g. Edston, Marton, Thornton Riseborough, Normanby, Salton, Great Barugh, Little Barugh, Kirby Misperton, North Holme and South Holme. Here, too, were the arable fields of the villages.<sup>94</sup> The area of lay cultivation in the western Vale was thus strictly localised.

Some cultivation occurred close to the River Rye. A small group of villages stood above the alluvial flats of the river on a higher terrace of warp and lacustrine clay, at about 80 feet. Their fields stretched from Brawby to Great and Little Habton and thence to Ryton Grange and Manor House, giving an almost continuous belt of cultivated land above the river alluvium for four miles.<sup>95</sup>

Apart, then, from cultivation of the 'islands' and certain terrace land, the western Vale was mainly marsh or meadow — valuable for hay, turves and pasture only. No evidence has been found to show that lay cultivation extended beyond the localities mentioned, despite the stimulus that monastic efforts at reclamation (mainly from 'island' sites) might have been expected to give. In conclusion, the Vale of Pickering was, in effect, divided in two from the point of view of arable farming. The

<sup>91</sup> C.P.R. (1447) p.69.

<sup>92</sup> *The Itinerary of John Leland*, ed. L. T. Smith (London, 1907) vol. 1, p.5.

<sup>93</sup> Domesday Book shows that a few settlements had existed in the marshes before 1069. It is not possible to say whether these were villages or isolated homesteads. They (e.g. Loftmarsh, Theokomaris and Chiggesmere) were listed as waste in 1086.

<sup>94</sup> Attempts to extend the arable area in the western Vale often failed when they were made on carr-land, e.g. there were 57 acres of poor land south of Minnington as well as 19 acres nearby 'debil' et morosi' unable to be cultivated or let. Thus such land was generally left as meadow; P.R.O. C.135/44/6.

<sup>95</sup> Evidence from Field-work.

peripheral areas were extremely fertile, actively exploited by both monasteries and laymen and highly productive. Arable holdings were generally very large in size, when they were outside the open fields. The central Vale contrasted very strongly with this; cultivation was severely limited to certain areas. In the eastern Vale it was almost exclusively in the hands of the monasteries: in the west the lay farmer took a greater share. The indications were, however, that with a few exceptions the whole of the central Vale was more an area of pastoral than arable farming.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF PASTORAL ACTIVITIES

Of course, arable and pastoral farming go hand in hand. The one derives strength from the other. A great reason for the success of the monastic farmers was because of their careful integration and balance of arable and pastoral activities. It remains to examine, briefly, the relative importance of the two.

The Inquisition for the Ninth (1341) gives the first comprehensive picture of sheep farming in the North-east.<sup>96</sup> Including, as it does, the wool and lamb tithe of the parishes, it allows a fair estimate to be made of the relative importance of sheep farming in the area as a whole. The wool tithe of a parish was usually expressed in sacks or money value. Thus at Hawnbly the rector used to receive one sack of wool as the tithe from the parish; at Whitby three sacks. At Hackness, the wool tithe was worth 400s. and at Kirkby 80s.<sup>97</sup> These different modes of expression were probably because of the particular whims of the parishioners who gave the information on oath.

Analysis of the Inquisition shows that sheep farming was most widespread in the parishes of the Coastal Plateau, the Moorland, and the margins of the Vale of Pickering. The former emerges as a very important region of sheep farming. The parishes of Loftus and Easington were described as

lying mainly in the moor, where the parishioners lived for the greater part by sheep farming. Even if the Inquisition had not made special references to this, the value of tithes from wool and lambs would have been enough to emphasise it. The total value of the wool and lamb tithe in the Coastal Plateau parishes (except Lythe) was £899 8s., more than the total tithe of parishes in the Vale of York. It seems likely that Hinderwell had at least 2,000 sheep, Easington 4,600 sheep and lambs and Whitby 7,000 sheep and lambs.<sup>98</sup> It is evident that in an area so largely infertile in soils and unpropitious in aspect and elevation for arable farming, sheep husbandry occupied a prominent place in the economy.

In fact, this was a persistent trend: the tithe details given in the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* show that even in the early sixteenth century pastoralism, and in particular sheep-farming, was highly important.

Those parishes in the Moorland were, as might be expected, also important in sheep farming. Danby had about 4,000 sheep, Hawnbly 2,000, Lastingham 6,000 and Hackness 12,000 in the middle of the fourteenth century. All these parishes included valleys within their boundaries; for instance Danby included much of Eskdale, and Hackness, the upper Derwent Valley. This made it possible for the sheep farmers to exploit the surrounding high moor tops as pasture land in summer but to keep to the sheltered valleys and valley sides for the colder weather. Hardy as the highland sheep were, the presence of such valleys was a great advantage.

However, the region *par excellence* for the sheep farmer was in the strip parishes extending northwards from the River Derwent into the moors. Their size was large and about three-quarters of their area was moorland. The size of the flocks appears to have been invariably high: there were about 3,800 sheep and lambs in Hutton Bushel; 12,000 in Helmsley; 5,000 in Kirkdale; 8,000 sheep in Middleton; 6,000 in Brompton; 2,000 in Thornton; giving a total of 36,800 sheep and lambs (and this excludes several parishes). It was in this region that the great monastic and lay sheep farmers concentrated their flocks. The Duchy of Lancaster, whose Honour of Pickering covered much of the area, had well over 1,000 sheep on its estate during much of the fourteenth century. Then there were other individual laymen, like Thomas de Westhorpe, who had nearly 3,000 sheep and lambs on his lands in 1366.<sup>99</sup> Not least were the monastic farmers. The small nunnery of Rosedale had as many as 2,000 sheep in Middleton parish in 1308,<sup>100</sup> while the larger houses had even

<sup>96</sup> A detailed analysis of the Inquisition is made in B. Waites, *The Monasteries and the Medieval Development of North East Yorkshire*, unpublished M.A. thesis (University of London, 1957) pp.160-6.

<sup>97</sup> *N.I.* pp.219-43.

<sup>98</sup> B. Waites, *op. cit.* pp.241-4. Calculated on the basis of 200 fleeces per sack of wool. Sheep numbers given subsequently are also calculated on this basis from data in *N.I.*

<sup>99</sup> P.R.O. L.T.R. Memoranda Roll no. 139 m. 24.

<sup>100</sup> *Reg. Greenfield*, vol. 5, p.239.

more impressive numbers. Rievaulx and Kirkham had wool and lambs worth 480s. in Helmsley parish alone in 1341.<sup>101</sup> Besides, it was in this area, stretching from Ryedale to the coast, that large numbers of monastic granges were situated, either in the valleys which cut through the Corallian dip slope or on the slope itself. Associated with them were large areas of pasture such as that owned by Rievaulx in Farndale, Bransdale and Bilsdale.

In those parishes on the western flanks of the North York Moors sheep farming maintained its importance. This was especially noticeable in the parishes of Kirby, Ingleby Greenhow, Stokesley and Leake. All these included some moorland within their boundaries. Stokesley had, in fact, an extremely large area of high moorland called Westerdale Moor forming a detached part of the parish where flocks from the Cleveland lowland went for summer pasture. Ingleby and Stokesley appear to have had a sheep population of about 8,000 in 1341. Later, in the sixteenth century, the *Valor Ecclesiasticus* shows that pastoralism was important. In most parishes along the western edge of the Moors the wool, lamb and calf tithes together comprised over one-third of the total agricultural tithe. In Sigston, Osmotherley, Cowesby, Kildale and Kirby the animal tithe was over half the corn-hay tithe. Sheep and cattle farming was obviously not the be-all and end-all of this region's economy. In fact, arable farming was, overall, very important: naturally so, since besides moorland, the parishes contained extensive stretches of fertile clay and gravel. However, it is significant to see the increasing importance of pastoralism as the moorlands were approached.

The highland areas of sheep farming were in sharp contrast to the surrounding vale lands. Parishes situated entirely within the clay basins of the Vales of Pickering and York, were, so far as the Inquisition shows, much less concerned with sheep farming. This is not surprising: the effect of foot-rot and liver fluke on sheep mortality is well known in places where drainage may be poor and areas of standing water considerable.<sup>102</sup> Flooding was frequent in the Vales; even in 1794 Tuke could describe the Vale of Pickering as 'very low and wet in consequence of the river being very crooked, much choaked, insufficient for the floods . . . by which means about 11,000 acres of land . . . are greatly injured, or rendered totally useless'.<sup>103</sup> Much earlier, in 1366, Thomas de Westhorpe had 60 acres of land, 'of no value because each year it is flooded by the water of the Derwent'.<sup>104</sup> This was a common occurrence throughout the Vale.

<sup>101</sup> P.R.O. E.179/211/20.

<sup>102</sup> Sir Cyril Fox, *The Personality of Britain* 4th ed. (Cardiff, 1959) p.94.

<sup>103</sup> Tuke, *General View*, pp.15-16.

<sup>104</sup> P.R.O. L.T.R. Memoranda Roll, no. 139, m. 24.

The Abbot of Byland had built up the banks of the Derwent as levees at Rillington to protect his pasture land in 1342 but several men from nearby villages broke the banks and the Abbot's pasture was flooded causing great loss.<sup>105</sup> At Scagglethorpe, too, meadowland was described as of no value in 1323 because it was inundated by the Derwent.<sup>106</sup> It was hardly likely that sheep farming could be widespread in such places. When it did occur it would be, generally speaking, seasonal.

From the earliest days of their foundation the monasteries had owned large flocks of sheep. By the middle of the twelfth century, for instance, Rievaulx had already acquired most of her pasture lands, many of them extending over large areas. Initial advantages such as these were amplified by privileges to particular houses or to orders. Pope Honorius III, in 1221, had commanded the rectors of parishes in which the Cistercians pastured their sheep not to exact the customary tenth of wool, milk or lambs from them, for example. Besides, sheep were not to be distrained in case of debt: Meaux Abbey had a charter of protection from King John forbidding 'on pain of forfeiture, your making any distress upon their sheep, so long as they may be distrained in any other way'. It is hardly surprising that the monasteries quickly developed their sheep farming when such privileges existed (and these were but some of many, which included freedom from tolls, forest regard and so on).<sup>107</sup>

The cartularies of the North-eastern monasteries vary a great deal in the amount and character of information about sheep farming. The Rievaulx Cartulary is very good, but the Whitby and Guisborough Cartularies are poor, and contain, in fact, little reference to the sheep farming which undoubtedly existed. Of course, cartularies cannot be expected to give details of organisation for they are collections of charters dealing with acquisition of property or rights. We must look elsewhere for details of how the farming was worked and, in fact, such details are scarce. What can be gained from the cartularies, which is very valuable indeed, is a record of most of the pasture land given to a particular monastery. Grants of pasture were mainly of two kinds; either in the common pasture of a village (usually the number of animals to be pastured was specified — this was the 'stint') or in a very large area of moorland, marsh or waste. In the latter, although boundaries were specified, no limit was placed on the number of animals to be pastured there. If the former type of grants can be gathered together and plotted on a map a good picture of the main areas of monastic sheep pasture can be obtained.

<sup>105</sup> *Monastic Notes*, vol. 1 (Y.A.S.R.S. vol. 17) p.31.

<sup>106</sup> C.I.P.M. vol. 6, p.305.

<sup>107</sup> 'The main source of income of the canons of Malton, their wool, was untaxed, for in accordance with their charters they were exempt from all customs at the ports or elsewhere.' Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies*, p.63.

Pl. 4 represents an attempt to do this. All cartulary references to sheep pasture grants to monasteries in the North-east have been inserted. In addition, other scattered references from such varied sources as Inquisitions have been used. Twelfth- and thirteenth-century grants only have been plotted. In fact, most grants received by the monasteries were in the late twelfth or early thirteenth centuries, and are thus close together in time. The picture presented is deficient in several ways and unless these are explained it could be misleading. The Cartularies of Whitby and Guisborough do not give very much information about sheep pasture owned and the map cannot reproduce what is not given. Yet other sources show that both houses had flocks of a least several thousand sheep each; it can only be assumed that the Cartularies omit to mention these. Consequently the map is emptier than it should be. The coastal area suffers most in this respect. The map must be examined with this in mind: it is, perhaps, a minimum picture of monastic sheep pasture in the North-east. As such, it has the value of indicating the areas utilised by the monastic sheep farmers.

Another difficulty concerns the actual number of sheep pastured and the number allowed by a grant. Henry de Willerby might have granted Rievaulx pasture sufficient for 300 sheep in the village of Willerby, but did the Abbey actually feed 300 sheep there? All the evidence seems to support the idea that the monasteries did utilise the grants to the full. As late as 1299, for example, Bridlington Priory did in fact pasture 500 sheep, driven from Burton Fleming, in the field of Hunmanby, where they had been granted pasture for 500 in the twelfth century.<sup>108</sup> In fact, the probability was that a monastery would be more likely to pasture a greater rather than a less number. Meaux Abbey, for instance, was involved in a lawsuit for pasturing more than the allowed number of sheep in Octon, and such cases occurred frequently.<sup>109</sup> Certainly, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it seems safe to infer that pasture grants were fully utilized.

Bearing in mind these reservations, what is the value of the map? Three main areas stand out as concentrations of pasture grants: the chalk Wolds, the limestone slopes north of the Vale of Pickering, and the North York Moors (especially their western margin). The Vales of York and Pickering are almost devoid of pasture grants; this is not because of lack of information, since it is only in the Cleveland Plain and along the coast that the picture is affected by this, the conclusion is that the highland, in particular its margin and the dales within, was the main area of monastic sheep pasture.

<sup>108</sup> B.P.C. p.73.

<sup>109</sup> *Chronica de Melsa*, ed. E. A. Bond, vol. 1 (Rolls Series no. 43) p.430.

The conclusions drawn from this map are supported by a study of the distribution of monastic granges (Pl. 2). Monastic sheep farming was administered from granges and cotes located in geographically suitable places among the possessions of a particular monastery.<sup>110</sup> The map showing monastic granges in the North-east shows concentrations in the Wolds and Moors (especially the margins). The granges in these areas were concerned mainly with sheep farming. Other granges, located in the lowlands, generally dealt with other tasks. Both the size and staff of granges varied considerably according to the order involved. Generally, however, they were run by lay brothers, and the Granger made regular visits to the mother abbey with daily reports about the stock.<sup>111</sup>

Guisborough Priory had most of its sheep granges and cotes in Eskdale, the great east-west valley of the moors. These were within easy reach of watermeadow, dale pasture and moorland grazing. Whitby Abbey concentrated its sheep farming activities along the south-east margin of the moors in Hackness Dale, and Rievaulx made Bilsdale its most important area. Here there were five granges and many associated cotes assiduously exploiting a quite small region.

The size of monastic flocks cannot usually be accurately estimated: in a few cases the numbers are stated. At Whitby, for example, there were 4,000 sheep on the estates in 1356. Ten years later the number had fallen to 1,307 due partly to mismanagement, partly to disease.<sup>112</sup> By 1393 the number had increased to 2,709. These numbers were quite high for the late fourteenth century when the heyday of monastic sheep farming had passed. Even the small Houses appear to have possessed large flocks. Rosedale Priory had more than 2,000 sheep in 1308. Earlier, monastic flocks had been much larger; in fact, the numerous contracts made with the Italian merchants at the turn of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries usually included large amounts of wool, which could only be supplied by monasteries with large flocks of sheep.<sup>113</sup>

Towards the end of the thirteenth century Pegolotti made a list of monastic wool suppliers.<sup>114</sup> The following list gives the sacks of wool supplied by monasteries in North-east Yorkshire. An attempt has been

<sup>110</sup> The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'grange' as 'an outlying farmhouse with barns etc. belonging to a religious establishment or a feudal lord, where crops and tithes in kind were stored'; 'cote' is described as 'a slight building for sheltering small animals, e.g. sheep, or for storage'. Monastic granges were rather more important units and more active farms than this definition implies.

<sup>111</sup> Further details of the character and distribution of granges can be found in Waites, *Y.A.J.* vol. 40, pp.627-56.

<sup>112</sup> C.B.M. vol. III, pp.68 and 286.

<sup>113</sup> A list of such contracts is given in Waites, *The Monasteries and the Medieval Development of North-east Yorkshire*, appendix 19.

<sup>114</sup> Printed in W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce*, 5th ed. (Cambridge, 1910) pp.628-41.

made to give a rough estimate of the flocks from which the wool was taken on the basis of 200 fleeces to the sack.

Monastery	Sacks	Possible Flocks <sup>115</sup>
Rievaulx	60	12,000
Bridlington	50	10,000
Malton	45	9,000
Byland	35	7,000
Whitby	30	6,000
Kirkham	30	6,000
St. Mary's, York	30	6,000
Guisborough	20	4,000
Newburgh	13	2,600
Keldholm	12	2,400
Arden, Rosedale	10	2,000
Wykeham	4	800

Some support for these figures can be obtained from various sources. The Whitby Abbey flocks totalled 4,000 sheep in 1356; the above reckoning estimates 6,000 for about fifty years earlier, when flocks might be expected to have been larger. Rosedale Priory was said to have 2,000 sheep in 1308; the estimate tallies with this figure. If the pasture grants for Rievaulx are added together (this can only be done where the number to be pastured is specified) a total of nearly 8,000 sheep is obtained. This is below the estimate of 12,000 on the list but the discrepancy can be explained by the fact that Rievaulx owned a great deal of moorland pasture upon which there was no limit to the number of sheep pastured. The total pasture grants in the Malton Cartulary were for just over 6,000 sheep, again below the estimate of 9,000 on the list. A similar explanation could be put forward to account for this discrepancy. Besides, the monasteries were collectors of wool: the supply mentioned on Pegolotti's list may not all have been 'de proprio stauo et pastura'. Meaux Abbey, for example, agreed to provide wool from Holderness 'towards Bridlington and towards Kirkham as far as York'.<sup>116</sup> Malton made such a large profit from wool sales that it seemed 'utterly impossible for the canons to have obtained the whole of the wool from their own flocks. The conclusion is that they organised an immense trade in Yorkshire, and collected wool with great success'.<sup>117</sup>

The list must, then, be used with reserve, but it seems to give a fairly

<sup>115</sup> See F. M. Powicke, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216-1307* (Oxford, 1953) pp. 637-8 for details of Pegolotti and many useful references.

<sup>116</sup> P.R.O. L.T.R. Memoranda Roll, E.368/53/14.

<sup>117</sup> Graham, *English Ecclesiastical Studies*, p.264: the canons made £5,224 9. 3. from sale of wool between 1244 and 1257. The best year was 1251 when the gross profits were £460 16. 8.: the worst was 1255 with profits of £243 19. 8.

good estimate of monastic flocks in the late thirteenth century. It has further drawbacks which should be noted. It is not clear, for example, whether the number of sacks quoted is the total yield of the house or the amount likely to be purchased by one firm. Meaux is said to yield 25 sacks but it engaged to supply 30 sacks in 1280, 36 sacks in 1281, and 42 in 1282 to the Society of Circulorum of Florence alone. A Memoranda Roll<sup>118</sup> for 1294-5, showing wool due from monasteries to Italian merchants and collected for the king's use, indicates that several houses on Pegolotti's list were capable of yielding a larger number of sacks than is stated there. Malton supplied 56 sacks and Kirkham 57 sacks, but they were said to yield only 45 and 30 sacks by Pegolotti.

Despite all such drawbacks certain conclusions are evident. The North-east was an area in which monastic sheep farming reached a predominant position over every other sphere of monastic activity. The size of the flocks was very large, especially on the Cistercian estates (notably at Rievaulx). There were not less than 50,000-60,000 sheep belonging to the monasteries in the area in the thirteenth century. Rievaulx, Bridlington and Malton appeared to be foremost as sheep farmers: representatives, it should be noted, of three different orders. Byland, and the Benedictine houses of Whitby and St. Mary's, York, were less important. Even so, Whitby, for instance, had a well-developed sheep farm compared to most houses of their order in the country. Guisborough appears the least important of the larger monasteries; whether this impression comes from lack of detailed evidence is hard to say. In the background, behind the contribution of the greater monasteries, smaller priories and nunneries played a significant part in the area's sheep farming activities.

The monastic use of the North-east as a great pasture for sheep laid the foundations for the importance sheep farming has there today. Present-day farmers owe much to their forebears who tended flocks and nurtured the soil more than five hundred years before.

In every sphere of activity the monasteries predominated. Sometimes they were initiators, as in the settlement of moorland and marshland and sometimes they consolidated and organised what they found, as they did in the arable farming of the vale-lands, emphasising in particular the importance of certain soils, such as those along the margins of the Vale of Pickering. Their settlement and agriculture were carefully adapted to the environment in which they found themselves. In fact, the capacity of the monastic houses in this respect was largely responsible for their success and influence.

Their contribution to farming has been dealt with in this study. In the broadest terms, it fell into two parts: the contribution made to the development of the 'physical' landscape and to the 'economic' landscape.

<sup>118</sup> P.R.O. K.R. Memoranda Roll no. 68, m. 64.

The former consisted mainly of clearance of woodland, drainage, utilisation of marshland and settlement, all elements which can be traced in the make-up of the present-day landscape. The River Rye, for instance, diverted by the monks of Rievaulx in the twelfth century, flows today along the course they made for it; the canals and ditches they constructed around their abbey are clearly visible still.<sup>119</sup> Bilsdale, Farndale and Rosedale, once impenetrable woodland, were cleared largely by the efforts of the monasteries. Their settlement and exploitation of Pickering Marshes laid the basis for subsequent agricultural activities in what had been a desolate, uninhabited waste in the eleventh century.

However, it is in the recovery of the landscape after the eleventh century devastations that their contribution is most marked. The North-east, except for a few areas such as the eastern half of the Vale of Pickering, had been left a desert in 1069. Even by the end of the century it had not recovered. The monasteries re-settled the once prosperous regions, the Vales of Cleveland, York and Pickering. Here they were consolidating and re-emphasising a pattern which the Domesday Survey shows, however imperfectly, had begun to emerge. The association between these regions of greatest prosperity and concentrations of monastic settlements remained a permanent feature in the medieval history of the North-east. The footing which the monasteries were able to establish after the devastation was the basis for the great influence which they subsequently held.

Though the monasteries were primarily responsible for the recovery of settled areas they did much to extend these. They moved into previously uninhabited districts, such as Pickering Marshes, and made settlements on the moors or in the dales, extending not only the areas of settlement but also the areas of cultivation. The grange was their unique instrument for this and, irrespective of the order involved, it was invariably the unit of 'exploitation'. It was supremely well equipped for the development of a region such as the North-east. It was an adaptable instrument of policy and 'exploitation', for it could be an administrative, pastoral, arable, or industrial unit depending on the area in which it was situated. The success of this type of settlement can be adequately judged by the permanence of its influence. The North-east is still today mainly an area of dispersed farms, many of which occupy the exact sites on which the monks built their granges, and the farmer still tills the land which the monks broke up and ploughed more than seven hundred years ago.

By 1301 the North-east showed fully the patterns of development which became more emphasised in later centuries. The part of laymen in this becomes clearer. Interest in iron mining drew settlers into the

<sup>119</sup>H. A. Rye, 'Rievaulx Abbey: its Canals and Building Stones', *A.J.* vol. LVII (1900).  
J. Weatherill, 'Rievaulx Abbey: the stone used in its Building', *Y.A.J.* vol. 38 (1954)  
pp. 333-54.

moorland dales and clearance quickened in pace, especially in Eskdale.<sup>120</sup> Cattle and sheep farming also led laymen into the moors. Sometimes when sheep farming was organised on a grand scale, as on the Duchy of Lancaster estates, this process became more emphasised.<sup>121</sup> So, the monasteries and laymen combined to develop the area. However, it should be noted that, in industrial activities as well as in agricultural, it was the monasteries which led the way, the laymen who followed. Guisborough Priory's iron mining in Eskdale and salt working in Teesmouth, for example, were so well and carefully organised that laymen could hardly rise to the same scale in their exploitation. It was natural that monasteries should be to the forefront of most activities: they were undying corporations with a continuity in policy and administration. They had extensive privileges in markets and ports. They were often exempt from tithes and their property was protected from any kind of violation or intrusion. They had power, organisation and resources which enabled them to acquire monopolistic positions and to act on a large scale. This was particularly evident in their purchase and acquisition of lands. Even large landowners like the Duchy of Lancaster were never able to obtain the power and freedom of the monasteries.

The contributions to the 'economic' landscape were no less striking. The monasteries had been chiefly responsible for inducing foreign merchants to come into the North-east. Their active part in promoting the wool trade, in particular, encouraged the development of ports, markets and routeways.<sup>122</sup> This, of course, ultimately derived from the major contribution of the monasteries, their specialisation in sheep farming. Here again is an instance of close adaptation. The monks were quick to see the North-east as a splendid area for sheep farming. By doing so they gave the economy of the area a particular bias which persisted through succeeding centuries. In arable farming, too, considerable achievements (though less well known and not so spectacular) were secured, many of permanent value.

From the eleventh century onwards, far into and beyond the medieval period the pattern of agricultural prosperity was established and strengthened. It is a great tribute to the Yorkshire farmers, notably the monastic farmers, that they were able to make such profound changes and improvements, especially in the thirteenth century. Such changes were, in effect, a revolution — gradual, unnamed and unsung but no less significant than that later Agricultural Revolution about which so much is said and written.

<sup>120</sup> B. Waites, 'Medieval Iron Working in North-east Yorkshire', *Geography*, vol. 49, part I (January 1964) pp.33-43.

<sup>121</sup> Duchy Accounts for 1313-14, 1322 and 1325-27 are printed in N.R.R.S. New Series, vols. 2 and 4. The 1377 Account and subsequent Accounts are in P.R.O. D.L.29/490/7934-7956.

<sup>122</sup> B. Waites, 'The Medieval Ports and Trade of North-east Yorkshire', *Transactions of the Scarborough and District Archaeological Society*, vol. 1, no. 6 (1963) pp.13-20 and no. 7 (1964) pp.12-19.

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