

Calf Hill Ditch Usage

To save repetition, the 1:10 560 and 1:2500 MARIO maps will be referred to as the 'old' and 'new' maps, respectively.

The land from Clitheroe Rd, above the modern track to Calf Hill and beyond, is categorised as 'rough pasture' on the old and new maps with the following exceptions: Calf Hill itself has no indication of the vegetation growing on it; apparently this was normal practice according to Oliver, so it was most likely used for grass, as at present ; similarly, the land between Calf Hill ditch and a line drawn between Craggs and Oddy House has no indication of vegetation so is most likely the same as Calf Hill itself. On the new map, the assumed grass area extends further north and east of the Craggs/Oddy House line, perhaps to compensate for the loss of land under the reservoir (there is no mention of Oddy House on the new map).

The area assumed under grass for the Calf Hill/Craggs area is a little under one hundred acres. The new map numbers the fields (large numerals) with the acreage in smaller numbers underneath. The number of sheep one acre of land will support ranges from two to thirty according to internet opinion. However, I think it is more likely that the grass was used mainly for other animals such as cattle and that the fields bordering the grassed area were used to raise sheep. If this were true, the number of sheep to deal with could run into thousands. As an example, Bank Hill field (no 225) has an area of 71 acres, so could theoretically support anything from 140 to over 2,000 sheep.

On the old map, the ditch is recorded as a fenced road/track – presumably the banks being the 'fences' (possibly topped with a wall, PAG investigations show). According to this map, the track from Calf Hill to Clitheroe Road did not exist at this time; so apparently the ditch is a road to nowhere. On the new map the remains of the ditch are shown as unfenced road/track. The east edge of the ditch is now under the reservoir, but also appears to lead nowhere. On the old map, at the west edge is marked 'fold'. This is a sheep fold, not a geographical feature. The west edge terminates in a stream (Badger Well Water) which passes under the path at this point and is equipped with a slot to take stop planks to dam up the stream. This would create a shallow pool, constantly overflowing, in which to wash sheep. It was usual practice to wash sheep prior to shearing in the 19th century (see refs 1 and 2).

There are two other folds on the old map in the vicinity, one between Craggs and Oddy House and the other south of Oddy House. Both these folds are adjacent to streams and on the boundary between the grassed area and rough pasture. I have not been able to access the last-mentioned fold, but the other sites of the other two are on small plateaux in an otherwise sloping environment; this would allow shallow pools to be formed when the streams are dammed. So, with large numbers

of sheep to wash and limited time (sheep are normally sheared in mid-summer to allow them to regrow their coats before winter), I envisage the Calf Hill ditch, fitted with gates at various points, as a means of managing sheep and saving manpower at sheep washing time. I imagine the sheep would be admitted to the ditch at some point east of the fold. The ditch narrows moving east to west, so sheep would arrive in ones and twos and not as an unseemly mob, making them easier to handle. There is a short extension to the west end of the ditch which leads on to a track towards Craggs, so it is possible that some sheep were raised in the grassed area. On the old map, the east edge of the ditch has a tenuous link to the field 225, mentioned above. Sheep from field 225 could be passed through the ditch system from the east end, be washed, then released into field no 102 which is a colossal 305 acres. Obviously the examples given are conjecture.

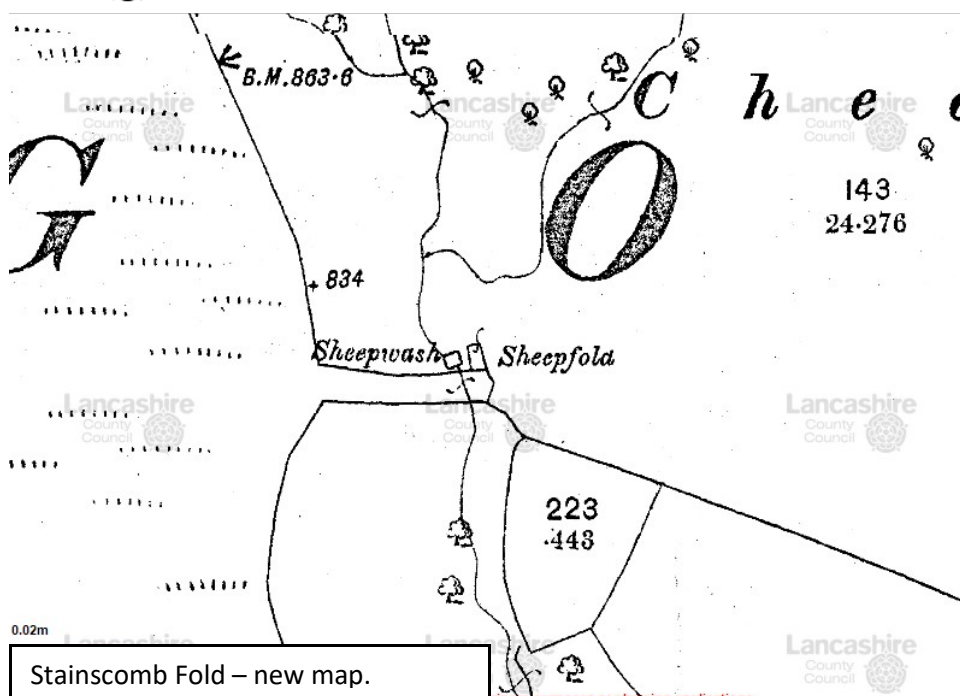
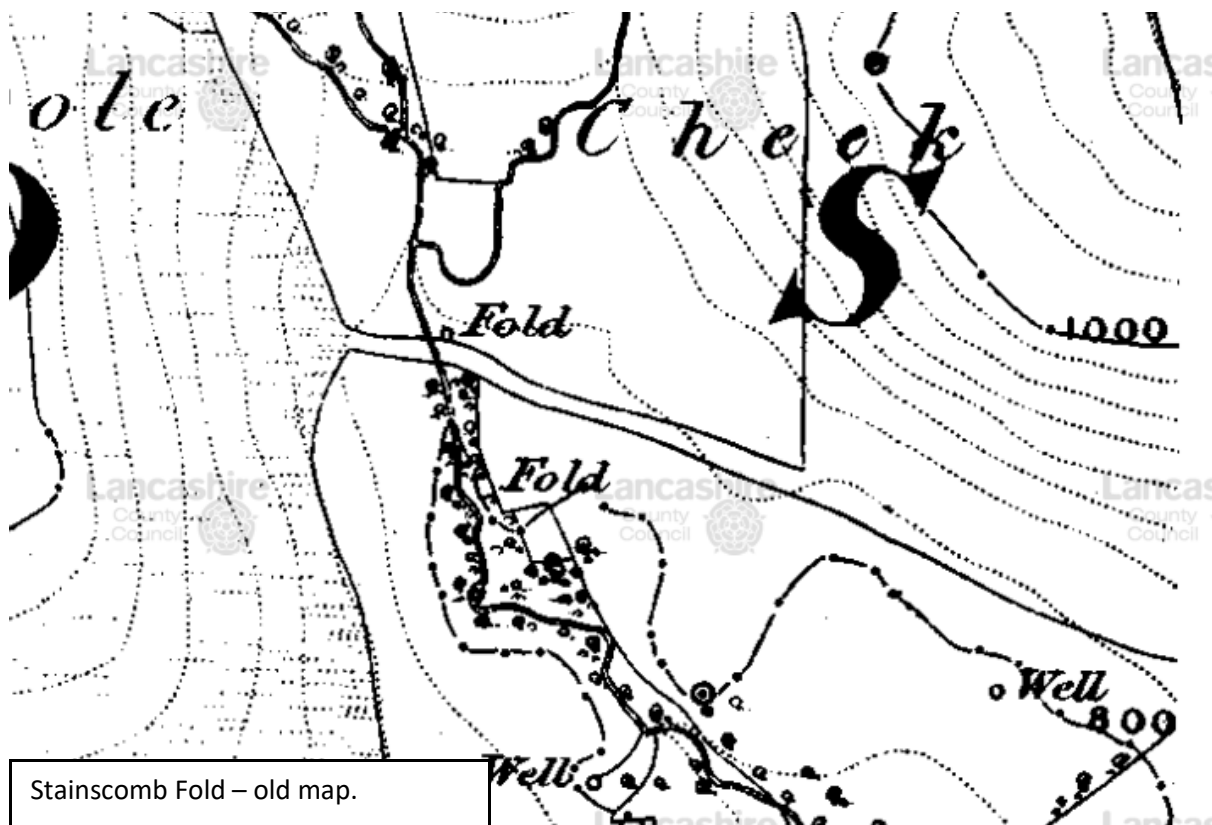
However, scrolling east from Calf Hill on the new map, to the east of field no 224 (Stainscomb Dole) a sheep fold can be seen which is also marked 'sheep wash'. It can be seen that the boundary of fields 143 and 223 has been widened at the west edge to form a narrow passage to funnel the sheep into the sheep wash. This passage is still in existence (see pictures, below) and consists of two dry stone walls approximately 1.8m high. On the old map, in this area two separate folds are shown. Additionally, there is another passage on the east side of the stream, directly opposite the passage mentioned above. The two passages combined total approximately 200m in length. This appears a less sophisticated version of the arrangement at Calf Hill.



The remains of the entrance to the sheep wash near Stainscomb (far side of stream), viewing from east to west.



The stream at the sheep wash, near Stainscomb, looking upstream.





Wool Washing in Scotland in the 19th Century in preparation for Shearing

From: <https://www.ramshornstudio.com/shearing.htm>

sold without washing. The softness and flexibility of the living fleece depend upon the presence of the yolk; but as it does not add to the value of the shorn fleece, it should be washed out, which can easily be done in a running stream, as the yolk is a true soap, and is soluble in water. In Britain the sheep are



SHEEP-WASHING.

washed before shearing. If the yolk is left in the fleece it ferments, and leaves the wool in a hard and harsh state.

The filaments of white wool, when properly cleaned, are semi-transparent; their surface, in some places, is beautifully polished, in others curiously encrusted, and they reflect the rays of light in a very

Above taken from p 301 'The Useful Arts and Manufactures of Great Britain'. London 1848.

Refs

1 'The Useful Arts and Manufactures of Great Britain'. London 1848, p301.

Online version: <https://archive.org/details/usefulartsmanufa00sociuoft>

2 Sheep being washed! <https://www.ramshornstudio.com/shearing.htm>

3 MARIO: <http://mario.lancashire.gov.uk/>

4 Ordnance Survey Maps a Concise Guide for Historians, Richard Oliver, London The Charles Close Society.

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