

Friends of Pendle Heritage Archaeological Group - Field Walking Saturday 20th June 2009 – Report Musbury Deer Park.

Nine of us met at Holden Wood Antiques, Helmshore for pre-walk refreshments.

Discussion. In comparison with some other local medieval features, Musbury Deer Park is well documented. It had been thought that it would be instructive to look at the known medieval boundaries and that this would be a help in identifying less well documented vaccary and deer park boundaries of a similar date.

We looked at an extract from the De Lacy *comptii* for 1304/5 where the construction of the Musbury Deer Park was mentioned as follows :-

To carpenters as part of their wages for felling timber and making paling in part for the park of Alvedene and Musdene	£22.10s. 0d
Making and planting nine hundred, five score and six perches of paling round Musbirry park, with the carriage of the said paling in partg from Tottington wood. The rest was done by Simon Noel as appears in his <i>compotus</i> .	£60.10s. 5d.
Eighteen oxen bought for the carriage of the paling	£ 8.17s. 9d

Henry de Lacy was a confidant and close friend of Edward I and advisor to Edward II – a powerful man.



We studied a copy of plan produced in 1580 (original in the National Archives), and the boundary as shown on 1st edition OS map and transposed onto the modern 1:2500 OS Map,

It is not known how much of the original fence existed in 1580 when the plan was drawn as in the mid 1400's the park was described as 'feebly enclosed with hedges and no deer in it'. However the fence is drawn on the plan as what appears to be individual sharpened posts placed adjacent to each other all around the perimeter of the park, a distance of about 4.5 miles, enclosing an area of some 1713 acres.

This would have involved a great deal of timber and whilst it may well have been the case, it is known that many medieval fences were built from posts and rails filled in with brushwood.

The boundary ditch and bank is in large part easily traceable on the ground and it was decided to walk all or part of the boundary.

Field Walk. We set off across the dam of Holden Wood Reservoir and turned to our left above Holden Vale Hotel, to look at the bank and ditch as it descended to Holcombe Road. Retracing our steps we then walked along the road at the side of the reservoir towards Tenements Farm with some remains of the bank and ditch by the roadside on our left. Approaching the farm we had to turn to our left, off the road to follow a footpath upwards across a field.

Turning to the right in Access Land at the top of the field we followed a flagged path to the west. It is known that this flagged path is of fairly recent construction (within last 20 years), the flags having been imported from elsewhere. Loom sockets and other indentations were noticed in some of the flags indicating that at least some of them had once been used as flooring in a mill.

(On the map below our route is shown in blue and the deer park boundary in orange)



One flag was very unusual. Incised in it were three circular depressions with drainage channels leading from them. This flagstone provoked considerable discussion, one hypothesis was that the stone had been used as the base for a cheese-press with the depressions being used to drain away the whey, but further research is required.



We crossed the deer park boundary - on our left it has now been eroded to a steep sided gully going straight up the hill – on our right it was visible as a line of rushes curving down towards Tenements Farm. We continued and on reaching the remains of a quarry tramway incline we turned up it to re-join the boundary visible at first as a ditch and bank, (*picture*) then a ditch only on the flat ground at the top.

The tramway originally lead downhill from Musbury Heights Quarry, curved to the east, crossed Holcombe Road – south of the Holden Arms and joined the mainline railway at Grane Road Station. Full trucks going down pulled empty trucks up the incline and from the bottom of the incline to the station the trucks were pulled by a small steam locomotive.

The chimney at the quarry marked the location of a 'scrubbing mill' where flagstones were polished. Unfortunately in recent years whilst the chimney has been restored, its surroundings have been damaged by alterations to the site made for paintball games!

All traces of the deer park boundary within the quarry have been erased by the activities there.

Following the Rossendale Way, we walked through the quarry and over a stile onto Access Land again. From this point the line of the deer park boundary was clearly visible – a ditch and bank coming in at an angle from the quarry wall on our right and going ahead then curving away to the left and dropping down to cross Musbury Brook and climbing again as a gully up and over the shoulder of Tor Hill. We continued along the Rossendale Way which at this point follows the deer park boundary.

Here the boundary is in the best state of repair (*picture*) and remarkably good condition considering that it is over 700 years since its construction. The deep ditch on the outside (uphill) of the boundary has a corresponding bank on the inside (downhill). This bank and ditch, together with the paling on top of the bank would have protected the deer from other wild animals and also prevented their escape.



Passing the ruins of Will Barn above us to the right, we stopped for refreshments at the ruins of Rushy Leach Farm. Will Barn, built prior to 1793, was already a ruin in 1922. Rushy Leach, also built prior to 1793 was empty in 1922 and in ruins by 1950.

Almost due east and at a similar altitude, is the site of Higher Tan Pits Farm, once known as Great House, which has been suggested as the Parkers Lodge for this side of the park, though John Simpson in his book 'Alden and Musbury' argues that perhaps better candidates would be Middle or Higher Park House.



We continued along the boundary until it branched off to the left away from Rossendale Way, curving downhill towards Musbury Brook. Here the bank was less distinct and could have been on the inside and slightly downhill side of the boundary. This phenomenon of the bank seeming to be on the 'wrong' side has been noted at some of the vaccary boundaries which have been identified and it is not yet clearly understood.

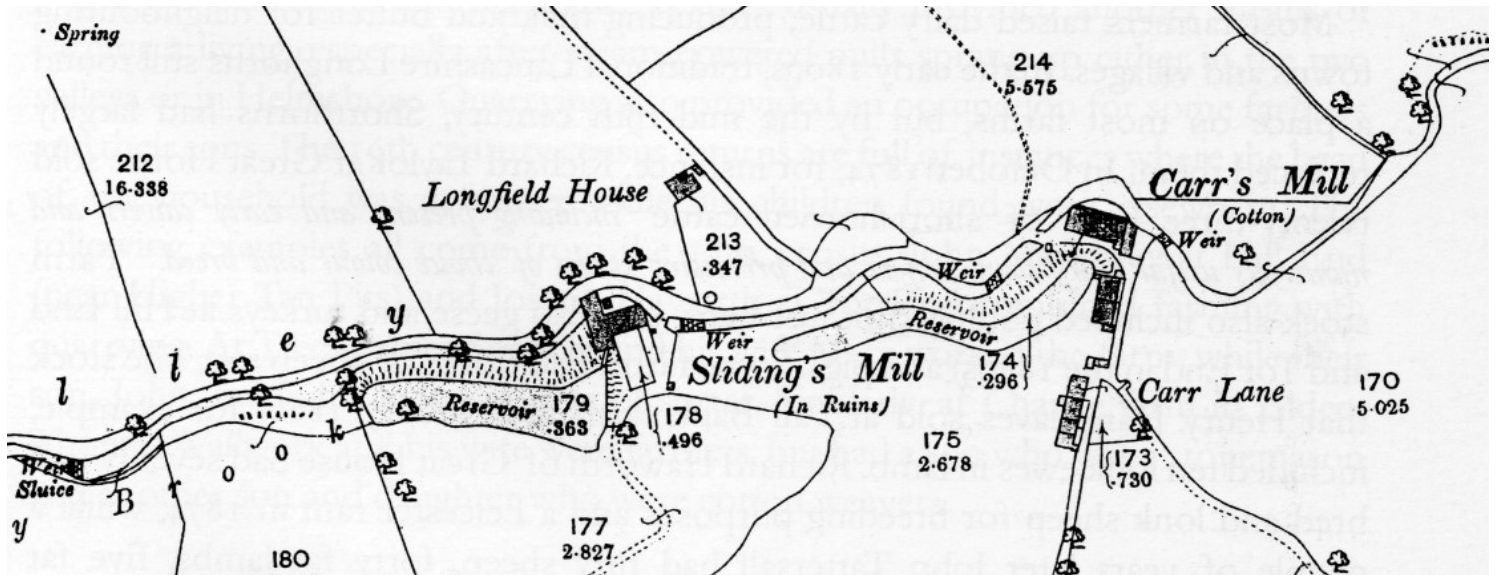
Instead of continuing along the boundary as it dropped steeply into the valley (*picture*) we turned left onto the old track connecting Causey End on the skyline to our right with the ruins of Hare Clough hamlet to our left.

The first ruin encountered was Bank Top or Higher Hare Clough. This farm and Lower Houses, the next farm along the stony track, are both believed to be early 19C. The final farm, Hare Clough is believed to have been built prior to 1793. The only farm occupied in 1922 was Lower Houses.

Some discussion took place about the age of gateposts found at these ruins but no decisions were made.

The track turned right and dropped down the clough towards Musbury Brook. Just before the gate a flat rushy area and some brickwork in the stream bottom, marked the site of the Hare Clough Mill reservoir. The site of the early 19C mill was not investigated and no visible ruins remain. It is known that the mill was burnt down in 1873.

Continuing down Musbury valley and through another gate we saw the garden wall around the site of Longfield House and kennels. This house was built in 1802 by the Worsick family who owned Slidings Mill (built circa. 1806) on the opposite side of the brook. Longfield House was demolished in the 1970's.



A low arched bridge over the brook gave access to the site of the mill. We crossed the bridge, part of which has recently fallen into the stream and climbed the embankment of the mill reservoir. The site of the mill was visible on the ground below the reservoir and Mike found indications of a ford across the stream to the mill. Part of the mill was damaged by fire in 1878.

A short distance down the valley we came to Carr Lane cottages (built early 19C and still occupied). Across the track from the cottages an area of flat land marks the site of Carr Lane Mill built circa 1820 and ruined by fire in 1890. This site was not investigated.

We continued down the valley from Carr Lane Cottages along a stony road with kerb stones and gutters. This road was built across the fields in 1920 using stones from Carr Lane Mill. Previously access had been by a roundabout route involving climbing part way up the side of Tor Hill and dropping down again.

We turned right along Park Road to Holcombe Road and soon reached Helmshore Textile Museums. Concern was expressed about the strap pointing, with modern mortar covering the original lime mortar, causing water damage to the stonework.

As only about half of the deer park boundary has been examined it is suggested that one or more visits to this area should be made in the future.

Notes

Some farms are identified above as being built before 1793. This is known because the farms were mentioned in the Poor Rate Survey of that date.