

Moor also provided freestone, although there is evidence that this was exploited commercially in 18th century.

Both Emsay and Eastby have a high percentage of field boundaries which are constructed as revetted banks topped with thorn hedges with ash trees regularly spaced through them. Lines of trees and free-standing trees, often ash Trees, give evidence of ditch-and-bank boundaries that have been grubbed or ploughed out.

There is significant evidence to show that these revetted bank boundaries are the earliest form of field boundary within Emsay and Eastby.

Firstly, in the Bolton Priory Compotus (1286-1325) one field is named Aldermires. In the 1847 Tithe Map there is a field called Aldermires sited next to the parish boundary, Berry Ground Beck, in the SE of Eastby. The name indicates some antiquity (*Alder*, a small tree that grows in damp conditions, *-mire* from Maere, Old English for boundary). The northern boundary of this field is a revetted bank with thorn bushes. The same bank can be traced along the southern side of Low Lane. At grid reference SE 0201 5357 there are pole-gate posts set within the bank.

Secondly, the series of fields called Laith Grass, which stands immediately to the east of the Emsay Priory site contained wide ridge-and-furrow, until recent deep ploughed destroyed the feature. There are three lines of revetted bank boundaries between the Priory and the Emsay-Eastby boundary. In the 14th century the old Emsay Priory building probably housed a grange farm. The fields next to that farm are the most likely to have been enclosed first. The roadside banks also hold pole-gate posts (ref North Yorkshire HER MNY3712)

Evidence from the Bolton Priory Compotus shows that the population of Emsay was drastically reduced by Scottish raids after Bannockburn, killing villagers and taking slaves back to Scotland. There were two incursions through Emsay and Eastby in 1318 and 1319. The rent paid to Bolton Priory reduced by 75%^[1] of that paid in earlier years. Elsewhere in England the dearth of people after the Black Death is recognised as a driver of field enclosure. It is probable that the field enclosure happened earlier in Emsay and Eastby as the reduced population responded to similar challenges.

¹ 'Crisis in the Early 14th century. A North Yorkshire Local Case Study', Chris Lunnon. 2021

Area Maps and LIDAR



Figure 2. 1851 Ordnance Survey Map of field system superimposed with field names from 1847 Tithe Map.



Figure 3. Google Earth satellite image of same field system overlaid with LIDAR Image

The maps and images in Figures 1 and 2 both show the same area of fields bounded by Emsay Beck and Hilltop far to the North (top) Emsay Beck to the east and Brackenley Lane to the south at Grid Reference SE 005 535. The lands further to the east, across Emsay Beck, probably formed part of Emsay Green, an area of common land. The fields north of Hilltop formed 'Emsay Pasture' common land that was not enclosed until 1760. These two commons were linked by Mill Gill, alongside Emsay Beck.

It can be seen that large areas of the fields shown in the 1851 map have been overbuilt with housing. The LIDAR image shows that the north-south field boundaries follow the line of earlier ridge-and-furrow ploughing. Ridge-and-furrow can also still be seen in the remnant of Great Sand Banks in the SE corner, next to the old mill. Wide ridge-and-furrow is dated between approximately 11th century and the early years of the 14th century. It is very likely that the entire area detailed on the maps originally contained ridge-and-furrow fields. Being close to the centre of population, the field boundaries following the ridge-and-furrow lines are also very likely to have been some of the earliest created.

Details of individual fields and boundaries

Stone Butts.



The field name Butt, indicates it was at the extreme end of a feature. The wall at the SW is curved with the neighbouring wall abutting the curve. This also indicates that it was a wall built in open space, probably at the end of an enclosure. SE 00026 53468



The boundary line is 'wiggly' indicating early construction followed by centuries of repair. SD 99981 53628



The western boundary contains a gritstone wall, with ditch to the west with a spring running down it. A stone trough collects water from the spring and a drainage pipe exits to the trough.
SD 99996 53535



The north wall is built of gritstone including some large 'cobbles', some of which have been made smaller during wall reconstruction.

It is likely that the wall has been mainly or completely rebuilt following the recent construction of water pipes. It is possible that the installation of the water main forced a re-positioning of this wall.
SE 00023 53658



The east wall is built of gritstone. A wide gate has been cut through the wall, but the remains of the wall, original foundation are still visible.
SE 00136 53563



The south wall is a revetted bank at the side of Brackenley Lane. It shows many repairs in gritstone and limestone of varying quality. It supported the ground above a roadside ditch which was extant in 1730 when the Manor Court records issued instructions that this ditch should be cleaned out '*before 2nd day of ffebruary next on pain of 3^s 4^d a rood*'. (Chatsworth L 45 29 Call Books and Verdicts 18 November 1730).
SE 00078 53455

Odd Acres.



The field name is repeated a number of times in the vicinity and probably was farmed from the farm of the same name.

The western field boundary was probably established at the same time as that in Stone Butts. This boundary shows evidence of surviving ditch and bank with hawthorn trees. Large trees also grow along the field boundary line.

SD 99958 53723



The north end of the western field boundary is formed by a gritstone wall, built with cobbles and with possible orthostats at the base. (Walls with orthostats are considered to be some of the oldest, built after 1350)

SD 99928 53838



The northern boundary is gritstone built of large 'cobbles', indicating an early wall. A ditch to one side of the wall either indicates the remains of an earlier ditch-and-bank or is eroded by the ancient footpath that runs alongside the wall. The wall forms the boundary between the common land of Embsay Pasture to the north.

SD 99963 53883



The eastern boundary is well built of gritstone construction but has probably been re-built with some sections showing protruding 'throughs', commonly seen in the nineteenth century. At the northern end, the wall is not keyed into the mating wall showing that it was built later.
SE 00018 53873

High Pasture



The ridge-and-furrow features can be clearly seen in this field.



The northern wall is a continuation of the northern wall from Odd Acres. The 'cobble' construction continues until it meets Hill Top farm. A significant ditch runs along the south side on the wall which could either be the remains of an earlier ditch-bank or the eroded ancient trackway runs alongside this wall. The trackway is a continuation of the route that can be traced from behind the crofts of the houses along Main Street in Embsay. It leads to None-go-Bye farm on Grassington Road, a location recognised as dating from the period of hunting forests for Skipton Castle.

SE 00108 53888



The Eastern wall is partly gritstone built with sections of ditch-bank remaining.

SE 00256 53783



The southern field boundary is partly gritstone built with significant sections of ditch-bank remaining. The remains of the bank revetting and hawthorn hedging can be seen. There are the remains of a pond, natural or created, abutting a section of the wall and marked 'Well' on the 1851 OS Map.
SE 00213 53670

Phillip Low Meadow



North Wall. A shallow stone trough has been set south of the boundary in a wet/boggy place opposite the possible pond in High Pasture. It would appear that the wall/boundary has been built through the pond. This frequently occurs when smaller fields are partitioned from a single large field.

SE 00166 53663



The eastern wall has both gritstone walls and the remains of ditch-and-bank and significant tree growth (these trees are subject to protection orders). The stone walls are built of 'cobbles', and where the wall has collapsed the wall is clearly 'battered' on both sides.

SE 00283 53615

The southern wall is the boundary with the housing estate and has clearly been heavily modified and probably completely re-built.

Flatts Ing Pasture

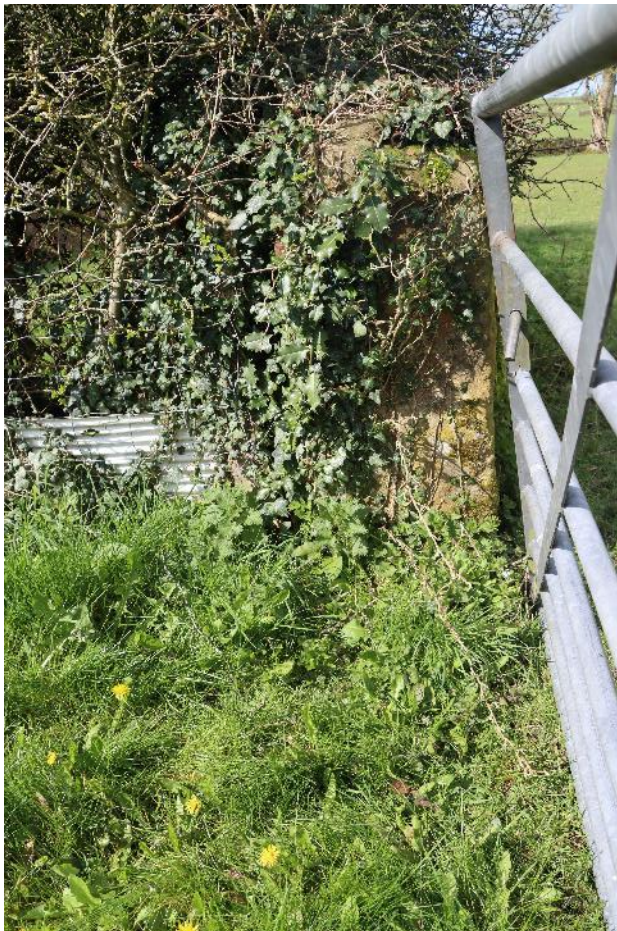
This field shows significant ridge-and-furrow. The line of the western wall clearly follows this ridge-and-furrow line and continues into Flatts Meadow to the north.



The north wall is built of thin-cut gritstone and would appear to be of later construction. LIDAR clearly shows that the ridge-and-furrow lines pass under this wall.

(The rise and fall of the ridge-and-furrow can be clearly seen in this picture)

SE 00303 53698



Eastern boundary. This is modern, constructed at the same time as Rockville house.

The southern wall is also probably affected or re-built with the housing estate. It does contain an ancient gate post.

SE 003380 53615

Flatts Meadow



LIDAR indicates that there is a possible earlier north-south boundary within this field, which coincides with a sub-division of the field which is not identified or named in the 1847 Tithe Apportionment. This subdividing wall is of gritstone construction of later construction, possibly 19th century. The wall has been constructed to finish at a growing ash tree, which indicates it is more recent than others in the survey area.

SE 00288 53803



Flatts Meadow probably originally extended to a wall further down the slope which was the boundary of Embsay Pasture and Mill Gill. The remainder of the northern boundary of Flatts Meadow is formed by a steep cutting through which Embsay Beck runs. It is bounded by a modern wire and post fence.

SE 00303 53908



The eastern boundary is created, along its entire length by a revetted bank, ditch and thorn trees.

SE 00416 53765

Great Sand Banks.

The remains of this field north of the housing estate contains clearly visible ridge and furrow (the southern section being covered by the housing estate) as does a remaining fragment in the SE corner. The northern boundary of the original field is created by the steep drop to Embsay Beck.



It is possible the edge of this drop is revetted, but a wire and post fence runs the complete length.
SE 00516 53735

There are no remains of any eastern boundary, the field running down to Embsay Beck. The field boundary to the south is a new-built gritstone wall to the housing estate (which probably utilised walling material from the field walls demolished at the time of the building of the estate).

Gate-post

A pole-gate-post remains, at the end of a footpath between modern housing. It is very possible that this is sited at or close to the junction of a footpath to Hill Top and Brackenley lane. There are similar gate-posts in ditch-and-bank locations elsewhere in Embsay and Eastby.



Analysis

The survey area indicates that there were originally three primary, early enclosure events creating three large fields. The 'Sandbank' enclosure (Great and Little Sandbank) the 'Flatts' enclosure (Flatts Meadow Flatts Ing and Low Meadow) and the Stone Butts enclosure (Stone Butts, Odd Acres, High Pasture, Phillip Low and High Meadow)². It is possible that the original occupier of Hill Top Farm created the 'Flatts' enclosure as the farm is built within it, and the 1851 map shows the trackway from Brackenley Lane to the farm runs entirely with the Flatts confines. The pole-gate post was probably sited at the Brackenley Lane end of this track

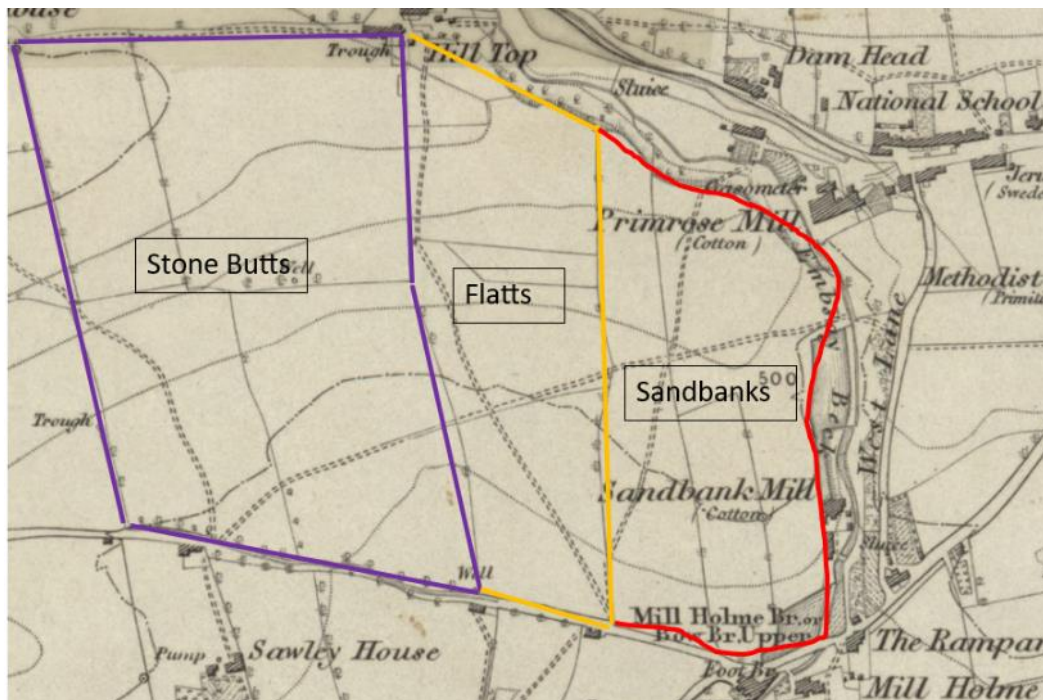


Figure 4. Primary Enclosure fields north of Brackenley Lane

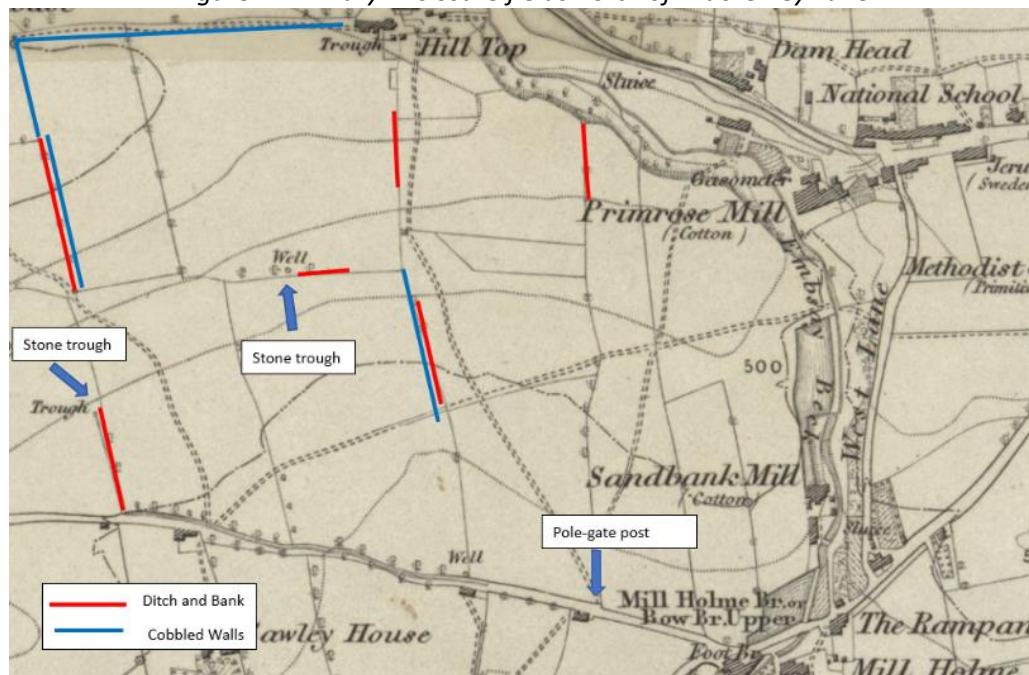


Figure 4. Location of historic features in fields north of Brackenley Lane

² Named by the Author from 1847 Tithe apportionment map field names.

The north-south field boundaries appear, in their original form, to be of the style of the earliest enclosures found elsewhere in Emsay and Eastby, namely revetted ditch-and-bank, surmounted with thorn hedges. This form of boundary is the simplest style and can be created with little manpower and in a piecemeal fashion. The available evidence indicates that the Sandbanks-Flatts boundary remained in this style. The Flatts-Stone Butts boundary was converted to a wall either as materials or funds became available, or as the thorn hedges failed. The nature of the wall structure, large clearance-type cobbles, indicates that this work was carried out relatively soon after the hedge construction. The fact that the western side of the Stone Butts primary enclosure was also re-constructed as a stone wall in the same style indicates that the occupier of this enclosure carried out the early conversion of the Stone Butts enclosure outer walls to stone.

The 'Stone Butts' primary enclosure was split in half, the two sections probably being separated first by a ditch-bank and subsequently being converted into a wall. The northern boundary wall of the current Stone Butts field includes some large cobble stones, many broken to smaller more manageable size. This, along with the ditch-bank at the north of the Phillip Meadow indicates this was an early sub-division.

The division of the northern half of the 'Stone Butts' primary enclosure into two fields appears to be later. If, as the field name implies, this subdivision was to integrate this field into the Odd Acres Farm's lands, then the subdivision is unlikely to have occurred before the 16th century, the date of origin of Odd Acres farm.

All of the wall construction in the survey area used gritstone, whether quarried or collected freestone, apart from the revetted boundary to Brackenley Lane. There are no field boundary walls constructed of quarried limestone, which only became readily available when the Haw Bank quarries were opened.

Conclusion

The fields within the survey area were farmed as ridge-and-furrow (ploughed fields) from the period of the creation of the Norman village at the founding of Emsay Priory (12th century) until the middle of the 14th century. Local and national population decline caused a change in farming practices which encouraged the enclosure of larger fields. Three fields were created at this period of primary enclosure: 'Stone Butts', 'Flatts' and 'Sandbanks', probably in the 14th century. The enclosure of these early fields used the simplest methods; digging a ditch, creating a bank revetted with stonework, and planting a thorn hedge on the top. As material and funds became available, some of these simple field boundaries were converted to stone walls. The earliest walls in the survey area are constructed with rounded non-quarried stone, often from field clearances. These walls were often used to fill gaps in the ditch-bank boundaries and also often built as more robust replacements for long lengths.

The 'Stone Butts' primary enclosure was subdivided twice. One east-west subdivision was relatively soon after primary enclosure as it employed the same construction methods while the second was much later, probably in 15th-16th century. Sub-division of the 'Flatts' primary enclosure appears to have occurred much later still, the wall construction using quarried stone and later construction methods. It is surmised that this was carried out in the 18th or 19th century. The 1851 OS map shows that the 'Sandbanks' primary enclosure was subdivided, but all field wall evidence has now been destroyed by the construction of the housing estate.