

During the 18th century many improvements in farming methods were being developed. Some of these only worked if they were applied to fairly large areas of ground. Where land was held in common it was difficult to get everyone to agree, so the Enclosure Acts were passed.

In Horton the need was to improve the grazing on the higher land in the parish. The enclosures meant that each farmer could have sole use of certain of the fields into which the land was divided, rather than rights spread over a large area and held in common with other people. The parts of the parish divided in this way can be recognized by the fact that the walls are absolutely straight - the dividing lines were obviously drawn on a map with a ruler!

There were at least 5 enclosure awards in the parish and the map shows the areas covered by each one. 4 of them, in 1758, 1771, 1791 and 1795 were private arrangements between groups of landowners.

The Award in 1814 dealt with "The Commons and Waste grounds in the lower division of Horton-in-Ribblesdale called High Moor and Penyghent, Mooton, Swarth Moor, Archa Wood, Horton Wood and Jellet Brae".

The act set out in great detail how the work was to be carried out, and the commissioner, Alexander Calvert, and the land surveyor, Samuel Swine had to sign a declaration promising to do their job honestly and impartially.

42 people are listed as being "Lords of the Manor, or reputed Manor, of Horton" and most of them were the resident working owners of the various farms in parish.

Notices of meeting had to be printed in a newspaper circulated in the West Riding, and affixed, in writing, to the main door of the parish church, on Sunday prior to divine service and at least 10 days before the sitting.

The commissioner had first to identify and protect peoples rights of watering places for cattle, getting stone for repairing buildings, roads, walls, bridges, fences or other work, and for the digging and getting of turf for personal use but not for profit.

Then they had to mark out an area for sale to defray the cost of implementing the act. John Ford's land at Beecroft Hall must be allotted before anything could be sold.

Anyone searching for, or taking away, lead, coal, tin, copper, stone, lime, slate, metals or minerals should make full and reasonable satisfaction for damage or spoil of ground in working, or in making waggon ways, to the owners of the ground or to the body politic.

Then all the roads are listed, who should repair them and who had rights to use them, how wide they should be, who should own the herbage and where they all went. Some of these roads may never have been built, or they became disused at an early date and reverted to their former state, as no trace can be found of them on modern maps, or on the ground.

This was obviously a very thorough piece of legislation and it set the pattern for the parish as we know it today.

We know that there was a 6th award, dealing with Birkwith moor, because the solicitor's accounts have been found, but as yet we have not discovered the act or the map dealing with this.

Mark Thompson went straight from school at the age of 14 to work in the quarry. His first job was driving the horses in the quarry. He started at 6am when the horses had to be groomed and fed with oats before starting work at 7am. The quarry "day men" finished at 4.50pm and Mark then had to return the horses to the stable, feed them and bed them up for the night.