The Walls of High Close, Grassington

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Introduction

High Close is a large oval upland field remarkable fort retaining some of the best preserved earthworks in an extensive area of prehistoric/Romano-British field systems. The dry-stone wall enclosing High Close is also of interest. It is a type of wall irregularly built with paired orthostat stones (large stones placed upright) and recumbent clearance boulders, and is some of the oldest walling recognised in the Pennine Dales, generally dating from before 1600. It is not uncommon as a walling type but it has been little studied in detail. Various authors have called it 'ancient' or 'medieval' (Raistrick 1946) or '16th century (Winchester 2002). Tom Lord has shown that some 'wide top' and 'straight-sided' walls, rather than the A-profile and narrow top of later walls, are likely to be medieval (Lord 2003; 2003). The High Close Project presented an opportunity to look more closely at the wall during the Yorkshire Dales Landscape Research Trust work on its prehistory.

The wall study is on-going: so far fieldwork has been the main source of data and information but documentary sources also need to be investigated, and comparison made with other similar walls in Grassington. The aim was to discover if there are different periods of building in the High Close wall, if the wall can be dated by its structure and form, and if any historical references survive to help interpret the evolution and use of the field enclosed by the wall.

The methods used include field observation of the geological materials and wall structure and some comparison with other local walls. A selection of wall profiles were measured and drawn using an innovative profile-measuring device, designed by one of the participants. Record photographs of back and front elevations of the selected profiles and record-card information were kept (all stored on a dedicated CD with profile drawings).

Documentary Sources

The only dateable evidence for the wall is likely to come from documentary sources and further work is needed here. For example, the Parliamentary Enclosure map, Tithe Award map, early 17th century surveys of Grassington, and the Clifford papers held in the Yorkshire Archaeological and Historical Society's (YAHS) collection, may all give clues about High Close and other fields. The Upper Wharfedale Field Society may have some of this information from their studies of Grassington freeholders. One archival document (from the YAHS Bradfer-Lawrence collection) shows an assignment to William Tempest in 1704 of the *tenement of West Cote*, *Calf Hall Close, High Close and pasture ground, a messuage with close of meadow called*

Lady Bank and other premises. West Cote remains a ruin in the Cove Pastures just below High Close and is associated with medieval pottery. Being privately owned, High Close was not included in the Parliamentary Enclosure (in 1792) of the extensive common pastures, with out-moor, that surround it.

High Close in the Field Systems of Grassington

The High Close walls cannot be interpreted without understanding the field and its relationship to the land use and field systems of Grassington township. The field balloons out into the former common of Grassington Moor, enclosed by Parliamentary Act in 1792 into large rectangular fields with straight stone walls. High Close, by contrast, is defined by a substantial and curving dry-stone wall of much earlier date and encloses part of an upland limestone shelf and the damper 'slack' of mudstone above it.

Grassington is a medieval village with a 13th century stone-built, first-floor hall surviving at the bottom of Main Street. There were outlying farms too, like West Cote near Grass Wood. High Close seems to have been created as a large intake-like field, making a great oval out into open pastures that were stinted and communally used until the Enclosure of 1792. It has similarities to and differences from the form of usual intake fields. It is not attached to earlier fields nibbled from the higher hillside and neither is it a detached intake made for a new farmhouse or a common pasture. It has no laithe or field barn and was not stinted. Like many intakes, however, this pasture lies well above the village settlement with its three former open medieval fields (the West Field, Sedber and the East Field) and the small field closes of the lower hillsides, like those at Cove. It forms a category of land between stinted pasture above and small closes below rather than between the outmoor and the closes below. It is therefore likely to predate the Old Pasture and its wall, which is also of orthostats but less substantial. The 18th-century intake with its laithe, to the east of High Close, has a ditched head-dyke above and is attached to earlier fields (some with orthostat walls) now reached from the walled Intake Lane, and such intakes represent progressive bites out of the upland edge to create more fields. Deep hollow-ways onto the common pastures funnel out northward around High Close; on the east from the top of walled Intake Lane and to a lesser extent from Townhead Beck, and on the west up from Bank Lane. The deeply-entrenched ways, under the later Enclosure walls, indicate that High Close has been an 'island' on the common for a very long time. The walls have no defined head-dyke, like most intakes, but are mostly placed on a break of slope or embankment, giving protective high walls on the exterior. Even on the interior, against the higher hillside of the north-east area, are some wall sections 2.1m high.

Field Findings

The course of the wall

The wall runs along and across the prehistoric field systems and clearly post-dates them. Physical and manmade features seem to have governed the laying out of the field on its shelf of limestone. The east wall is largely curving but the west wall has angled turns, making topographical differences along its lengths. For identification, the wall sections have been labelled Wall A – Wall K on the sketch plan.

The southern field wall (Wall E) follows the break of slope above the natural valley of Townhead Beck, with a leat carrying spring water, but it also appears to follow the edge of an older prehistoric bank. The north wall, too (Wall A), follows prehistoric embankments. The influence of these older earthworks is strong throughout much of the wall's course. There is some degree of symmetry with the highest altitude in the north and the lowest in the south and with the wall lengths each side being quite similar. The east wall (Wall F – Wall K) runs from the north summit to the south-east corner largely as a long curve as there are few grid-like earthworks here. There is however some evidence of stone cutting in the south-east suggesting the east part of the field has been cleared of stone and ploughed in more recent times. The west walls of the field, by contrast, have distinct angles between wall lengths of about 220m. The north part (Wall B) follows an earthwork feature for some 200m to a large boulder. The next section (Wall C) veers away diagonally across the earthworks to the corner with the stone 'circus' feature; the south section (Wall D) then cuts back across stony prehistoric earthworks towards Townhead Beck. The walls on the west, then, seem to be more influenced by the existing earthworks which made a convenient base for the new dry-stone wall.

The long curving wall of the east side (Walls F,G and H) and the section of west wall running diagonally across the older earthworks (Wall C) have much in common structurally since they are not greatly influenced by pre-existing structures. Both are on embankments with a higher density of visible paired orthostats, intermittent earthfast orthostats and boulders embedded in the outer lower wall and some continuous, rather even, boulder bases. Both have sections of 'wide-top' wall, some with projecting coverstones, and are tall with heights of 1.8-2.1m. Most of High Close has walls now averaging 1.5m high on the interior. The east wall in parts reaches up to 2m in width at the base as does the west wall.

Stone sources

Fieldwork revealed the very local sources of stone used along the wall, reflecting geology. Clearance boulders, cobbles, and erratics were widely used in the base and lower layers – the oldest remaining stonework. The upper parts of the walls have had many repairs with angular quarried limestone and sandstone, making a visual

difference. The covering of stony glacial boulder clays and large erratics yields mostly rounded or weathered limestone seen in most of the wall. The bedrock limestone and thin shales of the Wensleydale Group, or 'Yoredales', however, are not far beneath the surface. Limestone is exposed below the south wall (Wall E) near Townhead Beck and under the hollow-ways on the east side (Walls G & H). Flaggy limestone outcrops in the knoll beyond the north-east field corner. Shales are seen near the north-east spring and the impervious layer probably causes the damp slack and spring line on the east side of High Close. Glacially-smoothed limestone cobbles and boulders make up most of the wall but gritstone orthostats and boulders are notable in the south-east (Wall F). Towards the north-east (Walls G & H) is an increasing use of angular sandstone, and flaggy crinoidal limestone and shelly limestone from the outcrop adjacent are predominant. Some of the sandstone flags may be from hillside 'Yoredale' rocks. Nineteenth-century stonework includes large, squared gritstone gateposts probably from quarries on the moor; inserted current-bedded sandstone sheep creeps; some through stones and dark sandstone wallheads top the south-east access gateway. The stony ground is still colonised by rabbits and moles that maintain the loamy tilth of reddish and brown soils with their natural limestone clasts and chert fragments.

Tooling evidence in the wall is limited to some hammer dressing on the face of boulders to make them more even. This may reflect the pre-1600 date of the wall before steel tools were widely available. One or two large limestone blocks remaining near the cart track and gate (near Wall F) have evidence of possible quarry wedge marks suggesting larger stones were broken up, perhaps during nineteenth-century clearance.

The Wall and Wall Profiles

Nineteen wall profiles were measured (see sketch map for locations) of which 17 were of the perimeter wall. For comparison, one profile (6c) was taken on the west wall of the small sheepfold (18th century?) built against the enclosing wall (Wall A) and one on the 1792 Parliamentary Enclosure wall (4c). One imitation of the profiles is that they are of the standing wall only and do not extend laterally to include ditches and banks or older foundations on which they were built, although these features were noted separately. The walls and profiles are briefly described here (digital images and profile drawings are stored on CD).

Wall A

The north wall section follows the bank of a prehistoric or Romano-British field for some 200m across a comparatively level summit area: it must have made an ideal base. Along some parts of the interior a stone plinth of neat orthostats juts out from under the wall. At one point about 10m of boulders form a rather even plinth. These features resemble Wildgoose's (1991) 'Type 4' orthostat field wall at Roystone

Grange in Derbyshire which he considered Romano-British. This may be the case here where a section of prehistoric wall is apparently well preserved under the later wall. **Profile 5c** shows the wide wall made of a spread of clearance boulders although the profile does not include the plinth or bank on which the wall sits. Parts of this wall reach 1.83m wide at the base, and lower courses are well preserved with boulders on the exterior and some orthostat rows on the interior. The wall grades upward into smaller cobbles of grey limestone above.

Wall B (NW wall)

This section follows the break of slope and is again on an earlier stony embankment, probably prehistoric, for about 200m. There is a slight interior ditch. On the exterior are seen some larger orthostats, with a base mostly of smaller boulders making a rather neat base in parts with possible stone dressing. The exterior wall is 1.8m tall and bulges out down the bank. No profiles were taken here.

Wall C

The bank here runs diagonally across the earlier features, suggesting a deliberate decision using marked points. Near a large boulder the wall diverges away from the pre-existing bank in the north to the circle feature in the south. Like the east wall, this walling must be original since it is independent of prehistoric foundations. Much of the wall is very tall (1.8m) inside and even higher externally. The wall is mostly of clearance stone but gritstone flags form the cover stones. There is a lot of orthostats and some large earthfast boulders, notably where older banks cross underneath and were incorporated. The wide stony base has a difference in height between the interior and exterior as the ground drops away. On the interior the visible larger orthostats seem to be set at regular intervals. The wall has parted above some of the largest stones giving the appearance of wallheads or straight joints. The profiles show how the walls have spread, bulging out on the uneven slope. Nevertheless, **Profile 1c** retains a wide top and **Profiles 2c and 3c** are straight sided on the interior. The wall turns at the corner by the orthostsat ‘circus’ enclosure. Profile 3c shows how the wall was built on part of the base of this older circular structure forming a plinth step inside the wall.

Wall D

Here the wall is set on a break of slope and cuts across a number of prehistoric embankments. In the Close the wall is quite low (1.2m) but the outer wall drops away to become twice that height with a wide stony base. Large limestones and upright orthostats are seen throughout but are particularly noticeable where the wall crosses these earlier features, and their stones have probably been incorporated. The wall is mostly limestone cobbles and boulders with sandstone cappings. In the low corner near the narrow paved gateway is an indication that this wall corner may once have

been more rounded. The acute angle of wall incorporates sandstones. The gateway may date from after Enclosure as it has 19th-century gritstone gateposts and a paved floor (no profiles were taken).

Wall E

Six profiles were taken on this south wall: 3b, 3p, 2p, 1p, 2b, 1b. The wall again follows prehistoric foundation banks on the break of slope above the valley with Townhead Beck and a leat from a spring. At the east end, near modern livestock pens, the ground is more level and the wall much rebuilt and it includes drain smoots in the base with fewer orthostats evident (see profile 1b with a smoot). Angular quarried material is prevalent in 2b and p but it retains its boulder base. Most of the wall westward has a number of large boulders and orthostats, as big as 600mm, seen particularly on the exterior. The inner stones are often partly hidden in the bank. The wall is increasingly taller on the outside, due to the slope, and is up to 2m wide with wide tops of 500mm. **Profiles 1p, 2p and 1b** show the inside to be surprisingly straight-sided walls. **Profile 2p** gives an example of the paired orthostat structure which is seen throughout High Close but is mostly hidden in the banks internally. **Profile 3p** was taken in a section that incorporates the back wall of a small building with niches, perhaps a dairy. The straight joints of the wall corners are visible where they are cut into and intercept the field wall above. The building was cut into solid limestone at the foot of the wall exterior. It may have had a monopitch roof against the field wall which here is 3m high on the exterior. Flagstone layers are incorporated into the building's back wall and used for the row of niches. The building would seem to be contemporary with, or earlier than, the field wall since it cuts into it. If it is later, it would seem a lot of effort to reduce a thick wall just to add a small 'helm' type of building. (The Tithe Award map may reveal more.) **Profile 3b** shows an area of orthostat walling towards the west end with a wide 2m base.

Wall F

The wall continues on the level and damp area with several springs and is probably underlain by an impervious shale bed in the Yoredale cyclical beds. The wall is not tall, about 1.2m, but 1.6m on the exterior. South of the gateway are signs of rebuilds and wallheads, rabbit or drain smoots but not many visible orthostats. The wall is mostly of cobbles. It was noted that one large stone near here in the field has stone-breaking wedge marks as if cleared of stone. North of the gateway, however, the older wall is again evident with paired orthostats, mostly visible on the exterior, but large boulders on the inside. Brown gritstone orthostats 650mm across and increased numbers of gritstone boulders and cobbles are notable here. **Profiles 1j and 7p** are both concave on the inside but rather straight sided and wide topped. The only sign of earlier earthworks is the raised rectangular area around the small monopitch-roofed building. This building (3.62m by 2.86m) is now amongst stock pens and appears to be 19th century. It has a door and a window but its back wall

cuts the orthostat wall suggesting the site has had long usage and the building is rebuilt, perhaps making use of the platform in front. Inside the building the back wall is lined with niches, like the ruin on the south wall (Wall E). Possibly these were dairies situated on the common outside High Close, but it is puzzling why they cut into the field wall. They were not gateways. North of the building are some springs with drain smoot holes under the wall.

Wall G

The section of wall here rises up the slope from the springs and becomes very tall reaching over 2m on the inside. There are rabbit smoots and one is a zigzag type at the base of the exterior wall. On the exterior one of several deep hollow-ways is worn down to bedrock and creates a kind of ditch along the wall. The wall however is still of paired orthostats and boulders (see photo of 3j) but some of the orthostats on the exterior have collapsed outward into the hollow-way. One enormous stone block is incorporated into the wall base on the interior forming an unusual feature in the High Close wall. The upper wall parts feature flaggy sandstones as well as increasing flaggy shelly limestones probably taken from the hillside scree. The flags were used for flat capstones, some 500mm across. Both are tall, straight-sided, wide-top walls with overhanging flag capstones. This is a type which Tom Lord dates to as early as 1250 AD and are like those at Sawley Abbey's farm at Winskill, near Langcliffe. Much of this wall length has evidence of an older, rounded bank with stone edges but there are no obvious prehistoric earthworks here. It may have been a hedge bank with parts of the orthostat wall built later, set back from this older foundation which protrudes on the interior making a 2m-wide base.

Wall H

From a corner turn, near the junction with an Enclosure wall, the ground levels off. The wall continues on a bank (perhaps a hedge bank) with a trackway in a hollow on the exterior. Shelly and flaggy Yoredale limestones from adjacent outcrops become prominent here and cobbles are few. Orthostats are not a feature here but near Profile 6p is one large upright stone set sideways through a wall. It is unique in High Close and resembles a gatepost but there is no wallhead or straight joint or any worn path across the bank. **Profile 6p** shows the rather straight-sided, wide-topped wall (590mm wide). Much is 1.5m high on the interior with projecting coverstones, again resembling Lord's medieval type.

Wall J

This is a short length of wall now dividing the spring so that it could be shared by both High Close and the common pasture. It probably dates from Enclosure since it looks 19th century being only 669mm wide and of quarried stone, so very different from the thick walls it meets on either side. The wall may have originally run on the

raised bank north of the spring where there are traces of a stone embankment. The spring is now trampled into a swampy circle but running spring water is still piped into a trough nearby.

Wall K

This section is diagonal to underlying earthworks, like Wall C. It includes the gateway with its good wallheads in this thick, 2m-wide wall of big boulders and orthostats like Wall C. **Profiles 4j and 5j** show how the walls are straight sided to half way up with a wide base of large boulders and orthostats, although the upper walls have been rebuilt in an A-profile. Wide, 590mm wall tops put the structure firmly in the 'wide top' category. The adjoining earthworks have a good supply of large stone which may have been robbed to create profiles rather different from Wall H. The inserted sheep creep at Profile 5j is only 380mm wide, narrow by modern standards.

Other Features at High Close

Parliamentary Enclosure wall of 1792

By contrast, parliamentary enclosure walls are mostly of angular limestone pieces dug from shallow nearby quarries. They are straight, long walls with regular lines of throughs. **Profile 4c** demonstrates the regular A-shape of these slim walls. Raistrick (1946) quoted the 1788 specifications enshrined in the Act for Grassington's new walls. They were to be 34 inches (870mm) wide at the bottom and not less than 16 inches (400mm) at the top, six feet (1.8m) in height and the throughs were to be at 2 feet (600mm) and 4 feet 1.2m) from the base with stones at the top. Profile 4c fits this exactly but other Enclosure walls measured had spread to 42 inches (1.07m) and even 48 inches (1.2m). The three rows of slightly protruding through stones, including the projecting top stones, are well seen. The stonework is generally even but irregular with small limestone walling stone from 2-5 inches (50-120mm) high and 5-12 inches (120-300mm) long. The base has trenched, squared-up, footing stones and the crinoidal limestone was largely taken from nearby outcrops. The wall fillings are of many small stones. One wall length in 4c has a gateway of gritstone gate posts but other nearby walls incorporate roughly-hewn gate posts of crinoidal limestone. Some of the Enclosure walls have regular small mounds along their length as if the course of the long walls was marked out before building began.

Two of the Enclosure walls that meet the north wall of High Close have great mounds of clearance stone stacked at the wall junctions against High Close as it to make the boundary junction prominent and permanent.

Gateways

The narrow gate at the south-west corner of High Close has 19th-century squared gritstone gate stoops and a paved floor that looks inserted. The gateway in the north-

east (Wall K) is through a thick wall and is finished with large wallhead stones that look original. It may be significant that a hollow-way outside the north-west corner (junction of Walls A and B) appears to run down to medieval West Cote so perhaps access was always from the north. The lack of any original gateways elsewhere is puzzling. The present entry in the south-east has wall foundations still in the ground and piles of stone that suggest it had been widened with gritstone flags relatively recently. Both Bank Lane and Intake Lane have orthostats in their walls nearer the village but there are obvious hollow-ways leading into High Close, but only around High Close. Perhaps High Close originally had another use, such as woodland, and was not for cattle or sheep.

Sheep keeping

There are **sheep creeps** in the north walls that look inserted with the use of gritstone lintels and jambs with boulders rebuilt above them. One has a boulder base but with sandstone flag lintels and sides and a rather narrow opening of 15 inches (380mm) wide – perhaps allowing only younger sheep to pass through at shearing time?

A small **sheepfold** was built against the north wall which would have acted as a driving wall. From the pen is a small blocked, inserted sheep creep with access on to the common. It may have been used when animals returned to the common after summer washing or clipping or spring lambing. The sheepfold walls are rather A-shaped (see **Profile 6c**) although straighter on the inside, and made of stacked boulders and cobbles with angular fillings. It has battered or diminishing wall corners with a base width of 1.17m. Small flags had been used for levelling up and stabilising the boulder wall but they are not through stones (resembling Lord's 'three quarter walls'). It is likely to be 18th century and the small size of the fold may suggest stinting with a small number of sheep gathered at any one time. Similar-plan sheepfolds, with an entry along the north wall, are seen near Botton. One fold is built against the orthostat wall of Botton and has two rounded corners, perhaps to save dressed stone. The walls are thinner at 900mm-1m thick and the fold is 4.5 x 6.5m. Nearby against a new Enclosure wall a 19th-century sheepfold measures 3.5 x 6.5m with 800mm-thick walls at the base.

The **T-shaped bield** in the lower centre of High Close was built on prehistoric foundations and is a low and wide A-shaped wall of stacked boulders and cobbles with some chunky through stones. The large earthfast boulder at the south-west end may have formed a gateway. The longer wall may have been used as a driving wall since the inner part of the cross wall has regular holes as if for structure, possibly pens or feeders; it may be 18th century.

The **'circus'** of upright orthostats on the west wall (Wall C/D) seems to share foundations with the stone wall and earthworks. It is unclear if it is medieval or prehistoric. At Bordley, once a monastic sheep grange, part of a similar-sized

banked circle with orthostats is associated with probable medieval rectangular building foundations. Possibly these circles were pens for livestock. The gap in the circus wall, on the north side, may indicate its use as a fold with the field wall again acting as a driving wall, just like the 18th/19th-century plans. A 19th-century walled, circular sheep washfold on the dry limestone near Bare House, north of High Close, has similar dimensions. Could this have been its purpose?

Smoot holes

Small openings near the bottom of walls, like miniature sheep creeps, were built to allow water to drain away in floods and as rabbit smoots for gentry hunting, particularly in the 18th century. One smoot on the east side (Wall G) is a zigzag type designed to slow rabbits down and may be older. Several smoot holes by the spring and low end are more likely to have been for drainage.

Buildings

There are no buildings within High Close although a stack of sandstone blocks and pebbles in the field centre may indicate a former structure.

However, two building structures cut the wall, though both open onto the common and wall exterior. Both have rows of niches in their walls. The building above Townhead Beck is a ruin that retains quoins in the field wall and piles of stone from its fallen side walls lie below. The platform suggests a small, rectangular building, 2.9m wide, built on exposed bedrock. The line of niches – 5 above and 2 possibly below – were built into the backwall suggesting this may have been a milking shed and possibly used in summer when cows and calves were turned out onto the common, a routine common after the mid 16th century. There is a flat area in front of the little building with a linear depression marking a track. The other building, in Wall F, is roofed and used for livestock. It looks 19th century but again fills a gap in an orthostat wall. Perhaps it is a rebuild of an older structure since it is on a platform. If the pasture close was ever used as hay meadow in the historic period, then one might expect to find stackgarth platforms.

Springs

There are several springs in High Close, essential for livestock. The wall in the north-east (Wall J) divides the spring to give access from High Close and the common pasture. The wall is low and of blocky stone and suggests a division of the watering place for shared fields. The wall may originally have incorporated all the spring as the embankment around it suggests. The spring in the south-east (Wall F) has also developed into a trampled circular pond.

Other Orthostat walls and their Dating

Wall building using pairs of orthostats and large clearance boulders has long usage as it can be seen in the prehistoric field walls around High Close with a typical width of 1.4m. Medieval foundations of rectangular buildings, made with smaller paired orthostats and associated with 14th-century pottery, are seen at West Cote near High Close. These orthostat house walls are 760-820mm wide. There are other fields in Grassington township with paired orthostat walls like High Close. Plotting these may highlight their significance. Some are likely to be medieval. Cove Lane, for example, is a walled lane between the Cove Closes and the medieval West Field. Both the lane and these two enclosures have boundaries with a base of orthostat walling. The west Field was divided up in the 17th century and perhaps the Cove Closes about the same time, and the subdivision walls are quite different with no orthostats between earlier enclosed fields. The irregular Cove Pasture closes, above Cove Scar, are defined by Back Lane on one side but nearly all the field walls there are of orthostat construction. Some walls, however, overlie what appear to be reverse S-shaped plough lynchets so these pasture walls may be later, perhaps 16th century. Surprisingly, the walls round the demesne woodlands of Grass Woods are mostly 18th/19th century, and only a section from Bastow Wood north to the township boundary is of orthostats. This wall is built along the scars with a ditch behind and it is a straight-sided, wide-topped wall with 640mm-oversailing cap stones. This is like Lord's medieval-type walling, as old as 1250.

On the former common above High Close were some named stinted pastures – the Out Moor, New Pasture, Old Pasture and several named enclosures such as Botton. All were included in parliamentary enclosure in 1792 but their walls indicate different dates of construction. The wall boundaries were sufficiently entrenched in the landscape as to be retained at parliamentary enclosure. Some have substantial orthostat walls and large ditch and bank features, possibly from earlier hedge banks or head dykes. Botton, against Conistone Old Pasture, has the remains of a narrow standing building, possibly 16th century (the house walls batter from 850-650mm), and walled pens. Botton (a pure Norse word) is surrounded by a bank with orthostat walling 1.37-1.5m wide at the base. Abutting Botton, and therefore of a later date, is the long wall of Grassington Old Pasture which is also of limestone orthostats, but with only a slight head dyke. At its east end, near Yarnbury, the geology and the wall incorporates massive gritstone erratics, many paired. East of Moor Lane on Yarnbury it has been much rebuilt but retains some large boulders. An old section (apparently used as a recent walling quarry) survives amongst the lead mines and meets with the old named pasture of Loss Gill south-east of (Grassington) New Pasture. Here it runs on the break of slope like the High Close wall and with paired orthostats and recumbent stones. Stinted pasture walling has usually been

considered 16th century based on documentary evidence, when upland common pastures made a controlled grazing area between the closes below and out-moor above. Conistone Old Pasture was stinted by 1568 and Raistrick thought this the probable date of its wall although he also said there was a medieval sheep farm, so perhaps the wall is older. It has a significant head dyke ditch and bank with orthostat walling. The east side of the pasture forms the township wall to which Botton is attached. To the west, New Close in Conistone was, according to Raistrick, 'newly enclosed' by 1587 with an enclosing wall built and maintained by the freeholders. Nook and Kelber stinted pastures were added by 1600. Nook has a small embankment and a rather low wall so would indeed appear to be later. The 1801 Parliamentary Act for Conistone included named fields in the township, including Old Pasture, Nook, Kelber, New Close, and Conistone Out Moor and Bycliffe New Pasture.

Orthostat walls also form the Grassingotn township boundary and most boundaries shown on OS First Edition mapping were in place by the 13th century (according to Moorhouse (1981). The township boundary of Grassington and Hebden is of large, single-width orthostats near Garnshaw House (Wildgoose believes this type is 13th or 14th century). Edge Lane, at the top of the enclosed fields east of Grassington, also includes some paired orthostats along its eastern length. They start near a rock marked 'T', possibly the Tempest family in the mid 16th century, and two orthostat walls run down the fields here possibly defining a block of land (the top of Isondale?).

Orthostat walls, then, can be relatively dated when there are head dykes as 'tide lines'. Certainly, later walls seem to have less defined ditches, like the Old Pasture wall. Possibly later orthostat walls were less neatly built; an untidy and rather rambling wall of orthostats and large stacked stones was built in Giggleswick in the 1570s (or even older) to create more farm land, so perhaps this style continued at a vernacular level but less well made.

Further from Grassington there are many other examples of orthostat walling, much of it connected to medieval sites, eg in Barden Forest, along medieval Skyrethorns Lane, and lanes and fields near medieval Starbotton Bridge, remote walled lanes and field systems in upper Swaledale (eg near Muker) where Fleming recorded monastic farms on previous Norse shielings. In Long Preston orthostat walling in Back Lane and down one field exactly defines the holdings of Bolton Priory in 1305. Orthostats also define land around Royd Farm (14th century?). Tom Lord has identified a number of 'wide-top double walls and 'three-quarter double walls' with orthostats which he thinks are 13th century, eg at Bordley, Malham and Gunnerside. Many reflect monastic upland farm sites. Many of Lord's walls, however, are not of boulders, as at High Close, due to their altitude but are of broken limestone and thus different in appearance. The 12th-century home grange walls of Fountains Abbey at Morker and Haddockstones are also straight sided but made from clearance

boulders that have been well shaped on the outside to form a flat face, and they have no orthostats, perhaps because of the high status of some home granges. The impressive gritstone orthostats walls at Dacre, an upland grange of Fountains Abbey, may have been built in the 14th century when accounts include building stone walls to keep out wild animals (Jennings 1967). The distant granges at Bordley, too, have a lot of orthostat walls around the closes but at Know Bank farm, which was developed after 1495, there are only hedges and ditches. This suggests orthostats might mostly date from before 1350. Fifteenth-century medieval walls built for gentry parks, for example the Nevilles' Cotescue Park boundary wall in Coverdale, have no orthostats and are built like house walls with two straight faces and often coverstones. When Silsden Moor was let out to tenants by the Cliffords in the 16th century only hedges and ditches were made, and there are no stone walls older than the 18th/19th century in spite of plentiful stone. Angus Winchester (2002) believes that, according to documentary sources, stone walling is unusual until the 16th and early 17th century in Craven. Field evidence, however, suggests otherwise. There does seem to be evidence for orthostat walling before 1350 and again in the 16th century but not much in between.

Recent studies in nearby Hebden township (Beaumont 2006) show that orthostat walls surround four primary enclosures that were later subdivided into smaller fields. The date of the enclosures is not certain but may have been before the planned layout of the nucleated settlement around a green was imposed, possibly in the 14th century. It seems likely that much orthostat walling dates from either before 1350 or from the 16th century as population levels and farming increased. The connection of ownership of High Close with medieval West Cote in 1704 may indicate a medieval farming arrangement with two properties that has since disappeared.

Conclusion

The great oval field of High Close has existed long enough for deep hollow-ways to develop around it. Its orthostat wall almost certainly dates from before 1600 although it has been much repaired in its upper half. Work on dating walls in the Pennines is rather sparse but recent work locally by Tom Lord and Heather Beaumont indicates that walls of this type may be medieval. Lord has identified part of the wall in the north-east (Wall G), characterised by overlapping coverstones on a straight-sided, wide-top wall, as being as old as 1250, based on style and comparison with other such walls in the Dales. Heather Beaumont has shown that primary enclosures in Hebden, now sub-divided into fields, are almost certainly medieval and may predate the open-field system and planned village. This suggests a date pre 1350. Initial surveys and selected wall profiles at High Close do compare with the wide and rather upright profiles of these walls along with paired orthostats and clearance boulder bases. Much of the High Close wall is on prehistoric foundations which can be confusing but it would all seem to be of one build. Some parts are on low hedgebanks but much is on a break of slope making for a very high wall on the

exterior. Was this height for protection at a time when wild animals could still be a problem for livestock or was it defence against illegal human incursions? What was High Close's use? Irregular orthostats and huge boulders in the wall base with clearance cobbles above are seen throughout, but there are other examples of this type of walling in the area. If the High Close wall is medieval, then it could have been made for the West Cote settlement with which it was still associated in 1704. If the wall is 16th century then how did it and perhaps outlying fields like Botton come to be built in the Old Pasture which itself has a probable late 16th-century orthostat wall.

In conclusion, no firm date can be put on the High Close wall: it may be medieval because the field itself is an oddity but only documentary evidence and further comparison in the field with other walls is likely to give an answer. A good guess at its date might be the first half of the 16th century when much of the land was still owned by a few lords but population was expanding. The wall survey here is already leading to plotting the distribution of other orthostat walls in Grassington, and this may eventually provide some relative dating evidence.

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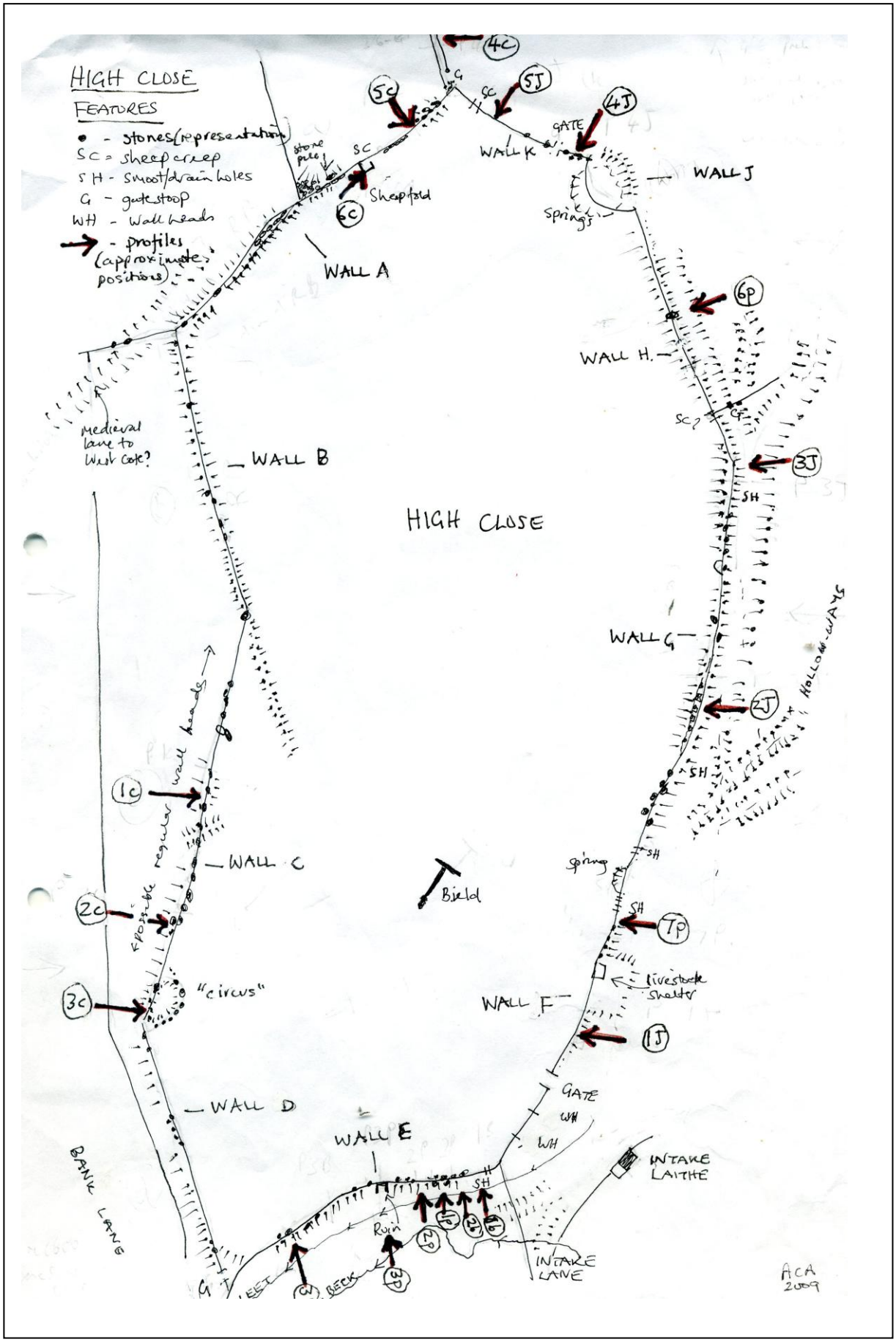
HIGH CLOSE
FEATURES
• - stones (representation)
SC = sheep creep
SH - smoot/drain holes
G - gatestoop
WH - wall heads
→ - profiles (approximate positions)
4C
5C
5J
4J
GATE
WALL K
WALL J
stone pile
SC
Sheepfold
6C
Springs
WALL A
6P
WALL H.
Medieval lane to West Gate?
WALL B
3J
SH
HIGH CLOSE
WALL G
HOLLOW-WAYS
2J
SH
wall heads
1C
WALL C
Bield
spring
SH
2C
7P
livestock shelter
"circus"
3C
WALL F
1J
GATE
WH
WALL D
WALL E
INTAKE LAITHE
BANK LANE
SH
Ruin
2P
1P
2C
1C
INTAKE LANE
3P
BECK
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