

THE KIRBY BANK TROD: - “THE PANNIERMAN WAY”

The exposed section of the Kirby Bank Trod – the subject of the application – is part of a long distance route. It has been characterised as being a “Long Trod”, requiring “considerable resource and supra-parochial organisation” to build it; its construction representing “an economic venture of some significance.”¹

The section is 403 metres long. It rests on a man-made, raised embankment. It is paved with locally distinctive sandstone flags, sourced from nearby quarries. There are five waymarkers (two being double) and route-marking hawthorn trees. It has also sets of smaller parallel stones (purpose unknown) and the Peddar Stone – a large flat stone slab, characteristic of a Trod. Continuous use of the Trod has worn a regular groove in the stone. The exposed section is well-preserved. There are sledway courses that connect with the flagged route.

The Trod (known locally as “the Pannierman Way”) was constructed for the use of packhorse trains, up to forty horses in number. Breakell, quoted by Raymond H. Hayes² states that the original Cleveland Bay, a weight-carrying speedy horse, was bred for stamina and was a product of the monasteries, including Rievaulx which held a virtual monopoly on non-military horse-breeding in the area for three centuries before the Reformation.

The Kirby Bank Trod is the only footpath to the north out of Bilsdale, connecting with routes that lead to the River Tees and on to Durham. It is significant that the section of the busy A172 north out of Stokesley is still known as “Pannierman Lane”.

The Kirby Trod is unique in two ways. Firstly, the “Long Trod” lies entirely on rights of way. Secondly, and most significantly, with its clearly observed commercial and industrial context it illustrates important aspects of England’s social and economic development. In consequence of that it is of special interest, nationally.

A) Medieval:

Fish: the abbeys required a considerable and reliable supply of fish. There is a clear link from the fisheries at Normanby Grange (a Cistercian House), through the village of Kirby-in-Cleveland, up Kirby Bank, across Cold Moor to Chop Gate and thence, through Bilsdale, to Rievaulx Abbey. The middlemen between fisheries and purchaser were called “Panniermen”. An account of the control of the Tees fisheries by Rievaulx Abbey is given by Waites³ and Ferguson and Harrison⁴.

Salt: there was also a constant demand for salt, both for monastic and domestic use. The association of the mother church (Rievaulx Abbey), the monastic granges and the salt-panning centres around the River Tees is well illustrated by Waites⁵. Again there is a clear route from the salt-panning centres, via Kirby and the Trod and into Bilsdale.

B) Medieval to 19th Century:

The sandstone quarries, clearly revealed still on Kirby Bank, were the source of the flags for the Trod. They also offered building materials, particularly in the mid 18th Century when the economic boom resulted in the expansion of the middle classes and a consequent extensive building programme. This is evident not only in Kirby but in the wider region.

C) 18th Century:

For about twenty years in the middle of that century alum was the most profitable commercial activity in the region. It was also one of the least pleasant to work in. The alum shale rock was hacked from Kirby Bank, processed on the site for about a year and then, in the form of ammonium alum, carted down the Trod to Stokesley (three miles away) as an essential ingredient in fulling and dyeing in the Linen Industry; for tanning; for medical use and, regrettably, for adulterating flour. The mine faces, alum shale tips, the site of the alum houses and the network of sledways serving the Trod all remain.

D) 19th Century:

Kirby Bank was a main source of jet when it became the jewellery of choice for Victorian women after Queen Victoria adopted it as part of her mourning dress on the death of Prince Albert. The mined jet was transported along the Long Trod to Whitby's workshops. Jet mining was immensely profitable but extremely dangerous. It, however, gave employment to many agricultural workers in surrounding villages. The mine and spoil heaps remain on Kirby Bank.

There are also outcrops of ironstone and some indication of mining.

E) 20th and 21st Centuries:

Tourism. The Pannierman Way is one of the most attractive and impressive routes on to and down from the North York Moors. It joins national footpaths – the Cleveland Way, the Lyke Wake Walk and the Coast to Coast. It is much used as the route to and from bed and breakfast accommodation and to local pubs and shops.

It features on the local Heritage Trail leaflet (available to visitors from local pubs, tourist accommodation, libraries, shops and the National Park Information Centre).

This most recent industry is the latest in an unbroken 500-year of economic activities centred on this Trod.

SECTION 4: “Any other information relevant”

Further details of the social and economic development associated with the Trod.

A) Medieval:

Fish:

In this period Normanby Grange, eight miles north of Kirby and a Rievaulx Abbey house, held a licence for twenty brood ponies, maintained as pannier carriers. The Abbey also acquired the fisheries at Normanby.

Salt:

Details of the existing remains of medieval salt-working in the Tees villages of Cowpen Bewley, Coatham and Greatham and the extensive workings, including Normanby, now obliterated by the modern chemical industry, on the south of the Tees are given by Spratt ⁶

The medieval market network would have taken full advantage of a paved route from farms to ancient markets like Stokesley.

In time the Trod, established for the transportation of salt and fish, would have served the full range of commercial and personal uses.

B) Medieval to 19th Century:

An expansive building programme was stimulated by land becoming available in Kirby in the 1750's following the sale of manorial lands. The sandstone building blocks were fashioned (on site at the quarries on Kirby Bank) with the locally distinctive herring-bone dressing before being transported on the Trod. One quarry - "Church Quarry" - supplied the stone for the 18th Century rebuild of the parish church.

C) 18th Century:

The alum shale was roughly hewn from the rock face on Kirby Bank, piled into great pyres between layers of dried bracken and burnt for months at a time. The resulting compound was carried in water courses to large tanks, (the "Alum Houses"), and boiled with added urine (imported from London and Newcastle, carried by packhorse up the Trod) and finally re-crystallised as ammonium alum.

D) 19th Century:

Jet Mining. The 1861 and 1871 census for the local villages, including Kirby, records the names of those jet miners who worked in the Kirby Bank mines. The miners worked in teams of six, in atrocious conditions, as described by Mawer ⁷

Festival of British Archaeology:

Last year the local history group organised an event as part of the 2010 Festival. Christopher Evans, an authority on the Trods, gave an illustrated talk in which he reaffirmed his view that the origin of the Kirby Trod was the transportation of monastic fish and salt. Kevin and Susan Bulmer of the Cleveland Bay Horse Society spoke on the origin of the breed as packhorses.

People attending were given a guided tour of the Trod by Christopher Evans.

The annual clear-up session of the Trod also took place.

Future Action: 1) As a local history group we have begun surveying the site of the "Old Foundation of Alum Houses", using the 1854 survey map as a guide. Jon Kenny, B.A., PhD, community archaeologist with York Archaeology Trust, has worked with us on an initial survey, using a resistivity mapping system. On the basis of found anomalies he will return with a magnetometer to conduct a more detailed survey.

It is our intention, over a period of time, to complete a full survey of the industrial and commercial context of the Trod.

2) One of the History Group members has successfully germinated hawthorns from berries from the trees alongside the Trod. We plan to involve local Primary School pupils in planting these alongside the remaining ancient – and ageing – trees.

3) We have requested consent from the North York Moor Archaeology Service to produce signage boards at each end of the exposed section of the Trod, informing of its history and significance.

Conclusion:

The local history group proposing the listing has committed itself to an annual maintenance day for the Trod. The exposed section – the subject of the application – has remained unchanged for centuries.. One motive for listing this sandstone Trod is that it represents a particular historical type of thoroughfare which is unique to the northern end of the North York Moors. It has been estimated that there has already been an 80 percent loss of the Trods over the past century.⁸ We wish to prevent any further loss.

References:

¹ Christopher P. Evans: “The Trods of the North York Moors: a Gazetteer of Flagged Paths”, Scarborough Archaeological and Historical Society, Research Report 13, 2008. Pages 18 – 19

² Raymond H. Hayes, “Old Roads and Pannierways in North-East Yorkshire”, North York Moors National Park, 1988. Page 7

³ Bryan Waites, “Monasteries and Landscapes of the North York Moors and the Wolds”, Tempus, 2007. Pages 51 – 52

⁴ Peter Ferguson and Stuart Harris, “Rievaulx Abbey: Community, Architecture and Memory”, Yale University Press, 1999. Page 42

⁵ Waites: *ibid.* Pages 51 – 52

⁶ D.A. Spratt, edit., “The Archaeology of Cleveland”, Middlesbrough Borough Council, 1979. Pages 49 and 54

⁷ John G. Mawer, “Where the Wainstones Stand”, Gordian Print, 1977. Page 36

⁸ Evans: *ibid.* Pages 2 and 10