

Introduction

This paper shows the position of old roads on Eaglestone Flat, and their development over the years. They have been extended into surrounding areas to show their destinations. The results are based on a practical knowledge of the area. In general roads preferred high ground, avoided boggy areas and used well defined crossing points over waterways. Many left holloways. Aerial views have helped, as have the old guide stoops with the destinations inscribed on them.

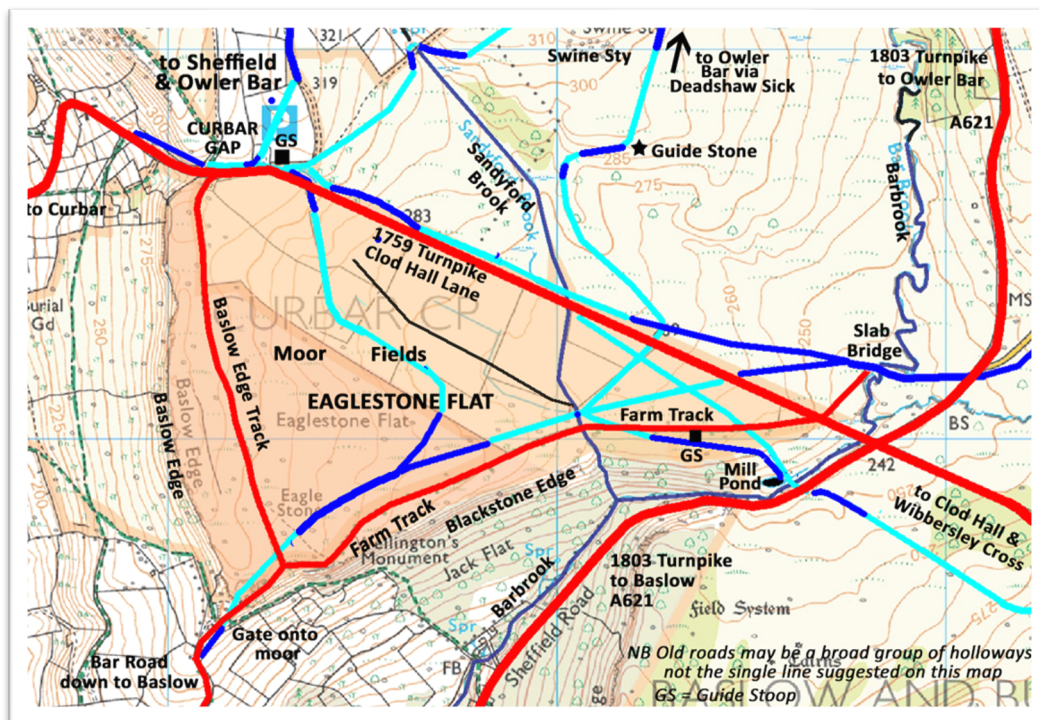
Eaglestone Flat

Eaglestone Flat is an area on the moors north east of Baslow. It is triangular in shape bounded by Clod Hall Lane, Baslow Edge and Blackstone Edge (the edge overlooking the Sheffield Road). About half the area, the higher land to the south west near the Edges, remains moorland: still present are many hollow ways and traces of old quarrying. The other half nearer to the road is now farmland where all traces of holloways have been carefully flattened. Most of this farmland was in place by 1848, as shown in the 1848 Tithe Award maps. The two large fields at the southern end, both adjoining the Farm track were finally drained and ploughed as part of the effort to increase food production in the second world war. Originally much of the area now farmland was marshy and difficult to cross. Early roads in the area all headed towards a crossing over the Sandiford Brook close to Blackstone Edge.

Other features in the area today include the "Farm Track" close to Blackstone Edge and another track parallel to Baslow Edge. Traces of ditches and culverts remain. The millpond by the Barbrook near Clod Hall Lane originally served a lead smelter which closed in the 1770s. Later there was a Corn Mill on the site with a now bridge (still present) connecting it to the road. A feature of note is the stone slab bridge over the Barbrook 170 metres upstream from Clod Hall Lane with a ford alongside it.

There are two types of stone guide posts referred to below. Guide Stones as used in this article refer to pre 1700 stone posts, some are mediaeval and have monastic origins. Guide Stoops were erected after 1709 following an earlier Act of Parliament. In general these were more substantial stones, square in cross section and inscribed with the names of the nearest market towns. Most were in place by 1745.

Eaglestone Flat and surrounding area



Red lines - modern roads and tracks Dark blue lines - holloways Light blue lines - suggested old roads

There are two guide stoops at Eaglestone Flat. One is at Curbar Gap dated 1709 inscribed with the names Tideswell Sheffield Dronfield and Chesterfield, and other is on the farm track above the mill pond with the single inscription "Chesterfield".

The Wibbersley Cross is an old guide stone probably mediaeval about 2 kilometres to the south, close to the building now called Clod Hall Farm. It used to be an important crossroads on the way to Ashgate and Chesterfield. Owl Bar with its inn north east of Big Moor was and still is another road junction where road to Sheffield is crossed by important roads from Hathersage and Tideswell to Dronfield. Many travellers from Eaglestone Flat would have turned right to Dronfield.

Roads at Eaglestone Flat

The first map shows the Eaglestone Flat and its immediate surroundings. Current roads and tracks are drawn in red. Holloways in dark blue are the physical remnants of old tracks where traffic over the centuries had created long ditches. When one way became difficult travellers would have tried another way alongside creating another ditch, so the road became a broad collection of parallel ditches up to 100 metres or more across. This breadth is not shown on the map, but can be seen in the satellite views such as Google. The light blue lines suggest how the holloways on the ground could be connected.

The second map shows the continuation of these roads over the moors. Guide stoops with their destinations and long stretches of holloways ensure that they are fairly accurate, but even so some guesswork was needed, and alternative routes remain possible.

Much of the early traffic would have been local, but it included significant long distance routes connecting Cheshire and Lancashire in the west to Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire in the east. All of the roads described below come through the market towns Bakewell and Tideswell from the west and on to Sheffield, Dronfield and Chesterfield to the east.

Most goods were carried by packhorses, however the roads would also have accommodated wheeled vehicles especially in summer.

The 1759 Turnpike

By the mid 1700s, roads in general were deteriorating because of lack of maintenance and increased use. The solution was the Turnpike. These commercial enterprises were built on routes where there was already significant traffic, so the tolls were intended to give a profit to the investors. They were completely new roads designed to accommodate wheeled vehicles in all weathers, with well built walls which kept animals out and deterred unauthorised use. They were an addition to the old roads which remained in place at least for a while for local traffic and non-payers.

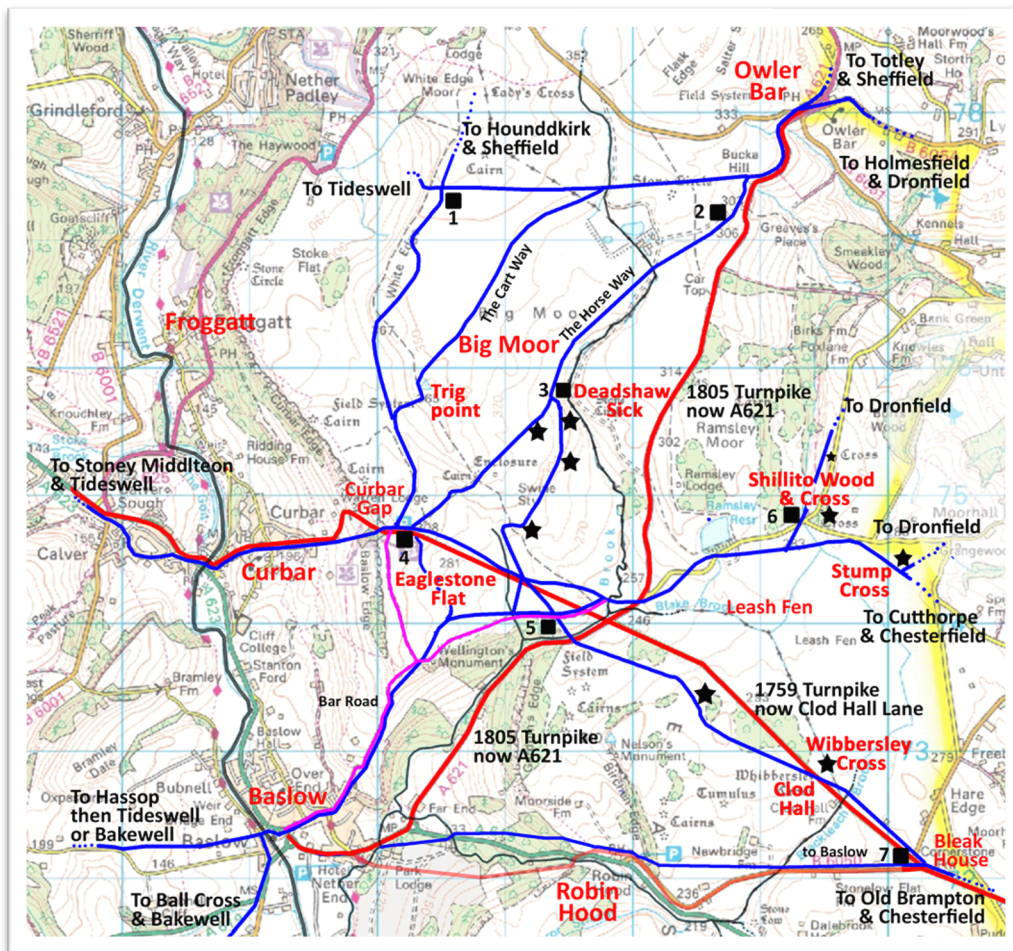
The first Turnpike in the area was enabled by Act of Parliament in 1759. The full route from east to west started in Chesterfield and finished at Hernstone Lane Head near Peak Forest, where on going Turnpikes completing the route to Stockport and Manchester. Locally there were two major branches. One went through Baslow and Hassop, the other through Clod Hall, Curbar Gap and Stoney Middleton meeting up again at Wardlow Mires. Part of this Turnpike was and still is the very straight stretch of road from Curbar gap towards Clod Hall now called Clod Hall Lane. It forms the north-eastern boundary of Eaglestone Flat.

Routes to Eaglestone Flat

For consistency and clarity the roads across Eaglestone Flat are followed from west to east.

- From **Bakewell** there were two ways to Eaglestone. The main one was up to Ball Cross, down through Pilsley, across Baslow Bridge then up Bar Road. Less important was the way through Hassop to Curbar and Curbar Gap.
- From **Tideswell** the roads were either through Stoney Middleton and Curbar, or through Great Longstone Hassop and Baslow. Both of these were upgraded to turnpikes in 1759, highlighting the importance of the routes and their use by long distance traffic.

Roads across Eaglestone Flat and beyond



Red lines
Purple lines
Blue lines

Turnpikes, now main roads
tracks present today
pre 1760 roads

Black lines
Black Squares
Black Stars

Streams
Guide Stoops
Guide Stones

Guide Stoops in the area

1	White Edge (north)	E to Dronfield via Owl Bar, W to Tideswell , N to Sheffield via Houndkirk, South to Bakewell via Curbar Gap, Eaglestone Flat, Baslow, Pilsley and Ball Cross
2	Near Bucka Hill	N to Sheffield via Owl Bar South to Bakewell via Deadshaw Sick and Baslow
3	Deadshaw Sick	NE to Sheffield via Owl Bar (also to Dronfield), SW to Tideswell via Curbar Gap South to Bakewell via Swine Sty, Eaglestone Flat, Baslow and Pilsley
4	Curbar Gap	N to Sheffield along White Edge and Houndkirk, (and to Owl Bar across Big Moor) NE to Dronfield via Deadshaw Sick and Owl Bar (also to Sheffield) W to Tideswell via Curbar and Stoney Middleton S to Chesterfield , via the Slab bridge & Cutthorpe or Wibbersley Cross & Old Brampton.
5	Eaglestone Flat	E to Chesterfield via Shillito (or Wibbersley Cross & Old Brampton)
6	Shillito	SE to Chesterfield via Cutthorpe, NE to Dronfield West to Bakewell via Eaglestone Flat, Baslow & Pilsley
7	Bleak House	E to Chesterfield via Old Brampton, NE to Dronfield , W to Bakewell via Robin Hood NW to Middleton (Stoney Middleton) via Wibbersley Cross & Curbar Gap

Inscriptions on the Guide Stoops are in bold font

Details from "Guide Stoops of Derbyshire" by Howard Smith 2009

Routes from Baslow to east and north east

Bar Road in Baslow leads up to the gate on to the moor. Above the gate a stone quarry has carved away the old road but it reappears on the moor above as a whole group or braid of holloways. Close inspection of a satellite image (e.g. Google) show that most aim north east, spread out across the moor and disappearing when they reach farmland. They reappear west of Clod Hall Lane as they descend the hillside towards the slab bridge over the Barbrook. The road continues up the far hillside, passes south of the Little Barbrook reservoir to the guide stoop at Shillito Wood and on to the Stump Cross before dividing to go to **Chesterfield via Cutthorpe** or to **Dronfield**. The arial view shows that the holloways on either side of the farmland at Eaglestone Flat tend to converge on the Sandyford Brook near Blackstone Edge, supporting evidence for a ford or bridge at this point.

There were three branches off this main route from Baslow outlined above.

- **To Curbar Gap and Sheffield.** Before reaching the area of fields, a few of the holloways head slightly northwards. This original road would have curved above the boggy ground before reaching a small rocky slope, where holloways still present confirm its presence up to Curbar Gap with connections on to Sheffield.
- **To Owler Bar and on Sheffield and Dronfield.** After Sandyford Brook a branch went north across the fields to a gate onto the moor off Clod Hall Lane: this is about 500 metres up from the Barbrook and may be an original feature of the Turnpike to allow this traffic across it. It continued for 500 metres over low moorland, curved round the top of a stream, ascended a holloway to an old guide stone, then across a causey (stone paving now covered over) to Swine Sty where it ascended the scarp onto the flatter moorland above. Two guide posts, the first leaning sideways and the next marked BAS (Baslow), lead it to the guide stoop in Deadshaw Sick. It continued up the west side of the Barbrook before crossing it below Big Barbrook reservoir (where there is still a bridge) and heading for Owler Bar, passing on the way another guide stoop at SK 287772 marked Sheffield and Bakewell.
- **To Chesterfield via Wibbersley Cross.** One branch after Sandyford Brook goes south east. Shallow holloways south of the Farm Track curve down to the Mill Pond where it joins the road from Curbar Gap to Wibbersley Cross, and on to Old Brampton and Chesterfield

Routes from Curbar Gap

The road up from Curbar divided into five at or near Curbar Gap. Most branches have long stretches of holloways.

- **To Sheffield via Houndkirk.** The first branch heads north across the fields and lower moorland before reaching the top of White Edge about 300 metres north of the Trig point (SK26392639). It continues along the scarp to the guide stoop at SK 26517752 where it crossed the old Tideswell to Dronfield road. The inscription on the stoop includes Bakewell confirming a through route from this market town, and Sheffield which must have taken the traveller north past the Wooden Pole at Longshaw (SK 26787909) and on to Houndkirk Moor, Eccleshall and Sheffield town centre.
- There is a branch to the right from this road at the north east corner of the enclosed fields near Curbar Gap. It leads directly up to the Trig point and down into a shallow valley in the middle of Big Moor. Holloways point to three potential crossing points over a boggy stream. A little further north, the road curves to the east, crosses the Barbrook at the north end of the old Big Barbrook Reservoir and continues on to Owler Bar. Oral Tradition calls it The Cart-Way
- **To Owler Bar and Dronfield.** The next branch from Curbar Gap went north east to White Edge just north of Swine Sty. On the moor above there are numerous holloways and an old guide post leading down to the guide stoop at Deadshaw Sick where it joined the road from Baslow to Owler Bar. This was The Horse-Way
- **To Chesterfield via Cutthorpe.** The third branch goes south east. There is a single holloway north east of the road part of the way down to Sandyford brook, where there would have been a bridge and/or ford. After the brook holloways re-appear, gradually deepening as they approach the slab bridge where it joins the old Baslow road to Shillito, Cutthorpe and Chesterfield.

- **To Chesterfield via Wibbersley Cross & Old Brampton.** The fourth branch, replaced in 1759 by the Turnpike, was perhaps the busiest. It would have followed the Cutthorpe road to the Sandyford Brook (above), before branching right across Eaglestone Flat to the Mill Pond. There must have been a substantial bridge and ford across the Barbrook, about 50 metres above the present disused bridge. The first physical remains of it today are holloways south of the Barbrook and the A621 road on the bank leading up to the flatter moorland. They can be followed for the first 100 metres or so towards Birchens Edge. Aerial views then show stretches of them on the long wet slope before they become much more apparent near the crest of the Edge where a fallen stone may once have been a guide stone. There are no further remains, but the route is marked by an old guide stone on the moor above Birchens Edge, and by Wibbersley Cross itself. The road continues to Bleak House where a guide stoop dated 1743 includes "MIDEL TON ROAD" (i.e. Stoney Middleton) and "CHESTERFIELD" (via Old Brampton and Ashgate)

It is of interest that there are two distinct ways from Curbar Gap across Big Moor to Sheffield. The first is north along White Edge, Houndkirk and Eccleshall. This is a route following high ground and ridges the whole way with a single stream crossing at The Wooden Pole, Longshaw. The other is east from the Gap to Deadshaw Sick, up the valley of the Barbrook, across to Owler Bar and then on to Sheffield either through Holmesfield or via Totley and Abbey Brook. The high road is only one kilometre longer than the lower road using valleys and may have been the preferred route in earlier times.

The Farm Track and Guide Stoop

When the Turnpike was built in 1759, it cut across the old Baslow to Chesterfield "main" road, at that point a wide braid of parallel holloways about 200 - 300 metres across. This presented a problem to the road builders as the Turnpike needed a single crossing point with gates to control the traffic and keep out animals. It is suggested that a crossing was made at or near the present gate. The Farm Track, a properly constructed road with ditches and culverts, could have been built at the same time, or it could have been later perhaps as part of the alterations following the 1824 Enclosure Award. The track started at the top of Bar Road and continued right through to the slab bridge. The other track parallel to Baslow Edge could have been built at the same time for the benefit of travellers going north from the top of Bar Road.

The undated guide stoop above the mill pond had always been a puzzle. Consensus at present is that it was a simple reassurance for travellers on the Farm Track on the way to Chesterfield via the slab bridge and Cutthorpe, however -

- it is close to the crossing point of the old Curbar Gap to Wibbersley Cross road giving more meaning to its position.
- 1759 was late for a guide stoop. It is possible that the Farm Track was in place before 1759 or it might have been on the original old road some 200 metres to the north and later moved to its present position.
- It is not orientated parallel to the Farm Track. When facing any guide stoop, the place name is always to the right. In this case the only destination is Chesterfield. It points exactly to the holloways on the south bank of the Barbrook leading to Old Brampton and Chesterfield

Even so it remains a puzzle.

The 1803 Baslow Owler Bar Turnpike

The Turnpike from Baslow to Owler Bar now the A621 was a relatively late addition to the roads in the area. The Act of Parliament was in 1803 but it was some years before road was completed. It replaced the old route through Curbar Gap and the upper Barbrook valley, taking a completely new route up from Baslow before cutting through the Edge into virgin moorland to Owler Bar.

The old mill pond had earlier provided power for a lead smelter. This was built in 1645 and abandoned about 1760 leaving the water facilities intact. At some point a corn mill was built on the site and the pond reconstructed. The disused bridge is at the same level as the road so it, and the mill must have been constructed after 1803

David Dalrymple-Smith

dds@w3z.co.uk

Dec 2018