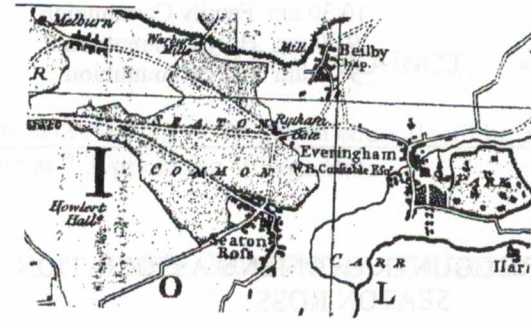


## PAST TIMES Seaton Ross "Common"



The common was once an integral part of the farming economy of a "Manor". In open field villages such as Seaton Ross manorial tenants had the right to graze livestock not only on the common edge of the settlement but on the other open fields. Common rights were vital for the ability to survive on a small farm; they are referred to as the 'appurtenances' of a property. The right to graze animals on the commons in particular was particularly important. Common rights were basically those of pasture (for

sheep and horses), pannage (for pigs), turbary (peat), estovers (wood), piscary (fish) and commonable soil (sand, stone, gravel etc.)

In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the common at Seaton Ross was a barren expanse of moor land, there were few productions save grass and tree like shrubs, and in certain places there were small woods which were overgrown with briars, brackens and gorse bush.

The "Common" then stretched as far north as Rytham Gate and was bounded by the belt - Moor Boundary, and on the southwest by Breckstreet Farm. Its area was about 800 acres. There are several maps which support this statement that the common once stretched as far as Rytham Gate, because the fields there have many gorse and hedge bushes.

In the early days, boys from the village took cows onto the common and tended them. Around 1860 mention is made of a particular dyke named "Leech Dyke" which contained some valuable named aquatic worms, or leeches used for the abstract of blood. Many of these creatures were found in the dyke and were sold for a good price. They were caught by men from the village and sent to the market when required. This dyke is likely to have been similar to black dyke.

Later this dyke was filled in with soil and the only surviving memory of it is now a bank of soil. There was no arable land during this period on the common, but later it was dug out by villagers and made available for cultivation.

The common was let in allotments ranging in area from one to six acres to the extent of rent being one acre per annum. The produce was of various kinds, sugar -beet, mangolds, turnips, carrots and wheat rye barley etc.

Flowers grew proficently on the common, wild rush heather, marsh marigold, daisies and buttercups. One of the most outstanding plants was the ling, which resembled heather and belongs to the same family as the Erica order known locally as ling.

The qualification, conditions and regulations of those privileged to the common were as follows: The rent being £1 per acre, per annum. That the tenant may qualify himself or herself as capable and respectable to own such an area of land. The common was owned by the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire whose residence was Everingham Hall.

In May 1811 the lands in the township and parish of Seaton Ross were enclosed an extract from the enclosure reads to quote " Whereas within the Township of Seaton Ross, in the Parish of Seaton Ross, in the Riding of the County of York, there is a certain open and stinted pasture called the Car, containing about eighty acres, and there are also certain common and waste lands, called the common and green, containing about seven hundred and twenty acres". Enclosure as now a part of everyday life in the countryside. The plan above showing Seaton Common is an extract from 'A Survey of the County of York' by Thomas Jeffreys 1771-1772. Thomas Jeffreys was geographer to King George III and a renowned mapmaker and engraver.