

12- A Brief History of Barwick

Barwick in Elmet is situated in West Yorkshire, longitude 1°23" west and latitude 53° 50" north and is 8 miles east of Leeds and with four main routes through the village. North to the A64 trunk road from Leeds to Scarborough, east to Aberford and the M1, south to Garforth and west to Leeds City Centre. York is 18 miles to the north east with Scholes 2 miles to the west of Barwick.

The ancient village of Barwick in Elmet dates back to around 200-600 BC. Standing on well drained fertile limestone, farming has been the prime occupation of the village right up to the twentieth century. The 15 acres of earthworks situated at Wendel Hill and Hall Tower Hill were probably built by the local tribe of Brigantes and are rare examples of an iron age hillfort of some importance. Coins have been found dating from the second century BC and first century AD which would suggest some continuity in the use of the earthworks up to the time when the Romans conquered the north of England. They seem to have passed by as there is no evidence that they ever occupied the village. There is later reference of a well developed agricultural community recorded in the Domesday Book - "Ilbert de Lacey, 3 churches, 3 mills. Dormitory for Leeds. Church with a Saxon Cross. Impressive motte and bailey site" which would indicate a physical presence by the Normans. The Lordship of the Manor passed eventually through marriage to the estates of the Dukes of Lancaster (The Duchy) in the fourteenth century hence becoming a royal Manor but it is unlikely that de Lacey or the Dukes ever lived or even visited the village. The rector was appointed by the Lord of the Manor in those days and played an important and influential role enjoying a well endowed "living" of one third of the tithe income. In 1288 this was £30pa, in 1610 was £100 and 1780 £300 pa. The first rector was de Lacey's brother in law William de Vesey in 1190. From a number of taxation surveys starting with the Poll Tax in 1379 we know that there were 197 adults in about 100 households which was perhaps low due to the Black Death of 1349. However, the parish had a larger population than all others in the Skyrack Wapentake except for Leeds. There has been a rectory on or about the site of the Old Rectory since the fifteenth century and apart from the church is the oldest surviving building in the village. Later surveys show that the parish population was double the size of Ilkley, Otley and Bingley and was also more prosperous. In 1530 when under threat from France the Muster Roll for the Skyrack Wapentake lists the men from Barwick in Elmet available to fight. There were two Esquires John Gascoigne and William Ellis, the Constable, William Bryge and names 16 archers and 28 billmen (armed with a variety of weapons such as pikes). In 1603 King James granted the Manor to his wife, Anne of Denmark for life. In 1619 it passed to the Prince of Wales, their son, who became Charles I. Short of money in 1627 he mortgaged the Manor in London and two years later it was sold thus ending the royal connection. After passing through several hands the Manor ended in the hands of the Gascoigne family who in 1680 were accused of conspiring against the state in what was called the Barnbow Plot. In 1743 the rector recorded that there were 240 families in the parish including 20 who were Roman Catholics and 4 who were non-conformists. Methodism started in the middle of the century and by 1800 was well established. In 1720 there is first mention of the school in Barwick. A female Friendly Society started in 1778 and soon afterwards a Mens' Friendly Society which gave some form of insurance against poverty. The parish built a workhouse at Rakehill in 1781 which operated for a hundred years until Tadcaster workhouse opened. The century closed with the final enclosure of farming land which ended the medieval pattern of farming where the rector benefited with 900 acres awarded to him.

The Methodist Chapel opened in 1804 and occupied what is now the Miners' Welfare Institute in Chapel Lane. Around 1820 a windmill was built at Carrfield which saw the decline of the water mill at Hillam. The Enclosure Act and later the depressed state of farming along with the increase of better paid work in Leeds led to a decline in the number of farm labourers. The opening of coal pits in the 1870's gave the first large scale alternative to farming. In 1821 the parish had 1,481 inhabitants and from 1841 there was a ten yearly census which provides more interesting statistics. The Crossgates to Wetherby railway opened in 1876 and enabled residents to commute from Scholes to Leeds. The last decade of the century saw the setting up of the Parish Council under the provisions of the Local Government Act 1894. The Parish Council replaced the old Vestry Meetings which had provided local government in the community since medieval times. Above the Parish Council, the Act provided for the creation of the Tadcaster Rural District Council which lasted for about 80 years. By this time the Parish had shrunk with the Crossgates, Manston and Stanks area being administered by Leeds City. The Parish consisted of Barwick, Scholes and the Wellington Hill area. At the start of the twentieth century the village was still a farming community with little other form of wealth creation except coal mining in nearby pits. A new Methodist Chapel was opened at the Boyle and better transport attracted a group of artists to the village where they rented a cottage in