

VILLAGE HISTORY LESSON PART 1

We are fortunate to live in a beautiful area. But how much do you know of why it is like this? How have the people living here over the centuries shaped this land we live in?

The earliest signs of life may well be an undistinguished mound just off the road towards Sicklinghall. The name Barrowby is all we have to go on. "Barrow", of course, is the name given to the numerous Bronze Age mounds dotted all over the country. "by" is the old Viking name for village. Hence possibly 1200 years ago a small settlement became simply known as the village by the mound. So we start maybe 3000 years ago with evidence of the first of our ancestors to till the land round here.

The Greeks never made it to these desolate islands but what did the Romans ever do for us? Not a lot it would seem. There are no Roman villas or amphitheatres and the nearest Roman roads form a distant triangle from the village: York (Eboracum) to Ilkley (Olicana or Olenacum) well south of the River Wharfe; Ilkley to Aldborough (Isurium) near Boroughbridge well to the north of Harrogate; and the road north just east of Wetherby. So apparently no interest in any Brigantes living here at that time, which perhaps is a blessing with no coach parties jostling with cyclists to view priceless mosaics in the village.

But then again maybe the Romans were here. Or at least we were aware of them. Why else would there be St Helen's well in the village? St Helena, Empress married to Constantius, was mother of Constantine the Great and helped spread Christianity; she was possibly a daughter of King Cole of Colchester ("Old King Cole was a merry old soul..."), but then again there are at least 25 St Helen's wells round the country and the name may just have appeared later to distinguish one of the 40 odd wells known round the village.

Next in the series: Violent invasion or peaceful immigration?

Quiz question: Where was the old village dance hall?

The answers will be in the Part 2