

## VILLAGE HISTORY LESSON PART 4

1066 and All That. Well, the “All That” is quite a lot. The first thing William did after defeating Harold at the battle of Hastings was to proclaim that all the land was his. He proceeded to strip the titles from all the existing owners, kept a big chunk for himself and gave selected areas to his followers.

The effect of this fundamental dictat is with us still: 70% of Britain’s land remains in the hand of less than 1% of its population, including the descendants of those early invaders with names today like Darcy, Percy, Montgomery and Mandeville who remain significantly wealthier (at least 10%) than those who descend from Anglo-Saxon stock.

Furthermore, Queen Elizabeth II remains the nominal owner of every bit of land in England, and every landowner is technically just a tenant (who pays rent in the form of loyalty). So when Prince Charles eventually succeeds he could demand land as part of his Duchy Estate from anyone who fails wholeheartedly to support the monarchy (which means The Fold going on the market).

Locally, William divided the larger parish between himself and William de Perci, whose stronghold was at Spofforth Castle, and took the Forest of Knaresborough including Kirkby Overblow as a royal hunting ground. If you join the strollers up Walton Head Lane and go far enough you will see by the left verge an early boundary marking stone.

In the Domesday Book of 1086 Kirkby Overblow (Cherchebi) is recorded in the Hundred (probably meaning an obligation to provide a hundred men-at-arms) of Burghshire (a large area stretching from Wetherby to Ripon). The Village included Walton Head (stolen by Harrogate Borough Council to build the estate) and the lost settlement of Todoure (or Tidover). The population then can be estimated at around 300, little different to to-day. It was valued at £2 in 1066, somewhat less than now when it is probably nearer £200 million.

Next time: more trouble and strife

Part 3 quiz question: where was the early post office?

Answer: if you thought this is easy, it must be Mr Parkin's old shop opposite Walton Head Lane which after he died in 1990 was called "The Old Post Office" (re-christened "Cherchebi" by the new owners), then you were wrong! Note the word "early". The earliest recorded post office in the village is in 1888 and was in Floral Cottage next door to the Shoulder of Mutton. Prior to that there was a Receiver of post in the village appointed in 1846 at £4 a year. He complained that this was insufficient and Postmaster General replied: "I cannot recommend any addition to the allowance granted – if he is unsatisfied he is quite at liberty to resign the appointment"

Part 4 quiz question: what is the furthest you can see from the village?