

VILLAGE HISTORY LESSON PART 9

Failing to toe the line had rather more serious consequences for our forebears. The church favoured excommunication with the denial of all the rites and consolations of religion then burial in unconsecrated ground (to the north of the church?) along with unbaptised babies, suicides and criminals. There were two excommunications here in the 18th century.

In physical terms secular punishments could be said to be harsher, at least apart from burning heretics. In 1598 a woman stole some sheets hung over hedgerows in Kearby. She was whipped with “the cat” through Kearby, then again through Kirkby Overblow, and finally at Wetherby where she was forced to display the lacerations on the upper part of her body before being flogged again. So ladies, don’t be tempted by sheets hung out to dry in this nice weather: the village stocks which used to be on the triangular piece of land by the Star and Garter can always be re-built. In 1751 the village constable was paid 6s 0d for “stocks making” and a further 5d for “colouring” them.

The 18th century saw much change in rural England. Strip farming, “ridge and furrow”, whereby peasants leased their own small areas of land, and common grazing land were enclosed into privately owned fields. This was a process which had been going on for many years, spawning protest movements like the Diggers of Cromwell’s time, and culminated in villages being left with just a Village Green as common land (though not here). There is no doubt it led to agricultural improvement, though at the cost of dispossession of rural communities: now half the land is owned by 0.06% of the population.

The only record of a riot in this area relates not to land enclosure but another common cause of objection: erection of turnpike barriers. These were introduced mainly in the 18th century to pay for road improvements and maintenance because the ancient duty of parishes to do this was being ignored. In 1793 about 400 men burnt the toll barrier at Pool and arranged the

following day to meet at Harewood Bridge to burn down the barrier there. Lascelles at Harewood House received word of this and assembled some 140 "stout fellows" from his estate equipped with some 40 firearms and two carts were placed across the south side of the bridge. Church bells were rung and in the ensuing melée several on both sides were wounded and thirty rioters were taken prisoner, ten being committed to York Castle. Think of that as you next drive to Leeds toll free on the A61.

Next time: more law breaking.

Part 8 quiz question: if you were arrested for being drunk and disorderly outside the Shoulder of Mutton, where were you taken? Answer: probably bedded down for the night in the police house which in Victorian times was in one of the Park View cottages and more recently at no 1 Harewood View, the penultimate building on the left going to Barrowby before the old council house estate.

Part 9 quiz question: where was the village laundry?