

**Some elements of the  
Landscape History of the five  
‘Low Villages’, North  
Lincolnshire.**



**Richard Clarke.**

## **Some elements of the landscape history of the five 'Low Villages', north Lincolnshire.**

The following twelve short articles were written for the Low Villages monthly magazine in 2014 and 2015. Part One was the first, and so on. In presenting all 12 as one file certain formatting problems were encountered, particularly with Parts two and three.

### **Part One.**

Middlegate follows the configuration of the upper scarp slope of the chalk escarpment from the top of the ascent in S. Ferriby to Elsham Hill, from where a direct south-east route, independent of contours, crosses the 'Barnetby Gap' to Melton Ross. The angled ascent in S. Ferriby to the western end of the modern chalk Quarry is at a gradient of 1:33 and from thereon Middlegate winds south through the parishes of Horkstow, Saxby, Bonby and Worlaby following the undulations in the landscape at about ten meters below the highest point of the scarp slope. Therefore the route affords panoramic views west and north-west but not across the landscape of the dip slope to the east.

Cameron<sup>1</sup> considered the prefix middle to derive from the Old English 'middel' and gate from the Old Norse 'gata' meaning a way, path or road. From the 6th and 7th centuries Old English (Anglo-Saxon) terms would have mixed with the Romano-British language, Old Norse (Viking) from the 9<sup>th</sup> century. However Middlegate had existed as a route-way long before these terms could have been applied, it being thought to have been a Celtic highway, possibly even Neolithic and thus dating back five millennia. If so it was almost certainly a highway for the trade in flint such as that from the shaft mines at Grimes Graves, today a heritage site between Brandon and Thetford in south-west Norfolk. Archaeologists examining Neolithic sites can

---

1 Cameron, K. *A Dictionary of Lincolnshire Place-Names* (English Place-Name Society, 1998)

identify the source of flint objects and chippings found and have thus established that such long distance trade existed.

Grimes Graves flint would have been transported to the Wash shoreline along a pre-historic track now called Peddars Way.<sup>2</sup> No evidence of early trans-Wash craft has come to light but there is evidence of early craft that may have carried such cargos across the Humber. One of the five 'Ferriby boats' discovered between the 1940s and 1970s in the foreshore mud of North Ferriby has been carbon dated to about 1900BC. These large sleek craft may have been able to navigate the coastal waters of the North Sea as well as crossing the Humber and linking to Middlegate.<sup>3</sup> A prehistoric track led from the Wash to the Humber along the upper scarp slope of the Lincolnshire Wolds, Middlegate being the northern end of this route-way. Rex Russell's map of post-Enclosure South Ferriby (1801-1804)<sup>4</sup> labels Middlegate as 'Caistor Road', the O.S. First series one inch map (1820s) labels it Middle Gate Lane as far inland as Melton Ross.

This brief study raises two questions about the early evolution of Middlegate; why did the early traders/travelers choose to deliberately follow a particular contour along the escarpment, and secondly was the term 'middle' identifying this track in relation to some point or feature on either side.

---

2 Although Peddars Way follows a remarkably straight north-west route from Castle Acre to Holme-next-the-Sea across the rolling chalk-lands of the East Anglian Heights it is thought to have been a pre-historic route-way adopted, and possibly straightened, in the Romano-British era.

3 Ted Wright and his brother first drew attention to the remains of these boats in the 1930s. The anaerobic conditions in the foreshore mud had preserved the organic material. 'Tommy' Sheppard, first curator of Hull Museums and as a child resident of South Ferriby, encouraged the Wright brother's research.

4 Russell, R. *Landscape Changes in South Humberside* (Humberside Leisure Services, 1982, 133).

The route chosen high-up on the scarp slope afforded views over the landscape to the west and well above the impenetrable marsh of the Ancholme valley floor. However an alternative route along the top of the escarpment would have afforded views to both east and west, a potential military advantage. Was the route weather related in that running where it did it afforded some shelter from north and east winds? Was a political factor at play, the escarpment top being reserved for some greater priority?

As regards the term 'middle', if taken literally, middle of, or between, what? If the term identified the middle one of three pre-historic track-ways then this has some credibility as 'Barton Street' followed the lower dip slope of the Wolds from the Humber southwards and there was almost certainly a prehistoric track along the Lincoln Edge across the Ancholme valley (this before the Roman Ermine Street). If 'middle' meant between then Middlegate was between the Ancholme valley and the lowland North Sea coast, but then so was 'Barton Street'. Of course the name for the pre-Saxon route-way may well not have included the concept of middle at all, so what was it 'between' in the 7th century?

Middlegate is favoured by cyclists and walkers from around the region given the fine views and lush vegetation of its verges and field boundary hedges. A route rooted in History.

## **Part 2.**

The landform/geology of the Low Village parishes is, conveniently, easy to understand. They are underlain by a series of strata, or layers, of rock formed across geological time, these in turn tilted from the horizontal by about five degrees, the upland facing west. Across geological time this once mighty mountain range has been eroded back to reveal the older strata now forming the Pennines of west and south Yorkshire while the newer strata further east form escarpments, the scarp slope (steep slope) being the edge of the strata, the dip slope (gentle slope) being the top of the strata (see Fig. 1). Chalk was

one of the newer strata and the Low Villages lie near the base of the scarp slope of the chalk escarpment. Prior to the last glaciation the chalk escarpment would have been virtually continuous, interrupted only by a dry valley where the Humber Estuary now flows.



**Fig. 1 View east from the Winterton Carrs area of the Vale of Ancholme. The linear highland, running approximately north-south, is the scarp slope of the Lincolnshire Wolds (chalk escarpment's scarp slope). Just discernible are the two parallel runs of pylons and high tension cables crossing over the top of the escarpment between South Ferriby and Horkstow. Here the comparatively gentle gradient enables arable land-use along the scarp.**

The general average gradient of the scarp slope is 1:30 although, as the face of the scarp has a diverse topography, gradients can vary along any given ascent. In the Worlaby/Elsham locality the general gradient is slightly less. This formidable gradient has meant that lanes rising up the scarp face were/are either angled or snaking to reduce the steepness of the climb. Today the scarp is traversed by one or two minor roads in each of the six parishes. Historically there were more such lanes, for example the O.S. First series one inch to one mile map (late 1820s) records as highways in South Ferriby 'Parsonage Lane' and a lane passing the present day kennels and

linking to Middlegate. Above Horkstow a network of lanes angled across the scarp, these today retained in the various public footpaths which exit to the B1204 near the church. Above Worlaby and Elsham the configuration of lanes seems little changed while above Saxby and Bonby rights of way that are now footpaths were then (1820s) shown as highways.

Despite the fact that the Geological map defines all the scarp slope as composed of 'Ferriby chalk with reddened basal beds'<sup>5</sup> the scarp slope does not present a regular face. Localised fault lines in South Ferriby and Horkstow parishes have resulted in sections of the scarp 'slumping' over geological time while the 'reddened basal beds' appear, in places, to result in vertical undulations above the B1204. In places the scarp is characterized by wide, shallow depressions while above Saxby village and beside the woodland footpath running north from Danns Lane there are sections of vertical cliffs, possibly resulting from earlier chalk quarrying into the scarp face. In South Ferriby recorded episodes of soil creep and slumping almost certainly resulted in the re-orientation of the church in early modern times.

Today three types of land-use may be seen along the scarp slope; arable land, grazed grassland/parkland and plantation woodland. Rex Russell's study of the Parliamentary Enclosure of South Ferriby parish<sup>6</sup> shows that most of the scarp slope was part of South Field,

---

5 See Geological Survey of Great Britain (map), Sheet 80 Kingston upon Hull, 1:50000 series, Drift Edition.

one of three large open fields enclosed between 1801 and 1804 **along with the rest of the open field land on the dip slope. The 'Old Enclosures'** (previously enclosed by local agreement and in single ownership) were mostly west of Horkstow and Barton roads in and around the traditional village centre and including part of the scarp slope either side of Parsonage Lane. Thus for centuries the open field administration by the manorial court(s) had dealt with scarp

---

and dip slopes alike. Corresponding details for the parishes of Horkstow, Saxby, Bonby and Worlaby are less accessible as they were enclosed by private agreement, but it seems likely that their pre-enclosure geography was similar to that of South Ferriby.

Whether before Enclosure all or part of the scarp slope was tilled and divided into strips and furlongs, as on the open fields of the dip slope, is speculation. However, it seems likely that most of the scarp slope would have had a separate identity. Certainly the scarp slope would have been less wooded in centuries past, most of the woodland seen today comprising trees densely planted over 100 years ago with little species variety. On early OS maps the hatching (later replaced by contours) and woodland symbols blur together but the First Series 1inch OS map seems to show very little woodland along the scarp slope. The early 20th century equivalent shows that existing scarp slope woodland had been planted in South Ferriby, Saxby and Worlaby parishes.

Finally a sympathetic thought, the medieval and early modern generations of peasants and yeomen, in order to work their scattered plots in the open fields, would have had to ascend the scarp slope from the village, burdened with their hand-tools, and this before work could begin. Probably obesity was not their biggest worry.

### **Part Three.**

Much of the land of each Low Village parish lies across the dip slope of the Lincolnshire Wolds. As we have today, so medieval villagers working on their open fields would have had panoramic views across the northern end of the Lincolnshire 'Marsh', and across the lower Humber to the plain of Holderness beyond, this aspect contrasting with the view from the village itself west across the Vale of Ancholme. On the dip slope modern civil parish boundaries mirror old

---

ecclesiastical parish boundaries, these being clearly shown on the modern O.S. Explorer map 281 (scale 1:25000).

The western parish boundary of Barton forms the eastern parish boundaries of South Ferriby, Horkstow and Saxby. This parish boundary, running south from the Humber bank, follows the course of a Romano-British route-way leading inland from the excavated 'ladder-settlement' now sited just above the Humber foreshore.<sup>6</sup> For some distance south of Barton parish the Viking Way long distance footpath follows this ancient route-way. South Ferriby's southern parish boundary passes west from the first bend in Horkstow Road (when travelling from Barton) and is defined by field boundaries before crossing Middlegate above Field House Farm.



**Fig. 2 View east-north-east from Horkstow Road, showing the heads of two dry-valleys which diversify this section of the dip slope. Anglo-Saxon Barton lay in the sheltered lower section of these dry-valleys.**

6 Russell, E. and R. *Landscape Changes South Humberside*, Humberside Leisure Services, 1982.



---

Horkstow's eastern boundary is followed by a public footpath following field headlands between Horkstow and Saxby Roads. Here survives residual evidence of 'Horkstow Bank', a linear earthwork which once defined the parish boundary (see Lyons, 1988, see later). Saxby Road (post enclosure road) follows the southern edge of Saxby parish before crossing Middlegate above Horkstow Grange.



**Fig. 3 View south showing a residual section of 'Horkstow Bank'.**

The southern boundary of Saxby parish strikes west from 'Old Belt Plantation' to follow field boundaries before crossing Middlegate and the B1204 between Saxby and Bonby villages.

Bonby's eastern parish boundary abuts the parishes of Barton and Thornton Curtis whereas its southern boundary follows a minor dry valley up the dip slope, crosses the B1206 (previously the A15) and Middlegate before descending the scarp slope just north of Worlaby Fox Covert.

---

Worlabys southern parish boundary follows another dry valley before crossing Middlegate, passing over 'Elsham Hill' and down the scarp slope through 'Worlabys Hillside Plantation'.

Parish boundaries evolved in the early middle ages in response to Papal dictates requiring people to attend only their local church, to which tithes were to be paid. The Low Village parish boundaries provide interesting examples of where pre-existing man-made features (the Romano-British track) and landscape features (dry valleys) were followed. To this day post-enclosure field boundaries and the edge of plantations often follow parish boundaries.

My comment in the previous article that 'Corresponding details (of parish enclosure) for the parishes of Horkstow, Saxby, Bonby and Worlabys are less accessible ...' has been overtaken by my recent introduction to two publications; (a) Lyons, N. *Enclosure in Context* (Humberside Education Committee, 1988) and (b) Carey, R. *'Saxbey Towne in Platt=forme'* (published privately, 2000). Although both are the product of in-depth research they are now out of print.

Prior to Parliamentary Enclosure, 1801-'04, South Ferriby's three open fields spanned the dip slope of the parish, Barton's neighbouring Westfield had been enclosed between 1793 and 1796. Enclosure across the other four Low Village parishes had taken place much earlier and by private (not Parliamentary) agreement. In the absence of definitive evidence Carey concluded that Saxby's enclosure took place in or around 1667, this by careful analysis of a 1667 parish map ('Platt'), contemporary probate inventories (wills) and glebe terriers (inventories of land and goods allocated to the incumbent). Unlike later Parliamentary Enclosure private enclosures usually left existing roads, drains, landmarks and settlements in place, also the resulting changes happened only gradually. Lyons (see above) concluded, following much research, that the lands of Horkstow and Bonby's open fields were enclosed in the early 17<sup>th</sup>

---

century while in Worlaby 'Enclosure was probably completed by 1700'.<sup>6</sup>



**Fig. 4 View south-west across the 'brooding' Elsham Hill in Worlaby parish.**

Enclosure meant that previously tilled plots across the open fields were replaced by single-ownership fields, usually with 'quickthorn' hedges planted to define field boundaries. Both Carey and Lyons found evidence that across the dip slope successive fields running east-west were allocated to the same owner. Furthermore this research unearthed an interesting phrase when referring to the dip slope 'from Barton meare unto the top of the hill', a 'meare' being an object that defined a point along a parish boundary. Where misspelled (mere) it is often assumed to refer to a bygone wetland area.

Confusingly Armstrong's county map ('Lincoln-shire'), surveyed and printed 1776-1778, labels the western lands of Barton parish (then an open field) and the dip slope lands of Ferriby (then open fields), Horkstow and Saxby parishes (then enclosed) as 'Common Town Fields'.

#### **Part 4.**

The western side of the five Low Village parishes extends across the eastern side of the Vale of Ancholme. Underlying the glacial and post-glacial soils of the Vale is a rock strata called the 'Ancholme Clay Group', the constituents of which were deposited in the upper Jurassic geological time (150-200 million years ago) when the landscape and climate of this part of the planet were very different to today. At 100 plus meters thick this strata is much thicker than the overlying chalk or the underlying Jurassic limestone. Overlying the solid rock of the Ancholme clay bed is a thickness of glacially deposited soil overlain in turn by post glacial silt deposited by subsiding flood waters.

From the Humber as far south as Elsham parish this topsoil has been deposited as estuarine alluvium deposited by flood waters surging inland from the Humber rather than by fresh water over-topping the natural levee of the Old River Ancholme. The Hull Valley, on the north bank of the Humber, has the same physical composition, the City of Hull having expanded across the estuarine alluvial lowlands. However, whereas in the Hull Valley the term 'carr' was adopted in historic time to refer to the vale soils north of the estuarine alluvium, in the Vale of Ancholme the term seems universal (Winterton Carrs, Horkstow Carrs, Saxby Carrs, Bonby Carrs and Worlaby Carrs) - except in Winteringham parish where the term 'Ings' is used to define the heavy, potentially waterlogged soils of the Vale.

As the Low Village parishes evolved in the early middle ages the meandering course of the Old River Ancholme was chosen as the natural feature to define their western parish boundaries. Throughout the parishes the course of the 'Old' River is defined by modern drains of varying width and depth and, in all but the southern part of Horkstow parish, parish boundaries are just to the west of the

canalised River Ancholme.<sup>7</sup> A recent interesting development can be followed in Horkstow parish where North Lincs. Council have negotiated a permissive footpath alongside the drain which follows the course of the 'Old' River. Accessed from near the end of Holmes Lane (Winterton Carrs) or from the track leading from the west side of Horkstow Bridge<sup>8</sup> the route follows field headlands alongside a substantial watercourse up to the field boundary that defines the parish boundary with South Ferriby. From there the route follows a section of the canalized Ancholme then around the permanent pasture land where once clay was dug for local brick making.



**Fig. 5 A section of the course of the 'Old River' (deepened) alongside which runs the permissive path.**

The Vale is the flood-plain of the 'Old' River, the waters of which must have always been sluggish as there is little fall in level between Brigg and the Humber. Consequently the main reason for the canalisation of the Ancholme and for the excavation of substantial feeder and relief drains, such as the 'Land Drain' in Worlaby parish which

---

7 The history of the canalisation of the 'Old' River has been studied in depth by the distinguished historian Raymond Carey of South Ferriby, although the resultant text has not yet been published. In view of this I shall not try to summarize the story here.

8 Currently (Oct. 2014) a small explanatory sign has been placed under the hedge.

extends north as the 'East Drain' in South Ferriby, was to drain water from the land to the sea. This eventually enabled the natural wetland landscape and flora to be replaced by intensive farming techniques, with a grid-plan of drainage ditches defining field boundaries rather than 'quickthorn' hedges.

Thus the common land of the Low Village parishes was lost to commercial exploitation. However, except in South Ferriby (see part 3), this did not happen overnight. The 'Adventurers' who financed the canalisation of the Ancholme<sup>9</sup> claimed large tracts of the flood-plain as their return on capital invested, but some common remained on the Vale for stinting to parishioners for a further century or more. Despite the Vale now being dominated by intensive agriculture there are virtually no examples of post-enclosure model farms (see part 3), farmers here preferring to travel to their fields rather than establish a base on the lowland. Thus the post-enclosure plantations, such as Swallows Low Wood and The Oaks in Horkstow parish, stand as landmarks in the level, low-lying landscape. In Saxby parish a cluster of plantations in the Vale appear to have been planted as features in an emparked landscape, beyond that immediately around Saxby Hall and Home Farm.



**Fig. 6 A section of the Vale showing the plantations of Saxby parish as viewed south-west from Middlegate.**

---

9 See Carey, R. *Journey to Anther Land, Tudor and Stuart South Ferriby 1540-1639* (privately, 57-63).

Historically the Vale of Ancholme was a barrier to east-west transport with Brigg as the single bridging point from late-prehistoric times onwards. However, transport inland from and to the Humber was possible by water from early times as shown by the prehistoric plank boats and dug-out boats excavated from the anaerobic estuarine muds. Post-enclosure, however, lanes were needed to access farmland. These are called Carr Lane in the parishes of Worlaby, Bonby and Saxby, in Horkstow their equivalent is Bridge Lane where the straight wide verged lane leads to Horkstow suspension bridge.

Completed in 1836 Horkstow Bridge linked Bridge Lane to the then brickyard immediately beyond, the unsurfaced track leading to Holmes Lane not then existing. Later a tunnel under this track (surviving) was constructed so that bricks could be moved straight from the yard to keels moored in the Ancholme. Sir John Rennie's rebuilding of Ferriby Sluice (seen today) incorporated a lock just big enough to take Humber keels engaged in this trade.

Although the distinction of oldest working single span suspension bridge is claimed for Thomas Telford's Menai Straits bridge built in 1826, nevertheless, Horkstow Bridge is a remarkable survivor, all the more so since in the 1980s it was only four miles from the world's longest single span suspension bridge.



**Fig. 7 Horkstow Bridge and clay digging lands beyond.**



Up to the 1930s brickyards in South Ferriby and Horkstow parishes took advantage of the 'Navigation' for transport and of the estuarine clays as their raw material.

So with the clays, we end where we started.

A particularly well written source of information on the Ancholme Valley is a series of three A4 folded leaflets produced by North Lincs. Council entitled Ancholme Valley Walks. One leaflet is about history, another about wildlife and a third about drainage and bridging.



**Fig. 8 Three leaflets about the Ancholme Valley.**

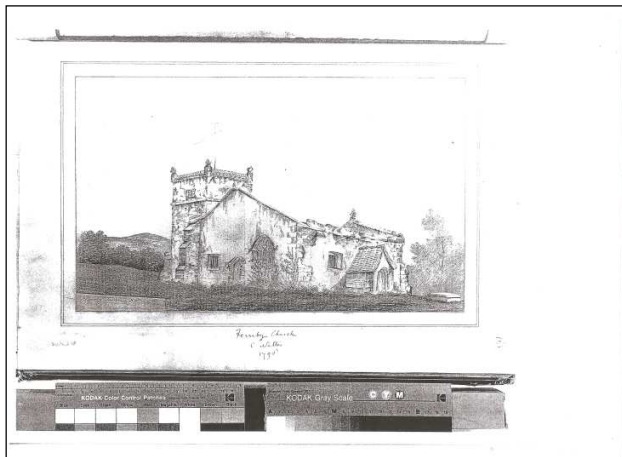
### **Part 5.**

As is often the case, three of the five Low Village's churches are much older than other buildings in the parishes and as such provide a rich source for study and analysis. Two of the churches are products of the Gothic Revival movement of Victorian England, Saxby rebuilt in the 1840s and Worlaby in the 1870s, although both incorporate earlier features and stand on the same site as their predecessors. Indeed all churches are products of successive changes over time and it stirs the imagination to think that these buildings, or their predecessors, were established long before the landscapes we see today existed on the Vale, the scarp, the dip slope or, indeed, in the villages themselves.



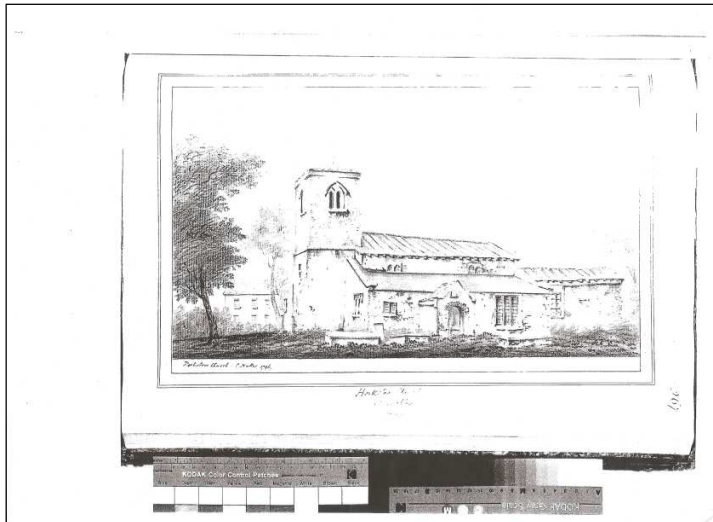
The pastime/discipline of 'churching' involves studying the building fabric of a church and thereby deducing evidence as to its possible architectural history. This involves using terms coined by Thomas Rickman in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century to define successive church architectural styles, for example 'Early English' (mid to late 13<sup>th</sup> century), 'Decorated' (mostly 14<sup>th</sup> century) and 'Perpendicular' (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries).

More recent evidence about the history of local churches can be gained from the sketches drawn in the 1790s by Jean-Claud Nattes, from the descriptions written in the 1820s by John Henry Loft and those recorded by Henry Kaye Bonney in the 1840s and from 'faculties'. Jean-Claud Nattes was a painter of watercolours who, at one point in later life, rambled round north Lincolnshire sketching churches, photocopies of which can be ordered from Lincoln Central Library, Old School Lane, Lincoln. Figures 1 to 10 show feint reproductions of Nattes drawings of the five Low Village churches and the churches as seen today from the same angles.

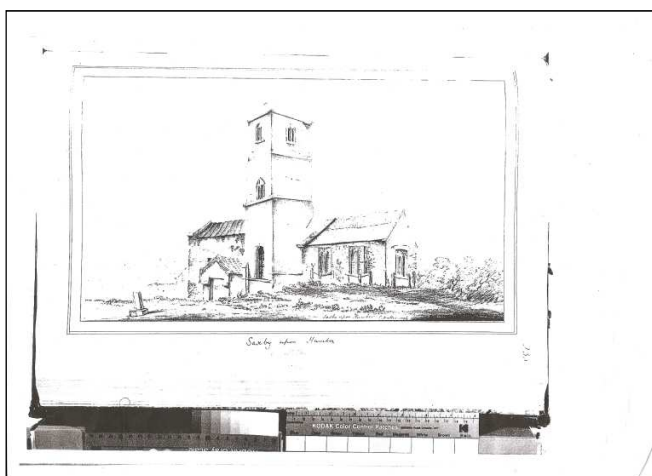




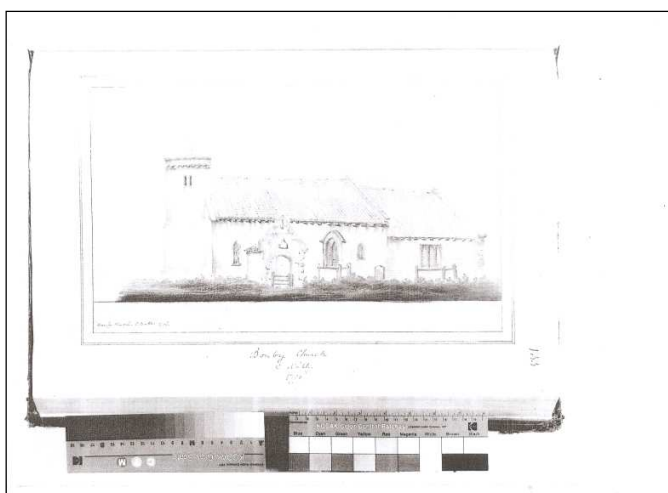
**Figs. 9 and 10 South Ferriby church.**



**Figs. 11 and 12 Horkstow church.**

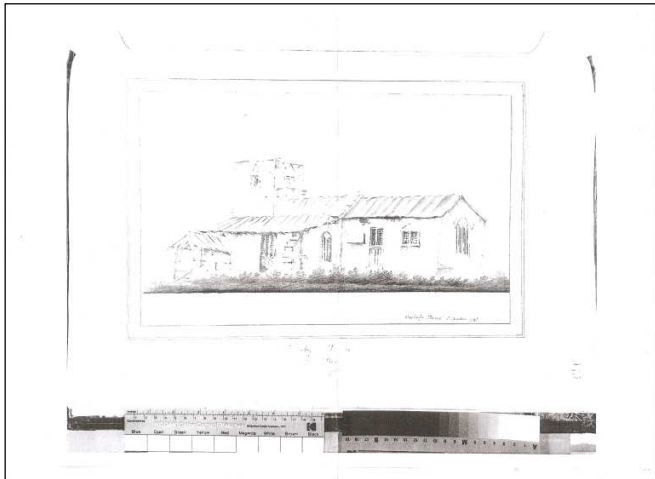


**Figs. 13 and 14 Saxby church.**





**Figs. 16 and 17 Bonby church.**



**Figs. 18 and 19 Worlaby church.**

John Henry Loft, following a distinguished military career during the Napoleonic Wars and as M.P. for Grimsby 1807-'12, also rambled north Lincolnshire recording and sketching (sometimes) local churches. However, there are two problems with using his evidence; firstly, all his notes have never been brought together in one archive or publication, and secondly, he tended to concentrate on memorials (personalities) rather than the building – but not always. Henry Kaye Bonney was archdeacon to the Lincoln Diocese and recorded his observations on the churches during parochial visits. These have been transcribed and published in the 1930s in a book *Bonney's Notes*, second hand copies of which are now rare. A 'faculty' is a record of any alteration to the building fabric of a church, these are stored at the Diocesan Archive in Lincoln.

The village of Worlaby is formed by a number of lanes mostly north-east of the B1204, this on the lower part of a rather fragmented section of the scarp slope. Most houses front these lanes while St. Clements church was built on a terrace higher up the slope than most other properties. The church is surrounded by a rather 'formal' churchyard.

Pevsner's *Lincolnshire* (Penguin Books, revised 1989) records that Worlaby church was re-built between 1873 and 1877, 're-using old materials' (p.813). Bonney records that the chancel had previously been re-built in 1837, this funded by John Webb 'Patron and Impropiator' – this meaning that he had bought, or inherited, the benefice and was thereby entitled to appoint the incumbent and own the tithes, or land in lieu of tithes, but had to fund the upkeep of the chancel. Loft's sketch, plan and dimensions dated 1831 and Nattes sketch dated 1796 both show the part-medieval predecessor building. Here the aisles extended either side of the low, plain tower. Both show wood-framed square-headed windows in both south aisle and chancel, these, probably, 18<sup>th</sup> century inserts. Although Loft's sketch

shows the south aisle as having a pitched roof Nattes sketch shows a single pitch south aisle roof, this possibly a continuation of the nave roof's pitch. Internally the re-buildings incorporated a Norman (12<sup>th</sup> century) tower arch suggesting that successive buildings have occupied the site for a millennium. The three bay arcades are re-built originals, the south piers Early English, the north Decorated.

All Saints church, Saxby also stands higher up the scarp slope than other buildings in the mostly linear village. The building seen today was designed by George Gilbert Scott, a leading architect of the Gothic Revival, and was built in the late 1840s. A high quality 'freestone' was brought to the site, probably from the limestone escarpment of south Lincolnshire, presumably at great expense. Current repair work is having to source comparable stone. Bonney reported the chancel as 'being re-built' (for centuries church re-building programs had usually worked from east to west). Loft recorded that the earlier church had a 'very odd appearance that the steeple ... stands on the south side of the church, east of the porch and next to the chancel'. This is confirmed by Nattes sketch and clearly Scott retained a similar ground-plan for the re-building. Bonney recorded the nave (not then re-built) as having 'square clerestory windows', however Nattes sketch shows no such windows. Loft described the church as standing on a 'considerable eminence' and accessed from the west by 'a long flight of stone steps'. The path above the steps has recently been re-formed and re-surfaced to improve access.

### **Part 6.**

Although there are some significant differences between the parish churches of South Ferriby, Horkstow and Bonby there are also a number of similarities, of which three are site, building materials and connections with the Fowler family during the Gothic Revival movement.



All three stand on small terraces on the lower third of the scarp slope (as do the churches at Worlabby and Saxby). However, whereas the churches at Horkstow and Bonby stand on the same contour as the houses the church at South Ferriby is perched precariously higher up the scarp slope than the cottages below, so much so that its site demands some possible explanation. Bryant, writing in an earlier article in this magazine stated that 'There has been a church at South Ferriby since at least the 12<sup>th</sup> century as the presence of the most interesting Romanesque tympanum (a recessed carving set in a wall over an arch) located over the west porch shows' (see Fig. 20). Of course the fact that this artefact is there now doesn't mean it was always there, the west porch is mostly built of 18<sup>th</sup> century brick, and when built the 14<sup>th</sup> century entrance arch was reset in the new wall – indeed Nattes sketch of 1796 does not appear to show the tympanum over the arch (although given the good state of preservation of the carving it may well have been located inside the building for centuries). But the question remains, why site the church so?



**Fig. 20 Part of west wall of South Ferriby church.**

It may be that centuries ago the site was less precarious and that subsequent downhill soil creep and slumping have undermined the original site. If so the original church/churches may then have had the standard east-west orientation, only later did restorers have to resort

to a north-south axis, parallel to the scarp slope. Another possibility is that the church was sited to have a particular function as a landmark (or sea-mark). Clearly extensions or rebuilding programs of South Ferriby church re-used building materials wherever possible, one re-used walling material being large blocks of limestone, presumably salvaged from a predecessor to the present building (see Fig. 20). If these had once been the building stone of a west tower then it would have been a prominent sea-mark for shipping in the upper Estuary. The present plantation which obscures the church is the product of a century old planting, Nattes' view suggesting that the scarp was previously much less wooded.

The building stones of South Ferriby church signpost stages in the building's development. Re-used stone from a medieval predecessor blend with 18<sup>th</sup> century hand-made bricks. The current nave was raised using limestone, like that once quarried in the Winterton area, while the present-day chancel is built of late 19<sup>th</sup> century machine cut bricks.

Both Horkstow and Bonby churches stand lower down the scarp than South Ferriby church, Bonby church standing beside a minor road which ascends the scarp from the B1204 while Horkstow church stands at the junction of the B1204 and an ascending lane which today is just a footpath but which is shown on early O.S. maps as a lane for horse-drawn vehicles.

Both Bonby and Horkstow churches incorporate much chalk (the local building material) in their walling. Chalk was generally considered a poor building material as it fractured in frosty conditions, however if quarried carefully along strata planes, cut to blocks and then 'weathered' for 12+ months it could prove durable. The mix of chalk and early bricks in the walling of Bonby nave and the chancel and west tower of Horkstow church conveys a pleasing rustic image, especially at Horkstow when contrasted with the stark freestone used



in the re-built south aisle as designed by R.H. Fowler (see Figs. 21 and 22).



**Fig. 21 Horkstow church as seen from the north-east section of the churchyard. In the east wall of the chancel two restoration lancets have been set into a chalk and early brick wall, the bricks probably being used to replace decayed chalk blocks. Above, a coursed limestone restoration wall dating from when the chancel roof was raised. The medieval roof-line of the nave is shown in the east walling of the tower and the limestone ashlar of the north aisle and its stylised window tracery date from the 1895 restoration.**



**Fig. 22 Bonby church, viewed from the north. When an early north aisle was demolished coursed chalk walling was used to infill the arcade. These chalk courses are not continuous with those of the wall above and in the spandrels as this walling dates from the construction of the aisle. The arcades were originally built in a transitional style of the late 13<sup>th</sup> century.**

The Gothic Revival Movement of the mid and late 19<sup>th</sup> century was hugely significant and provided a great deal of work for many architects and building firms. In 1895 the aisles of Horkstow church were rebuilt to the design of R.H. Fowler, architect. He was the son of, and continued the architectural practice of, James Fowler of Louth who died in 1892 aged 64. Commonly referred to as 'Fowler of Louth' the father was a distinguished architect and Diocesan Surveyor for Lincolnshire from 1871 to 1886. Confusingly, three years before the restoration at Horkstow church the restoration at Bonby church was to the plans of Charles Hodgson Fowler (1840-1910). At the time he was architect to the Dean and Chapter of Durham cathedral but had previously held that post at Lincoln. Among other examples C. H. Fowler designed two of the 'Sykes churches' on the Yorkshire Wolds, Langtoft in 1900 and Fridaythorpe in 1902.

Faculty (official permission for structural changes) records at the Diocesan Record Office often record changes at a specific church related to the Gothic Revival Movement. These were then seen as issues of public interest as shown by an article in the Stamford Mercury in 1870 when the interior of South Ferriby church was being modernized by Stamp builders, Barton's first integrated building firm, who also built, for example, the chapels of rest at Barton's civil cemetery.

Finally, a must at Bonby church is to explore the north wall of the nave for here is what Bonney described as a 'formerly north aisle', where the three arches of a 13<sup>th</sup> century arcade were incorporated into a new exterior wall (see Fig. 22). There can be various reasons why part of a church might have been demolished, possibly because of its dilapidated condition, or in response to a declining number of worshippers or for theological reasons.

The five churches of the Low Villages present to an interested observer many diverse angles on church history and architecture, and are worthy of study.

## **Part 7.**

During the 19th century it became common to define villages as either 'closed' or 'open'. Closed villages were those where the bulk of the land in the parish was owned by a few dominant landowners, while open villages were those where land was held by many different landowners. 'Estate' village was a term usually reserved for those villages where one single owner dictated policy across the parish. In the 19th century all the five Low Villages were closed villages in that the bulk of the land in those parishes was owned by landed gentry dynasties such as the Nelthorpes, Earls of Yarborough (with Brocklesby as their estate village), Bartons and the landed family at Elsham Hall.

Cottage building in closed villages was very regulated and characterized by good quality housing, generally reserved for the 'aristocrats' (such as stock-men, shepherd and foremen) of the farming workforce to tenant, while speculative cottage building for the less/unskilled workforce was discouraged. This was exacerbated by the 17th century Laws of Settlement which required each parish to be responsible for its paupers, as there was no accommodation for such persons in closed villages so the landowners avoided otherwise large Poor Law rates. In the early 19th century when village populations were increasing rapidly those of closed villages increased much less so. However, workers were needed on the farmland of such villages, generally these day workers or seasonal labourers, would commute on foot from the nearest open villages. In the Low Villages many of these would come from Barton or Brigg, walking the five plus miles before starting work.

In open villages patches of land could much more easily become available for cottage building although the quality, size and facilities might be very basic. Here populations rose very quickly up to the mid 19th century by which time many rural working families were migrating to towns or emigrating. Karl Marx in *Das Kapital* (Vol. 1,

1867) was critical of both open and closed village environments being of the opinion that in the former greedy minor capitalists, interested only in profit, provided sub standard housing for the labouring class, while in the latter wealthy gentry families turned away from a responsibility to their workforce.

The earliest Ordnance Survey map to plot the Low Villages was published in the late 1820s and shows that Horkstow and Saxby were linear villages, with all the properties straddling the connecting road (now the B1204). To an extent the other three Low Villages were also linear but at both Bonby and Worlaby a col in the lower scarp slope allowed a network of lanes to develop beside which stood further properties. At South Ferriby, in contrast, a network of lanes had developed west of the connecting road along the lower scarp slope.

Housing studies often categorize on the basis of 'polite' and 'vernacular'. Simply put, the latter refers to housing locally built, using local materials and to local styles, while the former refers to housing built to a national, contemporary style. Given this context the current housing stock in the Low Villages can be categorized as follows, 'polite' housing comprises; estate cottages, in village farmhouses, landowner's properties, institutional housing such as that for teachers, policemen and rectories, modern local authority housing and modern private (post Great War) housing. Vernacular housing includes speculative built worker's cottages and modest in-village farmhouses. As with in-village farmhouses, there may be an overlap between categories such as where estate cottages evolve from vernacular cottages.

Except for South Ferriby, all the Low Village communities include very interesting examples of 19th century estate cottages. As most of these include some modest neo-gothic features it seems likely that date from about mid-19th century. By late century estate cottage building had either ceased altogether or was being done to a very basic design, this as a result of the prolonged Agricultural

Depression. Most were built as three-bedroom cottages, this very progressive for mid-century working class housing as it made possible the separation of the sexes in family sleeping accommodation, thereby overtly challenging the problems of in-breeding and incest. Also most estate cottages had three ground floor rooms (excluding outbuildings), a scullery for the sink and copper, a middle room kitchen with the 'yorkist' cooking and heating 'range' and a front room (parlour). Invariably estate cottages had a large garden, this to provide an opportunity to supplement the family budget by on-site produce and, it was felt, to encourage sobriety and self help. Finally estate cottages were often detached or semi detached (not terraces), a situation which, it was felt, discouraged idle gossip or frequent disputes between neighbours.

All these factors made the tenants of estate cottages the envy of their contemporaries living in market towns and open villages, a situation which has continued and has resulted in them often being desirable residences for modern property owners.



**Fig. 23 A much extended estate cottage in Bonby displaying the Yarborough emblem on the front gable.**



**Fig.24 End-stack semi detached estate cottages in Worlaby.**



**Fig. 25 Semi detached estate cottages at the northern end of Saxby, designed for the Barton family by the famous architect Cuthbert Broderick.<sup>10</sup>**

---

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Di. Plumb for this information.



**Fig.26 A substantial estate cottage in Horkstow.**



## **Part 8.**

The late Victorian debate about the need to improve on the nation's housing stock sprang from a longer running debate about how to improve public health generally, particularly in the wake of the cholera epidemics of the early 19th century. Improved housing, it was felt by reformers, required statutory building standards, policies to reduce overcrowding, design features that allowed air and light to circulate,<sup>11</sup> ample provision of earth closets, at least three bedrooms in a family house and some provision for productive gardening. Generally estate cottages (see before) met these objectives but they only provided accommodation a small minority of working families.

Apparently a cluster of five centre entrance, end-stack cottages (four, very interestingly, being two pairs of semis) at the northern end of Saxby may have been very early examples of estate cottages as they are shown on a surviving estate map dated 1774.<sup>12</sup>

Although national legislation had sought to improve public health it was not until the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, that government took the first tentative steps towards the provision of housing directly. In the spirit of 'Homes for Heroes' the 1918 Housing Act set out to improve national provision, as did later Housing Acts of the 1920s and '30s. By these the government sought to encourage local authorities to built council housing by offering capital at a preferential rate of interest as well as by establishing national minimum standards of construction. Although a number of parishes in their respective Rural District Authorities in the East Riding built pre-war houses I am not aware of any in the Low Villages (although the

---

<sup>11</sup> To be achieved by incorporating such features as working sash windows of adequate size, ceilings no lower than nine feet above floor level and fireplaces (or 'ranges') with flues (chimneys) which aided the circulation of air.

<sup>12</sup> I am indebted to Di Plumb for this information.



semis at the southern end of Worlaby village may date from the late 1930s).

However all the Low Villages except Horkstow include well-built, late-1940s-early-1950s council houses (originally) built by Glanford Rural District Council to the terms of the 1944 Housing Act. Horkstow, and other Low Villages, includes examples of 1960s/'70s pensioner's (council) bungalows.

At the other end of the housing spectrum in all five parishes are examples of mid-to-late Georgian period houses (polite – see before). However styles vary considerably and examples include Ferriby Hall (built 1805), Ferriby Grange, Horkstow Hall, Horkstow Grange, Saxby Hall, Worlaby Hall and Worlaby House. There usually is, or once would have been, a nearby range of farm buildings often referred to by the term 'home farm'.

A study of the extracts from 19th and early 20th century trade directories at Scunthorpe Library shows that agriculture was the principal means of livelihood in all five villages with a number of farmers recorded in each parish.<sup>13</sup> Most of these may well have been tenant farmers, and of varying fortune, but a proportion of surviving houses would originally have been farmer's houses. These may well have originated in the 18th century, possibly with additions from the early 19th century when farming prospered.

In the 19th century the Established Church allocated vast resources to the building of substantial vicarages/rectories in most parishes. If built before the 1860s these were often built to neo-gothic styles<sup>14</sup>, were usually detached, surrounded by a considerable garden area and often provided considerable local employment for house servants, coachmen and gardeners. This provision by the Church of

---

<sup>13</sup> This point will be returned to in the next article.

<sup>14</sup> This in tandem with the Gothic Revival Movement in church building.

England was one of the strategies employed to encourage the priesthood and bring an end to the scourge of absentee incumbents.

Employee housing for professional staff, funded by the relevant authorities, initiated another source of existing housing. Sometimes church elementary schools, and after the 1870 Education Act 'board schools', had a teacher's house attached to the school building, one surviving example being at Worlabby. Non-conformist ministers were often provided with purpose-built housing although these would usually be located in a nearby market town with the villages being part of their 'circuit'. An in village example survives in central Worlabby. As well as teachers the 1918 Housing Act encouraged local authorities to provide housing for rural policemen and roadmen. A small detached house at the northern end of Horkstow is one such example.<sup>15</sup>

Village populations generally increased in the first half of the 19th century.<sup>16</sup> In open villages housing for the growing labouring population usually took the form of terraces of one-up, one-down or two-up, two-down cottages. Except in South Ferriby few of these survive (or ever existed). The incentive to build the two terraces in Ferriby was probably as much the development of the 'Stone pit' (later Leggott's chalk quarry) as the prosperity of farming. The building just south of the 'fountain' in Saxby which appears to have originally been a terrace of four cottages has in fact had a more complex history.<sup>17</sup>

Although the Low Villages were on the edge of his area of study a very good example of further study on this topic is Lyons, N. *Small*

---

<sup>15</sup> Apparently the 'Old Police House', Sluice Rd., South Ferriby was built by a member of the Franks family and only later became a policeman's residence.

<sup>16</sup> The figures will be examined in the next article.

<sup>17</sup> I am indebted to Di Plumb for this information.

*houses since 1750 in North-West Lincolnshire* (Scunthorpe Museum, 1985).



**Fig. 27 Worlaby – detached, L plan, centre stack house, possibly dating from 17th century and presumably an in-village farmhouse. Raised parapets show that the roof was originally thatched.**



**Fig.28 Saxby – centre-entrance, centre-stack cottages, shown on an estate map of 1774.**



**Fig. 29 Saxby – early 1950s council houses.**



**Fig. 30 Horkstow – gothick(!) cottage, gable-end to street, centre-entrance, end-stack, wooden window tracery.**



**Fig. 31 Saxby – west front of Saxby Hall, 1950s.**

## **Part 9.**

From early modern times the economies of the Low Villages have been dominated by agriculture. A study of the evidence from trade directories published in the 19th and early 20th centuries<sup>18</sup> shows that 'farmer' was the single most common trade recorded in all five villages.<sup>19</sup> It is reasonable to assume that most of those recorded were tenant farmers to the principal landlords that existed in all five parishes. Surprisingly for the early 21st century, a number of in-village 19th century farm buildings survive and offer visible evidence of agricultural practices generations ago.

In Worlaby part of a very large 'model farm' range of buildings survives (certainly the west range). Model farms, as promoted from the late 18th century, had a lay-out plan whereby all the necessary buildings were ranged around an open rectangular 'fold-yard', the arrangement sometimes expanded to a double fold-yard, where cattle could be stall-fed over winter. Usually the barn was the only two-storey part with hay and sacks of corn stored on the first floor and a threshing floor between two pairs of large double doors at ground level. Implement stalls were open-fronted, usually facing north, while the complex also incorporated stables, pig-sties, forges and shelters for farm animals in the fold-yard. In the neighbouring parish of Barton model farms were built for all the new out-of-village farmsteads constructed after Enclosure in the 1790s, whereas in the Low Villages the in-village farmsteads seem to have endured.

Model farm ranges were usually built of brick and pantile with substantial wooden supports for the open-fronted parts. Chalk, the

---

<sup>18</sup> This study made easy by the fact that in Scunthorpe Central Library this information is made more readily available in folders, one for each parish in North Lincolnshire.

<sup>19</sup> The term 'farmer' was, presumably, used for all between those who had a smallholding of a few acres and maybe were semi self-sufficient, and those with 100s of acres.

local building stone, was used as coursed walling in places, usually with brick quoins and door surrounds.

The history of chapel building in the Low Villages shows that there was a demand for non-conformist places of worship, a commitment which ran to raising funds for their building. Chapel building had a socio-political aspect in that the lord of the manor might forbid this challenge to support for the Established Church, a situation which clearly existed in Saxby. In the other four Low Villages both Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist chapels existed for most of the 19th century and into the 20th. The small village of Horkstow (with a peak 19th century population of just 274 in 1881) had two chapels from 1863 onwards, the Wesleyan having been rebuilt in 1838. South Ferriby, Worlaby and Bonby are recorded as having two chapels, the latter from 1849 onwards. South Ferriby's Wesleyan chapel is recorded as having been rebuilt in 1839 (surviving). Except for the surviving example at Worlaby all the chapel buildings were modest in size and plain of style, however at South Ferriby the interior of the Methodist chapel is a fine example of surviving wooden tiered seating and layout plan of an 'auditory' place of worship, all in excellent condition. Most Low Village chapel buildings are now redundant and ill cared for. A detached Sunday school building near the chapel in South Ferriby is currently being renovated to a private residence.

Although the two public houses in South Ferriby (and possibly the Haymaker in Bonby) have a long history the trade directories merely mention two 'beer retailers', Worlaby 1876 and Bonby 1849. 'Beer retailers' often traded from a cottage rather than a purpose-built property. For those that 'took the pledge' a temperance hall is recorded as existing in South Ferriby in 1882. Again, the retailing of alcohol could be a thing prohibited by a controlling lord, considering it to be a threat to social order.

Almost universal basic literacy, following on the provisions of the 1870 Education Act, meant that local 'reading rooms' were a valued

local public building. Usually funded by a principal landowner they offered facilities later expanded by the local authority library service. By 1888 Bonby had a reading room while by 1913 South Ferriby had two, one newly built at the Sluice, the other in the historic village dating from the 1880s and now a private house.

In 1910 the 'church institute' was built beside Horkstow Road in South Ferriby, still in active use as the parish hall. A parish hall in Horkstow appears to have been built initially as a cottage.



**Fig. 32 Section of Horkstow Grange farm buildings showing coursed chalk walling in a gable end, a Victorian hip-roofed barn and a 20th century multi-purpose brick building.**



**Fig. 33 Barn of 1781 on the site of Horkstow Manor. Diaper pattern ventilation holes in the gable-end wall, dentilled pattern brick ornamental course below eaves (no evidence of a threshing floor entrance).**





**Fig.34 Part of the west range of Worlaby model farm complex with later pitched roofs over a foldyard.**



**Fig. 35 Redundant chapel in Horkstow. Early English style lancet windows, decorative north Wales slate, steeply pitched roof of the Gothic Revival style. Attached vestry and meeting room?**





**Fig. 36 Worlaby chapel and minister's house.**



**Fig. 37 South Ferriby Methodist Chapel. Simple neo-Romanesque style, fashionable in 1839.**

## **Part 10.**

A casual comparison between the modern OS 1:50000 map (sheet 112) and its First Series predecessor (1 inch to 1 mile, late 1820s) shows that the built-up areas of the five Low Village communities has not changed greatly except for the southward extension by 20th century ribbon development in Bonby and Worlaby and the residential development along Sluice Road in South Ferriby. However if it were possible to revisit those 1820s villages their appearance would differ

greatly from that of the early 21st century. This is because still in the 1820s many of the cottages would still have been built in the 'mud, stud and thatch' tradition whereby a simple framework of timber was walled by 'wattle and daub' and roofed with either reed or wheat-straw thatch. Techniques of wattle and daub walling varied from area to area but the most likely style used in the Low Villages is shown in Fig. 2. It may even have been the case that some cottages might then have been built of mud and thatch, the walls being built-up in a series of thick layers, each layer allowed to dry before the next was laid.

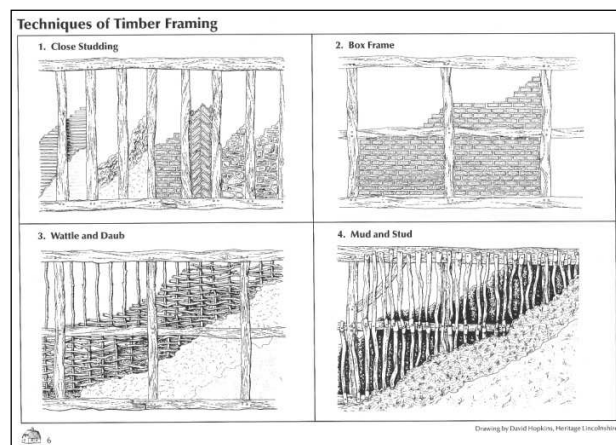
Such buildings of course would have been very easy to demolish and replace with a brick successor once bricks became a more affordable, and preferred, option. Brick was already a feature of the village built environment by the 1820s in the form of 'polite' Georgian buildings and more substantial farm houses and barns. Demolition of 'mud and stud' cottages and farm buildings would leave few traces of the occupation site, even the timbers being less valuable with the increasing import of Scandinavian softwood (often called 'deal') through the ports of Hull and Grimsby. The insanitary nature of mud-stud and thatch cottages is often cited as a cause of Victorian rural de-population, in the market and industrial towns brick-built terrace properties offered two-storey accommodation although the basic amenities would still be minimal. Also surely something was lost in the move from a detached (at least) home to one in a row where just a wall of single bricks separated you from your neighbour.<sup>20</sup>

---

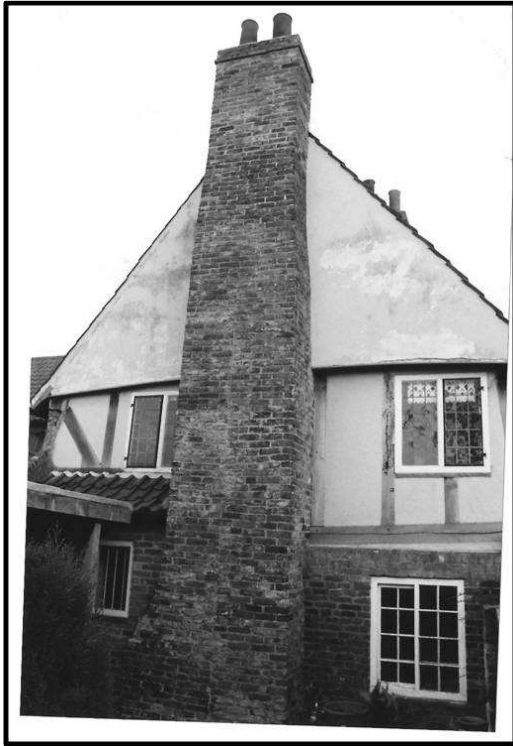
<sup>20</sup> See Clarke, R. *Housing in a 19<sup>th</sup> century north Lincolnshire market town: A study of Barton-on-Humber* (Fathom Writers Press, 2012).



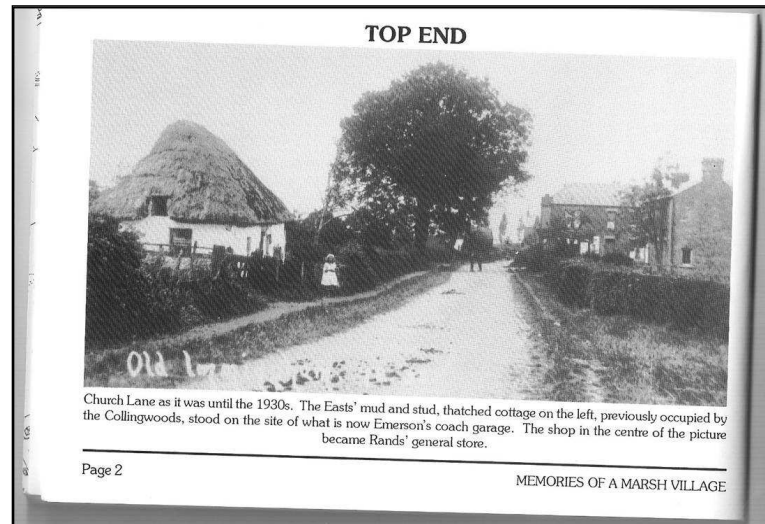
**Fig. 38** Photograph taken c. 2012 and showing the late-medieval/early-modern(?) barn just north of Horkstow Hall which has undergone an extensive and long running programme of restoration. The large timbers of the skeleton shown comprise adze-shaped tie beams, wall-posts and braces (angled) while the roof timbers comprise rafters linked to the ridge-board and supported by purlin boards.



**Fig. 39** The 'Lincolnshire style' of wattle-and-daub walling (bottom right), taken from *Lincolnshire Buildings in the Mud and Stud Tradition* and showing where the main timbers were spanned by willow lathes and nailed (a detail rarely seen outside Lincolnshire). 'Puddled' mud mixed with chopped straw would have then been daubed onto the framework and, once dry, usually whitewashed. If done well such walling might last two generations before needing to be re-built. Timber was scarce (there are probably more trees in North Lincolnshire now than 500 years ago) and re-used wherever possible.



**Fig. 40 Black and white photograph of the rear gable elevation of 51, Fleetgate, Barton. Evidenced in the walling is a surviving complete late medieval 'box-frame' with some of the first floor timbers showing flush with the render. The Georgian external chimney stack was added when the internal arrangement was changed to create two floors. The angled base of this stack was added when a copper was installed in the scullery (bottom left). The arrangement of roof timbers as seen in the first floor room is known as a 'crown-post roof' and is a rare example.**



**Fig.41 Little evidence survives of mud and stud cottages, a vernacular style that had existed for hundreds of years. Here a photograph of an example that survived in Immingham up to the 1930s (taken from the book *Memories of a Marsh Village*). With no chimney stack showing the cottage may have had an open hearth and a centre opening in the thatch roof.**



**Fig. 42 Early 20th century mud-stud and thatch cottage with central chimney stack at Easington in south Holderness. Alongside is another where the traditional walling has been replaced with brick. Centre-left a centre-entrance, end-stack house is an example of how the increasing use of brick allowed two-storey properties to be built. The coursed cobble walls seen in places were less of an option further inland (taken from the book *Easington in Times Past*).**

Mud stud and thatch cottages could take various forms although most could be allied to three categories. In a 'hearth passage' plan at the back of a large hearth (and later brick chimney stack) a cross passage linked doors on either side while in a 'lobby-entry' plan a central door led to a space beside a central brick chimney stack often with a hearth on each side. Once brick became more commonly used the centre entrance, end stack ground plan became common, these two-storey builds often surviving.

Village tradesmen, retailers and craftsmen often traded from such cottages, often without the need of shop-fronts, extensive outbuildings signs and displays.

## **Part 11.**

Not only were communities such as those in the Low Villages physically different in the relatively recent past but socially as well. The following analysis is made from a study of parish documents readily available at Scunthorpe Central Library.

The standard generalisation regarding village populations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century is that they rose up to mid century (along with urban and national populations) but then fell in later century as a result of rural migration, the Agricultural Depression, emigration and the poor quality of village worker's housing. Of the five Low Villages only Bonby's population graph followed this trend, peaking in 1861 the village population fell by 23% between 1881 and 1901.

Conversely, South Ferriby's population increased by 163% between 1801 and 1881, this by steady decadal progressions except for a staggering 46% increase between 1801 and 1811. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century the population of South Ferriby was greater than that of any other Low Village, being in 1901, more than twice that of Saxby, Horkstow or Bonby and a third higher than that of Worlaby (738 and 493 respectively).

Two important factors then are clear;

- (a) Agricultural decline did not impact in the Low Villages as severely as in more typical agricultural communities, maybe the dominant landowners were better able to withstand the declining incomes from farming.
- (b) The population figures for South Ferriby reflect the semi-industrialisation of the village's economy with the development of brickyards, exploiting the estuarine silts, along the banks of the lower canalised River Ancholme, and the development of the large chalk quarry (now Leggott's Quarry) soon after Parliamentary Enclosure in the 1790s. The Quarry was on land allocated to the Nelthorpe family (of Baysgarth House, Barton until the building of Ferriby Hall in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century) at Enclosure and capital funded by them. Availability of non-agricultural work encouraged migration to the village, worker's housing then being built as a response to demand.

Between 1842 and 1922 the number of farmers recorded in South Ferriby declined from 12 to six whereas in the other four Low Villages the numbers remained surprisingly static, averaging five to seven in each parish. Most of these would certainly have been tenant farmers.

By comparing the evidence from the 1891 Census with that from Kelly's Directory (trade) for 1896 for the small village of Horkstow and the larger community of Worlaby it becomes apparent that the average of tradesmen/retailers to the parish population was 1:46, although clearly some trades must have relied on customers beyond, as well as from, their parish.

The only trades to be consistently recorded in each parish throughout the 19th century were shoemakers and shopkeepers. In the 1860s South Ferriby was served by four shoemakers, this for a population of 580 (similar figures for Worlaby), while Horkstow had one from 1842 to 1919 serving a population of between 190 and 260. The picture is less clear for shopkeepers as



there may have been overlap between it and terms such as grocer and butcher.

Although no butcher was recorded in Saxby (village population 327 in 1881) they were recorded in the other four parishes. However no butcher was recorded in Bonby after 1889, nor in Worlaby after 1909 or Horkstow after 1903, while in South Ferriby a single butcher continued trading up to 1933. As these businesses almost certainly slaughtered on site the figures may reflect increasing regulation or maybe changing shopping trends.

Tailoring remained a village trade into the inter-war years with South Ferriby averaging two between 1842 and 1933 and two recorded in Worlaby up to 1926. No tailor was recorded in Horkstow, none in Saxby after 1876 and one in Bonby between the 1850s and 1937. However by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the term 'dressmaker' occurs with no reference to the term before the 1880s. Between this time and the Second World War there were two dressmakers recorded in South Ferriby – there was clearly the potential for some overlap between the trades of tailor and dressmaker.

Of the trades serving local businesses blacksmiths and wheelwrights figured in all villages between the 1850s and 1939. Generally each village had one of each trade although in Horkstow one tradesman served both trades.

Other trades serving both businesses and the public had a more scarce distribution. 'Coal dealers'/merchants figure in South Ferriby and Bonby but not elsewhere, as do saddlers. A 'fish dealer' and a 'tobacconist' traded only in South Ferriby. Worlaby had the only cattle dealing business between 1849 and 1926, Bonby the only rope making business between 1856 and 1896.

Some trades, such as bricklayer and gardener, seem to have been surprisingly scarce while, inevitably, some were localised, 'marine store' at South Ferriby being an example.

From the 1880s onwards threshing machine owners and 'machine owners' were trading from South Ferriby, Bonby and Worlabby while by 1937 a 'cycle agent' was based in Saxby. Up to the mid 1930s there are no references to garages or petrol retailers. Unnervingly, no doctors were recorded although by 1937 a district nurse was based in Worlabby.



**Fig. 43 A centre entrance, end stack, late 19<sup>th</sup> century property.  
Neighbouring house, gable end to street, is much older, end  
stack, tumble gable and hand-made bricks.**

Many of the tradesmen cited above would have traded from their own homes, thereby often leaving little surviving evidence in the built environment (see Fig. 43).

## **Part 12.**

The following 12 pictures show a section of Bridge Lane, Horkstow across 12 months January to December.











The picture sequences show the changing face of two local roadside environments across the year, one sequence located on the dip slope of the chalk escarpment the other along a section of the reclaimed Vale of Ancholme. Across one year (a few years ago) I took the pictures and recorded the wild plants then growing and flowering in the nearby grass verges and hedgerows (unfortunately my detailed record was destroyed in the 2013 flood). Of course the wide grass verges define Bridge Lane and Saxby Road as post enclosure lanes, the wide uncultivated strips being golden opportunities for natural wild plants to develop, which is why the regulation of mowing (flailing) regimes is so important as random mowing destroys many annuals before they have the chance to seed-down.

The following 12 pictures show a section of Saxby Road across 11 months January to December (February missing).









Across the 12 articles I have attempted to explore various aspects of landscape history relevant to the region of the Low Village parishes. The objective was to give some context to the landscape history of the region rather than more specialist local studies. As regards the local specialist reserchers and writers I have tried to credit the ones I know, Raymond Carey, Nick. Lyons and Di. Plumb.

The five spring-line Low Villages sit attractively in the scarp and vale landscape of northern Lincolnshire, with linear parish boundaries orientated east-west, the villages backed by the diverse scarp slope and looking out across the wide Vale of Ancholme. Sited in exactly the same environment, the five spring-line villages between Bigby and Caistor do not seem to have evolved quite the same collective identity as the Low Villages.

Culturally the Low Villages area seems to have identified laterally with the Scunthorpe (since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century)-Barton/Brigg-Grimsby axis or to the Humberside region, rather than to the traditional county town of Lincoln which, even today, is not easy to access by public transport. The Humber Bridge, being further west than the New Holland ferry crossing, has made crossing to East Yorkshire a journey of little more than half an hour by private transport from any of the Low Villages. Indeed, I believe that earlier in the last century Barton and the Low Villages were in the Hull postal district.

Public transport is currently very good for an area of relatively low population density. There is currently a campaign to increase the service on the excellent Barton to Cleethorpes rail line while from Habrough, Barnetby or Scunthorpe the trans-Pennine trains may be accessed and thereon, from Sheffield or Doncaster, the national rail network (similarly Brough and Hull on the north bank). Predecessors to the B1204 have presumably existed since early medieval times, this below the more ancient Middlegate. Today the excellent 350 bus service provides a frequent means of getting between Scunthorpe and Hull while the 450 (double-decker?) links directly the Low Villages to Barton, Brigg and Immingham. 'Use it or lose it'.

However for centuries transport by water was the preferred alternative so that, following the re-building in the 1760s of the derelict Ferriby Sluice of the 1630s it seems likely that each Low Village would have had a jetty visited by the Brigg to Hull packet boat or ferry. Of course, villagers would have had a distance to travel on

foot to access such boats, although up to the building of the modern sluice in the 1830s it seems that the natural course of the Ancholme was still usable for goods transport.

Everyone will have their favourite image of the region – for myself the sight of large, but silent, flocks of gulls gliding down to their night-time Humber roost or the majestic flocks of migrating, noisy, geese in October takes some beating.

In conclusion then it seems likely the Neolithic Man leading their 'haulage' along Middlegate would, if resurrected today, recognise the landscape of the region but certainly not the land-use. 21<sup>st</sup> century Man in controlling the land-use must surely respect, appreciate and take delight in the landscape.