

Fewston Rediscovered



**Claro Community
Archaeology Group**

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Archaeology Group
2007



Dedicated to the Memory of Doreen Roberts

Distinguished and valued member of CCAG

1988 to 2007

Remembered with Affection

This is an informal introduction to the work
carried out by Claro Community
Archaeology Group in the parish of Fewston.

The information in it has been taken from
our full report which represents the
culmination of six years work.

In 1871 the local historian William Grange wrote of Fewston

“Of the early history of the village hardly anything is known. With the exception of the valley of the Washburn, the greater part of the land lay in a state of nature. Far from any town, the site of no old family mansion or religious house, and out of the line of any great routes of traffic, it yields but little matter for the local historian.”

We, however beg to differ having found ‘matter’ enough to keep us busy for over six years. We’ve found family mansions such as Cragg Hall dating back to the 1500s, a major Roman road and 17th Century route way as well as connections to religious houses.

Background to the Project.



Claro Community Archaeology Group is a landscape archaeology group that has been working from our Knaresborough Offices since 1988. We don't dig but we do use the evidence left by generations of human activity in the landscape around us.

By studying maps, aerial photographs, historical records and detailed field walking we can reconstruct the landscape as it changed through time



The group is made up of volunteers drawn mainly from the Harrogate District. The members have brought with them life skills and interests which they have applied to the project. The group is led by Kevin Cale, Community Archaeology Limited. The project was funded by Harrogate Borough Council Museums and Arts

A preliminary site visit in the spring of 1998 was followed by a search of the existing literature on Fewston. This indicated that the area was full of interesting history, albeit sparsely recorded. As work progressed it soon became apparent that there was a richness to the historic landscape that we had not anticipated.

The study was broadened to embrace a social history, including a record of the buildings, to reflect all aspects of human activity in the area over the last ten thousand years.

This major research project into the landscape archaeology of Fewston has been documented in a detailed report, on which the contents of this booklet has been based.



The Group on site

SITE LOCATION



North Yorkshire

Harrogate District
Fewston



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FEWSTON CIVIL PARISH



Ciara Community Archaeology Group
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Characteristics of the Area

On our first visit to Fewston we did not find an official sign to tell us that we had arrived in the village, but found ourselves following a route through a linear settlement, which included a church and a village hall, confirming our location.

Although the setting was dramatic, including a drowned valley, now Fewston Reservoir, much of what came to occupy us for the following six years was not immediately apparent. We were encouraged by the presence of a church standing on an ancient site and by the thought of the secrets concealed in the flooded valley.

We could see that the southwest orientation of the valley slope, facing the present-day reservoirs, would offer a hospitable environment for settlement and cultivation of

the land, tempering the excesses of the northern climate. In addition, we realised that a major water supply was available from the river Washburn and its tributaries, to facilitate agriculture and industry.

The nature of the area, its topography, climate, soils and natural resources, has impacted on human activity in the area for generations. In return people's responses to their natural environment have also had a major impact.

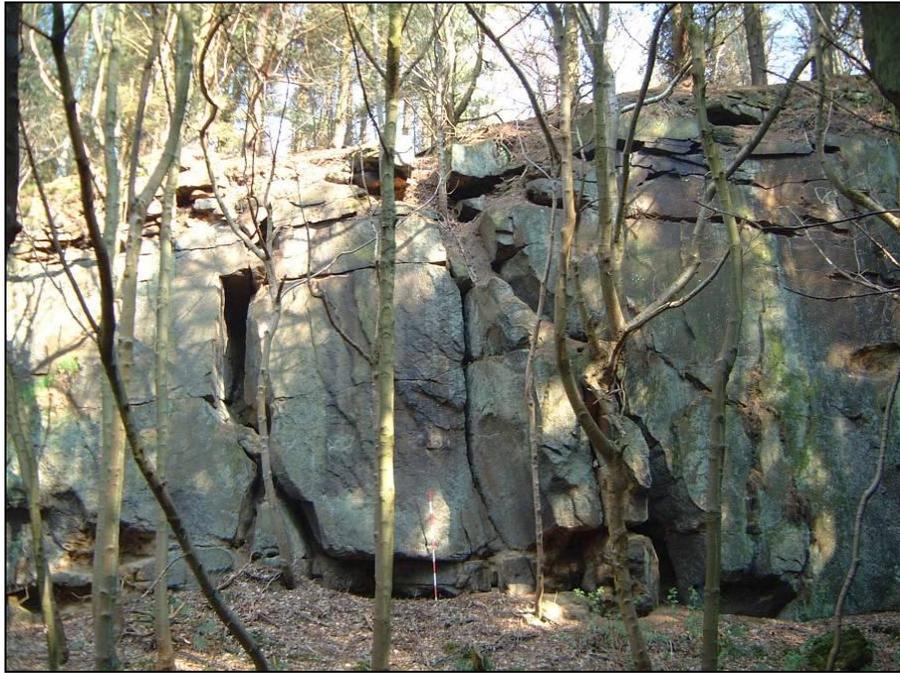
The buildings, walls, thoroughfares and quarry sites revealed that building materials have been available in the area from earliest times. The main geological features of the area involve a layering of sandstone and shale, with an added unusual feature of fossil-rich shellbed.

The combination of these features encourages the establishment and development of settlement.

Sandstone layers can be quarried for sand and building stone. It also leads to freely drained land. Shale layers provide useful mineral elements, which can be mined and used in industry. The shellbed layer acts as a natural lime based fertiliser and a source of lime for industry. In addition, this layer provides road stone quarries and promotes natural springs in the area.

Apart from any definite information gathered at this time, we started to develop a feel for the landscape. The village has an atmosphere of remoteness, even though it is close to the A59 major road, and a sense of incompleteness. Like many such places it had clearly been changed forever by the building of the reservoirs. On a practical basis, we were intrigued to note that the Fewston community has a Harrogate postcode, an Otley telephone number and a church, which is in the Diocese of Bradford.

We felt that much information could be yielded by the study of various sources such as maps, aerial photos, archives and by field walking.



Quarry near Busky Dike Lane, Fewston

Grainge got it Wrong!

William Grainge was a Victorian historian and an authority on Nidderdale and the Forest of Knaresborough. He considered Fewston to be beneath his notice with no *“old family mansion or religious house, and out of the line of any great routes of traffic”*. Our work, however has found family mansions, major route ways and even links with Religious groups.

A Family Mansion:

The Rise and Fall of Cragg Hall

Cragg Hall dates back to the 1500s and was in the same family from 1716 to 1871. It was one of the oldest homes in Fewston and can be fairly described as a Family Mansion.



*Ruins of
Cragg Hall*

We first visited Cragg Hall in 1999; it has been a ruin for many a year but through our research we have gained an idea of its former glory. The detail with which we are able to reconstruct the history of Cragg Hall shows how much information can be gathered about the landscape around us. It also illustrates just how rich and varied is the history of Fewston. The rise and fall of Cragg Hall typifies much of the story of Fewston and relates to trends that affected the entirety of the area.

The first records we found relating to Cragg Hall were in the Knaresborough Court rolls dating back to 1592 when a man named Christopher Lowcock of Le Cragg surrendered land. A year later there is a record of John Pulleyne of Cragg who in December 1593 surrendered two buildings and land in Fewston called Le Cragg to a man named Marmaduke Hardcastle of Bewerly.

However in 1595 Mr Hardcastle in turn surrendered Le Cragg and 16.5 acres of land to John Pulleyne, James Gibson, George Gill and Richard Lofthouse.

The next sets of records are from 1638 when William, Henry and Richard Frankland surrendered “Upper Cragg” to Henry Fairfax who also acquired the adjoining lands of Beeston Lees, Lower Crag and Bainbridge Gate.

Cragg Hall went in and out of various ownerships until the 17th of November 1716 when the estate was sold to Stephen Parkinson of Denton for £600. The house at the time was described as “a messuage called Cragg Hall”. A messuage is a dwelling with out buildings and associated land. In 1718 Stephen Parkinson laid a garret, or attic chamber at a cost of £1.2s.6d and in 1726 he built an oven house.

Stephen Parkinson died in 1763 leaving Cragg Hall to sons John and Thomas. In 1776 John sold his share of the house and lands to his Brother Thomas.

In 1779 Thomas died and left the hall to his son Thomas who in turn, on his death in 1816 left the house to his sons Thomas and Joseph. In 1819 the brothers divided the estate, Thomas taking Cragg Hall and when he died in 1846 his son Rev. Thomas Parkinson of Clare, Suffolk, inherited the Hall.

In 1871 Leeds Water Authority, which had such influence in Fewston, purchased the Hall. By 1881 a man named William Watkinson was living there. The Hall was photographed in the late 19th or early 20th Century and recorded on the 1909 OS map. There is no record of when the building fell in to disrepair but tree growth suggests that it was around 1900. Not much remains of Cragg Hall today.

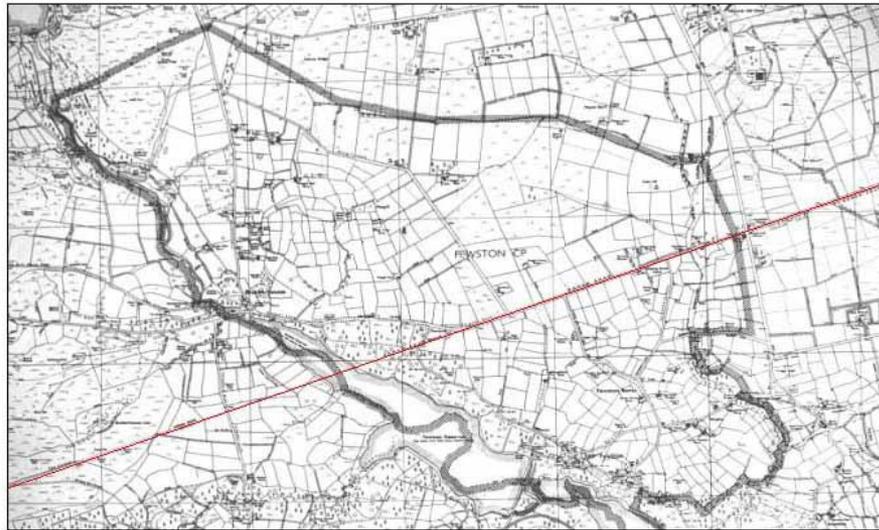
Walls survive up to 1.25 meters in height at points and cottages and out buildings associated with the Hall can be seen.



Cragg Hall circa 1900

Major Routeway: The Roman Road

The Roman Road, known as Watling Street runs in a straight diagonal line through the parish of Fewston. It was first surveyed in 1851. Part of it forms the A59 the modern route between Skipton and Harrogate. Originally it was the main route way between the Aldborough and Ilkley, both important Roman towns. To the West of Ilkley it continued onto Ribchester, a Roman settlement near Manchester.



Our landscape survey has shown that the projected route of the Roman road on the O.S. map is incorrect. There is evidence of the road 220 meters to the southeast of the projected line where it crosses the Washburn.

**Links with Religious Houses:
The Trinitarians and the Monks of
Bridlington.**

The Church of St Michael and St Lawrence in Fewston was, like many churches in the Royal Forest of Knaresborough founded by the Trinitarians in the 13th Century. The Trinitarians had had a 'religious house' in Knaresborough since *circa* 1250.

The Trinitarians were founded in order to provide the ransoms for people captured in the crusades. There were strong links between Fewston and Knaresborough, which was the administrative centre for the Royal Forest.

Money collected in the church at Fewston, which the Trinitarians were responsible for, would have gone toward freeing those capture in the Crusades.

Fewston also had links to another great religious house namely the priory at Bridlington, founded in 1113 AD. The Augustinian friars had the right to extract iron at Fewston. Physical evidence of this relationship can be seen in the form of a medieval bloomery. The archaeological remains of this metal working site were identified by the group and have since been investigated by Bradford University. A detailed survey of the visible earthworks has been carried out along with a thorough geophysical survey and analysis of the waste products left over from the metal working process. This level of detailed professional work was warranted by the rarity of the site.

Time Line



Prehistoric

10,000 BC– 70AD



Romano-British

70 AD -440 AD



Anglo-Scandinavian

440 AD –1066 AD



Medieval

1066 AD – 1500 AD



Early Modern

1500 AD – 1700 AD



18th Century

1700 AD – 1799 AD



19th Century

1800 AD – 1899 AD



20th Century

1900 AD – 1999 AD

The Prehistoric



There is evidence of people in the Fewston area since Prehistoric times. However there is little settlement evidence. This is probably due to the destruction of earlier features by the intensive use of the landscape in more modern times. What remain are occasional finds, such as Mesolithic flint tools that were found on the shore of the reservoir, suggesting human activity since the retreat of the Ice Age. The period, which saw the introduction of farming into Britain, is also represented in Fewston by stone axes found by the Victorians in the construction of the reservoir.



Prehistoric stone axes found during the construction of the reservoir (part of a collection held by Harrogate Borough Council)

During the Later Prehistoric (Bronze and Iron Age), there is a suggestion that people settled in the area near Hardisty Hill. The aerial photograph below shows evidence of possible prehistoric activity in the north of the survey area. The feature, circled in red is a large mound, which has been dug into on the top. It is thought

It is thought to be too large to be a house and may have been of ritual significance.



Large Circular Feature near Hardisty Hill.

There is currently relatively little evidence of prehistoric activity in Fewston. This reflects the fact that there has been comparatively little work done in the area that focuses on this period. Further study and field walking would undoubtedly reveal more information.

Romano British



The impact of Romans in Fewston can still be seen today. The modern A59 roughly follows the same route as the Roman road built for the purpose of marching from Ilkley to Aldborough. There is evidence of the existence of this road near the site of Cragg Hall, on the following page, where it descends into the valley diverging from the line suggested on the ordnance survey maps.

There has also been extensive quarrying for road building, some of which may date back to the Romans.



The Roman Road heading down into the valley

Anglo Scandinavian



Place name evidence from 700 AD onwards suggests that there was activity in the area during this period. The place name Fewston comes from *FOTS* and *TON* meaning foots farmstead in Middle English and Bestham which was latter incorporated into Fewston, also has an Anglo Scandinavian origin.

There is little documentary evidence from this period; however it is known that the township of Fewston was under the control of Edward the Confessor at the time of the Norman Conquest.

Possible evidence of Anglo Scandinavian period settlement can be found to the North of the A59 in the East of the study area. Building platforms and possible drainage channels can still be seen as earthworks.

Whilst place names suggest that settlements were founded during this period and leave a lasting legacy there is very little physical evidence of this period in the landscape.

Medieval



Settlement

The Domesday Survey of 1086 recorded two settlements on the North Eastern slopes of the upper Washburn. They were named as Fostune and Bestham. Fostune is now known as Fewston but Bestham, later described as Beeston, has completely disappeared and its lands absorbed by Fewston.

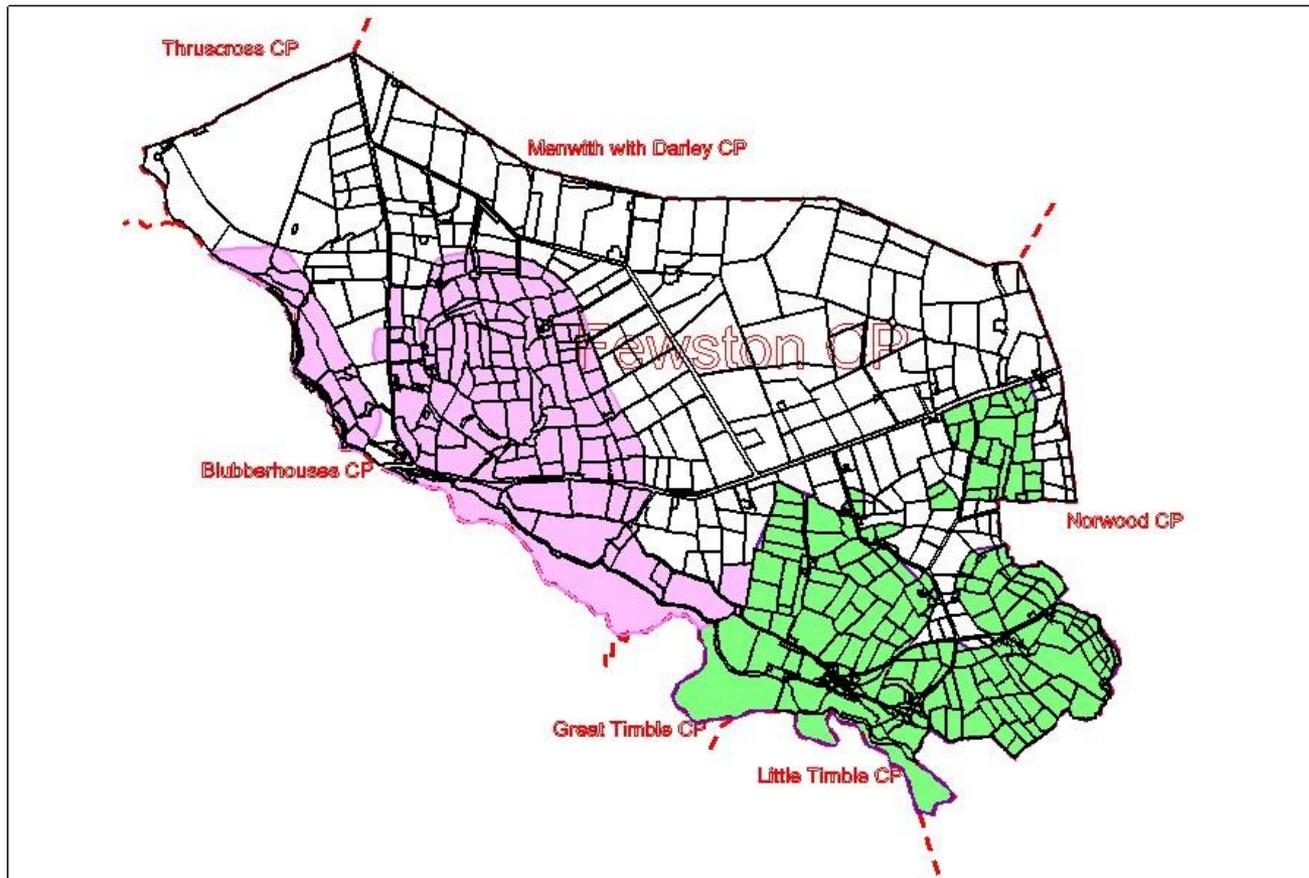
In 1086 Fostune had 4 carucates of ploughland and meadow (1 carucate is 80- 120 acres approximately) and wood pasture half a mile long, both owned by the King.

Medieval documents record the existence of 'Fostune – Bestaine' in 1299. In addition there is a reference to Bestayne in the Court Rolls of the Honour of Knaresborough of 1342 that states the tenants of Bestayne were accustomed to the rights of turbury, or peat cutting.

Prior to the Parliamentary Enclosure Act of 1775 a survey was made of the 'ancient enclosures', or fields, which were to be excluded from the parcelling up of land. This means that medieval field patterns survive to the modern day. An examination of the survey shows that these ancient enclosures appear to be in two distinct blocks separated by the small stream at Bainbridge Gate on Busky Dyke Lane.

It is thought that the extent of these ancient enclosures has not changed since the Black Death in 1348. The northwestern portion of these Fewston enclosures is thought to be the lost village of Beeston. An examination of the fields on either side of Meagill Beck and the stream that passes by the ruins of Crag Hall, running down to the Washburn, reveals the presences of building platforms, trackways and eroded boundary banks. This indicates that water sources combined with sloping well-drained land were essential to early subsistence agriculture.

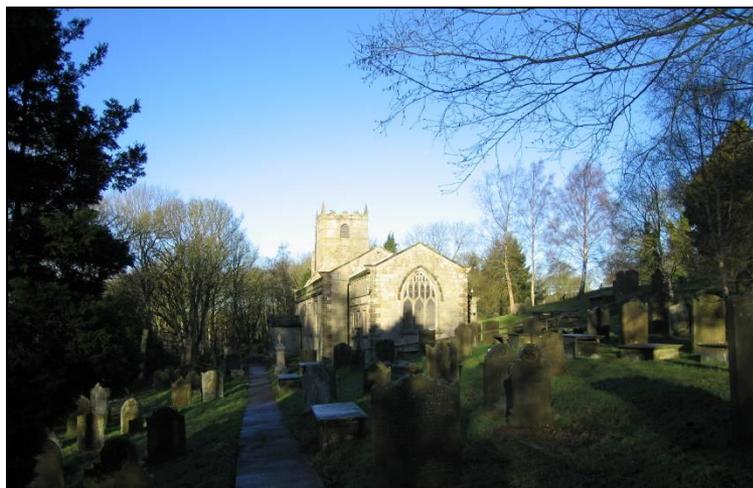
The absorption of Beeston by Fewston could well date from the late 12th or early 13th Century and may be associated with the creation of the ecclesiastical parish of Fewston which incorporated the townships of Norwood, Timble, Blubberhouses and Fewston.



Map showing Ancient enclosures. The pink is the proposed area of Beeston and the green Fewston.

The Church

The church, evidently a 13th Century foundation, formed a centre to the village. A stone cross, used as a gravestone, displayed in the church, dates from the 12th or 13th Century.



This stone is important as a relic of the Middle Ages, as the church was very substantially rebuilt at a later date. The church was built on a favourable site with a reliable, spring fed water supply. Many churches dedicated to St Lawrence have springs close by.

Their sites have been connected to pre-Christian worship.

The first rector of a church at Fewston is recorded in 1234. By 1289, the control of the church had been given to the Trinitarian Friars at Knaresborough, by Richard, Earl of Cornwall, son of King John.

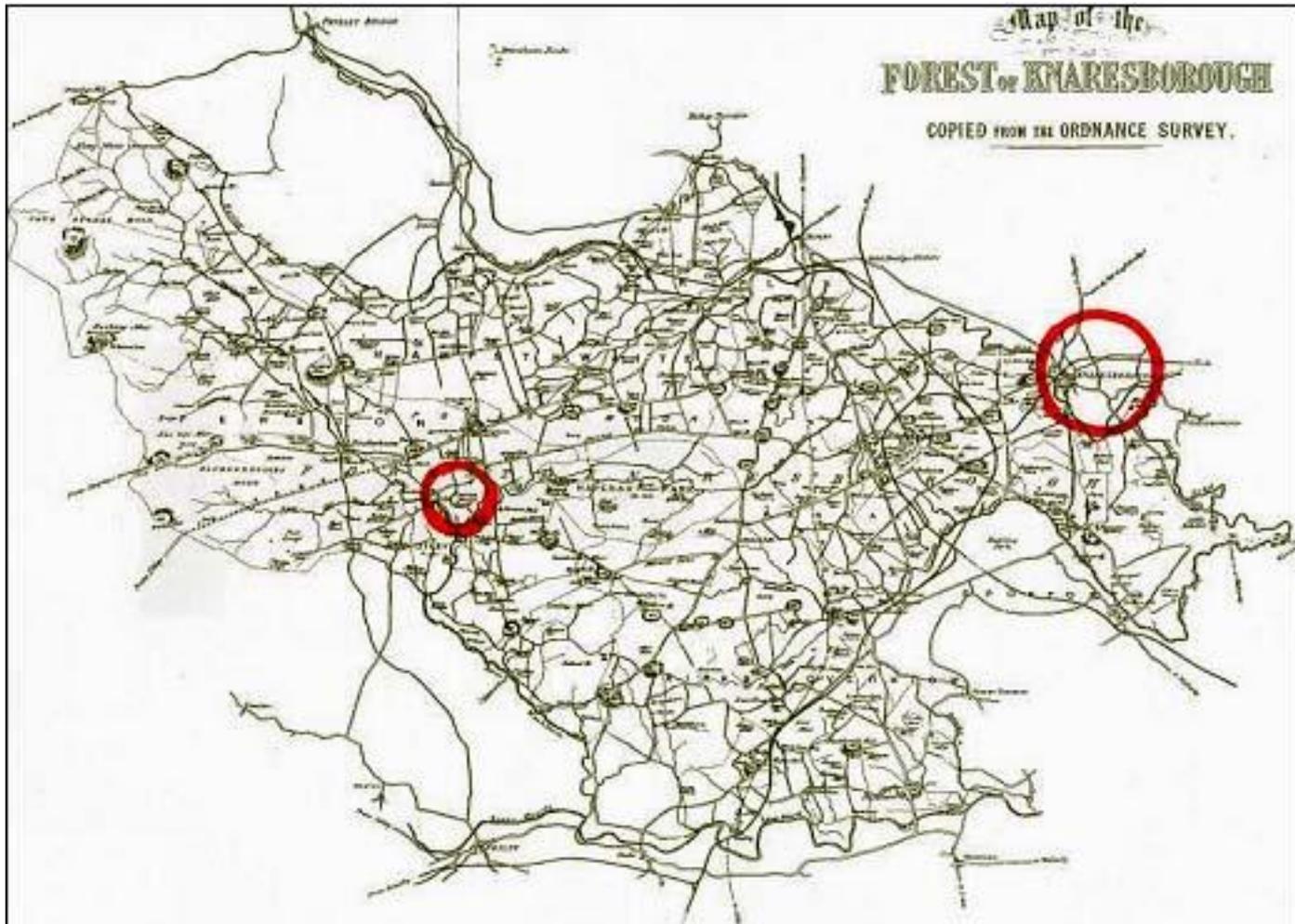
The Royal Forest of Knaresborough

The village of Fewston formed part of the Honour and Forest of Knaresborough, a Norman hunting ground set aside for the Royal family. This land was not a forest as we would understand the term today. The forest consisted of woodland, heath and moorland, with manors, villages and isolated farmsteads. The peasants who lived within its boundaries were subject to the laws of the land, the church and Forest. This designation of land use had an impact on the nature of the settlement and cultivation of the land around it.

As this was, above all, a hunting ground for royalty, farming practice was strictly controlled through the Chief Forester. Initially fines were imposed for ploughing up and enclosing land, although deforestation and enclosure were later permitted in return for payment. In this way agriculture was restricted to hunters, forest servants and residents.



Medieval boundary bank



Map of the Forest of Knaresborough showing Knaresborough and Fewston.

Fewston is typical of villages in the Forest of Knaresborough, which were without a village green, and appear to have grown up in an ad hoc manner.



A Medieval outgang. The dry stone walls still match the medieval pattern and relate to a major medieval road between York and Lancaster.

The population of Fewston boomed in the 12th and 13th Centuries, perhaps accounted for by warmer weather. However in the 14th century, the population dropped dramatically. The period saw a rapid and prolonged

deterioration in the weather conditions, frequent incursions by Scottish raiding parties and the impact of the Black Death. The population at this time dropped by 40% and the hamlet of Beeston disappeared. Young adult males were particularly vulnerable to the Black Death. This led to the loss of male succession to inherit family land, which may have reverted to wilderness and become valueless or informally incorporated into other estates leading to early enclosure of land.

Over the next two hundred years, the population recovered and increased, in a period of political stability. Whilst walking through every field in the parish to which we had access, we discovered evidence of industry from this period, including coal mining, corn milling, quarrying and lime processing. The activities of present day rabbits alerted us to the presence of a medieval bloomery used in the iron making process.

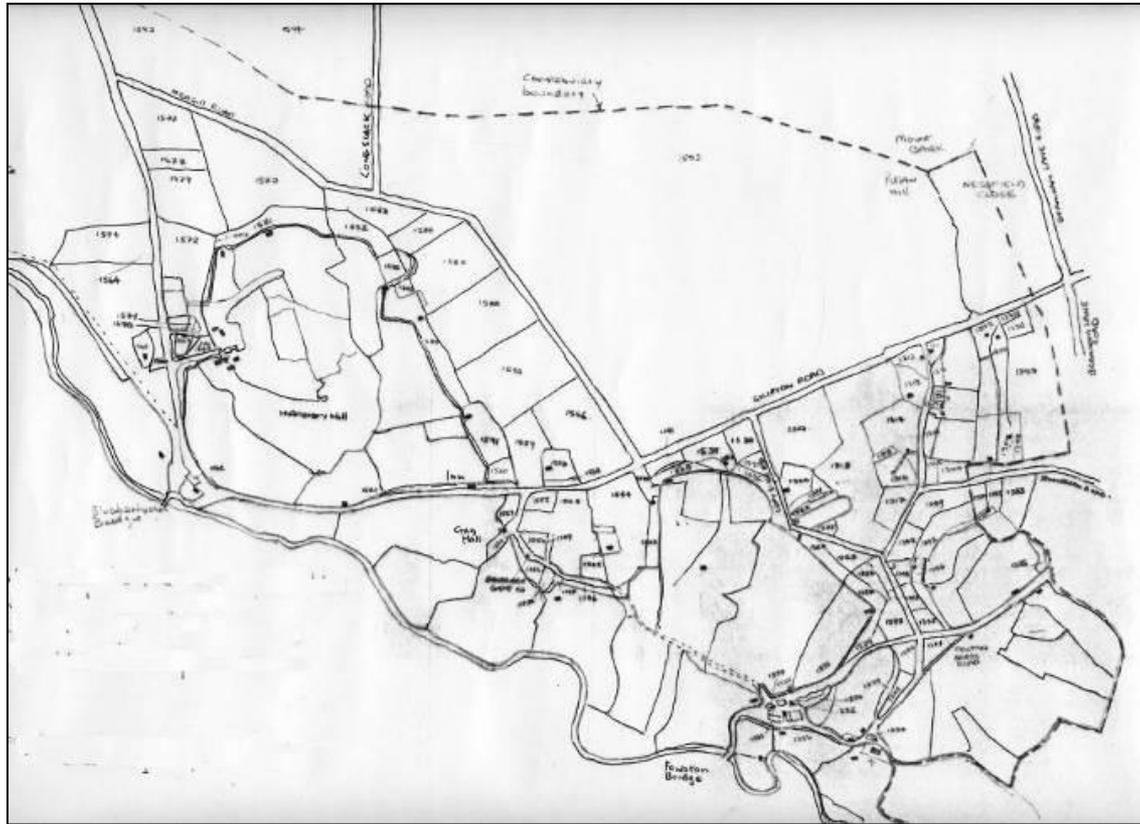


Site of a Medieval bloomery.

These were cottage industries, with the workers continuing to farm the land. Eventually a large stock of wood was used up in pursuit of these trades. Bluebells, by their very presence, show which present day woods are ancient and can also show us which areas used to be wooded.

As the population had increased, there was demand for land, which led to illegal squatting on the Royal estate. This process of encroachment is documented by court action and on the earliest maps, where small, oddly shaped fields can be seen nibbling into the Forest, just outside the large ancient enclosures. It resulted in the formation of new farmsteads and the cultivation of marginal land.

The situation of Fewston within the boundaries of the Forest of Knaresborough established an ongoing connection with Knaresborough, for the purposes of local government, leading to the present day inclusion within the boundaries of Harrogate Borough Council. The connection was strengthened by ecclesiastical management of Fewston Church by the Trinitarian Friars at Knaresborough. In spite of this, the routes to and from Fewston seem to lead the traveller away towards the south and west.



Small oddly shaped fields between Fewston and the Royal Forest of Knaresborough.

Early Modern



In 1526 a licence was granted to Fewston for a fulling, or wool-processing mill. Milling was to become an important industry in Fewston and this period saw the origins of those large-scale operations.

The village of Beeston proper had disappeared by this time but in 1613 a Forest Survey, identified 69 acres of land as 'Beeston Leaz'.

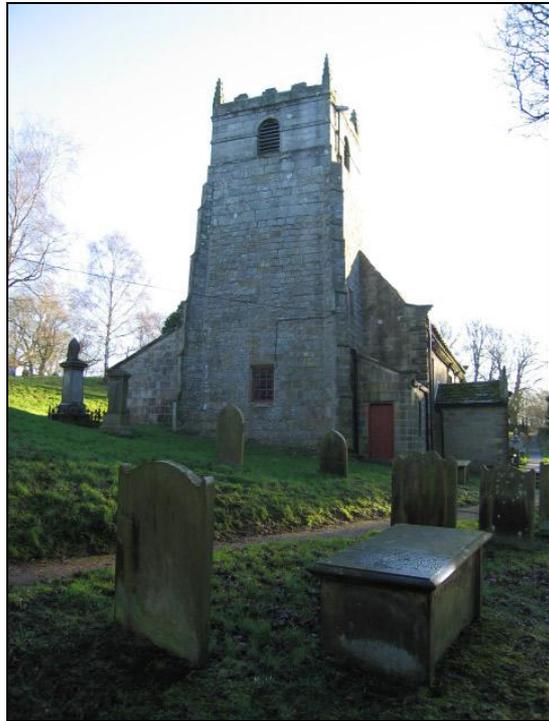
In 1638 when Henry Fairfax surrendered “one message called Beeston Leas and half an acre of meadow”.

By the 17th Century the land previously farmed in strips had been consolidated and acquired by local families, leading to early enclosure of land, mainly for stock rearing. There were far more small farmhouses and cottages than there are today, with a pattern of small fields or closes. During recent work to increase the capacity of Fewston Reservoir, the water level was lowered revealing a trackway and a fording point, thought to be the line of route from York to Lancaster in the mid seventeenth century.

One of the most lasting effects of 17th Century activity in Fewston is the church, which was rebuilt in 1697,

following a fire the previous year. This gives an indication of the strength of support for the church and the relative wealth of the congregation.

Although the new church was built on the foundations of the medieval structure, there is little evidence of this early structure.



*Fewston Church – St Lawrence
and St Michael*

18th Century



In 1775 the Parliamentary Enclosure Act formalised the process of parcelling up common land into fields. These new enclosures were awarded to the local population and put up for sale and are easily distinguishable from earlier boundaries as they are defined by long straight dry stone walls. An example of dry stone boundary wall is shown below.



18th Century dry stone wall

Through the maps, the Enclosure Award and some detective work it is possible to discover the origins of the field, who owned it, how it developed and perhaps about the movement of stock to it, along outgangs.

At the end of 18th Century the mill industry had become very important in Fewston. By 1797 the existing fulling mill had converted to a corn mill and Westhouse mill started to spin flax, a plant fibre used to produce cloth.

The former site of Westhouse Mill is partly Blubberhouses' Cricket Field.



Mill Leat

Now, there seems to be little left of this industry but our field walking has rediscovered much of the water system. Leats and dams were used to power Westhouse Mill, which at one point had the largest water wheel in Europe at 28 foot in diameter.



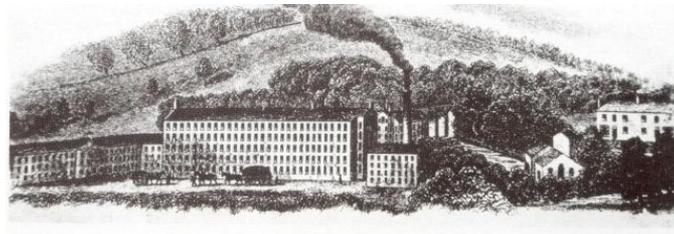
High Apprentice House

These enterprises needed to be staffed with cheap labour, in this case recruited from the indigent poor of industrial towns in the West Riding. There is no indication that these workers formed part of the permanent population of Fewston. However, they would all have needed to be fed, and must have had some impact on the development of businesses in the area. The apprentice boys and girls were required to live in the accommodation provided by the mill, High Apprentice House and Low Apprentice House (now Hewness House).



Hardisty Hill cottages.

At this time a nucleus of population developed around the mill on Hardisty Hill, including a Methodist Chapel, which remained in use until 1996. Fewston had become a centre for worship in the Methodist Church. The village was included in the wave of Methodism, which spread through Yorkshire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. There were two Methodist Chapels in Fewston, one in the centre of the village and one on Hardisty Hill. The latter had a strong connection with the influx of workers from West Yorkshire in the early nineteenth century. Furthermore there was also a Methodist reading room at the bottom of Hardisty Hill.



Westhouse Mill early 19th Century

19th Century



By the mid 19th century the industrial enterprises had started to fail, largely the result of competing towns having better access to canals and railways. The closure of Westhouse Mill had a very considerable impact on the population of Fewston, which declined from 850 to 640 between 1841 and 1851.

At the same time many properties were abandoned.

Toad Hole, near Fewston church is typical of the abandonment of Fewston in the 19th Century. All that remains are the privy and part of the garden.

*The garden steps at
Toad Hole*



*The Privy at Toad
Hole*



Westhouse Mill reopened in 1859 as a silk mill but did not prosper and in about 1870 the mill was bought by Leeds Water Corporation. It was demolished in 1877 and the stone used in the construction of the boundary walls around Swinsty and Fewston reservoirs.

From 1860 onwards the call for a major water supply for the industrial towns of the West Riding resulted in the flooding of the Washburn Valley at Fewston. The impact of this completely changed the character of the area and led to the loss of agricultural land, and disruption of communications. Many local people moved away and there was an influx of navvies and itinerant labour. In total twenty-three small fields, parts of twenty-two others, some small areas of woodland and a barn were flooded. Some homesteads were removed and the arable land surrounding them was also purchased and planted with trees, mostly conifers, totally

altering the appearance of this part of the valley.



Beach Combing on the shores of Fewston Reservoir.

Modern 20th / 21st Century



Once the reservoirs were finished in the late 19th Century, Fewston returned to being an agriculture based settlement, with vestiges of long established families still in evidence. The water authority became the main landowner and employer and has taken the responsibility for the stewardship of the landscape and quality of life for local residents and visitors.

It seems from pictorial records that between the Wars the main occupations in Fewston were agriculture, forestry and occupations relating to the numerous activities, which serviced these workers. During this time there were many community social events.

However as more people began to own cars and to travel further afield, the services in the village declined, leaving just the Church and the Village Hall as public buildings. It is interesting to note that there is a new development of affordable housing in Fewston, built in the vernacular style. These properties are owned by a housing association and allocated to a variety of people, some retired and some working.

Other housing developments in Fewston relate mainly to the changed use of existing buildings such as former places of worship, agricultural buildings and farmhouses no longer associated with the surrounding farmland.

Alongside the water industry, there has been a healthy development of an industry in leisure and recreation. The car parks near to the reservoirs are very well used by all sorts of people, mostly from nearby towns. These visitors include those who seek a leisurely walk, to those who are serious ramblers. Above all, the daily visitors include a large number of keen anglers. All of these people are well catered for by the water industry.

In addition to the daily visitor, there are quite a few tourists, staying at local bed and breakfast establishments.

Fewston Reservoir Another major landowner in the area is the Ministry of Defence. Aerial photographs taken after the Second World War show evidence of military activity in the area of Delves Ridge associated with HMS Forest Moor.



Fewston Reservoir

Conclusion

Our work at Fewston has shed light on many aspects of its rich and varied history. As Fewston's fortunes have changed so has its landscape and each generation has left its mark.

The contents of this booklet are based on a report compiled on the completion of a six-year project in Fewston Civil Parish. More detail can be found in our Final Report and database at the Heritage Environment Record, NYCC. It is proposed that topics touched on in this text may be further explored by the development of a series of guided walks.

Certain aspects of the study have been constrained by factors outside the control of the group. Access to parts of the landscape has been limited due to the nature of the land ownership and use, in particular relating to land owned by the Ministry of Defence. In addition, the progress of the entire project was set back by a full year because of the epidemic of Foot and Mouth Disease in 2001. There have also been financial constraints.

Since completing our work at Fewston we have gone on to a three-year project around Thruscross, just to the North of Fewston in the Washburn Valley.

We would very much like to thank the following for their assistance during the six years we were working in Fewston:

Harrogate Borough Council, Museums and Arts.

Yorkshire Water

North Yorkshire County Council

Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The People of Fewston

Peter Eaton for Original Art Work

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