A HISTORY OF NEWTON UPON DERWENT

The village stands on the Escrick moraine which was formed by the southernmost extent of the last Ice Age, some 10,000 years ago. This moraine forms a low ridge, standing above the Vale of York. It stretches, in a curve, from the west of Escrick in the south to near Stamford Bridge in the north .From 4000 to 2000 BC The Wolds were occupied by Neolithic peoples, they largely kept away from the lowlands but did occupy dry sandy margins of the Vale of York and in particular the York and Escrick moraines. There is a suggestion of the presence of a Neolithic Barrow to be found to the north of Mask Lane where it is marked on old maps as Round Hill

During the Iron Age, after about 200 BC, farming reached a peak in the East Riding and inroads were made into the lowland forests from the long favoured Wolds. (The name Derwent is thought to be derived from the Old English word derv meaning oak and suggests that the land by the river was forested by oaks which would have to be cut down to provide the pastures which made the settlement viable agriculturally.) There were droveways for moving stock and these trackways crossed the boggier ground in the Vale of York by the natural bridges provided by the moraines It thus seems likely that there would be a pathway along the top of the moraine along what would now be the road from Wilberfoss and along Back ‘o Newton

The existence of any Roman impact on Newton is somewhat problematical. The road from London divided at Barmby, the northern route going to Stamford Bridge, Thirsk and beyond. This route of this road is clearly traceable. However, the southern fork which goes directly to York is more dubious. The Sites and Monuments Record Office in Hull suggests a route for the road, this leaves the Hull road and goes along along Carr Lane at Beck cottage and continues on Carr Lane until the road turns left toward Bull Balk Bridge. At this point the suggested Roman road goes across the fields and across the Foss Beck continuing in a straight line across the fields and on to join Mask Lane which is a straight continuation of the line. Some confirmation of the route has been provided by the finding of a Ballista Ball at the junction of Mask Lane and Birker Goit. It would seem to be unlikely that this Roman missile would have come to this spot other than being shot or dropped some time during the Roman Occupation. This suggested route has some backing east of the Derwent because it follows existing road lines, and hedgerows in an almost straight line. There does not however appear to be any archaeological evidence to support the suggestion. Furthermore there does not seem to be any evidence on the west side of the river in the form of existing roads or paths which would reinforce the suggestion. A point to note is that a straight line down Mask Lane if extended to the west, meets York at Walmgate Bar.

At the times of occupation by the Angles and the Danes the typical form of village was of straggling or huddling groups of buildings and not like that of the present Newton which has the characteristic plan of a "street village", thus suggesting, there was not a village here during pre-conquest times.

Rebellions in Yorkshire provoked William the Conqueror in the winter of 1069-70 to undertake the "Harrying of the North" during which up to 100,000 people died and many villages were wholly or partially emptied of people and land laid waste. Wasting appears to have been particularly severe in the Wolds and it seems that many of the surviving inhabitants may have deliberately moved from the Wolds down to the wasted but more fertile land in the Vale There is evidence that this took place over the fifty years following the Domesday survey in 1086. It is suggested that there is a profusion of linear villages in the area that was wasted it

was possible that the population left from the “harrying” was regrouped in these new planned villages

Tthe new linear "street" village of Newton was not placed along the old pathway along the top of the moraine possibly because there was a line of natural springs and wells along what is now our Main Street and therefore the siting of the new village offset from the road along the top of the moraine would be a sensible move to capitalise on the availability of water.

Since Newton was not referred to in the Domesday book and not mentioned in records until around 1150, it is possible that it was founded during the 64 years between 1086 when the Domesday book was compiled and 1150. The name suggests that it was a new village (Old English n‘owa tãn) and thus a deliberate foundation and not just a village that had grown up by random settlement.

The first citing of Newton in records was of the chapel established there. It was first mentioned in 1153 and was a sub-chapel of St Mary Priory at Wilberfoss. That Priory was built of wood and thatch, so it is likely that the Chapel in Newton was not of better construction. No remains of the Priory in Wilberfoss were left after the dissolution of the monasteries and it is therefore not surprising that the site of the sub-chapel in Newton cannot be established. The only possible clue is the existence is on early OS maps where Mary Well is shown at the junction of Jackson Lane and Main Street.

The name Newton **upon** Derwent needs some explanation. The prefix "iuxta Derwent" was first mentioned in the 13th Century and "super Derwent" in the 14th Century, presumably to distinguish our Newton from the many others that existed. Why this association with the Derwent was used when the river is about a mile away is possibly because, at the time, this was the nearest clear feature by which it could be identified Later, the river Derwent became important to the village as a means of water transport. It was mentioned by Bede in AD 730 as Deruentonium and in AD 959 as Deorwentam. The fields on which the village have depended, stretch to the river. The water-meadow alongside the River, flooded often during the winter and spring is called The Mask, (from Old Norse for marsh) has been and still is a part of the village's economy, providing good crops of high quality hay.

One of the puzzles about the village is that the oldest houses that you see now appear to date from the late 18th century. We have records of some earlier inhabitants of the village, for instance Robert de Hoton who died in 1447 (and incidentally fought at Agincourt) and John Horsley who died in 1719 but we have no records of the houses in which they lived. It seems likely that all the original houses (probably of wood and thatch) were replaced by brick buildings from the time of the Enclosures around 1766 and only then did the village then become the "new town" which we can see to-day. The earliest map that we have which is dated 1755 shows that the majority of houses in the village were represented there. However, this does not mean, of course, that these were the same houses that we physically see to-day.

The big change in the village's land was brought about by the Enclosures Act which took effect from 1776. Before that the land beyond the North end of the village and down to the river was open pasture used by the villagers for grazing stock. The villagers lost that facility in 1776. The enclosure settlement had the following clauses which are worth while quoting in full. *"We do allot, award and assign to the same Mann Horsefield..... and John Horsley of St Loys an allotment of the same Maske .... Except the piece of ground within the same allotment called the Maske containing 44 yards in breadth and hereinafter awarded for a road and landing place to the proprietors and occupiers of Houses, Lands and Tenements in Newton upon Derwent aforesaid. Also we do allot, award and assign unto the several and respective proprietors and occupiers of Houses, Lands and Tenements in Newton upon Derwent aforesaid the said piece of ground within the said allotment called Maske and not fenced off containing 44 yards in breadth abutting on the River Derwent on the west end and on a lane leading to the said town of Newton on Derwent to the said common called Maske on the east end as a road to and from the said river for a landing place with Horses, Beasts and Carriages to carry and load Corn, Grain, Seed, Hay, Coals, Lime and Manure and other good and materials for their own private use and benefit and for the sale of Corn, Grain, Seed, Hay, Wood or any other things produced on their own estates to put on board any keel or vessel at the said landing place, but not for the sale of any corn, grain or seed or any other goods not produced on their own estates which may be put on board, or any coal, grain seed or coal, manure or any other goods which may be landed at the same landing place or led to any other township or place whatsoever. And we order direct and appoint that the said piece of ground to be awarded as a road shall be forever be repaired and maintained by the inhabitants of the Township of Newton upon Derwent aforesaid".* The particular interest of this quotation is that it allocates to the village, the Mask for grazing, the landing place at the end of Mask Lane and Mask Lane itself.

This emphasised is the importance of the river to the village. A Trinity House report of 1698 states that there were 2 keels employed in fetching and carrying as far as Buttercrambe The width of the flash lock at Sutton would allow boats of this size to trade above this point. The boats carried corn and other country goods. In 1701 an Act of Parliament was passed to make the river navigable from the Ouse up to Scarborough Mills, to provide a towing path and to levy tolls from the Ouse to Malton. By 1723 the river was navigable as far as Malton with a towing path for bow hauling by men, with five locks big enough to take a Yorkshire Keel of 55ft by 14ft. A statement of the river's trade in 1793 records 35 craft regularly trading to Malton carrying coal from the Leeds area and corn and flour down river. It was boats of this size that stopped at Newton's landing place to take our farm produce and to provide coal to the village. By the 1890's there was only any real trade on the lower reach as far as Sutton with coal, gravel, lime and manure. However, up to 1915 one barge and a lighter still ran to Malton but in 1960 the last commercial barge passed Sutton lock.

During the 19th century and later the village had a shop, two shoe makers, a smith, a wheelwright and several of the farmers wives were dressmakers. Before this there was a sawpit shown on early maps as opposite what is now Village Farm court. In 1841 there were two pubs, one The Sportsman as at the junction of the Hull Road and Carr Lane and the other th Half

Moon in the village. By 1861 The Sportsman was no longer mentioned but the Half Moon was open and has remained the Village's pub to this day with some breaks in occupancy.

Although the village was in the ecclesiastical parish of Wilberfoss and Anglicans attended church there, Newton had a strong Methodist following and a chapel was built in the village in1818 and replaced in 1901. It is still an active centre of the village as a place of worship and a venue for village activities

Farming in Newton up to the Second World War was typically small to medium sized mixed arable and livestock. Pre-War, Newton had thirteen full time holdings along its village street. Their land mainly lay in strips stretching east and west from the village where the first field adjacent to the farmstead would be permanent grass. Several of the farms were fragmented with strips or separate fields in different parts of the parish. In addition there were six outlying farms lying to the east of the village. Farm sizes ranged from 25 acres to about 150 acres. Several were worked by family, others employed up to three men, usually resident in the village, with piece work gangs coming in to do the seasonal work. Spring would be spent planting potatoes and 'shaking in' manure that was spread before planting. Early summer was mainly taken up by hoeing and 'singling' sugar beet, turnips and mangolds and later harvesting corn. The autumn was spent picking potatoes and hand pulling sugar beet. During the winter they sorted potatoes and were present on most farms on threshing days. Threshing days were almost a communal event. Twelve or thirteen men were required and as farms were mainly worked by one or two men, staff were 'borrowed' from neighbours and the debt was repaid when the neighbour had his threshing day. Only rarely would money change hands. Several farms produced milk from up to six cows, this going to a dairy in the village where it was bottled and delivered on the doorstep in York. Most farms had a covered fold yard and would fatten a number of bullocks during the winter, mainly on home produced rations. Most farms would have a few pigs mainly bought as small stores and fattened to Pork or Bacon weight on home produced cereals. Sheep were kept only on one or two farms. Most farmers' wives would have some free-range poultry and several 'stood' York Market on Saturdays with eggs poultry and butter. For those who did not produce milk commercially a house cow would be typical supplying milk and butter. Horses provided motive power.The village had its own blacksmith's shop situated immediately behind "Sunnycroft". This was visited by an Elvington based blacksmith on two days per week when he shod horses and did general implement repairs. A joiner- wheelwright lived in a cottage adjacent to Village Farm. The strength of agriculture in the village was shown by its capability in 1851 to start the "Newton Show" to show off the agricultural and equine interests of the local area. By 1880 it had amalgamated with Stamford Bridge to become the Derwent agricultural Society. By the early 1950s horses had virtually disappeared from farms and with them the one year clover ley and much of the acreage of oats. About this time carrots lost favour and few, if any were grown. Practically all farm free range poultry had gone by this time, as had the pigs that were kept on most farms. Farmhouses have become private homes and the buildings have been converted to dwellings or new houses have been built on the site. Fields attached to a farmhouse are now used for grazing or for exercising riding horses. There is now only one farm actually in the village, although others exist east of the village along Carr lane. At the

moment the village has a shape much like that which it had in earlier days although any departure from the present building regulations could change that.