

## **Kippax History Walk Update**

On Wednesday 13 October a group of us attended a walk, led by local resident and amateur historian Edgar Pickles, around Kippax High Street. This was very informative and please find a few notes below on the details we discovered, or remembered for some of the longer term Kippax residents!

Kippax was a substantial village from before 1066 and evidence has been discovered showing that there were settlers on the site as long as 6,000 years ago. At the time of the Domesday Book in 1086 Kippax was listed as Chipesch which is believed to mean 'Cippa's Ash Tree' (Cippa being an Old English personal name). The name has been used as a street name on a newish development on the site of the old Ash Tree School, Leeds Road near the library.

It is thought that the Angles or English first arrived in the area in the 7th century AD. Kippax is thought to have been the administrative and ecclesiastical centre of a large Anglo-Saxon estate and, following the Norman Conquest of 1066, was the manorial centre for the Northern part of the Honour of Pontefract ( an area of land that covered about half of modern day West Yorkshire). 14th century tax rolls suggest that Kippax had a population equivalent to Leeds.

The Church of St Mary Kippax, almost certainly exists on the site of an earlier church, possibly wooden, which was mentioned in the Domesday Book. Two fragments of an Anglo-Saxon cross shaft, thought to be part of an early 10th century cross, were found in the church in the 19th century. The church probably originated as a private chapel for an English lord but it is thought to have become a Minster church before the Norman Conquest. The 'herringbone' masonry visible on the outer walls is typical of 11th or 12th century building work. The church is Grade 1 listed as it remains relatively unaltered in size however the tower was not added until the 16th century and the pinnacles are 19th century. Local gentry, the Blands who resided at Kippax Park Hall, have a vault under the vestry with the remains of around 15 people.

Manor Garth Hill (known locally as Cheney Basin), is a nationally important archaeological site. The earthwork remains of an 11th century ringwork and bailey castle are clearly visible next to the church. This may have been the site of an earlier high status English hall. The castle's outer defences originally extended eastwards into what is now the churchyard.

The Co-op is on the site of an old chapel and hall. The doctor's next door is called Kippax Hall Surgery in reference to this. The Co-op building was originally GT Smith's supermarket but there was a Co-op presence in the village previously as the Co-op butchers were located in a small lodge.

The largest building in Kippax sadly no longer exists. This was Kippax Park Hall owned by the Bland family for many generations. Originally built in the 17th century, around the time of Sir Thomas Bland (1614-1657), the first Baronet Bland of Kippax Park, it was extended in the 18th century by the 6th Baronet, Sir John Bland. The family continued to live in the house until the death of John Davison Bland in 1928, after which the house and contents were sold, but it was left to become derelict and was eventually demolished in the 1950's. (Leodis) A photograph is available on theLeodis website, see link below

<https://www.leodis.net/viewimage/113373>

There are no remains of the actual Hall but a wall and gate posts are preserved near the War Memorial. The wall edged a very substantial deer park and had a 12 foot ditch on the inside to prevent the deer from escaping. This is perhaps the origin of the road name, Longdike (or Dyke) Lane. There is also a lodge which was built in the 19th century which still exists.

The old fish and chip shop on the High Street had the last coal fired fryer locally.

Almost opposite the old fish and chip shop at 105-107 High Street are the remains of the Pinfold which was where stray sheep and other animals were rounded up each evening. The owner would have to pay a fine to recover his or her animals.

We then walked up Gibson Lane towards Kippax Central Working Men's Club and onto Back Lane. Here, looking up New Street, we were advised that the nearby roads were built to follow the old field ploughing lines which was why they were curved at the end. This was very evident to the eye and can even be seen on street maps. There was an old Methodist Church at this location previously. We saw the entrance to a ginnel called 'Jumbo's Nick' locally, supposedly due to an elephant from a travelling circus escaping and getting stuck at the narrowed end of the ginnel!

The site of Truffles Restaurant is a late Tudor farmhouse, now a private residence. It still has a Tudor fireplace.

The old, semi derelict building in the centre of the High Street, previously C& S Fashions, is Grade 2 listed and was built around 1750. It is still occupied.

Moving down Butt Hill from Cross Hills we were able to see as far as Wakefield Cathedral. Most of the land between Brigshaw School and the rest of Kippax was mined and there were many small shallow coal mines. The Leeds to Selby railway went through Kippax mainly for the movement of coal. Roads were very poor and wealthier people would travel by train to Selby and then by boat to Hull and onwards to London. This was quicker and more comfortable than travelling by road. There was a bus terminus near the top of the hill but a small garden and plaque are all that remains.

There were two blacksmiths and farriers in Kippax. The remains of a mounting block is visible outside the building which was Hick's blacksmiths.

Well Lane just below the library off Leeds Road leads down to a spring. Before mains water was available water was collected from the spring, often by children. Some of our group remembered doing this when they were young!

There was a cinema in Kippax in the 1920's building which is now occupied by a snooker cue business. Hand made cues are now produced there.

There are numerous pubs in Kippax and we were given information on quite a few of them.

The Commercial, previously known as The Medhurst Arms, was a Bentley's Yorkshire Breweries pub and was also a brew house meaning that it could not sell spirits or strong wine.

There was a small pub and brew house at Bramham's Yard called the Blue Anchor.

The Old Tree Inn was also a Bentley's pub and brew house. The inner door still retains a stained glass panel with the logo of the brewery. Bentley's brewery was based in Oulton.

The White Swan was built in 1915 on the site of an earlier White Swan pub. It is thought that the Manor Court was held at the previous premises.

The Royal Oak was built by Edward Gray around 1700 as a private residence and was formerly known as Kippax House and its coach house was the building across Cross Hills now occupied by Best One. This is a Grade 2 listed building. It later became the Royal Oak which moved to this building from nearby. This has now reverted to residential use.

Finally, although we did not see these buildings, there was both a watermill, located near the allotments on Station Road and mentioned in the Domesday Book, and a windmill. The windmill is known as either Kippax Mill or Boggat's Mill and was used for grinding corn and was converted to steam power in the late 19th century. This is situated at Mill Farm on Longdike Lane and is Grade 2 listed. Another windmill was sited at Lime Hills in the late 18th century but did not appear on maps after 1878.

All in all this was a very interesting walk and the weather was kind to us.

Elaine Whelan