A History of Barlow, West Riding of Yorkshire

INTRODUCTION

The village of Barlow lies in a low, flat area near the River Ouse, about 4km south-east of Selby, and 25km south of York. It is a linear settlement apart from Barlow Hall and several dispersed farmsteads, with a population that rarely surpassed two hundred and fifty people until the mid-20th century.

The land in the township comprised 2250a. in 1847, expanding slightly to 2371a. by 1891.[1] At its widest points, its irregular shape is about 4½ km from east to west, and about 3½ km north to south.

Barlow is a chapelry in the parish of Brayton and was a township until 1866 when it became a separate civil parish.[2] Before the 19th century, it was usually known as 'Berlay' or 'Barley'.[3]

[[Fig. 1: Barlow Township, c.1850]] – Map in preparation

Landscape

The whole of Barlow is extremely low-lying, nowhere exceeding five metres above sea level with the exception of a slightly higher area in Barlow Common (12m.) and the site known as Barlow Mound (30m.). The bedrock is sandstone, but this is completely covered by soil that is mostly a mixture of clay and silt, along with some sand and gravel, deposited by a prehistoric glacial lake. There is also an area of alluvial soil, with similar components, around White House Farm in the north-east corner of the township.[4]

Although the landscape was once heavily wooded, in the medieval and early modern period it was characterised by arable cropland, riverside meadows, marshy 'wastes', and a wood of

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[1] Borthwick Institute for Archives (hereafter BIA), TA335.S; OS Map 6"/1:10560 (1891-93 edn).

[2] Frederic A. Youngs, *Guide to the Local Administrative Units of England, Volume II: Northern England* (London, 1991), p. 510.

[3] A. H. Smith (ed.), *The Place-Names of the West Riding of Yorkshire* (hereafter *PNWRY*) (8 vols; Cambridge, 1961-1963), IV, p. 23.

[4] British Geological Survey 1:50,000 (2010).

less than 100a. known as Barlow Hagg to the east of the settlement.[5] The watery areas were drained by the mid-19th century and most of the Hagg was cut down in the mid-20th century. The latter was replaced in the 1970s by Barlow Mound, a disposal site for the ash produced by the power plant, and this use has partly continued.[6] However, the Mound was later landscaped and partly planted, leading to the return of many species and an award for local planning in 1998.[7] The much-reduced Barlow Common, to the south-west, was used as a ballast tip through much of the 20th century, but this ceased in 1983. Shortly after, an artificial lake was formed and a variety of deciduous trees planted. It was declared a Local Nature Reserve in March 2002.[8]

Boundaries

The township's boundary is formed partly by the River Ouse and a long-standing water dike, and partly by more recent ditches, hedges and roads. Its eastern and southern portions were once mostly characterised by carrs and other 'low or rushy pieces'.[9]

The northern boundary follows the river from Thief Lane End Reach to Upper Hope at Newhay, formerly a ferry crossing. The site of the ferry on the east bank of the river, an area of 403a., is now part of Cliffe cum Lund (E.R.), but this was part of Brayton parish until 1883.[10]

Most of its eastern boundary is defined by hedges and drainage ditches, but a plot of 'the Manor of Drax Abbey' made in 1657 suggests that much of this boundary may have once run about 200m to the west of its current course.[11] In the south-east, it joins a long-standing drain known as Carr Dike which curves around this corner of the township (now adjacent Drax Power Station) before heading north-west to Barlow Common.[12]

The southern boundary runs through the large area once covered by Barlow and Camblesforth Common. A dispute arose between the two townships at the end of the 18th century which touched on the alleged movement of boundary stones, resulting in depositions about common rights and Rogationtide perambulation.[13] From around 1800, the boundary has followed Bridge Low Drain, later known as Common Drain.[14]

Its western boundary is marked by hedges and roads. Much of its border with Brayton is defined by the Selby-Snaith road and Thief Lane, while its border with Selby partly follows the edge of what was once Stainer Wood.

[5] See below: Economic History – Agriculture and Woodlands.

[6] S. Lee and D. A. Spears, 'Potential Contamination of Groundwater by Pulverized Fuel Ash', in J. Mather, D. Banks, S. Dumpleton, and M. Fermor (eds), *Groundwater Contaminants and their Migration* (Geological Society, London, Special Publications, v. 128; 1998), pp. 51-61.

[7] *The Evening Press* (York), 1 Feb 1998.

[8] 'Barlow Common Nature Reserve' at <www.selby.gov.uk/service_main.asp?id=177> (accessed 08/09/2010).

[9] BIA, TA335.S.

[10] OS Map 6"/1:10560 (1851-54 edn); Youngs, *Units*, II, p. 520; K. J. Allison, 'Hemingbrough', in idem. (ed.), *A History of the County of York, East Riding: Volume 3* (hereafter *VCH: ER*, III) (London, 1976), pp. 55-56.

[11] Hull History Centre (hereafter HHC), U DDEV/70/1.

[12] HHC, DDLO/1/15; HHC, U DDEV/64/29; East Riding of Yorkshire Archives and Local Studies Service (hereafter ERYALSS), DDCL/124. In Drax, this becomes Lendall Drain ('Lending-Goate' or 'Mare-dike' in 1657): HHC, U DDEV/70/1; OS Map 6"/1:10560 (1851-54 edn).

[13] ERYALSS, DDCL/124.

[14] OS Map 6"/1:10560 (1851-54 edn); idem. (1891-93 edn).

It is not clear whether the boundaries of 'Old Drax' – described in an Anglo-Saxon charter of 959 – included, excluded or split Barlow, but it seems likely that at least part of the township's borders were in place by this time.[15]

Communications

The settlement lies along a crescent-shaped road – variously known as Towngate, Main Street or, most recently, Park Road – that ends just east of the village.[16] At the western end, the road splits into Mill Lane, which runs south towards Camblesforth, and Barlow Common Lane, which runs west towards Brayton.[17] Both these lanes intersect the Selby-Snaith-Bawtry road, now the A1041, which is the only roadway of any importance running near Barlow. This latter road was known as Camblesforth causeway in the medieval period and was popular enough to be mapped in 1720, recorded in an itinerary 1771, and then turn-piked by an act passed in 1793.[18] To the north, Brown Cow Road provides a route between the settlement and the bank of the River Ouse via Barlow Hall and the chapel, while Thief Lane also reaches the river but begins at the Selby-Snaith road and partly runs along the northern boundary of the township.[19] In the 19th century, there was a bridle path running from Selby to Thief Lane, then along the riverside to Long Drax.[20]

The River Ouse once served to link Barlow with its neighbours, though the main docks have always been situated at Selby rather than here. In 1317, the settlement was included on list of towns used by river-going merchants and sailors.[21] When Drax Priory was dissolved in 1536, its possessions included 'the passage of the water of the Ouse' at Newhay, probably referring to a ferry crossing there which connected Barlow to the East Riding and which remained in operation until c. 1930.[22] River transport is also indicated by the presence of a waterman at the end of the 18th century and at least two sailors in the 1830s.[23] In addition, there was river landing, with a crane, around 400 yards south of White House Farm recorded in 1851, and

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[15] Moira H. Long, 'Howden and Long Drax', in Jean Le Patourel, Moira H. Long and May F. Pickles (eds), *Yorkshire Boundaries* (Leeds, 1993), pp. 132-134.

[16] The National Archives (hereafter TNA), HO 107/1280/6 (census, 1841); OS Map, National Grid, 1:2500 (1972 edn).

[17] Both were first marked on Thomas Jefferys, *The County of York Survey'd in MDCCLXVII, VIII, IX and MDCCLXX* (London, 1772).

[18] John Burton, *Monasticon Eboracense, and the Ecclesiastical History of Yorkshire* (York, 1758), p. 102; John Warburton, *A New and Correct Map of the County of York* (London, 1720); Daniel Paterson, *A New and Accurate Description of All the Direct and Principal Cross Roads in Great Britain* (London, 1771), p. 70; 33 Geo. III, c. 166.

[19] Brown Cow Lane was first recorded on Jefferys, *County of York Survey'd*, whereas Thief Lane was only recorded on C. & J. Greenwood, *Map of the West Riding of the County of York: From an actual survey, made in the year 1817 & 1818* (London, 1834).

[20] The northern portion was first recorded on Jefferys, *County of York Survey'd*, and more clearly on a plan of Selby parish in 1818: North Yorkshire County Record Office (hereafter NYCRO), DC/SBR. The southern portion first appears on the tithe map of 1847: BIA, TA335.S.

[21] W. Baildon (ed.), *Notes on the Religious and Secular Houses of Yorkshire* (2 vols; Yorkshire Archaeological Society Record Series [hereafter YAS-RS], vol. 17, 81; Leeds, 1895, 1931), II, pp. 41-42.

[22] John W. Clay (ed.), *Yorkshire Monasteries Suppression Papers* (YAS-RS, vol. 48; Leeds, 1912), p. 99; Allison (ed.), *VCH: ER*, III, p. 56.

[23] See below: Economic History – River Trades.

several mooring posts at the end of Brown Cow Road noted in 1892, though the landing had been removed by this time and the moorings were gone by 1907.[24]

Between 1912 and 1964, there was also a railway line linking Goole to Thorpe Willoughby (for goods) and Selby (for passengers), with a station at Barlow.[25] It enabled the establishment of the airship plant here in the 1910s and of the Ordnance Depot in the 1930s. Most of this line has now been dismantled.

SETTLEMENT AND POPULATION

Before c. 1750

There is no evidence of prehistoric human occupation here, though a Neolithic flint adze-head was found at Camblesforth Common near Barlow's southern border.[26] The area also lacks any indication of Iron Age and Romano-British settlement, despite the presence of a nearby Roman farmstead at Drax.[27]

Anglo-Saxon settlers probably established themselves at Barlow after arriving via the Ouse. They named the site *Bern-lege*, meaning 'barn' or 'growing with barley' and 'clearing', which suggests that they had to clear some of the woodland before planting their first crops.[28] When this occurred is unknown, but the settlement had probably been in place for several centuries before it was first recorded in c. 1020, in a survey of the estates of the Archbishop of York.[29] After the Norman Conquest, it was part of a larger estate centred on Drax and, in 1086, this group of vills also included Cambleforth and Little Airmyn. Although the individual settlements were not detailed, the group as a whole included a priest, 6 villans and 2 sokemen with 2 ploughs.[30]

This was followed by an era of substantial growth, probably spurred by the founding of Selby Abbey (1080) and Drax Priory (1130s), and by the emergence of the de Berlays as a local knightly family in the 13th century.[31] Richard de Berlay seems to have begun developing the area, building large fishing weir in the early 14th century and perhaps the mill that was recorded here in the 1390s.[32] Moreover, earthworks indicating a regular series of tofts surrounded by ridge and furrow fields suggest that the area to the north of the present chapel and hall was occupied at around this time only to be abandoned later.[33]

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[24] OS Map 6"/1:10560 (1851-54 edn); OS Map 25"/1:2500 (1890-92); ibid. (1st revision, 1907 edn).

[25] M. H. Cobb, *The Railways of Great Britain: A Historical Atlas* (Shepperton, 2003), p. 386; North Yorkshire Historic Environment Record (hereafter NYHER), MNY12378.

[26] NYHER, MNY10046.

[27] NYHER, MNY10078; MNY24803.

[28] Smith, *PNWRY*, IV, p. 23.

[29] Simon Keynes, 'The Additions in Old English', in Nicholas Barker (ed.), *The York Gospels: A Facsimile With Introductory Texts* (London, 1986), pp. 82-83, 88; William Farrer and Charles Travis Clay (eds), *Early Yorkshire Charters* (hereafter *EYC*) (12 vols; Edinburgh and Wakefield, 1914-1965), I, pp. 21-23.

[30] Ann Williams and G. H. Martin (eds), *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London, 2003), p. 841. Note that Barlow was the only township of Brayton parish to be included in the Drax estate.

[31] See below: Manors and Estates.

[32] See below: Economic History.

[33] NYHER, MNY10027; MNY10028; MNY10029.

It is not possible to estimate the number of inhabitants prior to the Black Death, but the township had the thirteenth-highest assessment in the wapentake for the lay subsidy of 1334, significantly higher than Brayton, Burn or Gateforth.[34] It almost certainly shrank as a result of the plague in the middle decades of the century, and yet there were still 100 poll tax payers in 1377, indicating a population of around 160 to 240.[35] The population seems to have declined, though only modestly, in the 14th and early 15th centuries. It had 31 tax payers for the lay subsidy in 1525, suggesting around 140 to 210 inhabitants, though it had only 26 who paid the subsidy in 1545.[36] In all of these various medieval assessments, Barlow consistently ranked relatively highly. Whilst being far smaller than the neighbouring towns of Selby and Drax, it remained larger than most of the other villages in the wapentake.

During the early modern period, the population scarcely grew at all, but Barlow may have gleaned some benefits from the presence of a new resident gentry family, the Twisletons.[37] After acquiring the manor in 1520, the family used some of the wealth it had earned in the London goldsmith trade to begin improving their country estate. Although it is not certain whether they built the earlier timber portion of the manor house, they must have been responsible for the main range of Barlow Hall, a brick structure that was probably erected in the early 17th century.[38] The family also funded the construction of Barlow Chapel, though they were no longer resident here by the 1660s or 1670s.

The parish registers, which begin in 1616, suggest that there were probably little more than one hundred people in the township by c. 1620, a fall of over fifty per cent from its level under Henry VIII.[39] Thereafter, baptismal figures suggest that the settlement shifted between periods of growth and decline relatively frequently. It had certainly expanded by the early 1670s, when the Hearth Tax assessment of 1672 revealed 39 households, indicating close to 200 inhabitants.[40] Yet, there was a distinct population slump at the beginning of the 18th century and, despite some growth in the 1740s, this was followed by another nadir in the 1760s, when perhaps only 70 to 80 people lived in the township.[41]

Development from c. 1750[42]

The early lay-out of Barlow is unknown, but the current settlement pattern had clearly been established by the 18th century. In the first map of its main features, published by Thomas Jeffreys in 1772, the village is depicted as a roughly linear string of houses concentrated along 'Towngate', the crescent-shaped road near the centre of the township.[43] To the north, the hall and chapel are the only buildings shown on the road that links the main settlement to

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[34] Robin E. Glasscock (ed.), *The Lay Subsidy of 1334* (Records of Social and Economic History, new series, vol. 2; London, 1975), p. 389.

[35] Carolyn C. Fenwick (ed.), *The Poll Taxes of 1377, 1379 and 1381* (3 vols; Records of Social and Economic History, new series, vol. 27, 29, 37; Oxford, 1998-2005), III, p. 260.

[36] John Sheail (edited by R. W. Hoyle), *The Regional Distribution of Wealth in England as Indicated by in the 1524/5 Lay Subsidy Returns* (2 vols; List and Index Society Special Series, vol. 28-29; London, 1998), I, p. 422.

[37] For the Twisletons, see below: Manors and Estates

[38] See below: Manors and Estates

[39] BIA, PR/BRAY/1.

[40] BIA, PR/BRAY/2; David Hey *et al.* (eds), *Yorkshire West Riding Hearth Tax Assessment: Lady Day 1672* (British Record Society, Hearth Tax Series, vol. 5; Index Library, vol. 121; London, 2007), p. 321.
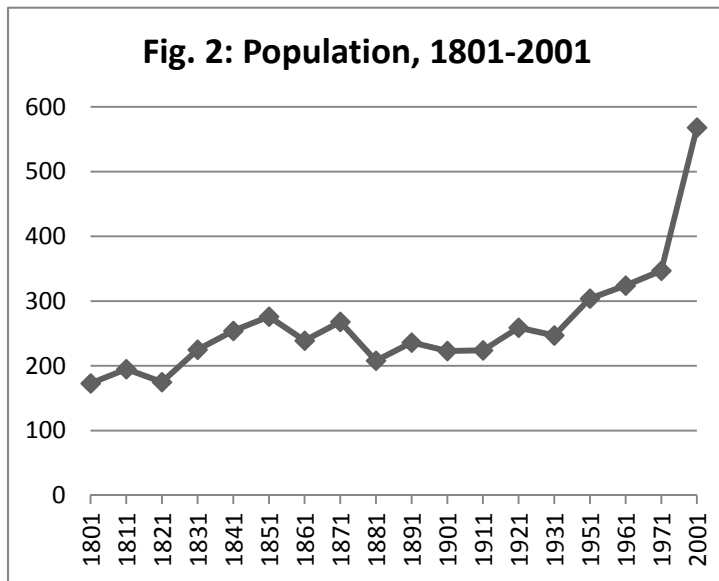
[41] BIA, PR/BRAY/3-6.

[42] Except where otherwise noted, information in this section is taken from the printed census and OS maps.

[43] Jeffreys, *County of York Survey'd.*

the Ouse. To the east, isolated and well beyond the apparent end of the road, is Hagg House, though the wood itself is not shown. To the south is only the windmill, sitting on the road towards Camblesforth. To the west, on the road to Brayton running along the northern edge of the Common, is one small group of houses followed by the two farmsteads of Ivy Tree House (probably later Commonside Farm) and Brackenhill House. In the north-west, alongside the secondary road to Selby, a building which may be Barlow Grange is shown near the river. There is also a lost site labelled 'Plumpton Park' in this part of the township.[44]

Jeffreys' map depicts the settlement as it would have looked only shortly after reaching the lowest point in its 18th-century demographic trough. Then began almost a century of irregular but cumulative growth. Barlow had a population of less than one hundred in the 1760s, but this had increased to 173 people living in 36 houses by 1801. The number of inhabitants had risen to 276 by 1851, partly due to a surge in the 1820s, implying an annual growth rate of 1.05% in the first half of the 19th century. It was during this period that the Selby-Bawtry Road was road was turn-piked (1793) and the remaining common land on 'Barley Moor' was enclosed (1839), both of which may have contributed to population growth.[45]

Fig. 2: Population, 1801-2001

The impact of this demographic expansion on the settlement pattern seems to have been minimal, though several buildings that were not depicted on the map of 1772 were first recorded during this period. For example, White House, in the far north-east of the township was noted a cartographic survey in 1817-18. Likewise, the Botany Bay Inn (also as known as the Fox Inn), positioned on the new turn-pike road near the edge of the Common, was listed in a directory of 1809, and the Brown Cow Inn, beside the Ouse, was marked on a map of 1843.[46] Yet, the settlement plan depicted on the first Ordnance Survey in 1853 differed little from that of seventy years earlier, despite the fact that Barlow may have more than doubled its population during these decades.

After this period of expansion, the settlement's population declined slightly between c. 1850 and 1910, reaching its lowest point in the 1870s or 80s. The population stood at 224 in 1911. This is not to say that there was no new development over these decades. Both a Wesleyan Association Chapel and a brick yard were built.[47] However, this period also saw the demolition of the mill and the removal of a landing site on the Ouse, whilst the brickyard was described as 'disused' by 1908.

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[44] A map of 1843 places it, probably erroneously, at the site of Commonside Farm: William Colling Hobson, *Hobson's New Survey of Yorkshire* (York, 1843).
[45] See: Communications; Economic History.
[46] Thomas Langdale, *A Topographical Dictionary of Yorkshire* (Northallerton, 1809), p. 159; Hobson, *New Survey*.
[47] See below: Economic History; Religious History.

Growth only began to return after the construction of the Selby-Goole Railway, completed in 1912.[48] The opening of Barlow Station was clearly a boon and, perhaps more importantly, the railway facilitated the creation of several military and industrial establishments in this area in the years that followed. An airship factory was built to the east of the village during the First World War and, although this only operated for a few years, a Royal Ordnance Depot was constructed on the same site in the 1930s.[49] As there appears to have been little new housing in the village itself, these military facilities probably accounted for most of the 36 per cent increase in population that Barlow experienced between 1911 and 1951. This growth quickened in the late 20th century thanks to the opening of the Selby Mining Complex and the associated coal power stations, especially the station constructed at Drax in the 1970s. It was during this period that, for the first time since the early 19th century, large numbers of houses were built along Park Road and Park Lane. By 2001, the population reached 568, and house-building continued in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

The vast majority of housing in Barlow was built or rebuilt since World War I. Red brick is nearly universal as the building material, and has been commonly used here since at least the 18th century.

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[48] See above: Communications.
[49] See below: Economic History.