HISTORY OF WEST BUTTERWICK.

by

SYDNEY MORLE.

This book was hand written by the author in the 1930's.
His original note books are still held by his descendants
In 1938 the local weekly paper that was circulated in the area was the 'Scunthorpe and Frodinghan Star'. This paper printed Mr.Morle's findings in a series of weekly instalments.
Then in 1939 they reprinted the newspaper type columns in a booklet which was sold for the price of half a crown. (2/6d).
Some local people still have a copy in their book collections.
The Preface below, written by a gentleman who was born in the village, was printed in this booklet

I HAVE NEVER SEEN A COPY OF THIS BOOK.

PREFACE.

To the tourist and the occasional visitor the village of West Butterwick would not appear to have much history. Even the church is not ancient as are those in the neighbourhood such as Althorpe, Owsten Ferry and Epworth. yet the writer has found in his extensive research much that will be of interest to present and past residents of this village and in the Isle of Axholme, a distict known locally as the "Isle."

The River Trent has had a very important part in settling the position and shape of the village, and also to a great extent it has been of influence in guiding the destiny of the people. As quicker means of transport have replaced the river steamer and the horse conveyance, so the mode of living has changed and the village is no longer so isolated.

The writer must have had difficulty in collecting the material for this work. some of which would have no doubt been imparted to him by Mr. Edwin Morle, his father who was master of the school for many years and a keen student of local history and social progress.

Credit is due to Mr. Sydney Morle for his reseach work and the record which he has so laboriously compiled and I feel certain he will have earned the sincere appreciation of present, past and future residents.

Written by Mr. J.W.Twidale, Inspector of Schools for Lindsey.

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52 - A4 SHEETS.

MANY MOONS AGO I TYPED ALL THE PAGES,
I KNEW STANLEY MORLE A DEAR OLD GENT
WHO HAD PAPERS WHICH HE LOANED TO ME
HE DIED MAY 1999 AGE 95
STANLEY WAS A SON OF SYDNEY.

Below the Stather Hill and near the Presthouses, he would take a boat, passing through the Little Carr, and along it into Cardike - the smaller arm of the River Eye (Eau).
Here in the angle of these streams stood a sand hillock known as Wiglow, which until the enclosure of 1800 was a notable landmark. From Wiglow, he would boat down Carr Dyke passing the Eye Delta on the left with its alders and its group of sand hillocks - the Lefthouses - rising out of the swamp..
Near the Trent, Butterwick Mere would be crossed. His boat would then pass along the bar known through centuries as Belyngefleet, afterwards called Youwster Bar. After travelling along this bar for 1½ miles he would land at Butrewic.

The delta of the River Eye (Eau) originally called Mantfleet, has for three centuries been known as Barlings-on-Trent. Here the abbey near Lincoln founded a cell, probably to act as a halfway house from Ermine Street to Doncaster.
These passages were used probably by the Saxons and the Danes, because no attempts were made at any drainage in the Isle of Axholme until after the Norman Conquest in 1066.
Butrewic in its earliest existence does not appear to have been a permanent settlement either in Ancient British times or in Roman times. The Briton's homes were of two types principally - cave dwellings in hills or lake dwellings near water. If the Britons lived at Butrewic, their houses would be of the latter type. It is well known fact that a British tribe lived on the sand hills at Crosby Warren, near Scunthorpe, for their pigmy flint implements have been found in the sand. As no flint is found in the ground in this vicinity, where did they get their supplies from to make their implements? Did they use the Butrewic route to Doncaster for this purpose?
If so, what a mental picture could be imagined when standing on the present river bank - the Britons propelling their coracles towards the village.
In the Roman times, the only occupation on Butrewic Island would be shelter for the Roman soldiers to guard the passage across the island. Here again we can see in imagination the Roman soldier parading the present West Street, and watch the Roman trading or passenger boats, land or leave the shores of the island. Many similar pictures of our imagination can be produced of 'life in early Butrewic'.

CHAPTER 2.

BUTREWIC IN THE SAXON AND DANISH TIMES.

The permanent settlement of the village seems to have taken place when the invasion of the Saxons, Angles and Jutes occurred in the 5th Century. About this time, Saxon England was divided up into seven kingdoms called the Saxon Heptarchy. Each one had its own king. These kings were constantly fighting each other to see who was to be the Bretwalda (the king of kings).
In connection with the above I am going to reproduce the following from Read's 'History of the Isle'.

The late Baron de Berenger used to relate a very curious story with reference to the investiture of the Isle of Axholme to the dignity of a kingdom. Whether there is any foundation in facts for the story it is hard to say. The original document or manuscript was in the possession of a friend of his who allowed Mr. Read to produce it in his history.

LEGEND OF THE ISLE OF AXHOLME.

During one period of the Saxon Heptarchy the two most powerful kingdoms were Mercia and Northumbria. These two for a long time were bitter enemies. In the end, a marriage was arranged to bring lasting peace. The king of Northumbria had a marriageable daughter while the king of Mercia was single and of marriageable age.

Hence:- 'When a king wants to wed, he does it by proxy,
And sends o'er a lord to espouse his fair doxy.
When a commoner marries, the bridegroom poor elf,
Is obliged to go through all the business himself.'

So the king of Mercia chose as his proxy one of his generals named Ornulff. No sooner was Ornulff brought into the presence of the king of Northunbria's daughter named Elfrida, than he fell in love with her himself. Eventually they were secretly married but the princess was soon obliged to confess her marriage to her mother. At the same time, Ornulff informed the king that he was bringing the fair Elfrida back with him to be the king's bride. The lady however, he thought, was unworthy to be the king's bride. To make the lady worthy he had made a sacrifice by marrying her himself.

The messenger carrying the letter arrived at the royal palace when the king was at prayers in the private chapel. The messenger approached the altar where His Majesty was kneeling and presented the letter to him. He broke the seal and afterwards vowed vengeance on the traitor Ornulff. The king wrote a letter to him demanding his return home at once with, or without his wife, assuring him of a warm welcome. Ornulff however gleaned from the messenger the real intention of the king and went to Rome instead. He joined the Papal army and soon got to be an officer. He rose to the highest rank.

He then resolved to return to England and the Pope gave him his passage money. Before leaving he told the Pope the reason of his visit to Rome. He asked for the Pope's pardon. The Pope sent a letter of absolution to the king of Mercia for Ornulff. On arrival at the capitol he found the king at prayers. Ornulff knelt beside him and presented the Pope's letter. The king took no notice of the letter and in his rage, stabbed Ornulff to death. Just at that moment Elfrida, with her boy of seven years of age, ran into the chapel and fell prostrate on her husband's body. The king promised to protect her, and to make the boy his heir. The Pope, however, to punish him for disobedience, stirred up trouble with Wessex.

Finding himself in danger of being dethroned, he submitted himself to the Pope, promising to pay an annual tribute to him. He was compelled to make the Isle of Axholme an independent state and make the murdered Ornulff's son king over it.
How long he reigned is not known, it is certain that he attended a meeting of Saxon Kings, convoked for the purpose of resisting the landing of William the Conqueror.
The young King arrived late at the meeting and would have had difficulty to find a seat had not the King of Wessex called out,

"Sit closer and make room for my little King of Axholme".

Nothing of the character of this King would have been known, had not Baron de Berenger composed a ballad giving little insights into the King's actions.

IN SAXON TIMES.

When the Saxons built their villages, they followed one of two plans - the circular plan or the strip land system.
The former was used in forest districts -the latter near streams or low land areas. In the Three Field System, three fields were divided into strips. In smaller villages the Two Field system was used; Saxon Butrewic belonged to the latter.

The first field was cultivated by the villagers in equal lots. The next year the second field was cultivated, the first field was then left fallow. On the outskirts was course grass and woodlands where the villagers' pigs could feed on the acorns under the charge of a swineherd.

Over the village was a Lord called an Earl. The following written by Professor Rogers would be typical of Butrewic;-
" Each serf (the cottager) had not less than 12 acres of arable land. The rent consisted of payments of corn and labour, together with two money payments - a halfpenny on November 12th and one penny whenever the serf brewed.
Other payments for rent were;-

a) a quarter of seed wheat at Michaelmas,
b) One peck of wheat, four bushels of oats and three hens on November 12th.
c) one cock and two hens and two pennyworth of bread at Christmas.

He also had to plough, sow and till half an acre of his Lord's lands. During harvest he had to reap for three days free of cost for his Lord and find the services of one man to help him.

If one estimates with the money value of their time, these services due to the Lord would amount to nine shillings, including three shillings for his dwelling. The labour would be 6 pence per acre.The serf, often called a villien, was bound to get his Lord's consent for,

(1) his son or daughter to marry,
(2) to sell an ox, calf, horse or cow,
(3) to cut down any oak or ash he needed."

MONEY VALUES.

In 1066 there were six of these villiens or serfs according to the entry relating to Butrewic. There is also mention in the same record, one sokeman, who was a free cottager who paid from 1 to 2 shillings per year for his house, besides doing a few free days work in busy times for the Lord. In haymaking time he received a halfpenny per day while in harvest he received free food for his services. The money value in those days was 15 times its present value.
In the Doomsday record of Butrewic there is no mention of a Lord. It states that there were three carucates of land. A carucate was 180 acres, hence there were 540 acres of land in this village. The same record states there was one plough (these would be common property) and one mill worth 4 shillings per year.(equivalent to our present £3.)
The village provided for its own flour. The Lord took a share of its profits and in return provided the millstones and sails for a windmill or waterwheel for a water mill.
There is no indication which type was at Butrewic. The site of the mill was at the north end, not far from the present one. Every villien was compelled to use the mill and pay a mill toll, the miller took so much out of every sack he ground. The miller was often accused of 'heavy handedness' and 'being a trifle of a thief.' In Butrewic too, there would be a blacksmith, carpenter and a cobbler.

The villiens' houses were very filthy places. The dunghill was near the door and the smoke from the fire eddied round the room and escaped either through the door or by a hole in the roof. The floors were hard groud often sprinkled with salt. Hanging on the walls were the sickle, rake and other tools used for their work. As time went on the produce of the villiens' lands became more varied and then the Lord demanded 1/10th (tithe) from each. These tithes were received in a tithe barn at stated times. Can the reader imagine the Lord or his deputy standing at the tithe barn door, paper of tithes in his hand, receiving the yearly produce due to him?
Did everybody in those days always pay up ?
Again where did the Saxon 'Lord' live in the village?
Was this 'Lord' the sokeman mentioned in the Doomsday Record?
In one of the 'Lord's' meadows stood his dovecote or pidgeon cote. He kept hundreds of birds.
No villiens were allowed to keep them. The Lord sold his birds to the cottagers for a farthing each.
The Lord too, punished all wrong doers. For minor offences fines were imposed. In cases of serious crime the punishment was either fossa or furca, that was the pit or the gallows. The pit was to drown females while the gallows were used to hang the males.