

A concise history of Kirkbymoorside

Kirkbymoorside has a long history dating back around 4,000 years to the prehistoric Bronze Age period. The native Ancient Britons who inhabited this location would have lived in a small rural community of roundhouses engaged in a subsistence lifestyle. Life continued at a slow pace of change into the following Iron Age but this period came to an abrupt end in 43 with the Roman invasion and conquest of Britain. There is no evidence that Romans lived in the settlement that was here but those who were living in the nearby villa at Beadlam would have been familiar with it.

After the withdrawal of the Roman legions in 410 England was colonised by Anglo-Saxon settlers. We can be certain that these people, who became the English, did live in the settlement that we now call Kirkbymoorside because carved stones have survived from their church which once stood in the churchyard. The Vikings who settled in the area later left no physical evidence of their presence but they have given us the legacy of the town's name of Kirkby which translates as "the place with a church".

The Middle Ages, which followed the Norman Conquest of 1066, brought significant changes. The manor was taken over by the Norman Stuteville family and the embankments, dry moat and fish pond of their manor house can still be clearly seen on Vivers Hill. During this period the Anglo-Saxon church was replaced by the current medieval church of All Saints'. This was progressively enlarged under the patronage of the Neville family who had become Lords of the Manor and built a stone hunting lodge at the top of Castlegate. The most important event during this period was the granting of the Market Charter by Henry III in 1254 as this elevated the status of Kirkbymoorside from a village to a town.

The market brought prosperity to the town and by the Tudor and Stuart periods of the 16th and 17th centuries we can see evidence of this in the historic inns that had been built such as the Black Swan. Houses that were constructed at this time can also be seen in the present-day townscape such as Buckingham House in which the notorious character and Lord of the Manor, George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham died in 1687. Also, there are several houses still being used as family homes today which were built as traditional long-houses at this time, although often their antiquity is hidden by subsequent improvements that have been made to them over the years.

The continued prosperity of the Georgian period of the 18th century is also reflected in houses that were added to the town and include Low Hall in Dale End and the Georgian House in West End. However, there was also poverty in the community and the town's first workhouse was established in Tinley Garth to accommodate the destitute. Another public building that was built in this period was the Toll Booth, now called the Memorial Hall, and this was constructed from stone robbed from the derelict Neville Castle.

The Victorian period during the 19th century brought dramatic change to the appearance of the town and the way of life of the community. Industrial development took place including three foundries run by different branches of the Carter family. The one operated by Christopher Carter in Railway Street, now Piercy End, also produced coal gas for street lighting and household use. However, the biggest impact on the town was the arrival of the

railway in 1874. This gave residents a much better opportunity to travel beyond their immediate locality. It also brought larger quantities and varieties of new commodities into the town. These included bricks from different parts of Britain and roof slates from Wales which added to the variety of building styles. More public buildings appeared such as the police station and schools in Tinley Garth and the new workhouse on Gillamoor Road. A major event in November 1871 was a fire that started in a workshop on the top floor of the Toll Booth. This completely gutted the building and when it was rebuilt the upper storey was not replaced.

Over the last 100 years the biggest change has been the expansion of housing around the edge of Kirkbymoorside, from Ryedale View in the 1930s to Manor Woods in the 2020s. This has been the result of population growth and has required improvements in services to meet this demand, such as the building of the new Primary School in the 1980s. Modern industries also developed around the edge, such as Slingsby Sailplanes down Ings Lane in the 1930s and Rack Systems on the Kirkby Mills Industrial Estate in the 1990s. However, the town has lost some of its features such as the livestock market, the railway and all four of its banks. Many of the small, independent family-run businesses such as shoe shops, haberdashers and ironmongers have closed and the premises taken over by gift shops or service industries such as hairdressers, estate agents and cafes. In 2021 the town benefitted from the opening of a larger Cooperative store with an improved car park.

Throughout its history Kirkbymoorside has continually evolved into the town that we know today. However, evidence of its history can still be seen in its present-day townscape. The attractive appearance of the town centre is protected within a Conservation Area for future generations to appreciate and every Wednesday the community can enjoy the market which has been a living part of its heritage for over 750 years.

Kirkbymoorside History Group