

SKELMANTHORPE CC

DOWN YOUR WAY

CLOTHIERS, NAVVIES & LUG-BITERS

Skelmanthorpe: The Village

The village that is known by locals as 'Shat' (various reasons have been put forward for this nickname but the favourite appears to be that when the railway was being built labourers were required to shatter tons of rocks), like many villages in the Huddersfield area, was first settled by Danes in the ninth century; the suffix 'thorpe' indicating Danish origin. The Vikings (invaders from Scandinavia) first attacked Britain in 789 AD but it was not until nearly a century later that some of these invaders began settling in the area.



These early settlers built their homes in Skelmanthorpe, farming the land and hunting for food in the many woods that then surrounded the village. The Danes lived peaceably here for well over two hundred years until William the Conqueror and his Norman soldiers intervened. After forcing his way onto the English throne, William was surprised when some of the population (particularly in the north of England) rebelled.

He responded by dispatching his troops to suppress the rebellion and this they did, destroying every living thing in their path as well as burning homes, fruits and grains. Skelmanthorpe, we know, suffered this fate for in the Domesday Book of 1086 the village is described as 'waste', whereas it had been valued at 80 shillings during the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066) and had been home to twenty families.

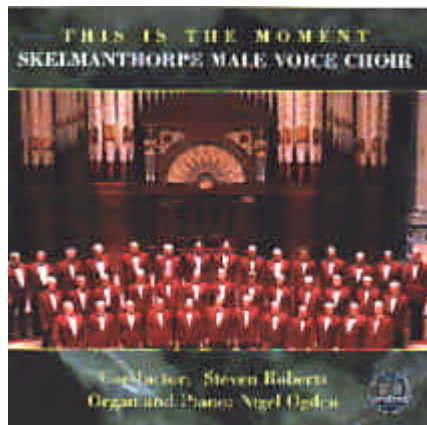


After the 'Harrying of the North' it took Skelmanthorpe quite a while to recover but certainly by the thirteenth century the village was

once again populated because records show that a corn mill was in existence. Life in the village at this time would have been heavily centred on agriculture but this was set to change - by the end of Queen Elizabeth II's reign (1558-1603) the woollen industry had arrived in the West Riding.

It is unclear when weaving first began in Skelmanthorpe but certainly by the end of the eighteenth century a number of handloom weavers and clothiers existed in the village; indeed a number of former weavers' cottages can still be seen in the village today. Joseph Field is one of the first recorded clothiers in the area and his family went on to own three of the village's textile mills – Greenside, Elm and Tentercroft.

It was also during this century that the inhabitants developed a reputation for feisty behaviour. Mary Jagger, a historian writing about the nearby village of Honley, referred to Skelmanthorpe as 'a village in which it was said that a whole man did not exist....having lost fingers, ears and noses' through fighting. This local fighting turned to warfare when a group of navvies arrived in the village to construct the railway.



The navvies brought with them their own reputation for riotous and unruly behaviour and were not welcomed in Skelmanthorpe; locals even requested that extra police be provided for protection. However, some local men decided to take matters into their own hands and began picking fights with the navvies.

Fighting reached a peak in November 1874, when after days of skirmishes, an increasingly frustrated group of locals (the navvies had won the majority of fights) decided to attack the navvies whilst they were working in a deep cutting by throwing stones at them from fifty feet above. A group of navvies working nearby arrived to help their colleagues and the locals were eventually forced back. Three Skelmanthorpe men were later arrested and charged with assault. This seemed to bring an end to the war.

The Skelmanthorpe of the twenty-first century is described as the area's 'most populous community' and it certainly has much to offer today's residents from nail spas to Mediterranean restaurants. Although the

village has seen plenty of modern development it still offers many reminders of the past from the Textile Heritage Centre at 6 Queen Street which gives visitors a glimpse of what life would have been like for handloom weavers over 150 years ago, to the copy of the Skelmanthorpe flag which hangs in the Chartist public house.



Perhaps a part of the past that residents might want to forget is the reputation they have acquired for ear biting, or lug biting as it is known locally. No-one seems to know when the first lug was bitten or by whom but there have apparently been several incidents over the years. This rather bizarre hobby was recently undertaken by a famous boxer and perhaps if one delves deep enough into his ancestral roots, he may have some connection to the Shat ear'ole biters.

CHARTISTS & CHAPELS

Skelmanthorpe: 2 Key Facts

POLITICAL AGITATION

The first half of the nineteenth century was a period of political agitation from the Peterloo Massacre to the last Chartist Petition of 1848 which took place at a time when Revolutions were occurring all over Europe. From 1819 the villagers of Skelmanthorpe were at the forefront of political struggles and a special flag, known as the Skelmanthorpe Flag, was woven in this year at a house on Radcliffe Street.

This flag, which was later taken to many rallies and demonstrations all over Huddersfield, proclaimed that 'Skelmanthorp will not rest Satisfied with the Suffrage being anything but Universal'; something which was later taken up by the Chartist movement. Chartism was an umbrella movement which drew together many different groups with various aims and grievances.



Chartists were so-called because they devised a six-point charter which detailed their demands: universal (male) suffrage, annual parliaments, vote by secret ballot, abolition of property qualifications for MPs, payment for MPs and equal electoral districts.

None of these demands were realised during the lifetime of the movement but all but one (annual parliaments) have since become law. The Chartists disbanded after the failure of their third petition in 1848, just two years after the hated Corn Laws had been repealed. Some believe that after the repealing of the Corn Laws Chartism's popularity declined and thus many historians argue that for many followers, Chartism was purely a knife and fork question.

RELIGION

Skelmanthorpe was, and perhaps still is, a nonconformist stronghold (two Methodist chapels still operate in the village today). Skelmanthorpe's population grew too rapidly for the Church of England and as the village did not have its own church until 1895 villagers wanting to worship had to walk the two miles or so to Emley. This was perhaps a pleasant walk in the summer but in the winter it could be treacherous and many did not attend church at all (this is evidenced by the decrease in Emley's

congregation which was down by 150 in the winter months).



It is estimated that by the mid-1700s Skelmanthorpe was 'a near pagan village'; the Church of England was not reaching the Skelmanthorpe people and this paved the way for nonconformism in the village.

The Central Chapel in the village dates from 1800, the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel opened in 1816 and the Primitive Methodists were active in the village from 1821. Residents of villages nearby welcomed the building of chapels in Skelmanthorpe and one John Wood of Denby Dale believed the opening of the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel to be a 'blessing' for Skelmanthorpe's inhabitants as many of them wanted 'civilising and humanising'!

DOMESDAY & DANES

Key Dates in the History of Skelmanthorpe before the Birth of the Cricket Club

c.800 Danes settle in Skelmanthorpe.

c.1069 William the Conqueror's troops visit the village, reducing it to wasteland.

1086 Skelmanthorpe, or Scelmertorp as it was then known, appears in the Domesday Book.

c.1200s Records show that there is a corn mill in the village.

1642 Gill Gate House is built.



John Wesley

1809 Records show that the Wesleyans are holding services in the village.

1816 The Wesleyan Methodist Chapel opens.

1819 The Skelmanthorpe flag is woven.

1836 The Primitive Methodist Chapel in Pilling Lane is built.

180 NOT OUT!

KEY DATES IN THE EARLY HISTORY OF CRICKET IN KIRKLEES

1825: Lascelles Hall Cricket Club founded.

1842: Dalton play Sheffield for £30.

1867: *Huddersfield Examiner* publishes scores or reports on 209 matches featuring 107 different teams.



1868: Fartown ground leased by Huddersfield St. Johns C.C.. Savile Ground, Dewsbury, hosts game between All England XI and United All England XI.

1873: Batley legend Louis Hall makes Yorkshire bow.

1883: Lumb Cup and Heavy Woollen Cup born.

1886: Huddersfield Cricket Association is formed.

1887-9: Dewsbury Savile C.C. win hat-trick of Heavy Woollen Cup titles.

1892: 10 Clubs take part in inaugural Huddersfield & District Cricket League competition.

LOCAL RIVALS!

OTHER NEARBY CRICKET VILLAGES



Cumberworth



Denby Dale



Kirkburton



Nortonthorpe



Shelley



Shepley