A Partial History of Sandholme Landing & Newport, in the East Riding of Yorkshire

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CONTENTS

APPENDICES

1 Introduction

1.1 Preamble

Following the preparation of a plan and website for Newport village in the East Riding of Yorkshire, this report looks at some of the history of Newport, and in particular the area of Sandholme Landing. History is studied from ancient through to modern, although it should be remembered that this is only a partial study and not comprehensive.

Newport Parish is found on very flat low-lying land north of the River Humber, and thus watercourses and land drainage are important local features. The most significant watercourse is the Market Weighton Canal (water level controlled), which drains into the River Humber. A significant tributary of the canal is the River Foulness, located in the north of the Parish.

The Parish is located within the Humber Estuary Flood Plain (or Vale of York). The Humber Estuary Flood Plain area is a large tract of landscape, similar to the Somerset Levels and Moors, the Fens and the Netherlands.

Since the area was historically periodically impassable on foot, transport links have also become important in the recent village history; initially with the development of the canal, then the railways, and later the M62 Motorway.

1.2 Glossary

To aid understanding an explanation of historic terminology is provided:-

- Channel/Drain A cut into the land which allows water to pass through
- Outfall/Clough Allows water to drain away in a controlled fashion
- Bank An embankment built to prevent flooding
- Mere/Marr A large natural lake
- Pond A local name for a fresh water lake
- Warping The seasonal impounding of tidal silts to enhance the soils

2 Preliminary Studies

2.1 Historical Research Sources

The historical research consisted of an internet surf, visits to the museum archives in Beverley and other research such as geological and hydrological information.

2.2 General Research

Various archaeological findings have been made in and around Newport Parish, including the Hasholme discoveries. Viking activity has been suspected due to the names of adjacent villages and from other incidental material.

At the beginning of significant human development, the general area was initially controlled by a large number of interests.

Naturally drainage took place through a delta system, whereby a complex and dynamic series of channels discharged water into the North Sea via the River Humber. Newport occupies the area of the former pro-glacial Lake Humber and its unity of character is derived from this glacial impoundment and the alluvial deposits, which resulted, together with a long history of drainage and 'warping'.

Since most development only occurred after the construction of the Market Weighton Canal this is defined as the historic dividing point. This point in time also significantly changes land use and accessibility.

Significant drainage improvements were made following the construction of the Market Weighton Canal (1772-1782). Other drainage and flood protection works began as early as the 11th Century and continued through the 20th Century, creating the drained area typical of today's landscape in Newport and the surrounding area.

2.3 Internet

Internet perusal and searches revealed some relevant information.

The name *Newport* is common in the UK with 12 sites being identified, with the name. Presumably derived from *new* and *port*.

Warping - *In addition to natural changes in the rate and patterns of sedimentation in the tidal part of the Vale, humans have also controlled alluvial deposition through the process of warping. This technique used the natural tidal flow of the lower Ouse, Aire, Don and Trent to introduce fine-grained alluvial sediments across areas of low-lying land in need of agricultural improvement. Sediment rich waters were distributed by a number of artificial drains controlled by sluice gates* (outfalls) *and each warp flood could deposit an average of 2 mm of silt and silty clay across the landscape, with 0.3 m of material accumulating in a single warp season and up to 1.5 m being achieved by sustained warping programmes. The earliest known example of warping is from the 1730s near*

Rawcliffe on the River Aire with the last recorded evidence from land to the east of Yokecliffe in 1947.[1]

2.4 Archives

Beverley Archives and Library has historic information on Newport and the Market Weighton Canal. However, since Newport village has only existed independently for ~100 years, the previous name, Wallingfen has also been searched. The Ordnance Surveys (1851-2, 1888 and 1910) identified typical grounds levels and historic land use.

The visit to the Beverley Archive and Museum, based in Beverley, revealed extensive resources covering miscellaneous records, books, magazines and a collection of historic maps and plans. A series of ponds are clearly marked on all Ordnance Survey Maps (1851-2, 1888, and 1908), which have been progressively enlarged to what is observed today. It was also possible to view the enclosure awards for Wallingfen Common (1786) and other early drainage plans.

The Vale of York is a tract of land extending from York to the River Humber. It is bounded by high land to the north and east and by rivers to the west and south. Typically this area consisted of distinct types of land use, as follows. Higher land, land always dry; intermediate land, land which periodically flooded or was water-logged for part of the year; marshland, land which was always water-logged or flooded; and the extensive network of natural drainage channels and banks.

[1] www.yorkarchaeology.co.uk/valeofyork/holocene.htm

3 Findings of Research

3.1 Pre-Canal History

Newport and the surrounding area originally formed part of the Humber Estuary Flood Plain, part of a complex delta system several hundred square kilometres in extent, which includes the Vale of York. It was not known exactly when the first embankments were constructed along this section of the Humber, references as early as the 11th century indicate that the area was embanked and farmed, but with inadequate drainage provision, however no details of the height or thickness of any embankment were discovered.

The earliest information indicates that Roman roads traversed the Vale of York (Humber Estuary Flood Plain), with settlements located on the higher ground. Settlements have been formally recorded in 1086, which suggests that some raising of embankments had begun prior to this period. The shape of the River Humber was slightly different historically; in particular Skelfleet[2] a bay on the north river bank drained a collection of natural channels. Three separate drainage channels were cut before the 13th Century, which drained land between the River Foulness and the River Humber. Effective embanking along the River Humber had occurred prior to the 14th Century following land reclamation and new manmade channels, which resulted in the silting up of Skelfleet. Around 1300AD a Clough was constructed at Skelfleet (east of Broomfleet). Further embanking protected the newly reclaimed land from overland flooding from the north, mainly from the waterlogged carrs. The waterlogged carrs however, were used annually as pasture during the driest summer periods, so much so that limits had to be placed on individual organisations to prevent over grazing and disputes.

Newport was typically selected, as farmland on the edge of higher ground adjacent to the River Humber and between Howden and Kingston upon Hull. Naturally, low land flooding may occur during the highest tides and would provide rich sediments for high crop yields after subsequent proper drainage and embanking. The land is typically alluvium and boulder clay, with occasional peaty patches. The peaty patches resulted in limited arable interest, due to the poor soils. Most of the land was ascribed as a common, which typically flooded in the winter period but provided lush summer meadows for sheep, cattle and horses. Hay crops were also often taken as animal feed, for use in winter.

As progressive improvements were made, interest in the land increased, which in turn resulted in further enhancements, such as the new dyke – Langdike (1668), which drained in Hodlet (along the approximate route of the Market Weighton Canal). Occasional flooding was still recorded in 1724 despite the new drains and additional banks. Generally Wallingfen was typically used as a summer pasture, which could flood for up to ten months of the year, since most of the land was below the high water spring tides.

[2] Near Broomfleet.

Two *Meres*, Oxmardike Marr and Yapley Marr were present; these are located at Marr Grange (Oxmardike Marr - approximately where the canal and existing railway line cross) and southern Sandholme Landing (Yapley Marr - approximately where the canal and the M62 cross).

3.2 Post-Canal History

Between 1772 and 1782 the Market Weighton Navigation and Drainage Act was implemented by the construction of the canal. The canal had two purposes as the title suggests, navigation and drainage. However, despite the potential neither was wholly satisfactory. The navigation never reached Market Weighton, due to the expense of the seven additional locks required and the extensive excavations, which were all completed by hand at the time. Although the drainage of Yapley Marr was successful, large tracts of land still regularly flooded due to the artificially maintained high water level in the canal for navigational purposes. In total three locks were constructed, the first a *Clough* at the outfall into the River Humber, the second and third near *Holme Ings* (east of Holme-on Spalding-Moor) and the canal incorporated the existing *Black Dike* (at Hotham Carrs). Initially the northern carrs benefited most from the drainage properties of the canal, this is due to the land being slightly higher, although Oxmardyke still flooded. Following the enormous cost of construction the investors looked for a rapid return on their venture. This is indicated firstly by the Market Weighton Drainage Award of 1784, secondly by the enclosure award of Wallingfen Common in 1786, and thirdly by the extensive use of the canal and the associated receipt of tolls.

The land adjacent to the canal was extensively excavated for the brown clay deposits, suitable for brick and tile manufacture, which peaked in 1840 (~2 million bricks manufactured). The canal was used for exporting the bricks and tiles for sale, and also importing coal and lime to the new communities springing up along the new canal. The deliberate practise of maintaining high water levels for navigation continued throughout the 19th Century and the early 20th Century, this resulted in parts of the land still being flooded periodically.

Commissioners managed the canal before the Market Weighton Drainage Board was created in the 1930's. The Drainage Board quickly sought to improve the drainage by firstly, lowering the water level in the canal, which was by now almost redundant as a navigation, and secondly, by straightening and improving the River Foulness. The improvements of the Drainage Board resulted in the eradication of flooding to most of Wallingfen.

The Hull-Barnsley railway line's construction began in 1845 and was completed in 1862 (on the 1851-2 Ordnance Survey Plan the railway is not shown in Newport). This rail route passed approximately along the route of the present M62 Motorway, and resulted in further local expansion of the brick and tile industry (the 1888 Ordnance Survey Plan show additional excavations of the Brick & Tile

Works). The railway's presence reduced the navigational use of the canal. The railway line's service reduced in 1932, before being entirely removed in 1952.

The route of the Hull-Barnsley railway line became the route for a new motorway, the M62 that was completed in 1976. As a result of the construction of the motorway several drains were changed, either redirected or increased in storage capacity. Either side of the motorway are various walks, tracks and roads that have some tree and bush copses located along the verges. In 2005 the M62's original concrete surface was replaced with a quieter tarmac covering.

In the late 1970's the canal's banks were raised by soil embankments and the construction of a substantial brick wall (still present today along most of the canal), where the existing embankment was particularly low. This work was carried out following extensive government sponsored land drainage improvement schemes. New pumping stations were also constructed.

Current developments include predominant agricultural development – some intensive greenhouses with ancillaries, residential, transport (the Motorway M62 & canal), with isolated farms scattered around arable farmland. A series of old *ponds* created after clay extractions are located throughout Newport.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1852 (surveyed in 1851-2, scale 1:10,560) indicates the Market Weighton Canal. Development is concentrated along a number of roads and along the canal, and is scattered. Most of the land is made up from detached parishes following enclosure. The land use is typically arable with occasional marl pits/ponds. Some marshy area is located in the village. Newport is referred to as the 'New Village'.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1890 (surveyed in 1888, scale 1:2,500) indicates new developments. Drains and the Hull-Barnsley Railway are also clearly marked. Various brick and tile works have begun, resulting in the formation of manmade *ponds*.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1909 (surveyed in 1908, scale 1:2,500) indicates little new development. Some brick and tile works appear disused, resulting in the formation of the manmade ponds as seen today.

Wallingfen Plan – 1775. This plan was published during the construction of the canal, although the information contained probably describes the area approximately ten years earlier.

The village has gradually expanded since the construction of the motorway, with several new housing estates offering accommodation for commuters.

4 Summary

Although Newport village has a relatively short history when compared to other more ancient settlements, it does show how human development can occupy marginal landscapes and present a wide diversity of activities.

The industrial revolution permitted the creation of Newport, by the construction of the canal. Later transport developments have enabled the fledgling village to become an important site for resident, recreation and business activities.

Given the industrial past, one could be forgiven for assuming that Newport is a redundant wasteland. Despite the intensive land use of mineral extraction, greenhouse agriculture and transport infrastructure, a peaceful and environmentally diverse landscape exists, which is proudly supported by the human population.

Sources & References

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