

## THE STORY OF MALHAM

The first evidence of people coming to the Malham area, dates to about 10,000 years ago - the end of the last Ice Age. These were most likely to have been nomadic people from Europe, who came over the land bridge, which still joined Britain to the rest of the continent.

The first settlements probably grew on the fell tops about 5,000 years ago, valleys then were heavily wooded and swampy. The remains of an Iron Age settlement, in use about 2,500 years ago, lie on the hillside near Gordale just outside of Malham. These people cultivated crops like oats and beans in strip fields and farmed sheep, goats and cattle. They built their homes with a stone base in a circle, with a roof made from wood and heather. Remains of a similar age and older are visible on the west side of the path to Malham Cove.

The Angles are a people who arrived from northern Europe and settled in the Malham area during the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Their village was named after 'Malca's Clan' - from which (we think) Malham gets its name. They built their homes around a green and farmed the land outside of the village. Today, their fields – called strip lynchets - look like steps on the hillside. They can be seen clearly on the hillside east of Malham Cove.

From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, the land was owned by monasteries. The monks of Fountains Abbey owned land to the west of Malham Beck and those of Bolton Priory to the east. The monks were skilled farmers and developed wool production into a very profitable business.

After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, farmers bought their own land – among them the Lambert family and Sir Richard Gresham. Even though the wool trade declined, farming continued as the main activity on the land. An important agricultural fair was held annually on Malham Moor. As landowners became wealthier, they built houses of stone, some of which are still used today.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lead, copper and zinc ores were dug from mines in the hills above the village. For a short time, the Malham area became a small industrial centre. Calamine (zinc ore), used in brass making, was stored in the village before transport to Gargrave and onwards by canal.

The common land around the village was 'enclosed' - divided into fields - by drystone walls during the nineteenth century. This makes the land look like patchwork and is an important part of the character of the area today.

The first tourists came to Malham in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Although many of the buildings haven't changed much for over 200 years, more than half a million days, are spent by visitors each year in Malham. Visitors come to enjoy the attractive village and its beautiful countryside, especially the limestone scenery at Malham Cove and Gordale Scar. More and more residents make their living from tourism, through the village shops, cafes, hotels and B&B's for example.

The 1991 census records about 134 people living in Malham. Many still make their living from farming, increasingly from tourism and growing in importance are those who commute to work in towns and cities nearby.

Today's residents and visitors value the unspoilt peacefulness of this very special Dales village. Yet Malham has seen its fair share of change and those who share responsibility for the future of the village are always preparing for what the 21<sup>st</sup> century might bring.