

Early Ackworth

Early Settlement

The name Ackworth is derived from the Anglo-Saxon and means Oak tree enclosure. It must have been quite a small settlement for even by the time of the Domesday survey compiled for William the Conqueror in 1086, only 14 villagers and two smallholders were recorded. The real number of inhabitants would be larger than this might suggest as only heads of families are recorded. A more realistic figure might be closer to thirty or forty people. There was also a church and a priest.

The Parish Church

There is now no trace left of the church mentioned in Domesday. The oldest part of the building now surviving is the tower which probably dates back to the late 15th century. The rest of the structure was built in 1852 after a fire had destroyed the rest of the medieval fabric. Preserved in the vestry is an important monument to Thomas Bodley

who was Rector of Ackworth and chaplain to Charles I.

A highwayman's hide-out

Ackworth Old Hall is associated with the highwayman Nevison who, according to local tradition, made the famous ride from London to York in a single day. A space between the floor of a bedroom closet and the roof of the passage below is supposed to be a bolt hole where the outlaw could stay hidden from pursuit. Nevison was hanged at York in 1684.

Ackworth Foundling Hospital

The first educational foundation at Ackworth, established in 1757, was a Foundling Hospital for the care of children. In 1773 the government grant to the hospital was withdrawn and it was forced to close. During its existence it had cared for over 2,600 children. In 1777 Dr Fothergill purchased the former hospital premises and founded the present school.

The West Yorkshire Archaeology Service Advisory Service

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