

Seacroft - a brief history

Saecroft, Sacroft, Secroft or **Seacroft** as it is known today appears to have two possible meanings when translated from Anglo-Saxon sources.

The first 'Saecroft' literally means pool or mere (SAEC) and croft meaning 'field enclosure'. Although there appears to be no obvious evidence which remains today, it was probable in ancient times, that SEACROFT was indeed partially covered with water!

The second, equally possible translation being (SAE) battle, and (CROFT) a field, thus a version which relates to the bloody war of 655AD, between the Northumbrian King, OSWY and the Mercian King PEN or PENDA.

655 A.D.

The earliest historical account of SEACROFT occurs as a result of the battle of WINWAED (Whinmoor) recorded by one of the earliest historians, The Venerable Bede, who was born in 673.

King OSWY, a Christian ruler, had offered gold and silver ornaments to the Mercians, who were pagans, in an attempt to pacify PENDA, in search of peace. However, the pagan king's army greatly outnumbered the Northumbrians and he resolved to utterly destroy all of OSWY's kingdom and his people. On the 15th day of November 655 A.D. both armies met face to face to fight "unto death".

A few hours later, PENDA lay slain, his remaining army retreated southward. It is recorded that "many were trampled underfoot" as they tried to cross the river Cock, their bodies serving their comrade soldiers as a bridge on which to cross.

Those who managed to get across were mostly swept away as they attempted to swim over the swollen River Aire, only to drown!

1086 A.D.

It was after the Norman conquest, upon the request of William the Conqueror, that a survey of England was carried out in order to provide the details of barons, land values etc. for tax purposes. The records of such formed two volumes known as 'The Domesday Book' of 1086. Here is the entry for Seacroft:~

"In Sacroft (Seacroft) Ode, and Nineling, Ulmar, Stainuef, Reginild had seven carucates* of land to be taxed and there may be four ploughs there. One Robert, now has it of Ilbert, and it is waste wood pasture, four quarentens** long and three broad."

* *A carucate of land equalled the same amount as a team of oxen could plough in one year.*

** *A quarenten = a furlong*

1250 A.D.

The entire parish of Whitkirk, which at this time included Seacroft, was granted by William the Conqueror, to Ilbert de Laci of Pontefract, the founder of the powerful Laci family, the Earls of Lincoln.

1602 A.D.

Seacroft was granted by James 1st in 1602 to Charles, Earl of Devon. Three years later on 10th September, by deed of bargain and sale, the Earl conveyed the estate to George Shilleto Esq. Of Houghton, who on 25th June 1613 settled in jointure with his wife to be, Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Bulkeley of Beaumaris.

This lady eventually married Sir Ralph Hansby who by deed conveyed Seacroft to James Nettlethorpe Esq. of Windsor on 19th February 1656 and in whose hands the estate remained for over 100 years.

1643 A.D.

On 29th March 1643 a battle was fought at Seacroft, between Sir Thomas Fairfax and a strong detachment of Charles 1st Royalists troops. Fairfax, who along with Cromwell, had formed the 'New Model Army' during the civil war, was in the act of marching a small unit of soldiers from Tadcaster to Leeds. When he reached the entrance to Seacroft village, from Whinmoor, he was attacked. Fairfax then retreated across to Bramham Moor.

1845 A.D.

The church of St. James in the centre of Seacroft village was opened on the 28th November 1845 and a chapelry district was assigned to it by Order-in-Council on 21st January 1846. The main contributors to the costs incurred during the construction of the church were the Wilson family of Seacroft Hall and also the vicar of Whitkirk, the Rev. A. Martineau.

1853 A.D.

The entry for Seacroft in 'Whites Register' for 1853 is as follows: "Seacroft, a village and township on the York Road, four miles east-north-east of Leeds, has 1750 acres and 1930 souls. This includes the hamlets of Killingbeck, Crossgates and Coldcotes, the latter of which is in the borough of Leeds but has only two houses. The lord of the manor is S. Nicholson esq. but the Wilson, Wand, Walker and other families have estates and neat houses here.

The church was built in 1845 by subscriptions and grants. The perpetual curacy, valued at £111, is in the patronage of the Vicar of Whitkirk, and incumbency of the Rev. Blanchard. Here is a National School and Wesleyan Chapel".

Among some of the 'souls' listed in the register are:

John Armstrong a saddler, George Brown a butter factor, William Burton a cattle dealer, Isaac Chadwick a coal agent, Joseph Lumb a millwright, Thomas Townend a blacksmith as well as several farmers, shoemakers, tailors and wheelwrights.

How the times have changed!

1873 A.D.

By an Order-in-Council, dated 30th September 1873, an exchange of land was made between the new parishes of Seacroft and Manston. That portion of the original parish of Seacroft, which lay to the south of the original parish of Manston, which contained Old Manston; Manston Lodge and Hall, were assigned to Manston. That portion, which lay to the north east of the church and village of Seacroft, which contains Whinmoor, was transferred from Manston parish to Seacroft.

(Further information of these historical events can be gleaned from: The Records of the Parish of Whitkirk, held at Seacroft Library)

(Produced by Seacroft Green Residents Association)