

1. INTRODUCTION: The Village in Context

The decennial census can never show how the village structure in Bramham changed during the 19th Century, it merely paints a vivid picture of the situation at a particular point - 1851. It would be false to suggest that the census alone can give a total perspective of a community. In fact, as it is hoped to show the census can be misleading in the information it includes and omits. Careful examination can reveal useful insights into the family, social patterns, the nature of employment and migration. But by looking at one village in West Yorkshire it is not possible to say that this was the general picture of small community life in England. The only factor which unites villages is their diversity, "ten thousand villages in England and all different".(1) It is local geography and geology which affect settlements. The fertility of soil, climate, the situation of running water, communications, local natural endowment and the general topography of an area all shape a village. The experience of a community through time can be equally influential creating individuality. It could be argued that "the development of a parish is to a large extent ultimately bound up with the character and number of its landowners"(2) who could both initiate and resist change.

This study of one village then, is not a model for all 19th Century villages. It is randomly chosen not to illustrate an argument but to stand on its own. The aim is essentially local in outlook, to consider the economic structure which dictated the character of the village and to look for indicators of both tradition and change. Secondly and perhaps of wider interest it may be possible to show to what extent the village was influenced from within and how far external factors were at work, in particular the increased industrialisation and urbanisation of the West Riding at this time.

It is necessary to put Bramham in some sort of context geographically and historically. The village is situated on the eastern edge of the modern West Yorkshire and the western edge of the Vale of York [Fig 1] about 3 miles from Tadcaster. It is a nucleated settlement [Fig 2] though the large size of the parish [3971 acres in 1851] means that many houses, in particular the large farms are located some distance from the village centre. The siting of farm houses in the fields is probably a result of enclosure which occurred in Bramham in 1807(3). The village is built around a steep escarpment and the majority of houses are constructed of locally quarried limestone and built in the 17th and 18th Centuries at the time of general rural rebuilding [Illus 1].

Historically the important feature about Bramham is continuity of settlement. The 'ham' name, the distinctly oval churchyard and a number of archaeological finds give the village a pre-conquest existence. By Domesday Book the village was well established with a Mill, Church [there were only 23 in West Yorkshire at this time] and a priest. An Inquisition in 1340 stated that there was no shopkeeper or trader in the village and that everyone lived by agriculture showing the dominant position farming has always held in the village(4).

The crucial point in Bramham's history is at the close of the 17th Century when Queen Anne granted the area known as Bramham Moor to Robert Benson later created Lord Bingley who built his country house, Bramham Park here and made this his home. From that point to the present day this family [later known as Lane-Fox] have been the dominant landowners in Bramham and as I hope to show their role is important to the economic and social structure of the village [Appendix 3].

In the mid 19th Century land ownership was dominated by two landlords. The Tithe Award of 1843 shows a total of 71 landlords but George Lane-Fox held 2100 acres, 53% of the total area(5). Lady Headley

owned 1100 acres and their lands together accounted for 82% of the available acreage. But she was an absentee landlord and so local agricultural control fell to George Lane-Fox emphasising his importance. [Fig 3].

Clearly agriculture was the key to Bramhams survival and is the foundation on which the community is built. The climate around Tadcaster is "kindly and moderate"(6) and the soil is a light dry loam suited to arable farming but it was mixed agriculture that was practised in Bramham. Wheat, Barley, Clover, Turnips, Swedes and Flax were all crops grown, but pasture was also important with the rearing of sheep and cattle. Added to this was the considerable amount of woodland in the Parish. This diversity was noticed as early as 1776 by John Cowdor(7) and in 1799 by R Brown(8) and is clearly evident from the 1843 Tithe Survey. Caird though in 1851 says that agriculture in this region could "not claim a prominent place"(9), but this was in comparison to the 'highly' farmed acres around Leeds.

The mid 19th Century was through political and economic necessity a changed environment for agriculture. There was a need for adaptation to meet the new opportunities of the age. The period prior to 1851 had seen the Repeal of the Corn Laws [1846] and

the introduction of Free Trade which resulted in uncertainty among farmers as to the effects of unlimited imports. Men like Caird believed that the response should be 'high farming'. Farmers must adapt to the latest technology and take advantage of market trends which in effect meant a shift towards meat and dairy produce and away from corn as urban eating habits changed. The period around 1851 was a time of transition, urban markets were expanding with population growth and communications with the spread of the railways were more efficient. These years also probably saw more capital sunk into farm improvements than at any other time. Despite a sharp decline in farm prices around 1848-52 [1848: 44s 3d, 1851: 38s 6d(10)] and inclement seasons the 1850s were profitable years for farming continuing until the 1870s. Where Bramham fits into this picture is hard to say but the relative prosperity of the northern counties and the increased demand from Leeds must have had some effect.

Communications are an important factor in putting the village in context. Bramham is situated on three key roads.

- (i) The Great North Road passed through the village
- (ii) The primary Leeds to York road was just south of Bramham.
- (iii) A road linking local villages with Leeds passed through the village centre.

All are Roman in origin.

This must have had some effect on the village economy as trading and coaching traffic passed through. The situation of four inns on the Great North Road bears witness to this. But from the 1840s coaching was in decline with the advent of the railways [Fig 4]. Bramham was well served by the railway boom. Tadcaster, Wetherby, Thorner and Thorp Arch stations on the North Midland Railway were within 4 miles of the village allowing easy access to Leeds and York. The area was also linked into the inland waterways by the canalisation of the River Wharfe.

The mid 19th Century was a time of considerable developments in the West Riding but Bramham seems little affected by this. The growth and mechanisation of the textile industry around Leeds was the overwhelming trend. Whether the 1850s marked the end

cohesion was breaking down and rural depopulation was taking its toll on the village. But in 1851 despite changes in agriculture, communications and urban growth and the greater changes which were to occur, Bramham represents the traditional.

Footnotes:

- (1) Baker, W. P, The English Village, London, 1953, P-11.
- (2) Steel, D. I. A, A Lincolnshire Village, London, 1979, P-23
- (3) West Riding Registry of Deeds, Wakefield, Bramham Enclosure Award, B29, P-104.
- (4) Wheater, W, Some Historic Mansions of Yorkshire and their Associations, Leeds, 1888.
- (5) Leeds City Archives, Bramham Tithe Award and Map, RD/RT/30.
- (6) Brown, R, A General View of the Agriculture of the West Riding, Edinburgh, 1799.
- (7) Leeds City Archives, Bramham Parish 29, Valuation by John Cowdor 1776, Acc 1157.

- (8) Brown, R, A General View of the Agriculture of the West Riding.
- (9) Caird, J, English Agriculture in 1850-1, 2nd Edition, London 1966, P-178.
- (10) Chambers, J. D, and Mingay, G. E, The Agricultural Revolution 1750-1880, London, 1966, P-178.
- (11) Whites 1853 Leeds and the Clothing Districts of Yorkshire, Reprinted 1969.
- (12) Evans, E. J, The Forging of The Modern State, London, 1983, P-292.



Fig.1. Ordnance Survey 1849. Bramham & Leeds.

Scale: 1in:1mile.

Source: York & Leeds, Reprint of the first edition of the one inch Ordnance Survey, David & Charles Reprints, Sheet 17.

———— The extent of modern Leeds.

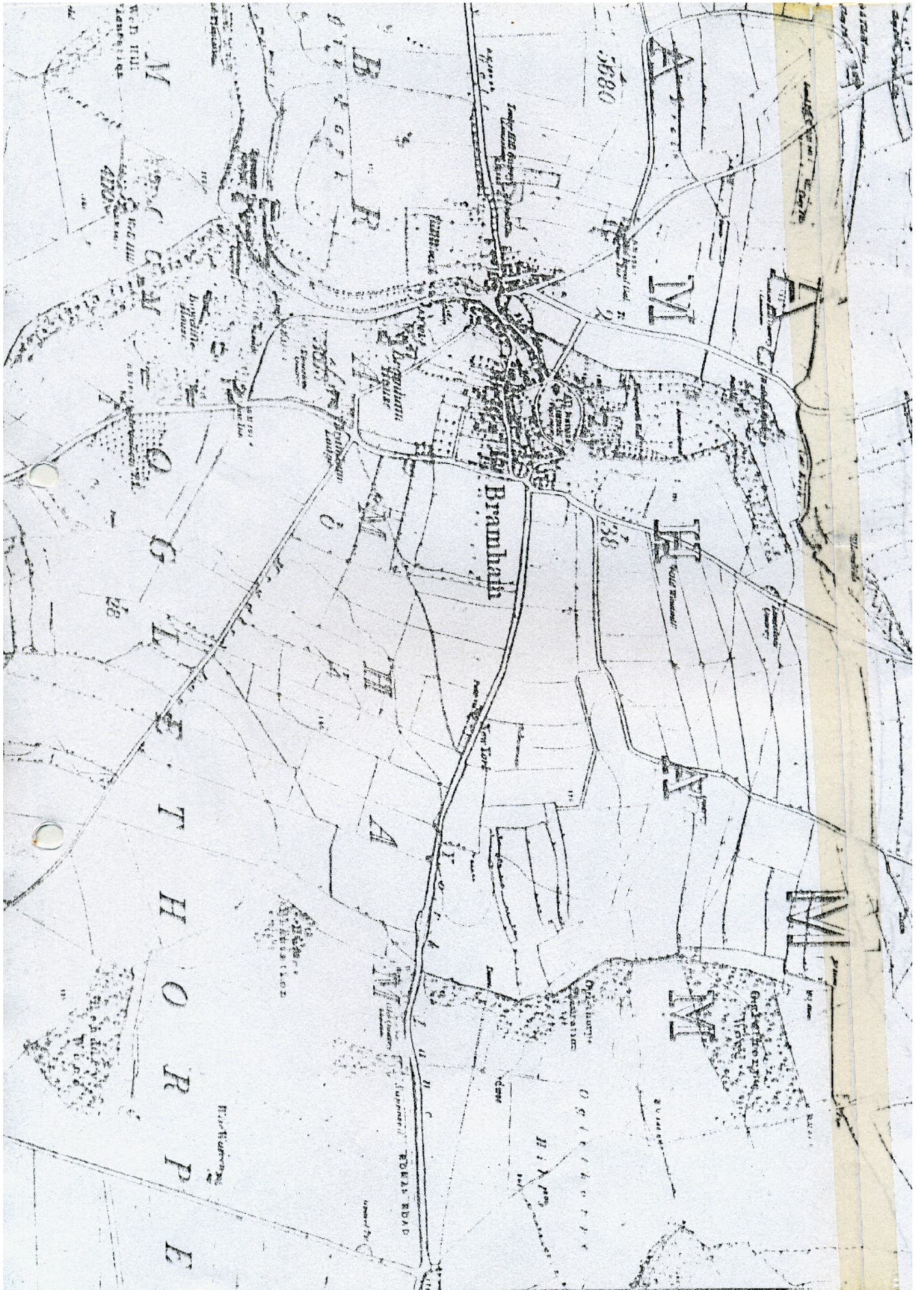
——— Bramham Parish Boundary.

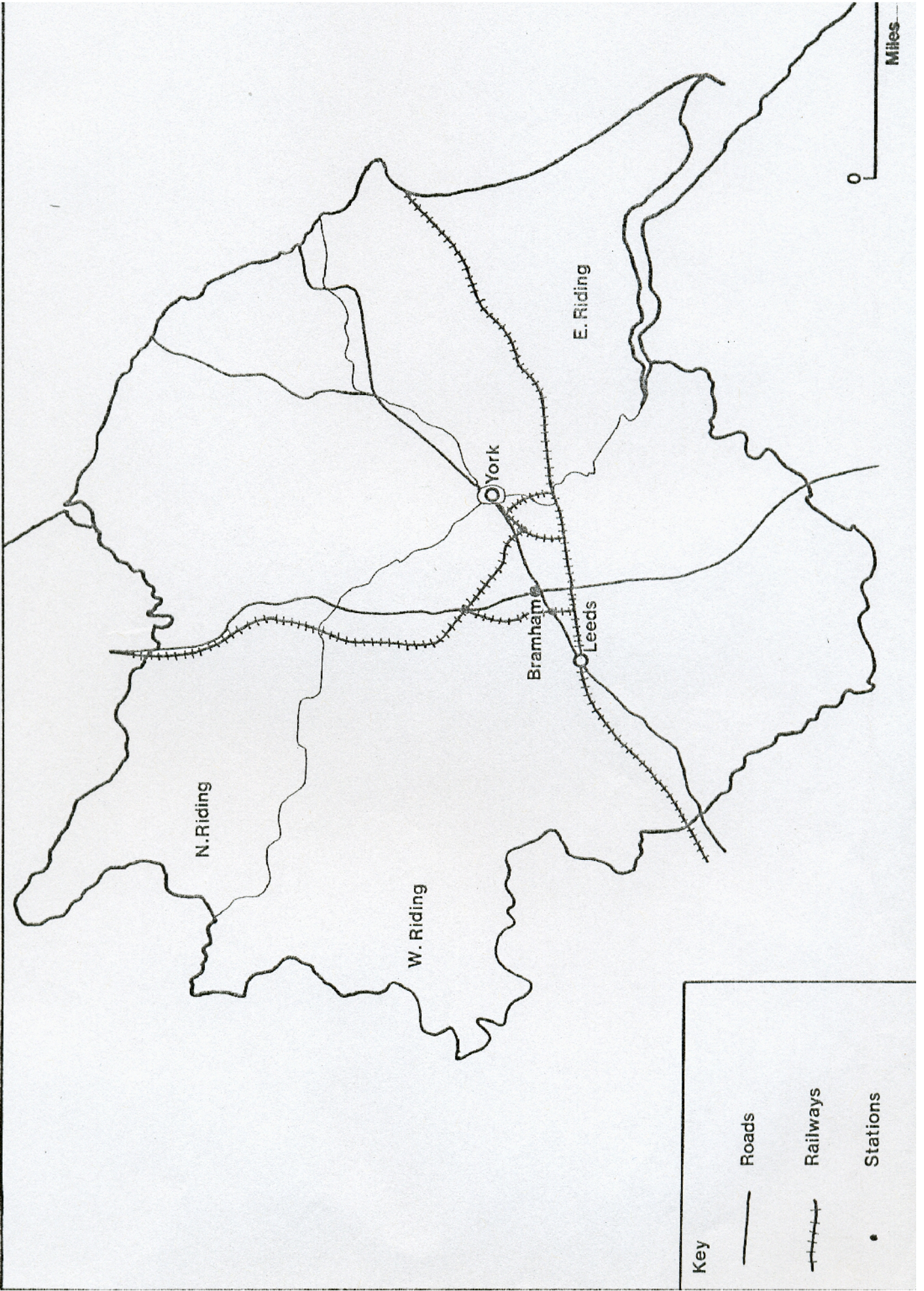
Note.

- (i) The close proximity of Bramham to Leeds.
- (ii) The relatively small size of Leeds in relation to its modern counterpart.
- (iii) Bramham's location on a number of north-south, east-west routeways.
- (iv) The close proximity of the York and North Midland Railway to Bramham. Within 3miles are Tadcaster, Wetherby and Newton Kyme stations showing the village to be well served by the railway boom of the 1840s.
This survey does not show a branch line which passed through Thorner to the west of Bramham and was in use during the 1850s.



Fig 2
Quincy Map 1880. Spunk.
Scale bar: 1 mile.
Source: Ken City Archive, Mar 1999





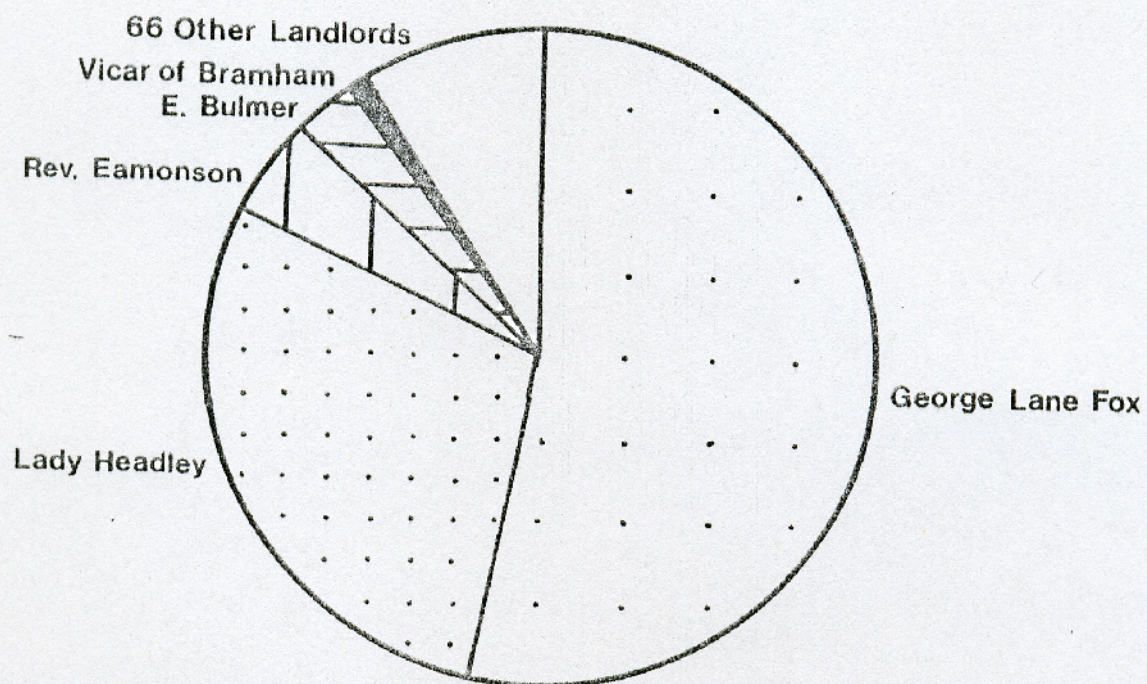


Fig 1 Landowners in Bramham 1843

Source: Tithe Award

Table of landowners in Bramham 1843

	<u>Approx Acreage</u>	<u>% Of Total</u>
G.Lane Fox.	2099	53
Lady Headley	1145	29
Rev. Eamonson	189	5
Eleanor Bulmer	127	3
Vicar of Bramham	56	1.4
66 other landlords	360	9.1

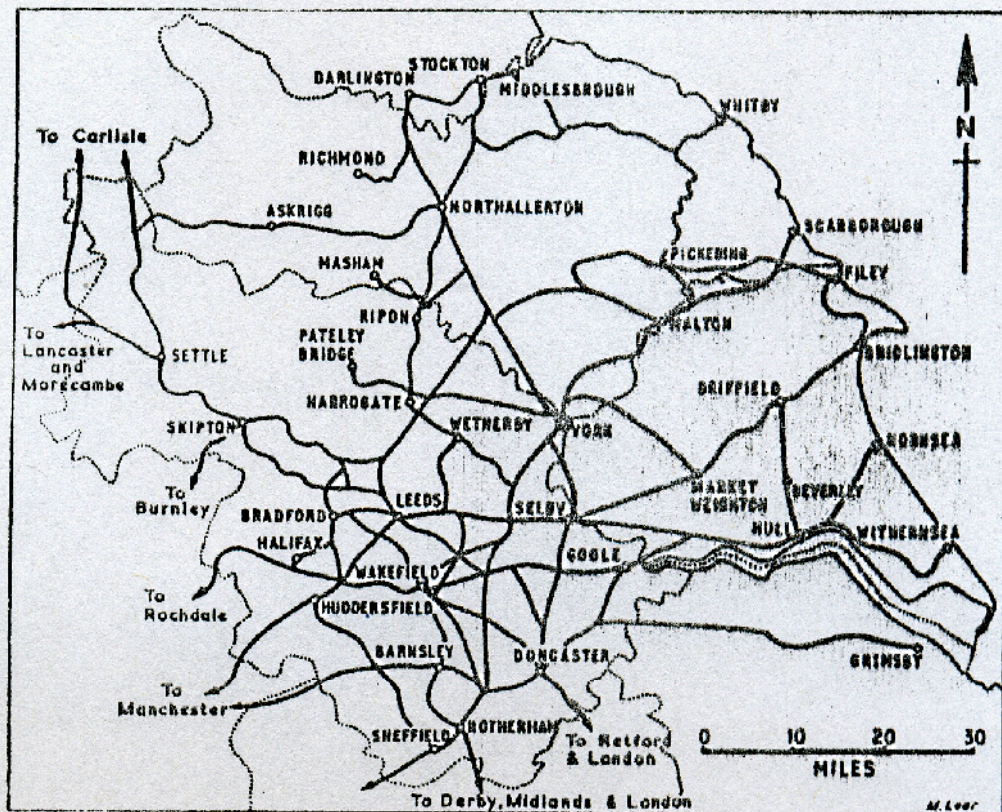


Fig.5. The Railways of Yorkshire.

This clearly shows the extensive nature of the railway network by 1851. Yet despite this development in communications Bramham remained relatively unchanged and traditional even though the village enjoyed easy access to railway transport.

Source: Singleton, F, Industrial Revolution in Yorkshire, Yorkshire, 1970. p 16

Table 1. The population of Leeds 1801-61.

Source: Kelly's Directory of the West Riding 1897, p.2.

1801	53,162
1821	83,796
1831	123,393
1841	152,074
1851	172,270
1861	207,165

Table 2. The population of the West Riding, the District of Tadcaster and the Registration County of Yorkshire.

Source: The Census Report 1851.

	West Riding	Yorkshire	Tadcaster
1801	576,336	851,706	14,523
1811	667,578	978,129	15,315
1821	816,144	1,166,522	16,648
1831	993,869	1,366,802	17,553
1841	1,176,514	1,584,116	19,565
1851	1,340,051	1,789,047	19,953

Table 3. Percentage increase in the population of the West Riding, Yorkshire and the District of Tadcaster.

Source: The Census Report 1851.

	West Riding	Yorkshire	Tadcaster
1801-11	15.8	14.9	5.4
1811-21	22.3	19.3	8.7
1821-31	21.8	14.7	5.4
1831-41	18.4	13.7	11.5
1841-51	13.9	11.5	1.9
Total	132.5	110.5	32.9

Table 4. The population of Bramham 1801-1891.

Source: The Census Reports 1801-91.

Year		Increase/Decrease
1801	792	+13
1811	805	+165
1821	970	+267
1831	1237	-43
1841	1194	+124
1851	1318	+13
1861	1331	-181
1871	1150	-4
1881	1146	-112
1891	1034	-79

Table 5. Percentage increase/decrease in the population of Bramham 1801-91

Source: The Census Reports 1801-91

1801-11	+1.6
1811-21	+20.5
1821-31	+27.5
1831-41	-3.5
1841-51	+10.4
1851-61	+1.0
1861-71	-13.6
1871-81	-0.3
1881-91	-9.7



Illus. 1 Bramham village 1985. Note the predominance of stone. In 1851 few buildings were constructed of brick and many cottages were thatched.



Illus. 2 The Great North Road looking south and the village c.1920. Note the extensive size of the settlement which probably looks much as it did in 1851.

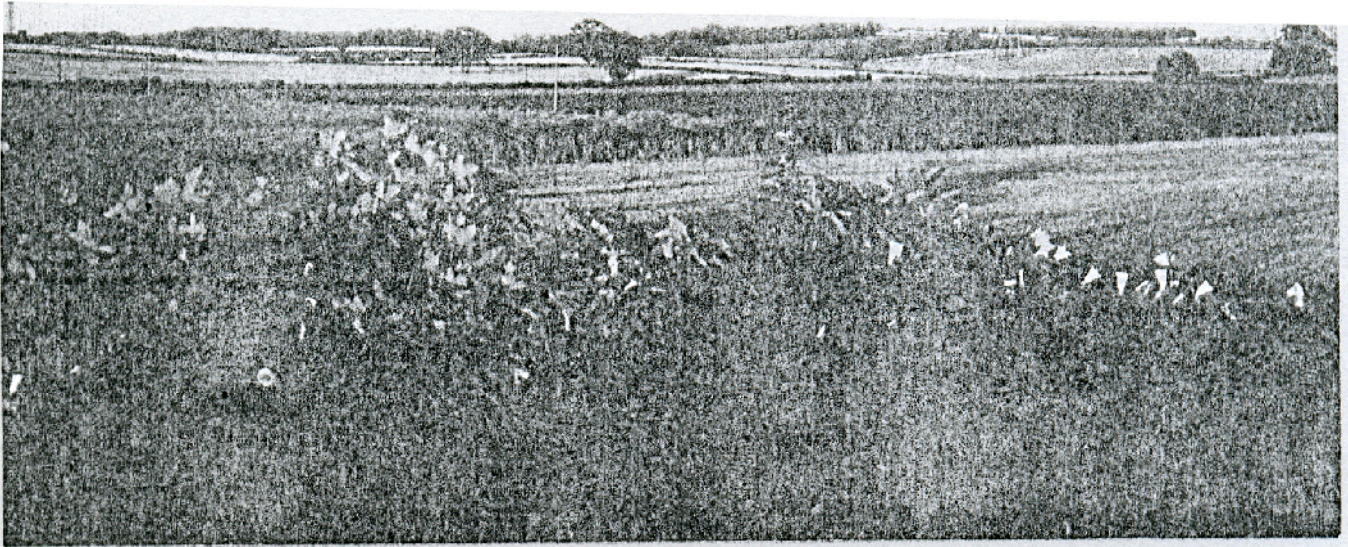


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Published by Parkinson & Roy, Studios, Kilsall St., Leeds.



Illus. 2 The Great North Road looking south and the village c.1920. Note the extensive size of the settlement which probably looks much as it did in 1851.



Illus.3 Agricultural land. Bramham Moor looking south.
The pattern of fields has changed little since 1851.



Illus.4. Agricultural land. Looking north east to the
Vale of York.



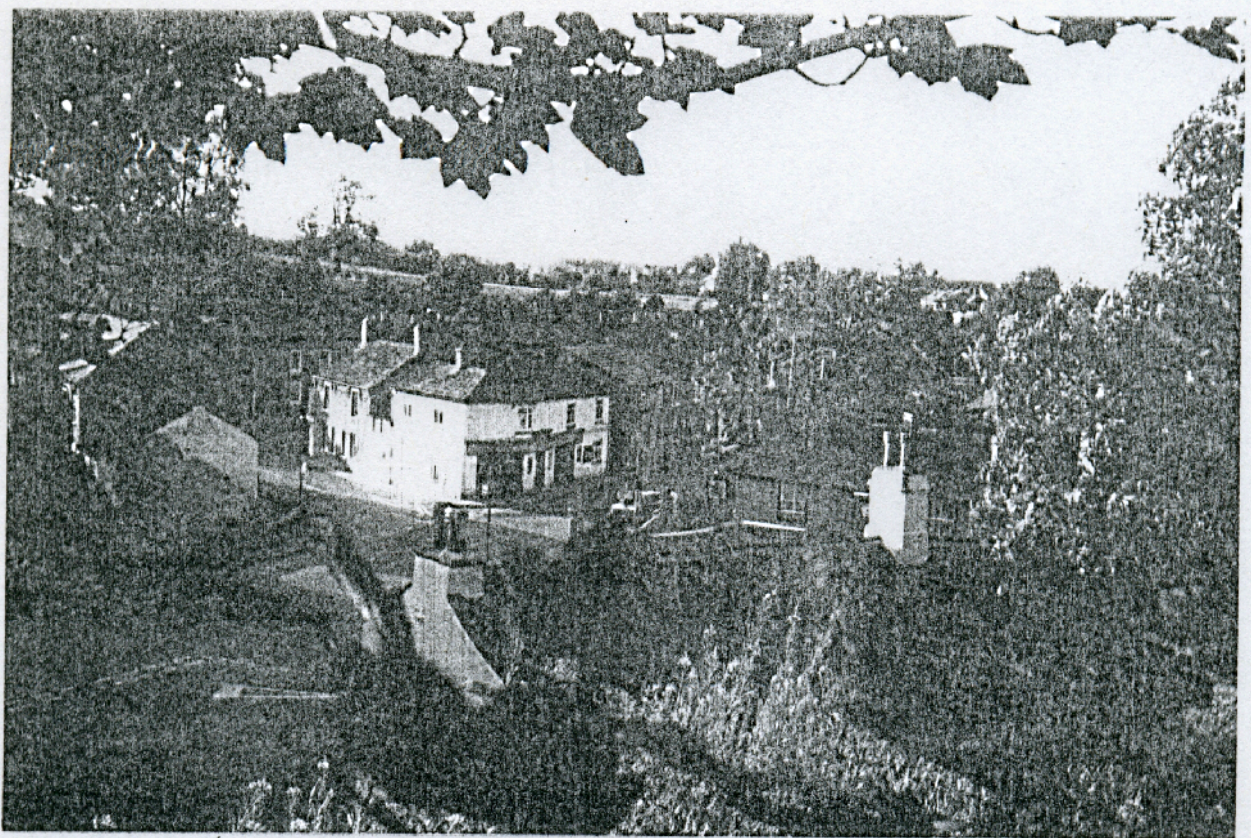
Illus. 5 A 19th century milestone in the village showing Bramham's situation on the Great North Road.

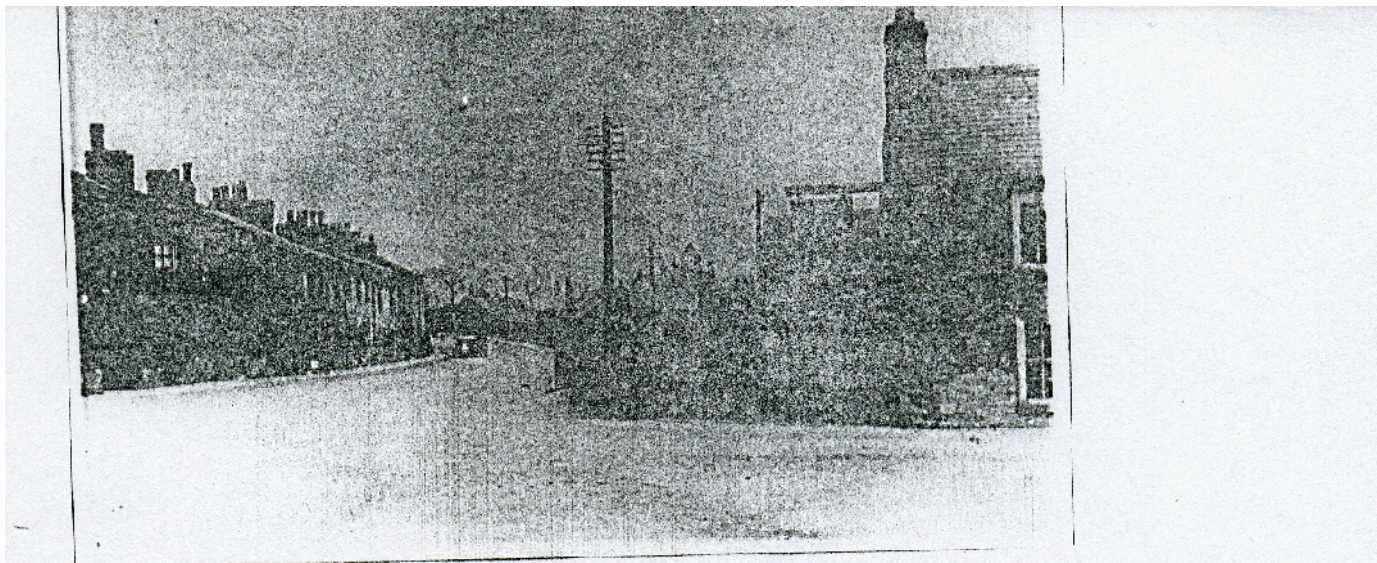


Illus. 6 The old Toll house (now derelict) on the Great North Road south of the village. This is just one of two toll houses in Bramham in 1851 and reflect the continued importance of road transport.



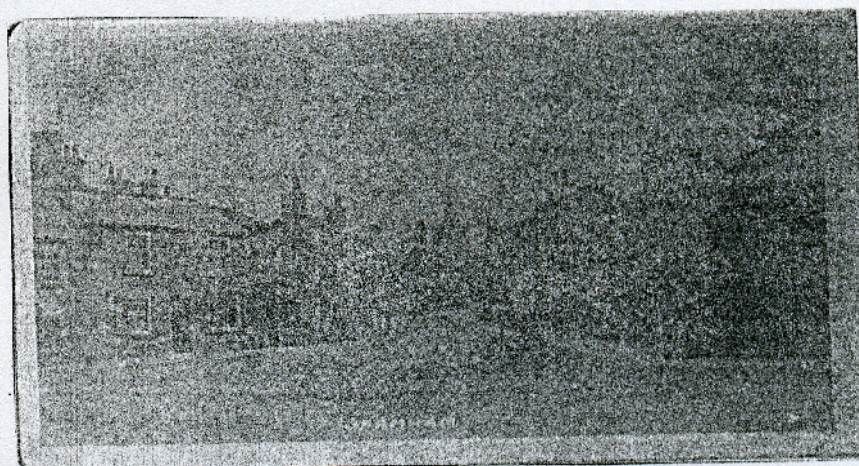
Illus. 7&8 Above, Bramham c.1920 and below the village 1985. Note that very little has changed. Except for a council estate and a small amount of 'in filling' this is largely true of the whole village. This reflects continuity of the actual fabric of Bramham.





Illus.9 The Great North Road looking north, c.1914. In the background is the school and on the right is 'The Red Lion' a coaching inn which existed in 1851.

Illus.10 The village square c.1914. The shop in the background was a wine & spirit merchants in 1851



Illus.11 The local road to Leeds at around the turn of the century. Note the continued use of horse drawn transport which in 1851 would have been the primary means of movement.