



# FOCUS: TOPONYMS



# FOCUS:

## TOPONYMS

There are a number of significant toponyms within the region of Elmet which are relevant to this survey. While the meanings of many place names are no longer relevant, understanding what they originally described helps give us insight. These are listed below:

### BARKSTON ASH

The village of Barkston Ash was once the meeting place of the ancient wapentake of the same name. It is named after an ash tree which was reputedly the centre of Yorkshire. See page 60 for more information.

### BARWICK-IN-ELMET

One of only two place names now to include the suffix *in-Elmet* (the other being Sherburn-in-Elmet). Other villages which once included the demonym are: **Burton Salmon, Clifford, Kirkby Wharfe, Micklefield, Saxton and Sutton.**

### LEAD, LEDSHAM AND LEDSTON

What is now known as Leeds seems to have originally been smaller a region within Elmet

itself, referred to in some texts as *Loidis*. The villages of Ledsham and Ledston, meaning ‘Leeds-farm’ and ‘Leeds-settlement’, have been established communities in that region for some time. Indeed, the village church in Ledsham has retained much of its 7<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Saxon core, making it the oldest extant building in West Yorkshire and possibly the ‘monastery that lies in forest of Elmet’ which is mentioned by the Venerable Bede. Sadly all that is left of Lead, originally a medieval manor, is the chapel which was declared redundant in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **SAXTON**

An interesting toponym, meaning ‘settlement



St Mary's Chapel in Lead, all that remains of the manor.

of the Saxons'. Such a meaning could be applied to almost every town, village and city within England but what makes this significant is that it is likely the village was originally a settlement of Saxons amongst an indigenous British people.

## **SHERBURN-IN-ELMET**

Along with Barwick-in-Elmet, one of only two villages to contain the *in-Elmet* suffix once seen more widely.

## **WALTON**

What seems like an innocuous name at first, actually speaks directly into the history of an occupied Elmet. The name Walton actually means 'settlement of the Wealas' – the *Wealas* being the Anglo-Saxon word for the native British. In a way it could be called 'Welsh-town' as both words share a linguistic root. It seems that as the Anglo-Saxons became more and more established within Elmet after its conquest, the native people became less dominant until only one settlement in particular, rather than the whole region, became associated with them, until their language and culture faded from memory altogether.



The tower of All Saints Church, Ledsham