

# **RUFFORTH with KNAPTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

## **APPENDIX II**

### **PARISH HISTORY**

Both Rufforth and Knapton were historically parishes within the West Riding of Yorkshire. In 1974 they were transferred to Harrogate in the new County of North Yorkshire. In 1988 Knapton Parish was absorbed by Rufforth Parish and became the Parish of Rufforth with Knapton. The Parish was transferred to the City of York in 1996 and is part of the Rural West Ward. Acomb Grange became part of Rufforth Parish prior to 1520. The parish is predominately rural, with two villages, a small settlement on the Boroughbridge Road and a very small area, Acomb Grange on the city boundary at Chapelfields.

Rufforth, Knapton and Acomb Grange are all mentioned in the Domesday Book. A settlement at what is now Rufforth existed in Saxon times. The Domesday Book entry refers to land ownership in Norman times. Modern names such as Southfield, Lowfield and Nodderys (north) are all derived from the medieval field system. The Domesday survey indicates almost 1000 years of established settlement.

Rufforth and Knapton villages have status within the Green Belt. Rufforth, a linear settlement village, sits astride the B1224, the York to Wetherby Road. It is built on a sandy ridge and surrounded by lower lying clay land with a higher water table. Before draining, surrounding land was marsh with areas standing in water. The surrounding countryside is mostly flat with the recent exception of landfill mounds at Harewood Whin. Open agricultural land has a productive classification of grade 3. Many fields are large but, in contrast, strip fields once attached to small holdings remain visible behind several village properties. The Enclosure Act Award of 1795 apportioned land to villagers giving Rufforth its modern form.

Knapton lies less than 4 miles west of the city of York and is within the York outer ring road, the A1237. It has always been surrounded by agricultural land. Evidence of open fields from the middle ages is preserved in local names, Lowfield and Northfield. The Enclosures Act of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries created a landscape of fields defined by hedgerows. Some of these field boundaries preserve the 's' shape formed by the medieval ploughing system called sellions.

Rufforth village developed from a line of cottages and small holdings into the village it is today. A number of cul-de-sacs have developed from former farmyards and paddocks. The Village is a compact area of housing surrounded by open countryside. Village boundaries are clearly defined by playing fields and burial grounds to the south east and allotments to the northwest. Allotments came from a scheme to give men returning from the First World War a small plot of land on which to grow vegetables and keep livestock.

Knapton village has a principal street, Main Street and on the east side Back Lane. Later expansion has taken place by new buildings on the west side of the Main Street but no back lane has been created there. Most building is contained within an envelope created by Main Street and Back Lane. A Chapel at Ease, Tithe Barn and Blacksmiths Forge have all gone and many of the old farmhouses have been replaced with new homes or have been heavily converted. Allotments were developed in Knapton in 2011.

Knapton's rural heritage can be found in the Pinfold at the north end of the village. Dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, on the initiative of the Parish Council, it was restored by Bishop Burton College in 1992. St Peter's Farmhouse and two cottages on Main Street have listed status.

The pump and trough in Rufforth, situated in the village garden, All Saints Church and Pear Tree Farm House, as well as the Pinfold are all listed. A barn and gin gang at Rufforth Grange were listed in 1987 but de-listed in 1993 as the building was derelict and damaged. Rufforth pond and Sand Dykes at the western end of the village were given to the Parish Council under the Enclosures Act. The pond was to cool the wheels of farm carts travelling through the village and Sand Dykes was the sand pit for building construction.

The Village Garden, Rufforth, facing the Chapel has paths depicting the runway layout of Rufforth Airfield. The Horse Chestnut tree adjacent to the Village garden is protected by a TPO. Yews in the school grounds are reputed to mark the place where dead soldiers from the Battle of Marston Moor lie.

Mature hedgerows around Rufforth are mainly native species, Blackthorn and Hawthorn. The wide uncut verges, immediately adjacent to the village attract a variety of insects, birds and mammals. While there is very little woodland around Rufforth there are copses and every species of British owl is evident along with Kestrels, Buzzards and Red Kites. The landscape also provides a habitat for lowland farmland birds such as Lapwing, Curlew, Grey Partridge and Skylark. Trees planted to screen Harewood Whin are a modern addition to the historic tree species.

Fields around Knapton are mainly large as a result of the enclosure period. The retained hedgerows include mature trees, mainly Oak and provide a sanctuary for wildlife.

Trenchard Road and Portal Road along with three pairs of semi-detached houses built in the 1930's, Westview Close and two properties off Low Poppleton Lane are part of the Parish of Rufforth with Knapton. Outside 204 Boroughbridge Road the Boundary Stone marking the boundary of West Yorkshire and York is still in place. Properties on Trenchard Road and Portal Road were built by the RAF in the 1950's as homes for Officers and NCO's stationed at Rufforth Airfield. Houses are large with a generous community space and a large frontage grassed over and planted with Cherry Trees. The area behind 2-8 Trenchard Road was the children's play area and is now an open space with seating and fruit trees. The MOD sold the properties to Annington Homes as a saving for the UK Defence Budget and the Trenchard Road Residents Company Ltd. was formed. In 2009 they took control of the company in order to manage the Grange in a more cost efficient way.

Land around Rufforth was selected as a suitable site for an airfield in 1940 and opened in 1942. The first Operational unit (158 Squadron) arrived from RAF East Moor flying Halifaxes, in 1943 the Halifax Operational Training Unit No4 arrived. Accommodation, sick quarters, messes, gymnasium and cinema were along Heights Lane away from the technical site. Rufforth Hall became officer's accommodation during the war. The roof of Grasslands Farm was struck off by an aircraft attempting to land in fog, almost totally destroying the upper floor. Repairs to the brickwork are still visible today. The Halifax crew and three members of the Hildreth family lost their lives. A local man later received the George Medal for his part in the rescue.

RAF Rufforth closed in 1959 and Flying Training Command took over. The RAF closed the airfield in 1974 and the land was returned to agriculture. One hangar remains today operating as a haulage company.

Civilian Gliding arrived in Rufforth in November 1961 and continued their tenancy until September 1977. The Ouse Gliding Club purchased the site and returned to Rufforth in 1981.

The British Racing and Sports Club set up as a circuit and held three meetings a year, they stayed until 1977. Air displays and model aircraft displays have also taken place. The Queen and Prince Philip landed at Rufforth. During 1979 – 1980 the TV series Airline was filmed here. The airfield was an out of city car park for the Pope's visit in 1983.

AF Budge Aviation attempted to establish a multi-million international airport for businessmen, the Gliding Club were instrumental in blocking the project. 1992 ended the plans when North Yorkshire CC refused to remove Green Belt Protection.

On the edge of the Airfield are Rufforth Playing Fields and Club House, with tennis courts, cricket and football pitches, a small children's play area is by the clubhouse. These fields are held in trust for the village.

A public footpath, connecting Rufforth to Askham Bryan runs along the edge of the main runway it having been reinstated before the return of gliding.

The Middlewood family purchased land and built Rufforth Hall in the mid-1860's. The family were great benefactors to Rufforth village. Sarah Middlewood built the church in memory of her late husband and later purchased a property known as the Manor House which became the vicarage. This was later sold and a new modern vicarage built. The Village Institute was given to the village. Historically, 'Institute' is a place of learning. Two farms of distinctive style, East View and Hawthorn House were constructed by the family.

The Methodist Chapel in Rufforth was built in 1843 on land donated by Elizabeth Ellis. Restoration was carried out in 1884 and a schoolroom added. The Clayden family added a kitchen and toilets in 1977.

Rufforth has a village school (new build in the 1970's by West Yorkshire CC), Church, Chapel, pub, Village Institute, Community Hall, sports pavilion, playing fields, Outreach Post Office and the Old School has become a tearoom.

Knapton has few amenities but has a thriving local pub; the Red Lion, a quintessential English bistro.

On a benefaction board in Rufforth church, is an inscription as follows, "John Hawkins from London departed this life in the year 1726 and gave to the poor of Rufforth the value of one pound 12 shillings and six pence yearly for ever and two shillings and sixpence to the minister". Trustees from the village continue to administer this charity.

In addition, the sum of one pound and four shillings (part of a previous rent charge) is paid to the Minister of the Parish for two anniversary sermons on Good Friday and St John's Day each year.

Income is raised annually from the ownership of land, hunting rights and shooting rights.

Another historical benefactor to the village was Jane Wright, an Elizabethan lady, brought up in Ogleforth in York, who married a wealthy Londoner. She gifted money for two farms in the village, Church Farm and The Gables. The letters J and W are to be seen on both those buildings.