# Malham

a honeypot site

## The development of Malham village

The first evidence of people in the Malham area, dates to about 10,000 years ago; at the end of the last Ice Age. These were most likely to have been nomadic people from Europe, who came over the land bridge, which still joined Britain to the rest of the continent. The first settlements probably grew on the fell tops about 5,000 years ago, when the valleys were heavily wooded and swampy.

There are remains of Iron Age settlements in use 2,500 years ago (and possibly older), just outside of Malham on the hillside near Gordale and visible on the west side of the path to Malham Cove. These people cultivated crops like oats and beans in strip fields and farmed sheep, goats and cattle. They built their homes with a stone base in a circle, with a roof made from wood and heather.

The Angles arrived from northern Europe and settled in the Malham area during the 8th century. Their village was named after 'Malca's Clan' - from which it is possible Malham gets its name. They built their homes around a green and farmed the land outside of the village. Today, their fields, known as strip lynchets, look like steps on the hillside. They can be seen clearly on the hillside east of Malham Cove.

From the twelfth to the sixteenth century, the land was owned by monasteries. The monks were skilled farmers and developed wool production into a very profitable business. After the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1536, farmers bought their own land. Even though the wool trade declined, farming continued as the main activity on the land. As landowners became wealthier, they built houses of stone, some of which are still used today. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, lead, copper and zinc ores were dug from mines in the hills above the village. For a short time, the Malham area became a small industrial centre.

Tourists began to visit Malham during the eighteenth century. The real boom in tourism took place in the twentieth century with the rise in ownership of cars and as leisure interests expanded, as people had more time and money to travel and enjoy recreational activities. Many residents now make their living from tourism, through the village shops, cafes, hotels, holiday homes and B&B's, for example. As of 2020, around 220 people live within the Malham parish.



Lister Arms in Malham (©YDNPA)

## A national asset

Malham is one of the most visited locations in the Yorkshire Dales. Few places in Britain possess such spectacular examples of upland limestone landforms on a scale as dramatic, such as Malham Cove, Gordale Scar and Janet's Foss; all of which are in close walking distance of the village. There is also a wealth and diversity of wildlife, habitats and cultural features. In recognition of these precious qualities, a large part of the area has been designated under Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), a site recognised by Natural England as nationally important.

Malham Tarn and its associated wetland, 2 miles north of Malham village, is a National Nature Reserve and is owned and managed by the National Trust. It is designated under the Ramsar Convention, as a wetland of international importance.



Malham Tarn (©YDNPA)

## Who looks after the Malham area?

A variety of organisations play their part in looking after the Malham area. Each has its own role to play and all of them work together to complement each other's activity. Some of these are listed below:

- **The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority:** The National Park Authority is the Planning Authority for the area and regulates building and land use development. It is also the Highway Authority for Public Rights of Way and so maintains the footpaths and bridleways in the area.
- **Craven District Council:** Organises housing services, household waste disposal and recycling facilities. It also helps business to develop in the area and provides recreational spaces.
- **Historic England:** The government adviser on the historic environment. Within the Malham area, Historic England has listed more than 80 buildings and ancient monuments.
- **The Field Studies Council (FSC) at Malham Tarn Field Centre:** An independent charity (one of 11 FSC centres in Britain) which manages the educational and research use of Malham Tarn National Nature Reserve and runs courses for education groups and adults.
- **Malham Parish Council:** Most Parish Councillors are local people, who meet regularly to discuss matters of local interest. It's a place to raise concerns about local life; often about the services supplied by other organisations and the arrangements made with them.

- **The National Trust:** A national charity and membership organisation, seeking to protect the best of our heritage through ownership. The Trust owns the Malham Tarn Estate and manages the National Nature Reserve with the Field Studies Council.
- **Natural England:** The government adviser on nature conservation. It has designated Malham Tarn as a National Nature Reserve (NNR) and advises on its management. It has also designated the Malham – Arncliffe Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- **North Yorkshire County Council:** The County Council provides education services, along with community and social services.

## Malham in the balance

The features that make Malham so special are under severe pressure from changing land management practices, changing economic and social structures and in particular, from the large number of visitors. Malham has been a focus for recreational activity since the Victorians first visited (popularised by the works of Ruskin and Wordsworth, and Charles Kingsley's novel, The Water-Babies) and is very popular with many types of visitor.

The most popular activities recorded in the most recent Visitor Survey were walking, eating in pubs or cafes and general sightseeing. Between 2015-20, the National Park Visitor Centre at Malham was visited by 800-1000 people, on average per day in the month of August and around 200 people per day in January. This places the special qualities of the area and traditional character of the village under serious strain, but along with visitors - comes money.

In 2019, prior to the pandemic, the Yorkshire Dales National Park as a whole received 4.9 million visitors, made up of 4.2 million day trippers and 0.7 million overnight visitors. Between them, day and staying visitors combined to produce 6.5 million tourist days. These visitors brought in £374 million to the region's economy and provided employment for 5,353 (FTE) jobs. This income is essential to many local shops and services; however, achieving a balance between conservation, recreation and the needs of the local community, such as Malham - is a constant challenge.

## Services for the visitor in Malham village

Accommodation: Several hotels, a number of guesthouses, B&B's and self-catering cottages, a youth hostel, bunk house and two campsites.
Food and drink: There are two pubs, a Bistro and two cafes.
There are other services nearby in the villages of Kirkby Malham and Airton.

## Visitors to Malham National Park Visitor Centre

| | |
|---|---|
| 2010/11 | 113,510 |
| 2011/12 | 113,788 |
| 2012/13 | 98,126 |
| 2013/14 | 88,855 |
| 2014/15 | 101,193 |
| 2015/16 | 103,465 |
| 2016/17 | 117,123 |
| 2017/18 | 116,744 |
| 2018/19 | 104,197 |
| 2019/20 | 89,623 |
| 2020/21 | 19,927 |
| 2021/22 | 66,064 |



Malham in summer: a farmer's field provides additional parking to the National Park Visitor Centre in the high season. Many visitors are also forced to park on the roadside entering the village. (©YDNPA)

During 2020, the coronavirus pandemic restricted visitors from visiting Malham for part of the year, reducing visitor numbers. However, when restriction allowed travel, high numbers were recorded particularly between June and September. Many of the opportunities to spend money such as going to a café or a pub, shopping or visiting an attraction, were also unavailable to visitors for many months of the year and the long term impact of this loss of income is still unknown.

## Population Figures of the Malham Parish

1801 262
1851 188
1881 148
1891 163
1931 126
1951 171
1971 163
1981 112
1991 134
2001 156
2011 238
Source: Office for National Statistics

## Land use conflicts and management

There are a range of land use conflicts at Malham which impact on the environmental, economic and cultural qualities of the area. The Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority's role is to work with land owners, partner organisations and visitors to conserve the character and beauty of the landscape; it does this in a number of ways:

- supporting sustainable land use by responding to climate change and threats to biodiversity
- managing and maintaining Public Rights of Way
- controlling development of housing and amenities
- providing services and facilities for visitors and residents
- promoting understanding and appreciation of the area through education and interpretation.

Below are some examples of the land use conflicts prevalent at Malham and how the YDNPA actively manages these issues:

Car travel

The Visitor Survey* 2017 indicated that 87% of visitors had travelled to the YDNP by car or van. The impact of traffic on the environment means that encouraging sustainable transport to the area remains one of the major issues in the National Park. High levels of traffic at peak times of the year bring issues that reduce the appeal of the village, such as pollution, noise, congestion, inappropriate parking, emergency service access and interference with local residents. Public transport services to and from Malham are promoted at National Park Visitor Centres and other Tourist Information Centres in the local area, to encourage people to use bus services rather than their own cars.

Footpath erosion

The Visitor Survey 2017 and 2020 recorded walking as the most popular main activity visitors participated in. Heavy use of footpaths creates erosion, which widens paths, as users try to avoid muddy areas or when forced to let each other passed. Excessive erosion and accompanying loss of grazing have been problems on many of the popular paths around Malham.

The Ranger Service, along with the help of volunteers, have re-surfaced many of the popular footpaths and bridleways, with some areas needing continual maintenance, such as the path to the bottom of Gordale Scar and the stone steps at the side of Malham Cove. Local stone or sustainable materials are used where possible to ensure re-surfacing is in-keeping with the surrounding landscape.



Re-surfaced footpath to the top of Malham Cove(©YDNPA)

Litter

Litter reduces the appeal of the area and has a devastating effect on plants and wildlife, including harm to livestock and other animals. It is also costly and time consuming to remove. Bins have been removed in Malham to encourage visitors to take rubbish home with them. During the influx of visitors in the summer of 2020, after the lifting of coronavirus pandemic restrictions, unprecedented and alarming levels of litter was left around Malham Cove.

Other visitor access issues

There are other Issues from visitors that include: trespass, drystone wall damage from people climbing over them, stock disturbance, vandalism and a lack of understanding of the user's rights and responsibilities on open access land.

Visitor management is promoted in a number of ways. For example, The National Park Visitor Centre, which is intended as a starting point from which visitors can discover more about the area, provides access to displays, exhibits and leaflets. Staff are also present to provide information on anything from local walks to travel and accommodation.

The Rangers Service ensures way-marking and other signage is up to date and in the appropriate places, to ensure rights of way are clearly indicated encouraging walkers to use appropriate routes rather than walking in sensitive areas.

Habitats

The limestone pavement that Malham is renowned for, is a rare habitat and home to a rich variety of species that flourish in the crevices. The Limestone pavement, such as at the top of Malham Cove, has been degraded by livestock grazing and the general wear and tear from visitors' feet, which has resulted in the decline of rare plants and in some places the removal of stone. Limestone pavements, as well as other wildlife and environmental features are legally protected for this reason (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981).

The pressure to farm more intensively to increase production has had a large impact on the diversity of species in areas of limestone grassland. For example, pastures have been fertilised to support heavy grazing and there has been a move away from mixed farming, to sheep farming, which graze more selectively on particular plants. Hay meadows and woodlands have also been degraded or lost altogether, as both are open to livestock, which has impacted on the rich diversity of species supported by these habitats.

Heritage features

Traditional features of the farming landscape, such as field barns and dry stone walls, become neglected. Field barns are not always appropriate for modern farming and therefore are not maintained by landowners. Traditional dry-stone wall building is a difficult skill, which is time consuming and costly. These features tell the story of the rich cultural heritage of the area and could be lost for future generations.

Housing

The popularity of the village and competition for housing has led to an increase in house and property prices. Increasing house prices have made it difficult for low income earners, often local people and especially the young, to buy property in the area and has effectively forced them to leave the area. Adding to this, growing numbers of holiday homes have reduced the availability of property to buy or rent. The pressure for tourism related developments, such as cafes, pubs, shops and public toilets is also growing.

Notes:
*Visitor Surveys are carried out by the YDNPA every 5 years. There was an additional survey in 2020 to monitor the impact of the Covid Pandemic.