

## Early history



A map of south-west Fylde c.1530. This is a certified copy, drawn in 1700, of an original map in the National Archives. The original was prepared, in approximately 1530/32, as part of the evidence in a dispute between the Lytham Priory and the lord of the manor of Layton. It is the earliest known map to mark the site of 'the heyhouse'.

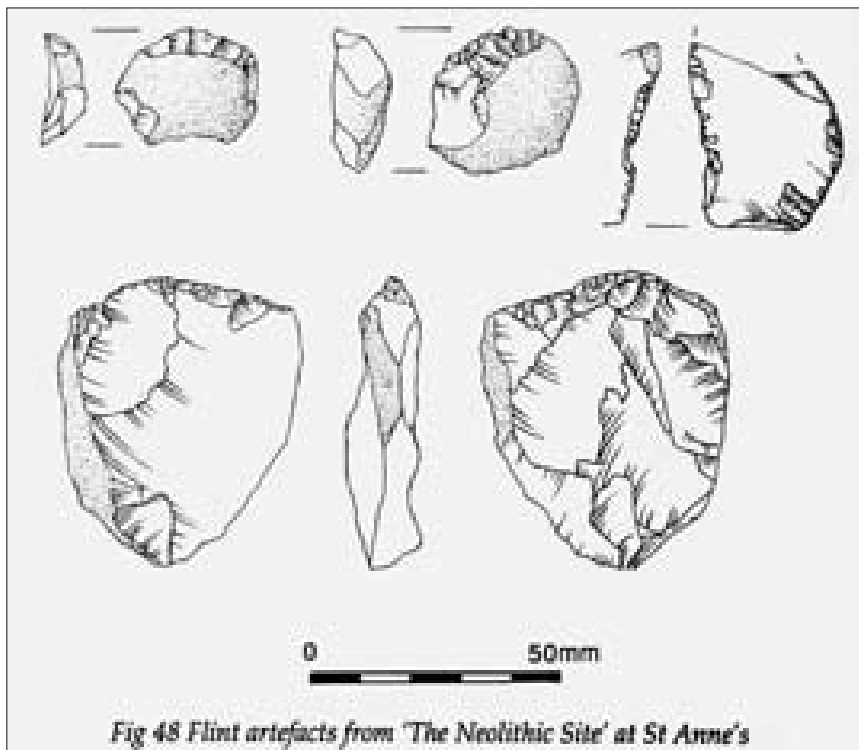
DDCL 685 MAP 7. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION OF THE COUNTY ARCHIVIST, LANCASHIRE RECORD OFFICE

Almost nothing is known of the early human occupation of that part of the Fylde which, from the fourteenth century, developed into the farming community of Heyhouses, and is now the site of present-day St Anne's. However, this apparent scarcity of evidence does not necessarily mean that settlement was limited; future archaeological investigation may well help to extend the story.

Evidence of human presence in the Fylde around 10,000 BC was revealed in 1970 when the almost complete skeleton of an elk (*Alces alces*), a species whose European range is now restricted to Scandinavia, was unearthed 2½ feet below the surface of a site at Carleton, near Poulton. Beside the remains of the animal was a barbed spearhead that had been fashioned by the hand of one of the early Mesolithic hunters and food gatherers who had been directly or indirectly responsible for the death of the animal. Fieldwork carried out during the 1990s by Lancaster University Archaeological Unit, as part of the North West Wetlands Survey study of peatland archaeology, revealed evidence of human presence at nearby Peel and Ballam during the late Neolithic and early Bronze Ages, around 2500 BC. The publication on the survey records that 'it was noticeable that all of the fields surveyed in the Peel and Ballam area contained flints'.<sup>1</sup>

The publication also notes that 'prior to the survey there was little to suggest that there was any settlement associated with these finds'. The exception was the two sites from where W. Jackson collected flints in the 1920s. One was described as 'the Neolithic site', the other 'the valley in the sandhills at Lytham'. Unfortunately the exact locations of these finds are not known, but 'the Neolithic site' is thought to have been in the area of Starr Hills, Ansdell. In addition to these finds the *Lytham St Anne's Express* reported in 1986 that a flint arrow head had been found in garden soil in Durham Avenue, adding that in 1981 a flint cutting tool had been found in another garden in the same avenue.<sup>2</sup>

A century earlier, in 1893, workmen uncovered what appeared to be an old road, near the north end of Park Road, at a depth of over twelve feet below the surface.<sup>3</sup> At the time there was speculation that it may have led to the



Flint artefacts from 'The Neolithic Site' at St Anne's.  
BY COURTESY OF OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGY NORTH

graveyard at Kilgrimol. Meanwhile, in the same year the *Lytham Times* reported the discovery of 'a prehistoric relic':

A labourer, when excavating in St Annes sometime ago – at the end of January – came upon the stump of a tree ten feet below the surface. Underneath the tree and on a bed of peat he found what is supposed to be an ancient stone battle axe ... The handle crumbled away at the touch, and the stone was sold for a very small sum to another labourer, and its whereabouts are not present known.<sup>4</sup>

By the time of the Roman occupation the district may have been settled by a branch of the Celtic tribe of Brigantes called the Setantii, but again no direct evidence of their presence in the area of present-day St Anne's has ever been found. Nor has any evidence yet been found – in spite of the establishment of a Roman fort at Kirkham during the first century AD – of any Roman settlement. The nearest evidence to St Anne's was the discovery of Roman coins six feet below the surface on the present Blackpool Pleasure Beach.<sup>5</sup>

Part of north-west England in Roman times, noting the location of the modern town of St Anne's in relation to places of known Roman occupation. At nearby Kirkham, around AD 120, a small signal station/fortlet was replaced by a larger and more permanent fort which itself appears to have been abandoned around AD 150.



### Angles and Scandinavians

After the final departure of the Romans from Britain in AD 410 the remaining Romano-British people in the Fylde probably formed part of a small British kingdom, with local populations surviving beyond the advance of the Northumbrian Angles in the early seventh century. It was possibly soon after the Anglian settlement that the parish of Lytham first acquired its present name. It should not be assumed, however, that because Lytham is an Anglo-Saxon place-name it was founded during that period, for it may have had a Celtic or even earlier name. The interpretation currently favoured by place-name scholars is that Lytham means 'at the slopes' – i.e. the dative plural (at) of the Anglo-Saxon word 'hlith' (slope). The 'slopes' were presumably a description of the sandhills.

Until recently it was thought that it was settlers of Norwegian descent, from their settlements in Ireland, who had had the greatest Scandinavian impact on the North West, in the early tenth century, but, based on place-name evidence, it now seems that people of Danish or Anglo-Danish origin were also involved.<sup>6</sup> The area known as Amounderness, which encompassed the whole of the Fylde and beyond, incorporates the name of Agmund, a Scandinavian who must have had considerable authority. Evidence of the integration of the Scandinavian people with the existing Anglian population is again provided with the association of Anglian and Scandinavian place-names such as Newton with Scales, Bryning with Kellamergh, and Clifton with Salwick, in which the first part is Anglian and the second part Scandinavian.

Although no Scandinavian name appears to have been added to that of Lytham it was almost certainly an Anglo-Scandinavian population that was working the land in Lytham at the time of the Norman Conquest.

# *Lytham Priory and the origins of Heyhouses*

## *The Norman Conquest*

The Norman Conquest of 1066 was a watershed in English history, and under the Normans the feudal system was refined into a new social order. The basis of Norman power was land, and ownership of land was held at the disposal of the king who divided out the country between his favoured barons. In the years following the Conquest the Hundred of Amounderness, which included Lytham, was granted to Roger of Poitou and was intermittently retained by him until his final expulsion from England in 1102.

The first surviving documentary reference to Lytham is the entry in the Domesday Book of 1086 when the township (spelt *Lidun* in the original) was said to contain two carucates of land. The carucate was the basic unit of taxation and originally was the amount of land that a team of eight oxen could plough each year. The actual acreage ploughed varied throughout the country and historically a Lancashire acre tended to be larger than in most other counties, even varying from township to township.

Assuming a figure of 120 acres per carucate then perhaps about 240 acres of land were being worked in the township of Lytham, although how much of this was in the area later to become known as Heyhouses is not known.

Nor do we know what events took place in Lytham during the hundred years following the Norman Conquest. Sometime during the reign of Richard I (1189–99) Richard FitzRoger, whose family appear to have been given the manorial rights, granted all his land of Lytham together with the church, to the Benedictine monks of the great Cathedral Priory of Durham, for the establishment of a daughter house of their order.



Cross Slack Farm situated at the west end of Highbury Road, near the junction of St David's Road, North. In 1869 the tenancy was taken by Thomas Gillett and was farmed by the family until the death of Bill Gillett in 1963. On the 1871 census the farm is described as Cross Slack Hall. It was demolished in c.1964  
BY COURTESY OF THE FAMILY OF THE LATE FRANK DEAN

## *The establishment of Lytham Priory*

Although Lytham Priory never achieved independence from Durham, it was the dominant economic and social force in the parish of Lytham for 350 years and, so far as is known, the only Lancashire monastic manor for which manorial court records survive.<sup>1</sup> When Richard FitzRoger granted his lands to Durham the bounds of Lytham Priory were described as being:

From the ditch on the western side of the burial yard of Kilgrimol, above which I [Richard FitzRoger] have erected a cross, westward unto the sea; and again from that ditch and cross, over towards the east along by the Curdismere over the great moss and the stream unto Balholm which said stream runs towards Swinebrigg, again from Balholm in a straight line over the moss, which lord John Count of Moretain (later to become King John) divided between himself and me, unto the northern side of Estholm-ker following eastwards unto the margin of the water which comes from Birchholm and separates Estholm-ker and Brining-ker