



Bawtry Heritage Group

Preserving our Past for the Future

Registered Charity No. 1188945

The Battle of the River Idle 616 AD. (Bawtry's Battling Saxons)

PREAMBLE

In the summer of the year 616 AD, or was it 617 AD? Such imprecision bedevils dating any historical event on our island between 410 AD and 1066 AD, a period commonly known as the "Dark Ages". I guess, for those interested, we have to live with the challenges presented by the lack of historical record and work with what we do have and what has been presented by those who have invested years of painstaking review. In the summer of the year 616 AD, many modern texts seem to plump for that date,¹ a battle took place on the eastern side of the River Idle in close proximity to an old Roman Fortlet abandoned two centuries earlier and within 500 metres of the centre of what is now the town of Bawtry, South Yorkshire. The fact that such a battle took place over 1,400 years ago is a nice talking point for anyone closely connected to modern Bawtry, however little they may be attracted to the lure of ancient long forgotten events.

Currently, I can think of no civic reference to this event anywhere within the confines of Bawtry town. As things stand the majority of those associated with Bawtry as their place of residence, work, or leisure, may forever remain unaware of the battle, never to be prompted. Yet, not too far below the surface of the indisputable fact that the battle took place is a compelling and, as far as one might claim with a Dark Ages event, a well supported story that promotes this ancient skirmish to a level of importance that many may find surprising and perhaps worthy of wider promotion and protective stewardship.

THE BROADER SCENE

It is thought to be late summer when the Battle of the Idle took place within view of the elevated ground to the west that would later become Bawtry's Marketplace. To get to grips with why we should consider this event with a little more sense of celebrity, we need to look at our island as it was at that time, who were the main players and why they came together so violently on our turf.

To begin this journey of appreciation it is useful to have some understanding of how our island was organised politically, during the 7th century. Figure 1 presents us with a picture of the divisions across the country and a sense of where the power lay, following the arrival of the Germanic Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Frisians, after the Romans. However,

¹ The Anglo Saxon Chronicles suggest 617AD.

the map does not tell the whole story and it is worth gaining an understanding of the concept of “*Bretwalda*”, which in simple terms defined the enhanced recognition of some leaders at this time, to increase our appreciation of the dynamics on the ground.



Figure 1. Sourced from Wikipedia - History of Anglo Saxon England.

Bretwalda means “Wielder (Ruler) of Britain”². Not to be taken too literally perhaps, but an indicator for those seeking to unravel the ancient politics of the day to another layer of power in society. Whilst there may have been a range of tribes with their own leaders, not all leaders were viewed equally.³ Newton points out that this title may not have always been about the control and power held by those identified as Bretwalda.

² S Newton, *The Reckoning of King Raedwald* - page 48

³ The meaning of Bretwalda is debated extensively and the true and agreed definition is difficult to nail down. For those interested the term is discussed at some length in the prominent resources utilised for this piece and in other works covering the period.

However, it does seem, at the very least, a reflection of an image or ideal promoted by the chronicles of the time to elevate the importance of some individuals. The significance for us seeking to understand the true place of the Battle of the Idle, is that two of the main protagonists carried the Bretwalda title after the event. One as an immediate and direct result. Making it, as some strongly claim, an event that elevated the victor on the day to being, "one of the first kings of all England"⁴

The Battle of the Idle involved the King of Bernicia Aethelfrith, the exiled heir of Deira, Edwin and his ally and protector at the time Raedwald, king of the East Angles. For those familiar with the modern geography of our island, Bawtry, as it was to be, would have been located on the north eastern side of the Mercian border, as much as that can be accurately defined, on the edge of the Humber wetlands, marked green on the map above. This being the case the protagonists had to move some considerable distance from what they may have considered their safe havens to engage. Before we explore this, a closer examination of the main men and how circumstances led them to that fateful meeting on the banks of the Idle is in order.

THE BUILD UP

Aethelfrith controlled, on his accession in 593 AD⁵, the northern part of Northumbria (Bernicia). This pagan overlord had a powerful desire to expand his realm and could be fearsome in doing so. Bede described him, "a most worthy king, and ambitious of glory". Who, "ravaged the Britons more than all the great men of the English". Not forgetting to point out that, "he was ignorant of the true religion."⁶

From his accession to the year 616 AD Aethelfrith is recorded as having a number of major victories in battle securing himself as the undisputed overlord of the north of England:

The battle of Catraeth (Catterick) 593 AD⁷ immortalised in the ancient poem The Gododdin "Glittering blue blades". Which glorifies the act of this battle against a backdrop of disaster for the northern

⁴ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - cover synopsis

⁵ Date according to the Anglo Saxon Chronicles.

⁶ Sites at Penn State - The Final Stand 2017.

⁷ P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages. Marren recognises problems with dating and quotes Welsh annals compiled some centuries after the fact. There does seem to be common ground that the battle was "around" 600 AD.

warriors seeking to check Aethelfrith advances.⁸

The battle of Degsastan 603 AD. Its location is not certain but thought to be identifiable with Dawston Rigg at the head of Lidderdale in the Scottish Borders. Aethelfrith was victorious in a battle "that was very bloody".⁹ His control of the north was now extensive.

The massacre at Carlegion (Chester). The massacre being reference to the brutal and fatal treatment inflicted on a large number of monks who assembled outside the town to pray for their army's victory over Aethelfrith, rather than a description of the latter's ultimate victory and subjugation of the north west. Of the battle. "The Welsh gave him battle, and were defeated with great slaughter".¹⁰

It is however, the annexation of the kingdom of Deira in the early part of the 7th century that set the chain of events underway that led to the clash on the banks of the Idle. How Aethelfrith came to be in control of Deira is vague. There is speculation that he married Princess Acha the sister of Edwin¹¹, heir to that kingdom¹², which led him to flee first to Mercia and finally to East Anglia. It seems fair to conclude that to ensure he solidified his control of the north Aethelfrith would be keen to erase any threats to his claims and Edwin would have been just that.

Edwin appears during his exiled period to be somewhat content with having secured his relative safety from the clutches of Aethelfrith. Records and historical interpretations do not indicate that he had a burning desire to reclaim his lost inheritance.

King Raedwald had given Edwin sanctuary after his flight from Mercia where the close proximity of his enemy was likely to be a concern as he extended his powers in the north and edged south. Raedwald during this time was approached on three occasions by Aethelfrith to give up Edwin in return for promised riches. Aethelfrith had sent his agents to persuade the King of the East Angles. Raedwald's loyalty to Edwin is reported to have come to a point when the temptation to capitulate in favour of the inducement was only reversed by the intervention of his wife, who lectured the King on the morality of selling his virtuous and honourable

⁸ Y Goddoddin - Online Translation by J Clancy.

⁹ P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages.- page 66

¹⁰ Online Dictionary of National Biography. Vol 18 edited by W Hunt

¹¹ St Edmundsbury Chronicle 2000 - The Anglo Saxons and Origins of the English people. Also S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 27

¹² P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages- page 68

position for a handful of silver or gold¹³.

Who was Raedwald? He ascended to the Kingship of the East Angles around 594 AD. He was baptised in the Roman Christian faith around 604 AD¹⁴. This was a result of Pope Gregory's mission led by Augustine which landed in Kent around 597 AD. Bringing the new emerging faith back to pagan East Anglia will have presented Raedwald with a challenge given that questions of faith were likely to be very serious matters for his people and the imposition of a new order would be met with more than a hint of suspicion. This may be why Raedwald on his return adopted two altars for worship in his temple, one for the current beliefs and one honouring the new. Seeking perhaps to avoid the potential travails of a more zealous path. Wood describes his approach as "ambivalent and cautious".¹⁵ This may be, but might we not interpret this as the prudent steps of a wise pragmatic leader, in touch with the issues of his time and the advantages of stability within his realm? Qualities that must have been supporting his emergence as a main player in Britain at this point in his reign. In any event Raedwald was amongst the first on our island that could be titled as a Christian. In early 616 AD Aethelbert, King of Kent died, leaving, for a time, Raedwald as the standard bearer for the new faith and the most powerful king south of the Humber.

It seems plausible that Raedwald may well have considered that his position would one day be threatened by the conquering desires of Aethelfrith in the north, and that he may also secure his position further by taking proactive action and using his role as protector of the rightful king of Deira to press home an advantage.

Raedwald, having found his moral compass, either via the virtuous intervention of his wife, or by pragmatic political opportunism, had set the scene for a showdown and the main characters were in place. All that remained was where they would meet?

THE MAIN EVENT

The two sides knew that an impasse had been reached in the dialogue over Edwin. With the talking over, the issue could only be resolved by force. What is less obvious is why choose the eastern bank of the river

¹³ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 30

¹⁴ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - pages 8 and 9

¹⁵ M Wood, In Search of the Dark Ages - page 74

Idle at the site that would become Bawtry? Marren, goes some way to resolving this puzzle by discussing the question of how armies at this time found each other? He recognised that most battles of this period made good use of roads, in particular old Roman roads.¹⁶ Aethelfrith already controlled the Roman road from Tadcaster to the Idle crossing. It was not overly complicated for Raedwald to make his way northward and facilitate the meet.

As soon as Aethelfrith's ambassadors had departed Raedwald "raised a mighty army to make war".¹⁷ Raedwald's forces could have utilised two possible routes out of East Anglia firstly the old Roman Road from Cambridge to its junction with Ermine Street and on to Lincoln, or the old Roman ferry crossing from Norfolk to Lincolnshire and along the Roman road eastward to Lincoln. Whichever route he chose, the section of the journey from Lincoln to the crossing at the Idle was via the Roman road classified by Margary as RR28a. It was along this route he came with his sub commanders Reaggenhere (his son) and Edwin, leading their army of noble warriors, levied troops and skirmishers.

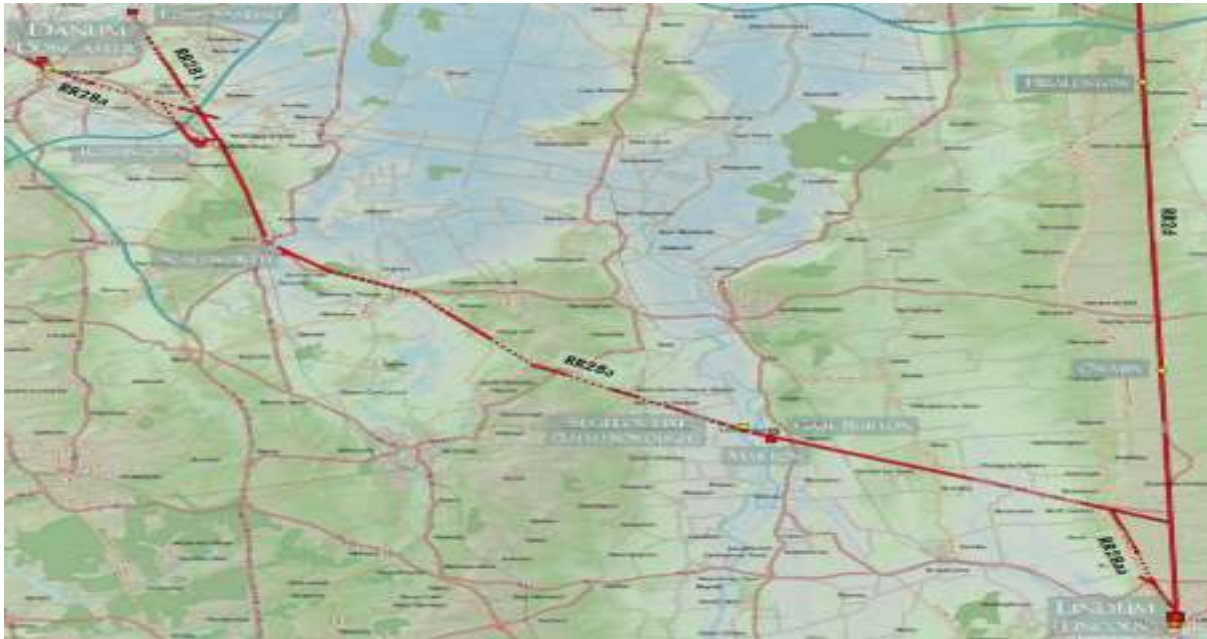


Figure 2. Map showing the route of RR28a from its junction with RR2d Ermine Street just north of Lincoln to the crossing of the Idle River at Bawtry. Sourced from, Roads of Roman Britain.org

Aethelfrith, perhaps expecting his ambassadors to secure a deal, seems to have been caught on the back foot as he is recorded as "meeting him (Raedwald) with much inferior forces".¹⁸

By late summer the two forces of the most powerful leaders on our

¹⁶ P Marren, *Battles of the Dark Ages* - pages 13 -14.

¹⁷ J A Giles, *The Complete Works of the Venerable Bede* - Volume 2, Chapter 12.

¹⁸ J A Giles, *The Complete Works of the Venerable Bede* - Volume 2 Chapter 12

island amassed and faced each other by the old Roman crossing of the River Idle.

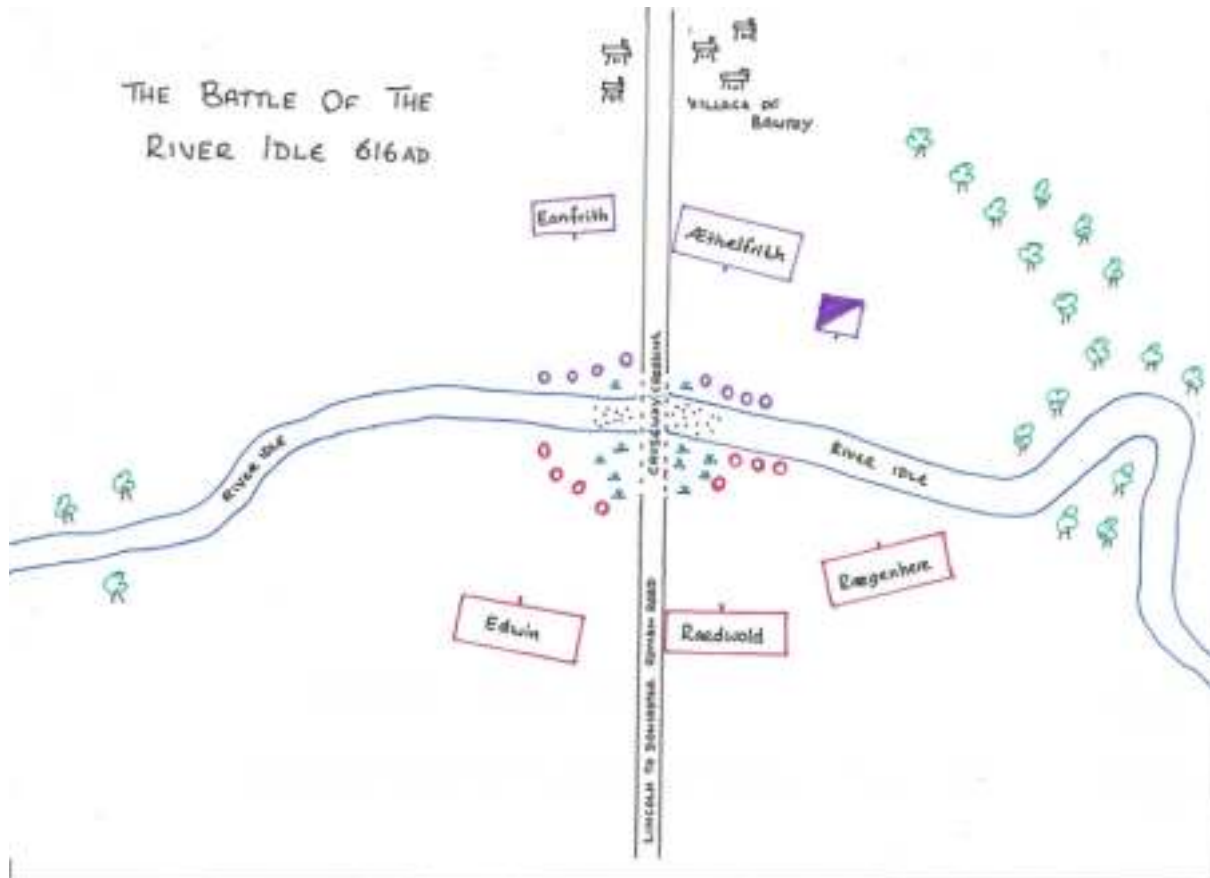


Figure 3. Suggested set up for the Battle of the River Idle 616 AD. Sourced from, The Little Corporal War Gaming Site 2021.

The plan laid out in figure 3 whilst simplistic gives some sense of the scene that the two armies faced as they formed up for action. Raedwald's cohort, flanked by his son and Edwin, with Aethelfrith's smaller force opposite. Of course there is no evidence that the "village of Bawtry " existed, potentially for another 500 years or so. Marren states that, "the Bernician king unwisely gave battle on the east bank".¹⁹ More of that later, let us first take in the scene.

Imagine men in their hordes, gathered at the river, not all from the warrior classes of course. However, all, even the levied troops, will have embraced the expectations and values of the time, that meant all taking part in such a venture will have brought their own tools of war. Treasured and required items much like we may view a car today. Without doubt each man would possess a shield, most likely round, about two or three

¹⁹ P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages - page 68.

feet in diameter and made of springy wooden boards glued with a homemade concoction of vinegar, cheese and quicklime, covered with animal hide. Many shields will have been basic but some may have had a boss mounted in the centre for additional protection and offensive capability. Shields for combat are likely to have bulged outward to enhance their resilience to the heavy blows of battle. All are likely to have been brightly decorated ensuring the scene was a spectacle of colour. Given that each man would have at least one, (some possessed reserves) there would have been a huge array of shields on display on the banks of the Idle. Entering the fray of a Dark Ages battle without a shield was to be truly exposed. Marren, reminds us that the Roman chronicler Tacitus wrote in the 1st century AD "to lose your shield was considered a great disgrace".²⁰

Other weapons on display would have included swords carried by the high status warriors and long spears carried by freemen. Those enslaved fighters were forbidden such luxuries and would have armed themselves with whatever they had, such as domestic knives and clubs.

Looking down on the scene would, at the very least, have been captivating. Dark Ages battles were high risk for all. To enter the melee on what turned out to be the losing side quite often resulted, inevitably, in loss of life. There was no quarter given or expected in this period. The age of chivalry was still some way off.

The Battle of the Idle is likely to have had a charged atmosphere bolstered by the reputation of Aethelfrith who, as Marren illustrates, had a reputation for "exterminating or enslaving".²¹ We might also surmise that his wrath was heightened by the audacity of Raedwald supporting the upstart Edwin. Fear had to be thick in the air and the urge to flee a potent force. This was not an era of the disciplined and drilled, or for that matter sophisticated tactics. Sure a revered or feared commander might instil a mentality that ensured the lines were held. There is I believe some credence in the conclusion that collective noise plays a psychological role in ensuring spines remain stiffened. "It helps to shout," says Marren, drawing parallels with the concept of a mob, when individuality gives way to a sense of one mass, masking one's personal thoughts and emotions as part of a bigger cause.²² We should have no doubts that men were scared that day on the banks of the Idle. With the splash of colour referred to earlier and the noise that must have been

²⁰ P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages - page 7.

²¹ P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages - page 17

²² P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages - page 13

deafening it is likely to have been quite a spectacle.

Whether the battle commenced with both sides viewing each other across the river or as hinted by Marren that both were on the eastern bank when proceedings commenced is not likely to ever be unravelled. But what does chime with the facts presented in Marren's account and the detailed breakdown on The Little Corporal website is that when the real fighting started Aethelfrith and his forces found themselves on the eastern bank with their backs to the river. Not the best position if one is seeking to keep all the options for mobility open.

It is perhaps logically theorised that the number one battle tactic in this period was to avoid conflict if one could. Given the likely dire outcomes for the defeated in an age when extermination was often the standard of the day, it seems sensible that commanders would look for the honourable way out, especially if they were outnumbered. Face saving negotiation was often the way things ended, but not on this day. Aethelfrith wanted Edwin out of the picture to secure the spectacular gains he had made in the north, where he was now the prominent lord. In any event he was on a roll and notwithstanding his reduced forces his confidence and sense of invincibility must have been high. Why would he negotiate? If his ambition was as described, a fight would come sooner or later in any event.

Raedwald, we speculate, had already fixed his eye on the bigger picture and all the risks must have seemed worth it, plus he had the superior numbers.²³ Negotiation would result only in a status quo and the longer term problem of a rampant dangerous overload closing in on his borders sometime in the future would eventually become a reality. Raedwald might also have had a sense of honour to his exiled ally Edwin, who knows? It does not seem unfair to speculate that what he saw for Edwin was a role in supporting his grand plan if success was achieved. After all, Edwin would be beholden.

Edwin, did he have any say? He was stuck in a no-man's land. Without the Aethelfrith threat being neutralised, what was the future for him? How long could he rely on the King of the Angles for security?

Conciliation was a non-starter. So battle commenced.

²³ P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages - page 68.

The detailed breakdown of the battle on The Little Corporal website is a convincing narrative. Once on the eastern bank of the Idle, Aethelfrith calculated that his best strategy was to eliminate Edwin. With him out of the picture Aethelfrith considered it reasonable to assume there would be no need for a continuance of hostility and a truce could be struck. To this end he set to charging at Raedwald's placements sending his son Eanfrith at the central force whilst he veered to the cohort under Edwin. His forces hit the defensive shield wall in a flurry of violent power forcing the lines to disintegrate and allow access to the prize. Aethelfrith however, had made a grave mistake assaulting the cohort led by Raedwald's son Raegenhere and not Edwin. Fierce fighting ensued and in the mayhem Raegenhere was slain. The account reports that Raedwald on realising his son's fate let out a "blood chilling roar" bringing, momentarily, a silence across the battlefield.²⁴ Any last chance of a truce was now lost.

Raedwald's cohort in a frenzy of fighting broke through and scattered Eanfrith's troops and along with Edwin pursued him and the rest of Aethelfrith's forces across the Idle causeway. The fierce fighting led to Aethelfrith's cavalry forces fleeing, perhaps up the slope and across the land that would one day be Bawtry's Market Hill, leaving the remaining foot soldiers with their two legendary commanders facing each other. A final charge saw both forces breached and a period of chaotic intense fighting. Raedwald pursued Aethelfrith in fury, slaying him and holding his severed head aloft. The day was done, the victory was his.

This account is supported to a large degree by a description of the battle recorded by Henry of Huntingdon writing in the 12th century as part of his "History of the English". The section recorded by the Little Corporal very likely draws from this work with, perhaps a little poetic licence? Newton comments on the full accuracy of Henry's account speculating on the 12th century author having access to an Anglo Saxon battle list poem now long lost.²⁵

There are no casualty records for battles fought during the Dark Ages. However, it was recorded that the waters of the River Idle "ran red with English blood".²⁶

²⁴ Courtesy of The Little Corporal War Gaming Website - Battle breakdown.

²⁵ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 35.

²⁶ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 35. Quoting the 12th century historian Henry of Huntingdon.

WHAT NEXT?

Aethelfrith was gone, his kin scattered exiles, living in hiding and fear.

Newton proclaims that Raedwald's "overlordship of the south was assured, it seems likely that he was now overlord of the north as well".²⁷ Newton acknowledges that Bede focuses more on Edwin being the great overlord, but points to the chronicler's description of Raedwald as "king of the Angles".²⁸ It is true of course, with the victory, that Edwin's sanctuary in East Anglia under the protection of the rising overlord Raedwald would eventually see him thrust from hiding into national prominence. Making him says Bede "the most powerful king England had yet seen".²⁹ But over Raedwald? Surely, not likely, given that Edwin must have been indebted to King Raedwald thanks to whom the former "exile-prince had survived great peril and had become king in the north".³⁰ We are left to speculate the level to which such indebtedness might be called upon by Raedwald, already a recognised southern overlord. It seems implausible that Raedwald a king described as "a right wise man"³¹ did not impose his will as sponsor and protector of the once beleaguered Edwin and take the lead in unifying, as far, as it had been ever known. The north and south of our island under one overlord, one king. At least until his death around 624 AD. This chronology of consequences still allows for Bede's interpretation of "good king Edwin"³² who continued the overlordship until his demise at the battle of Hatfield in 632 AD.

An account of Raedwald's death is unrecorded, but winding forward to 1939 AD his potential last resting place becomes hotly debated with the discovery of the Anglo Saxon ship burial at Sutton Hoo. Among a number of potential overlords shortlisted by the analysis of coin finds Raedwald "does remain the strongest candidate".³³

SO WHAT FOR ENGLISH HISTORY?

The battle of the Idle "could rank as one of the great river battles of English history".³⁴ The first major conflict to be won by a baptised

²⁷ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 37.

²⁸ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 38.

²⁹ P Marren Battles of the Dark Ages- page 69.

³⁰ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 37.

³¹ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 40 Quoting the Anglo Saxon Chronicler Gefferi Gaimer from L'estoire des Engleis.

³² P Marren, Battles of the Dark Ages- page 69.

³³ M Wood, In Search of the Dark Ages - page 77.

³⁴ S Newton, The Reckoning of King Raedwald - page 37.

Christian leader boosting the recognition of a new God and his power to deliver a great victory. By 616 AD the advancement of Roman Christianity across the island was at something of a low point, since the Gregorian mission's arrival around 597 AD. With the death of leading Christians such as King Aethelbert of Kent and King Saebert of the East Saxons, coupled with the major advances made by the pagan Aethelfrith in the north, the Roman Christian mission was on the brink of fully retreating.³⁵ How much of its survival is owed to Raedwald, the only surviving baptised leader at the time and his victory on the Idle? Certainly, Christianity was carried northward following this victory, Edwin being baptised in 627 AD reinforcing this advance. Aethelbert's successor in Kent, Eadbald, was drawn back to the faith by the example of Raedwald according to Bede.³⁶

History is littered with such crossroads and moments of huge significance. What might have been the path for religious development post 616 AD in England if the battle of the Idle had not taken place or had resulted in a different outcome is difficult to speculate. That it did contribute to the continuation of the Roman doctrine's development, without a retreat, seems to be an acceptable conclusion given the facts.

Bede reports unified peace across the island as a result of Edwin's rule over the Angles, post 616 AD.³⁷ Perhaps an exaggeration as there remained many who lived in fear of Edwin's efforts to subjugate, especially in Wales. But by the standards of the day the island was united across large parts for the first time in its history. An initial taste of future unification, one might argue, triggered by the victory of Raedwald's forces at the Idle.

SO WHAT FOR BAWTRY HERITAGE?

We may speculate about whether the area we know as Bawtry was settled during the Roman period, but as yet no conclusive evidence has been found. To that end we must progress with the view that at the time of the Idle battle no settlement existed, certainly not one called Bawtry. This begs the question regarding what real claim to the story does the modern town have in respect of its heritage. Is this event a legitimate chapter?

³⁵ St Edmundsbury Chronicle 2000 - The Anglo Saxons and Origins of the English people.

³⁶ St Edmundsbury Chronicle 2000 - The Anglo Saxons and Origins of the English people.

³⁷ P Marren, Battles of the Dark Ages - page 69.

There is no evidence that Bawtry existed at the time of the battle, but the space in which the future Bawtry developed was proving by this time to be attractive and useful in ways that ultimately led to the emergence of a "modern" place, vibrant with human activity. A core driving influence on the development of this space by humans has to be the ability to reach it, and that reaching it fulfilled a greater purpose.

We have good reason to acknowledge that neolithic man passed this way. The Roman invaders certainly did, for a number of reasons, mostly associated with their strategy to cement control and security. Our Dark Ages ancestors, the main players in this paper, were led here because of the ability to reach a suitable place to resolve their issue. Medieval traders utilised the natural developments that resulted from the river Idle being navigable to this location for over 8 millenia,³⁸ allowing regional industry to gain easy access to the wider world. I could go on about the importance of this space being a crucial routeway between the north and south well into the twentieth century and its attraction as a place to visit and meet today. I would submit that the location we call Bawtry has been an important spot on our island since our transition out of prehistoric times.

If one accepts the view voiced in the paragraphs above I would invite you to consider the following points as to why the Idle battle should be important to anyone researching, protecting and sharing the heritage of the space that is now Bawtry.

Historical events with national importance require ownership and commitment to prevent them being forgotten, unrecognised or misunderstood. There are of course national organisations which take on a considerable amount of that responsibility, but the breadth of the landscape to be covered is huge, and can and should, be supported by those with a local connection and affinity with the historical story. If one accepts the conclusions drawn about this battle voiced by those who have studied it, then it should be judged as an event of national importance.

The energy for embracing local responsibility for the protective stewardship of any national event is reinforced, I believe, when the locale itself has a tangible connection with the event. What I mean here is that the place is connected to the event that occurred by something more than the basic fact that it was on shared ground. The event itself should have a connection or resonance with the historical development of that

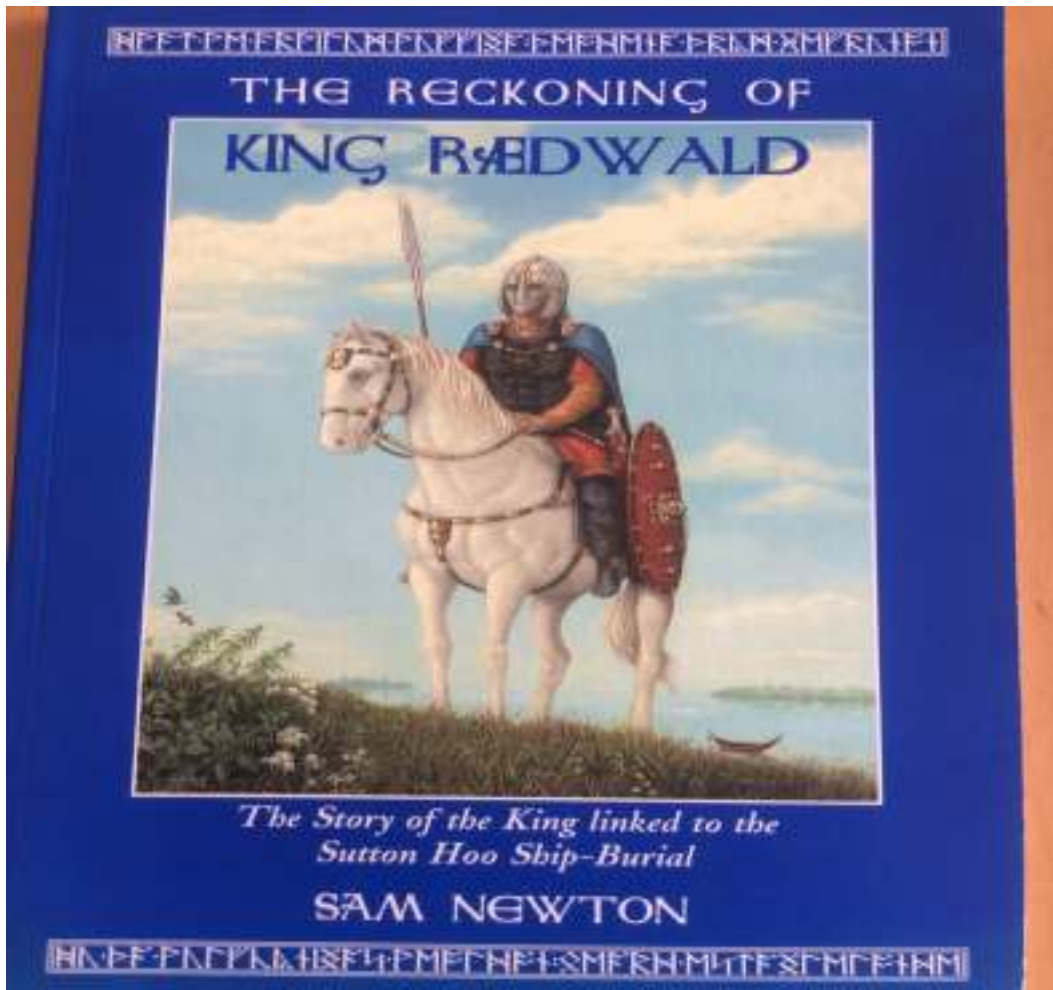
³⁸ Current Archeology Magazine No 172 page 163.

place. I believe this element is attributable to the battle's story and Bawtry through the ages. Firstly, as hinted above, its strategic importance as a place where routeways converge and bring people together. Whether that is for the enhancement of a broader national security, such as desired in the Roman period, or the merchants of the middle ages and the eighteenth century eager to transport their wares afar. Raedwald and Athelefrith came together here because it was recognisably convenient, easy to find and like those just cited, it met their needs. In addition, the battle in 616 AD took place at a point that marked a boundary of political division as defined at the time. A place where the struggle for additional power could be played out in semi neutral territory. Modern Bawtry still remains today positioned and somewhat defined by its location on the borders of separate political entities and the modern day impacts as a consequence. In short, I would strongly submit that the battle of the Idle in 616 AD is part of the narrative if one is seeking to weave a cohesive tale as to why Bawtry came to be.

A question I am left with is why is this event not more broadly and conspicuously celebrated within the confines of modern Bawtry? As I mentioned at the beginning of this piece I can think of no recognition of the event in any street name or commemorative plaque. Is it because the stories of the Dark Ages are confusing and difficult to unravel as well as being dimmed by the passage of time in a way Roman activity is not? Is this a challenge a heritage plan for the town should consider and address along with finding a way to tell the complexities of the tale to those who reside, grow up and visit our town?

THOUGHTS FOR THE HERITAGE GROUP

1. Should there be an official civic marker?
2. The book, *The Reckoning of King Raedwald* by Sam Newton, is a short (56 pages), snappy and entertaining account of Raedwald's life with a major section on the battle. I suspect it's hardly known nationally let alone in Bawtry.



3. "The Little Corporal" war gaming site supplied very useful material and my correspondence with them pointed to other valuable resources. As part of their battle catalogue they have an extensive piece on the Idle battle.

M P Maguire.
September 2021.
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Author's Note. *The content of this paper draws from several sources that have studied the history of the battle. The collective interpretation of those sources has been shaped by the author to weave a cohesive and informative story relevant for its intended audience. Events from the Dark Ages are always difficult to disentangle with complete certainty and readers should always be alive to that fact. Divergence of interpretation is often the life blood of historical research and what inspires further activity. For many it is what makes history fun.*