

Demise of Batley Green and Scottow Moor

22nd January 2019

Batley Green 1938.

Today very few people have even heard of Batley Green; let alone where it was. It sharing a similar fate and anonymity to that of Scottow Moor.

So where was Batley Green? Well, until 1938 - starting from the Scottow Three Horseshoes Inn - walk along The Fairstead until you reach the cross-roads at the War Memorial - then turn left along the Old Norwich Road -taking the first right hand turning immediately after Malthouse Farm. In those days this would have been a turning known as Batley Loke, consisting of just three cottages; housing the whole population that was once Batley Green, all located at its western end.

Its residents were as follows:

Mrs T. Buck, an old age pensioner aged 83 years old, had lived there for 64 years.

Mr Herbert J. Newstead, aged 66 years and his wife, had lived there for sixteen years with their four sons James 'Jimmy', Sidney 'Tiddler', Jack and Freddy. Mr Newstead supplemented his income by running a smallholding from Batley Green comprising of two and a half acres of land, on which he managed to employ all four sons. One source of income was that he and his son Sidney sold and delivered firewood from a pony and trap all over the locality.

Mr Harry Forster (agricultural labourer), with his wife and two children, June and Charlie, also lived at Batley Green.

All this was about to come to an abrupt end when in 1938 the Air Ministry decided to requisition some 530 acres of Scottow Estate land for an aerodrome, on which Batley Green stood pretty much at the centre. Out of a total acreage of around 2,200, it was a substantial loss to the village. The purpose of the aerodrome was in preparation for the pending war with Germany. Initially it was planned for Bomber Command, but was later changed to a fighter station. The work was to begin after 21st November 1938.

However, that decision for the residents of Batley Green meant leaving their homes forever. It must have been especially distressing for Mrs Buck, now aged 83, having lived at Batley Green for 64 years ever since she was married. The widow, who was reported frail, had children with whom she could have moved in with, otherwise she would have had to go to the infirmary. In spite of this, she ultimately opted to move in with the Newstead family in their new home.

In order to demolish the cottages to accommodate the building of what was originally called Scottow Aerodrome, (later to become RAF Coltishall) the Newstead's were moved to no. 42, The Fairstead (School Lane or Loke). It had a sizable garden, with a strip field that ran to the Norwich/ N. Walsham B1150 Road; along, what would eventually become the rear gardens to the houses south side of the Park Avenue council estate, which backed onto it.

Sadly, Mr Newstead died within a few years of the move and was followed by his wife sometime later. This left Jimmy and his brother Sidney (both their other brothers had already left) to run the small holding which they did for a number of years after. For a time they still had their pony brought from Batley Green and kept a large badelynge of ducks.

Mr Harry Forster, wife and daughter June and their young son Charles (Charlie) were all moved next door to the Smithson family at no. 60, Tunstead Road, Scottow.

Scottow Moor 1938

Scottow Moor, before the last war on sunny Sunday afternoons after church, was a favourite place for walks and picnics with the villagers.

Mrs Olive Cameron (nee Lowe) confirms this in her privately published book *Don't Burn the House Down!* Silver Heart Publishing 1998. On recalling her memories of that pre-war period she writes: "(there stood a place)... opposite Scottow Hall, which used to be called *The Moors*. There was a very large pond there. It was an ideal place for picnics in the summer and I remember when my brother (Hedley) was still in the pram we would take a small stove, kettle, teapot, etc. in the well of the pram, and after church would have our own picnic there with friends. The children enjoyed frolicking around the area."

It was much later described by the Landscape Group 2013, page13 thus, "Perhaps the most notable feature of this landscape was a linear common called 'Scottow Moor' in the Ordnance Survey First Edition map of 1889."

Echoing Mrs Cameron's account The Moor laid directly to the south of Scottow Hall, although not within the park. It incorporated a large pond, then an essential item for the watering of livestock. Legend has it that 'treasure' including the golden gates' from Scottow All Saints' church laid hidden in its depths. The tellers of such tales never related whether it was Henry V111's or Oliver Cromwell's set of vandals from whom the treasure was being hidden?

The east side of Scottow Moor laid adjacent to Manor Farm, running as a long narrow strip of land southwards, going beyond and west of Batley Green; which stood two fields away to the east. Whether Batley Green had been connected by loke or path to Scottow Moor has not been ascertained, but it was certainly a possibility.

It should be noted that the village of Scottow at that time, was known for its picturesque beauty. The Fairstead being described as an arcade of trees running from the 'Horseshoes' to the War Memorial. The tree count appeared much higher too. These were the days of compost farming, hedging and ditching, horses, haywains and strawstacks – not forgetting reaping hooks, horse brasses and pitchforks. The list is endless.

Even from my own early childhood I still remember well the neatly manicured banked Hawthorne hedges (nature's barbed wire) covered in the white blossom of the mayflower giving off its distinctive, slightly hypnotic perfume.

The most likely reason for the pristine and well-ordered running of the estate was in maintaining the prestige of its landowners. All this was made possible by the enormous expertise of its work force. The farm labourer, often ridiculed for their rustic ways and indecipherable dialects by the 'foreigner', had a range of endless skills. Thatching, hedging, ditching, animal husbandry, ploughing, sowing, cutting and mowing - to mention only but a few.

Their women folk were no less remarkable, often bringing up large families in the very cramped conditions of the small cottage, with no modern facilities or services. Washing, ironing, baking, cleaning, cooking, mending, scrubbing, sewing, darning and helping out in the garden were just a few of their daily chores. Their days were usually longer than that of their husbands. Arising early in the morning to light fires, cook breakfast for their husband and then later the children. Then after a full day of domestic labour and cooking, finally retiring late at night after cleaning, mending, darning and finally turning off the lamp and lighting a candle to bed!

Keith ap Owen 23rd January 2019