

Scottow Vicarage

A few memories more

1940s and 50s

Revised 20th May 2019



Scottow House (originally Scottow Vicarage/ Rectory) when it was occupied by the Riviere family from 1948-1956/8 before moving to the Grange, Dilham. The view is from the south elevation. The house after being used for rearing chickens was demolished in 1962.

Scottow vicarage was approached by a longish unfenced driveway running diagonally through a meadow to the west, and a cultivated field to the east, all known collectively as the Park. The gated entrance (always open) to the drive was located on the B1150 North Walsham/Norwich Road opposite Anchor Street. It had a low wall on either side of the gate posts (on which the villagers sat whilst waiting for a bus to North Walsham) and was flanked on both sides by lime trees. Anchor Street was referred to by the locals as 'the Sloley Rud' or 'Sloley Turnin'. It has since been confirmed as a Roman road.

The driveway continued on through an opened white gate into a wooded area that screened the house. Memorably, under the trees to the left of the drive were a small number of graves dedicated to the past lives of dogs that had lived at the Vicarage.

In a clearing surrounded by trees (large enough to turn a coach and horses as well as modern motor car) stood the main entrance to the house; a porch covered door facing east.

At the left of the porch was a fenced hedge with a wrought iron gate leading to the south facing lawned front garden and to the right, at right angles to the house stood a high wall finished in the

same manner as the house; its function presumably was to screen the more utilitarian area of the house from visitors. The driveway continued to curve around the wall to the back of the house, effectively guarded at that time by a flock of very aggressive white geese.

Totally relying on memory as seen through young eyes some sixty-five years ago, I recall the vicarage as a pleasing white stuccoed building in the Georgian manner having good vegetable gardens, possibly a walled one to the north and north-west end of the property.

A large springy cushioned lawn dominated the south elevation of the building and overlooked the grassy meadow known as 'The Park'.

It was at the southern end of this Park that the twenty-four house council estate was completed in the 1940s, and from whence it was to derive its name of *Park Avenue*. The Police House was built in 1949 in the grounds of the Park itself.

The floor of the wooded area surrounding the vicarage was constantly changing from a studded carpet of bluebells in early spring, followed by an abundant display of golden yellow daffodils spreading out under the trees and later followed by a magnificent display of mass rhododendron blooms along the east side of the lawn. The lawn was large enough for the holding of garden parties and fetes.

In the forties and fifties Scottow Vicarage was very much a magical place to the village children. It was almost surrounded on three sides by a wooded area containing a fairly wide selection of mature trees, amongst which were a variety of pines, a sweet chestnut tree, a walnut tree, a copper beech, an enormous cherry tree, bamboo and a large selection of rhododendron bushes that in late April and early May rendered a beautiful display of contrasting blooms.

It was a place of adventure and discovery much enhanced by the kindness of the Riviere family, with Mrs Bridget Riviere (Akela) running the local Wolf Cub Pack, greatly adding to its magic.

It was very much through Mrs Riviere and her able assistant Miss Sally Shaw (Baloo), daughter of Lt. Col. Shaw and Mrs Shaw of Scottow Hall we learned and experienced many things. Rudyard Kipling, India and the Jungle Book, how to build a camp fire, cook sausages over it and in the kitchen baking buns covered in icing, each topped with a glaciated cherry; along with the many various skills opened to being a Wolf Cub.

One of our favourite games was 'Tanks' which we played in the broad belt of trees running from the house to the main North Walsham and Norwich Road. So evocative was this place that it acted as a model in my own imagination for that part of the Wild Wood where Badger lived, in Kenneth Graham's book *Wind in the Willows*.

A number of important iconic memories have stayed with me. One for instance happened on a dark cosy evening in the drawing room on the ground floor of the house that had French windows leading out onto the lawn. There on the polished wooden floor was a headed tiger skin rug with yellowing vicious pointed teeth and glassy eyes. The teeth was almost as sharp as the sword we were shown, which when drawn from its scabbard, we were all allowed in turn to gently run a finger across its blade with a cautionary warning to be careful as it was very sharp.

Mrs Riviere's suggestion that we could one day (night) get a telescope and view the stars and planets from outside on the lawn was an exciting prospect and although it never actually happened, it was sufficient enough to create an awareness and an interest in astronomy.

We also learned the mythological story of the origins of Rome from the name of one of the dogs Remus, a Golden Labrador or Retriever. The other dog, a small wired-hair Terrier, was called Hedge so named we were told, as he was always busy running in and out of hedge rows sniffing out rabbit's holes and the like.

A further act of kindness and generosity from the Riviere's, was when the park meadow was eventually plough up for cultivation, a large area of grass was left for the villagers and their children as a playing field. This was heavily and regularly used by all.

Currently I have no record as to the vicarage's age, only that there are title deeds for 1676, 1767 and 1838 held in the Norfolk Records Offices.

The last member of the clergy to have resided at the vicarage appears to have been the Rev. Frank Newton Kent BA incumbent vicar from April 1900 till May 1940; although his total incumbency was not all spent living at Scottow vicarage. At some point the parishes of Buxton Lammas and Scottow were merged into one and as a consequence he took up residency at Buxton Lammas.

During the Rev. Newton Kent's occupancy of Scottow vicarage he ran a small private boarding secondary school from its premises. There is a record of a Second Lieutenant Norman Rausch de Pomeroy, born 2nd August 1891, having attended the school from 1902- 1908.

After the departure of the Rev. Newton Kent to Buxton Lammas came the Landon family who moved in before the Second World War. However, on the death of General Herman James Shelly Landon in 1948 his wife Mrs Christian (nee Sharp) Landon returned to the family home which was probably located in Paddington, London.

Mrs Landon's departure was quickly followed in 1948 by the arrival of the Riviere family who renamed the vicarage *Scottow House*. Having lived there for a number of years they too moved on in their case to the Grange, Dilham around 1956-8, leaving the house empty and never to be used for human occupancy again. It was instead used for the rearing of chickens and pigs, and the land cultivated for fruit.

Having been used for this purpose over a period of time, the vicarage became more and more dilapidated and was finally demolished in 1962!

The vicarage's ultimate shortcoming and that which brought about its final demise was that it stood almost directly under the flight path of the 1939 built RAF Coltishall and literally yards away from the runway. It was constantly assailed, as was the rest of the village, by the continuous roar and screaming of jet engines. For most of the villagers a move to quieter climes was not only financially feasible but was probably not even given a thought.

Being aware of the sense of social responsibility demonstrated by the Riviere's and their great interest in the arts, literature, history and conservation, it would appear inconceivably of them to allow the wanton destruction of Scottow vicarage!

After having completed my original piece on Scottow Vicarage I had the good fortune of speaking to Mr Tom Riviere, the youngest son of Mr and Mrs Riviere. He told me this, "My parents loved the house, and told me many times that they moved out not just because of the noise, but because the vibration from the jet engines caused the house to crack and eventually become unsafe and uninhabitable. That's why no one else ever lived there and eventually it was

demolished. I got the feeling that the house was rather lightly built in the early 19th century; buckets (were placed) in several rooms when it rained.”

It is also to Mr Tom Riviere we have to thank for the wonderful photograph of Scottow vicarage which heads this essay.

Historically, the vicarage was probably the most important house in Scottow, even topping that of Scottow Hall, a number of its occupants having played prominent roles both in the life of the nation as well as those in the village.

The Rev. Newton Kent has already been mentioned along with that of General Landon, a highly respected military figure who fought both in the Boar War and the First World War and was mentioned twice in dispatches.

And also previously mentioned the last occupants of the Vicarage the Riviere family. Mr Michael Valentine Riviere not only had a successful career as a brewer, but also as a writer of some note, especially poetry. He also contributed greatly to the arts during his life time, and with his wife Bridget became involved in its conservation. One of his legacy to the people of Norfolk was his part in the acquisition and restoration of the magnificent Dragons Hall in Norwich.

In contrast to his latter life, during the Second World War he escaped from two German prison of war camps and finally ended up incarcerated in the notorious Colditz Castle German Prisoner of War Camp.

Earlier still was the Rev. John Horatio Nelson, a descendent of the famous Lord Horatio Nelson, Battle of Trafalgar fame. On becoming the vicar of both Scottow and Belaugh at the age of 32 he took up residency at the vicarage in 1857. This was shortly before marrying Susan Spencer-Churchill, daughter of Lord Charles Spencer-Churchill, second son of the Duke of Marlborough of Blenheim Palace. They had two sons both born at Scottow Vicarage and christened at Scottow church. Nelson was to stay at Scottow for fifteen years before leaving in 1872

The Rev. Nelson on his arrival to Scottow, with the help of friends, greatly improved and renovated Scottow Church and the records indicate he contributed financially to the building of the Scottow Parochial School built in 1859.

It has been estimated that over 200 Norfolk villages have been deserted, lost or simply forgotten. A few years ago such a fate for Scottow was unthinkable! And yet in a very short space of time it became a possibility.

With the closing of RAF Coltishall in 2006 it rapidly became forgotten that the site on which the base had been built and flourished for 67 years was in fact Scottow land. The creation of a new community fashioned out of the old married quarters of RAF Coltishall and renamed Badersfield, further threatened the existence, both historic and actual, of the village of Scottow.

During the same period the Three Horseshoes Inn closed and along with it the Oddfellows Hall. The local school, so generously supported by the Rev. John Nelson, closed in 1966, although now in use as a private nursery school.

Scottow, as a result of the building of RAF Coltishall in 1939 for the then very urgent and necessary demands of the time, made many sacrifices. The loss of agricultural land, demolition of homes and houses, road closures, the guaranteed peace and quiet of country living and the local loss of life, to mention but a few.

To lose the name of a village which was ancient even when the Normans came, is perhaps to unnecessarily stretch that sacrifice too far!

The loss of the Scottow Vicarage to the village was huge and can never be replaced but it can be remembered and it is important for those memories to be recorded. Even more so as the land on which the vicarage stood no longer bears the name of Scottow!

In more recent times the site and the land (glebe) originally that of the Scottow Vicarage was purchased by the North Walsham Rugby Club in 1972.

The club must be congratulated on its sympathetic landscaping on incorporating a number of rugby pitches and buildings, yet retaining and developing an overall picturesque quality over the whole site. Recent information giving me immense pleasure is their renaming of the site Scottow Park.
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