

The Branston Village Allotment Field

Peter Stevenson

Identification The 'Allotment Field' is identified on the O.S. Sheets for Branston as being Field No. 529 on the south side of Hall Lane between what is now the north east corner of the Graffoe property and the east side of Peggy's Holt. (There is no evidence that any of the fields further west have ever been used as allotments. The present village footpath map is in error in labelling the last field to the south of the far end of Hall Lane as 'Allotments').

Ownership of Field No.529 - 1. Prior to and including the Enclosures of 1754 - 7 It would seem that this and a sweep of fields to the south and to the north east across what is now the (New) Hall Parkland were clearly established as 'Greater Tithes' (thereby the property of the 'Living' of Branston Parish) long before the Enclosures which divided the pre-enclosure 'Fields' amongst the existing major landowners. (Since Branston was then very much a 'Closed Village', villagers had very nominal tillage and grazing rights on these 'Fields'). Nothing in these Enclosure Awards indicate the possibility of the villagers using either Field No. 529 or any other as allotments.

2. From 1760 to 1921 When the Bertie family (then the Lords of the Manor, owners of the Old Hall and those parts of the village not owned by the church) died out, the estate passed into the hands of the Curtois family, the then rectors of the parish, the Tithe Lands were incorporated into a larger Branston Hall Estate, which in turn passed into the hands of the Melvilles. They built the New Hall, leaving the Old Hall in the hands of the Estate Steward. Thus Field No. 529 became successively, Curtois and Melville land. Again as yet there is no suggestion as to when Field 529 became the 'Allotment Field'. When Alexander Melville dies in 1919, the estate began to break up and Field 529 was sold to the Estate Steward and Head Gardener Joseph Ward. The Conveyance Map now clearly labels it 'Allotments' which would indicate that it became allotments in the Melville era, perhaps during the Great War 'Digging for Victory' years. It is shown as having an area of 8.72 acres.

Perhaps as a result of the Lindsey County Council takeover of the Hall and grounds and/or his age, by 1937 Joseph Ward had retired and appeared to have been in need of finance. He sold off four of the allotments in the north east corner to Arthur Willey, farmer of the Hall Farm, on which to latter subsequently built 'The Graffoe'. He then mortgaged off the rest of the field to various people including Alfred Key of Nottingham who may have been his son-in-law. When Joseph Ward died in the early 1950s, Alfred Key inherited the field and when he died in 1953, his son sold the field to Norman Brown of Sycamore Farm in Branston. When he died in 1959, his widow sold the field to John Beatty Tinsley. In 1964, the remaining two allotments in use then adjacent to The Graffoe were sold to Peter and Jean Stevenson and a year later the remainder of the field reverted to general agriculture as part of the Branston Farm Estate.

The use of the field as allotments Prior to the sale of the first four allotments to Arthur Willey,

there was a cart track running down the east side of the field, accessed by what is now the main entrance gate of the Graffoe. Each allotment was approximately 48 yards north to south and two of these correspond to the present length of The Graffoe garden. It's initial width corresponded to two allotments plus the width of the cart track. Arthur Willey was charged with establishing a new cart track and access gate which accounts for the second gate into the Graffoe garden. Until the field was sold to Tinsley's, it's southern boundary was marked by a hedge running east-west as a continuation of the southern hedge of the field between The Graffoe and the Gardener's House. At it's centre point was a large tree and subsequently both the hedge and the tree were removed. When The Graffoe changed hands in 1958, only six of the allotments were still in use, the rest of the field was very much 'set aside'. By 1963 only two were in use and Tinsley's moved these alongside the west side of The Graffoe garden. When these last two allotment tenants indicated that they too would soon cease working them, they were bought and added to The Graffoe garden. Thus 1964 ended a chapter in Brantston Village History.



BRANSTON.



ORDNANCE $\frac{1}{2500}$ SCALE.