

WHERE WAS THIRD HILLS CLOSE at BRANSTON?

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On 10 January 1804 Robert Craggs, yeoman of Branston, bought Third Hills Close 'at Branston' from John Brown, gentleman of Heighington, paying £103 for this field of four acres, two roods and 18 perches. The Browns had bought half the Branston Manor estate after the death of both Lord and Lady Vere Bertie - the half not including the Hall and Park. However, they had got into difficulty and were willing to sell off outlying pieces of land.¹

The Craggs family (including Thomas, who may have been Robert's father) had already bought a very small parcel of Branston land, 180 square yards, from the Browns in 1798 and Robert was to re-sell it in 1810 to Mrs Elizabeth Green, along with some newly erected cottages next to it.² This small parcel was near where the pump was later installed in Lincoln Road and the cottages are probably now no. 23 Lincoln Road. So the Craggs could be described as minor property owners, even as speculators. As a yeoman, Robert Craggs would have been an owner-occupier farmer, though probably not farming on a large scale judging by what is revealed later in the century.

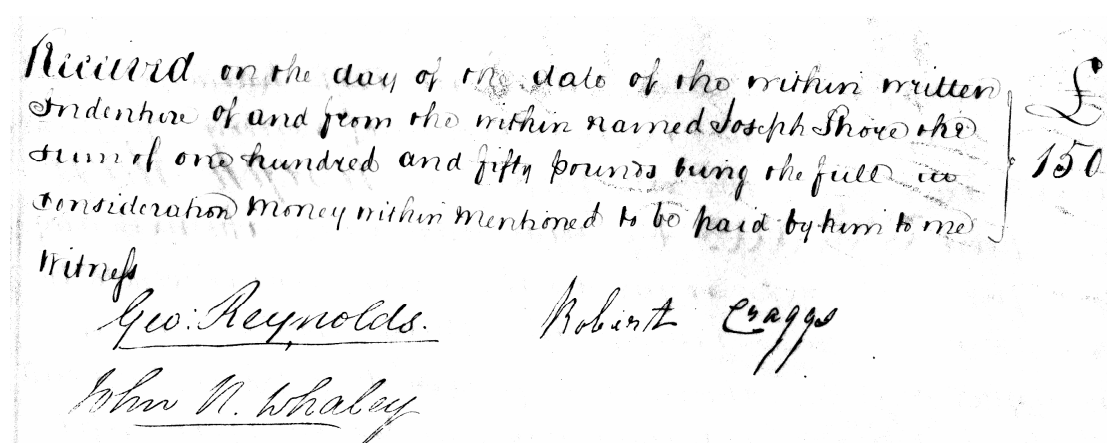


Fig. 1. Receipt for £150 from Joseph Shore signed by Robert Craggs at the bottom of the 1850 mortgage of Third Hills Close. The other two signatures were probably those of solicitor's clerks.

Returning to Third Hills Close, the next record comes in a mortgage between Robert Craggs (almost certainly the same person as in the 1804 document) and Joseph Shore, yeoman of Lincoln, dated 6 April 1850 (fig. 1). Shore advanced Craggs £150 on the security of the field – property values having risen. Farmers and other small businessmen often invested their working capital on retirement in land or houses that would yield a return of five per cent a year, as a kind of pension. The field was then in the occupation of Richard Parker, a cattle dealer who lived at what is now Church View, 7 Church Road. He would have found closes of limited size useful for pasturing small groups of cattle he needed to keep separate from his other stock.

In 1849 Craggs also owned three cottages and the acre of land that now contains Curtois Close. One cottage (Field House) survives at the far end of the street and another one at the junction with Station Road. The cottages and the land were all occupied by tenants and the next year Craggs was said to be a farmer at Bucknall. Possibly he had given up his small owner-occupied holding in Branston to become the tenant of a larger farm at Bucknall.

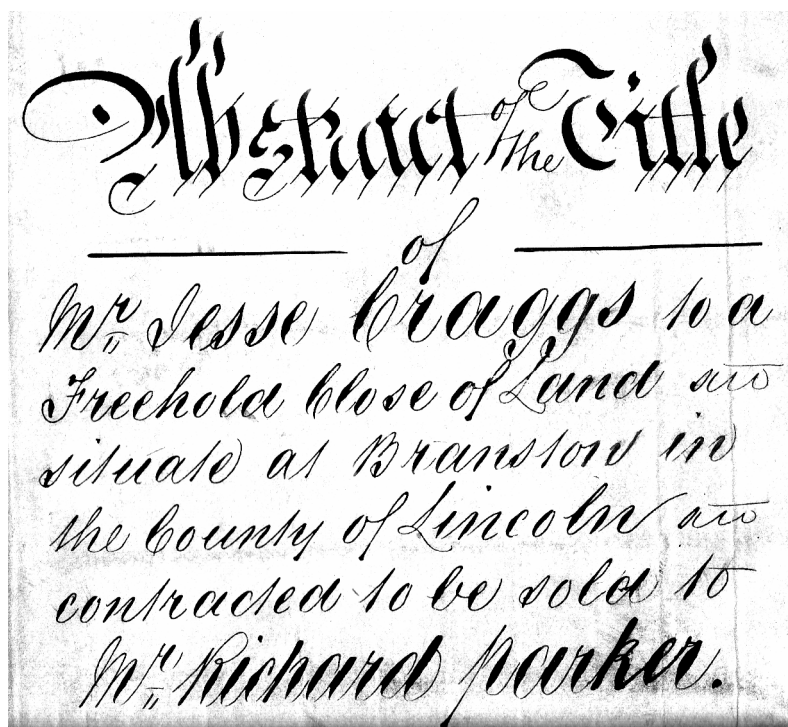


Fig. 2. From the front cover of the abstract of title of Third Hills Close summarising its legal history from the late eighteenth century, drawn up at the office of Richard Cotton Carline for Jesse Craggs in 1870. This was when he was considering the sale of the field to Richard Parker, cattle dealer, who was its occupier. The sale fell through.

Robert Craggs died 6 June 1859 leaving his property to his son Jesse. Joseph Shore died 27 October 1866 and his interest in Third Hills Close passed to F. W. Tweed of Horncastle and Mary Hodson of Spilsby. They were anxious to capitalise on their inheritance and on 13 April 1867 the mortgage passed to Edward Mucklow of Leadenham, grocer. At this point Jesse was described as a cottager of Horsington – at best this description could only mean that he was a small farmer, and was in debt as well. In 1870 Jesse began negotiations for the sale of the close to Richard Parker, still his tenant presumably, but the sale fell through (fig. 2). In the 1873 Domesday of Owners Jesse is recorded as owning about seven acres at Horncastle, possibly a clerical error for Horsington.

Jesse died at Branston 26 April 1882, but only on 25 April 1884 did his trustees put his will into effect. They were his son, Herbert Craggs, carpenter of Branston, and his brother-in-law, Alfred Merryweather, cottager of Skellingthorpe. They paid Edward Mucklow the £150 capital owing, and as the interest had already been paid up to date, the deeds of Third Hills Close came back into their hands (fig.3). There was also property at Horsington, whilst at Branston, in addition to Third Hills Close, there were two dwellinghouses in Jesse's estate. Herbert Craggs was still in the village in 1910, when the Estate Duty Valuation recorded that he owned a field of one acre and three roods. It appears that he had sold Third Hills Close. As the deeds on which this essay

are based were once lodged with the deeds of Peony Cottage (next to the Post Office) it has been assumed that his dwellinghouses became Peony Cottage.

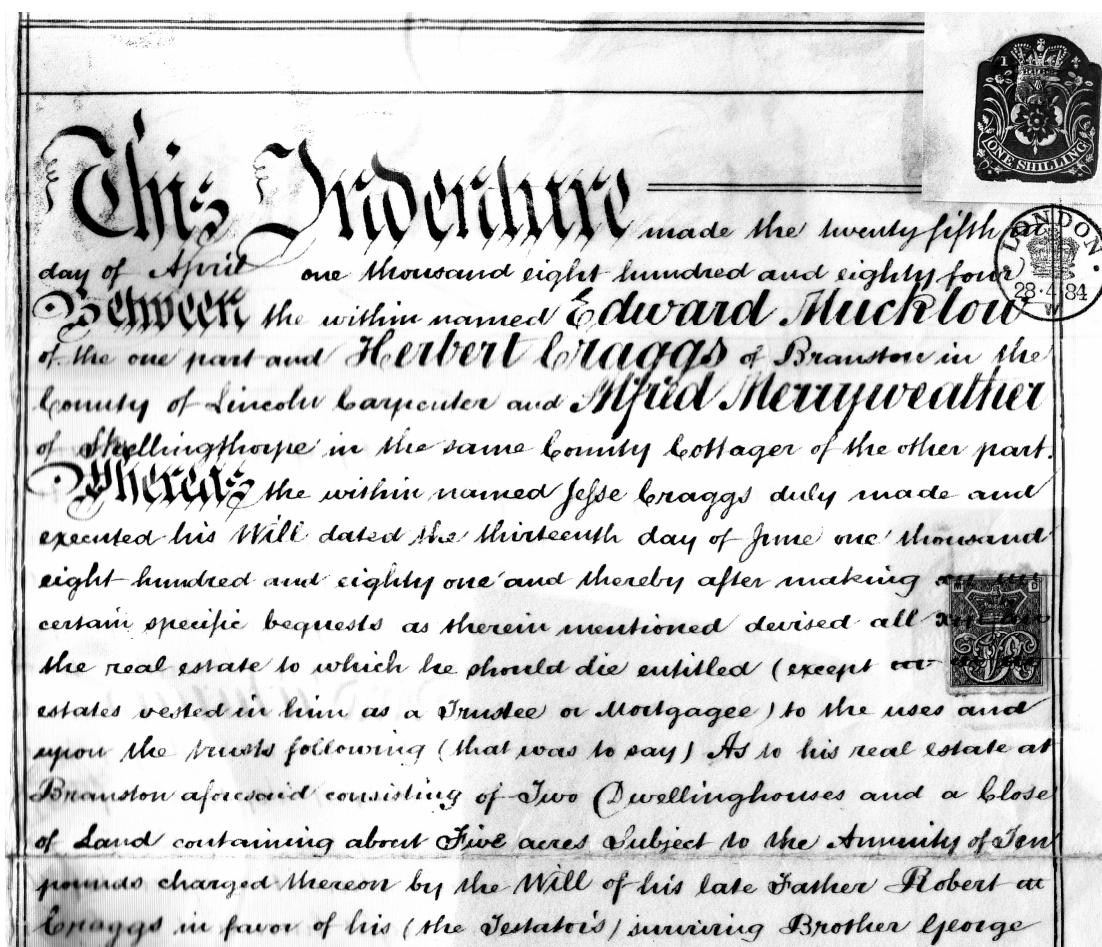


Fig. 3. Extract from an indenture written on the reverse of the 1867 mortgage in which Edward Mucklow had lent Jesse Craggs £150 on the security of Third Hills Close. It also records the redemption of the mortgage in 1884 by Jesse's trustees, Herbert Craggs, his son, and Alfred Merryweather, his brother-in-law. Towards the bottom is the reference to two dwellinghouses in Branston, thought to have been what is now Peony Cottage.

But where was Third Hills Close? The Heighington Enclosure Award Map of 1834 records that the general area between Third Hill Farm and the Branston boundary was known as Third Hills (fig.4). It is not unusual for a place to acquire a name through close association with another place nearby that already has a well-established name. A good example in Branston is the Longhills Field, once part of the Co-op Farm, which lies on the opposite side of the Sleaford Road to the real Longhills. Hence, the name Third Hills can be said to have 'crossed' the boundary between Heighington and Branston. But where did it cross to? Two possibilities present themselves.

In 1804 the tenant of Third Hills Close was Thomas Bowles of Ashfield Farm, who occupied five other small fields in the area alongside the Heighington-Potterhanworth Road, namely Spout Holes and the four Rise Fields.³ It would not be surprising that Third Hills Close was in the same area. Close 1 on figure 4 was not only nearby, but

Meanwhile the rather odd name ‘Third Hills’ deserves more attention. It is a ‘corruption’ or variant of an older name appearing in various forms in the Heighington records: Thurdayle(s), Thordayle, or as two words Th(o)ur Dayle; also Thirrdale and Thurdayle Lees and Churdayle Lees. Lees is a reference to grassland, usually temporary, but could become permanent. A dale was a strip in the open fields and in Heighington early enclosure by agreement in the sixteenth century enabled old field, furlong and strip names to survive more often than in Branston where most of the land was enclosed by Parliamentary Act in 1765. The area along the east side of the Heighington-Potterhanworth Road within Branston is an exception, having been enclosed ‘by agreement’ in 1682; and here what were probably mainly very old names survived at least until the Tithe Award of 1849. Close 2 is different in that it was enclosed by Act from the Moor Common in 1765, an area probably having few names anyway.

Acknowledgements. Our thanks to Mrs S. Liddle for the use of the documents relating to Third Hills Close; to Dr Rob Wheeler for the digital image from which figure 4 has been prepared; and to Brenda Webster and Robert Barker for their guidance on Heighington. See also Joan and Dennis Mills, *Traditional Farmsteads and Farming at Branston, Lincolnshire*, Branston History Group, 2011.

¹ Lincolnshire Archives Office (LAO), TLE 19/2 and Will of John Brown, snr., 1798/i/48.

² LAO, RAD1/A/11.

³ As note 1.

⁴ LAO, E541, Branston Tithe Survey, 1849.