

EARLY PLACE AND FIELD NAMES

Many of the field and place names on the 1837 Glebe map seem to have a much earlier origin, and often provide evidence for which there is no other source. Some recall an industry or activity that once took place on the site; Brick Kiln names recall a brickmaking industry which was already clearly established by 1837, Butt Furlong, Great and Little Bowman's Meadows probably hark back to the days when every village had to be capable of providing trained bowmen if called upon by their feudal lord, Dove House Close was perhaps the site of a medieval dovecote, maintained not for pleasure, but as an extra supply of food for castle or manor, Hawkers Leys may be where the lord's retainers trained his sporting hawks, Monk's Riding, Priest's Bridge and Lane speak for themselves. Other old field names refer to the fertility or otherwise of the area, and to the usual crop; thus we have many Clover, Rye, Furze, Pease, Orchard and Sun names, and none of the Hungry, Lean or Starveling type of names, which often found elsewhere, denote poor ground. Brinklow, as any gardener will agree, is even now an extraordinarily fertile place.

Other names hark back to the open field system of the Anglo-Saxon period, when most settlements had only two or sometimes later three large fields divided into strips. A bundle of strips running in one direction was known as a furlong, an element in many of Brinklow's field names - significantly mostly around the oldest part of the village towards Smeaton Lane. On a day of strong sunlight and shadow, Brinklow's ancient strip system is clearly visible, and the three field pattern clearly discernible in the parish map

Field name study is an area of research in itself, and within the scope of a general history such as this, can only be touched upon. Suffice it to say, Brinklow's field names reflect a fertile, sheltered and well watered and ancient settlement.)

Originally, before the economic demands of 18th century developments in farming methods led to a complete distribution of land, and the enclosure of the fields thus formed through various private Enclosure Acts, every villager would have had his (or occasionally her) own strips to cultivate, including a reasonably fair distribution of good and poor soils. Ploughing and harvesting was a communal affair, but clearly more conscientious villagers suffered from the weeds of their more feckless neighbours. However, each villager had the right to graze livestock on the common land (which appears to have been behind Broad Street, roughly where the playing fields are now) and also to collect firewood from it, which enabled even the very humble to maintain a reasonable level of subsistence.

With Enclosure, and its consequent legal obligations to provide and maintain expensive fences and hedges, many of the smaller subsistence farmers began to sell off their small fields to the larger landowners, and drift to the new, sprawling industrial towns and villages. Thus, many families who today have no connection with the land, have their origins rooted in the soil of these dispossessed "yoemen of England."

Bray's Close, Colledge Close, Skipwith Close and Brierley's Farm all owe their names to large landowning families past and present, while Potter's Close may recall the site of some early kilnworks. Great Balance is an early field name, Hall Grove was named after Lady Hall, who formally opened it, and Cathiron Lane seems to be, obscurely, a corruption of Catherine. Other local place names have yet to be researched, some presenting something of a problem. Barr Lane

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for instance, appears to be ancient, yet it has been known as Park Lane. As yet, no clue to the origin of Crook House has come to light. Broad Street was earlier known as Main Street, although it isn't clear when the change came about. It has also been known as High Street.

An interesting example of modern name-forming is Fog Cottages, in Smeaton Lane, so called because originally, they belonged to the railway, and on receiving a fog warning, workmen had to go ahead to lay fog "caps" on the line, which when the train crossed over them, made a great bang, thus warning the engine driver of fog ahead.