

Odder and Burton Fen

Between Burton Waters and Saxilby, set back from the Fossey canal is an area bulging out from the otherwise regular outline of the parish, as it has done for hundreds of years. This small enclave of farm buildings and houses is known as Odder, but its name has undergone a surprising number of changes over the past 200 years. In 1800 it was known as Hathow farm, in 1848 Haltho otherwise Hodda farm, and in 1896 Odda farm. Odder farm is recorded in the 1901 census and this name now seems to have found its way onto the ordinance survey maps and highway signs in perpetuity.

Although the area appears to be at the same level as the Fossey, there is an almost imperceptible rise in the land which is just 6 ft above the surrounding countryside. This anti-syncline has been its saviour on several occasions when the Trent has burst its banks and flooded vast tracts of land between Torksey and Lincoln. In 1795 and in 1852, flood waters engulfed much of the surrounding farmland and the farm at Hathow was isolated but not flooded. It is believed that "Hathow" was an Anglo Saxon word for an area of healthy heather or a rise in the ground, and this description is certainly borne out by the flood records.

The history of this unusual enclave is contained within the Monson archives but in the 1861 census Charles Thistlewood is residing at "Hathow farm in Burton fen" farming 306 acres and employing 5 labourers and 4 boys. Living in the same house with his wife were Thomas Trigg (22) Thomas Pash (19) and John Tovey described as carters and John Higgins an agricultural labourer who was a boarder. Elizabeth Butler from Potterhanworth was the house servant, so it was a pretty cramped household. They would have had an interesting outlook across the Fossey which was still a busy waterway boats carrying coal, iron, timber and farm produce to and from Lincoln to the river Trent and beyond. There were still regular sailing packets carrying passengers to Gainsborough and a Friday service to Saxilby and Torksey but water transport was under intense competition from the railway line now running alongside the canal. Coach services setting out from the Saracens head in Lincoln, such as the *Lord Nelson* to Gainsborough, the *Pelham* to Sheffield and the *Express* to Hull that used to clatter pass the farmstead, had already succumbed to the competition. In consequence toll income had declined and the road, maintained by income from the tolls was in terrible condition.

Farming would have been hard as the land was cold and undrained and liable to flooding but there was a decoy lake nearby where ducks and geese were trapped and sent to markets in Lincoln and to other cities. But by 1900 the land had been drained and steps had been taken to reduce the chance of flooding by embanking the Trent and the Fossey canal. Cottages were built on Burton Lane End and a thriving community of over 60 people lived in 7 properties at Odder farm, Fen farm and Burton Lane End. Prominent amongst the residents at that time was **Tom Woodcock** aged 35, a self employed butcher and poultry breeder who lived in one of the Lane End cottages with his wife Lucy and his mother in law, Ann

Patrick, from Yorkshire - but perhaps she was just visiting when the census was recorded!

In 1950 the Monson estate was broken up and the land, houses and cottages were sold. New houses were built at Odder and a garage established to provide services for motorists using the busy A57. With the decline in agriculture, the cottages at Burton Lane End became derelict and sold to a developer. **Tom Woodcock** is now remembered in the name of the Woodcocks pub/restaurant which was built on the site of the old Lane End cottages. Odder farm house is now the offices of an agricultural company and Fen Farm once a mixed dairy and arable farm, is a private residence. Recently 800 acres of land which covered the old Burton fen was sold to a development company but the land is farmed by Blankney Estates of Nocton one of the largest agricultural businesses in the country. Between Burton Waters and Odder on the Fosdyke side of the A57 a motor holiday site is being developed by Midas Ltd. It will include holiday cottages, fishing lodges grouped around a sporting lake. Planning permission has also been granted for a hotel and conference centre next to the David Lloyd sports complex.

The A57 now bypasses the 7 houses and farm buildings at Odder, but divert off the road you will find a flourishing garage specialising in the sale of 4x4 vehicles www.zednet.co.uk/keitharnoldcars/aboutus.html. and an excellent roadside cafe serving tea/coffee and cooked meals.