

## ROUGHMOOR THROUGH EIGHT CENTURIES

Until 2012 Roughmoor was part of Brockhall. It has had links with Whilton for centuries, but has now become part of our parish.

The earliest reference to "Roughmoor" dates from the first half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It was then the name of a furlong in Brockhall open fields. Its meaning is obscure. It has been suggested that it means "area of waste", but the evidence of its history does not back this up. Documentary evidence suggests that for much of its history the area was known as "Roomer", and the "mer" may come from an old word meaning "boundary". From the late 1880s it was sometimes called "Ringmore Grounds", perhaps a change designed to make it sound better!

Despite the mystery over its meaning there is a surprising amount known about this area of about 100 acres, and this is just an attempt to pick out some of the highlights we heard about.

In medieval times Brockhall and Muscott both had open strip fields, but as Muscott was a much bigger settlement, it provided some of the labour for Brockhall. Roughmoor came within the manor of Brockhall and in 1249 Sir Philip Lucien became lord of Brockhall on his marriage to Joan Wake. The Luciens remained here for several generations; in 1322 there is a record that part of Roughmoor furlong was being farmed by Margery Lucien, lady of Brockhall. No doubt it was her labourers who were doing the work!

This regular farming system might have continued for many generations, with a prospering village nucleus at Muscott. However, the later 1300s were marked by bad weather and poor harvests, weakening the villagers who depended on their own crops for survival, and probably meaning they were less robust to face the disaster which hit from the outside. The Black Death appears to have reached this area around 1349, with recurring bouts in 1361/2 and through the following decades.

There was some trouble in 1362, when Robert Syer of Brockhall complained that the lord of Whilton, his wife and his son and a few others assaulted him in Brockhall after Robert Syer's sheep got into Whilton. They had impounded his cattle in Whilton and made him pay a hundred shillings to release them. He claimed he was afraid they would kill him. A hundred of his sheep had been hunted and bitten by Whilton's dogs, leading to 20 of them dying. Whilton's lord was fined for his actions.

One interpretation of this event is that for some reason the boundary hedges or fences between Brockhall and Whilton were not being maintained. This may be an indication that there had been a drastic decrease in the population. Within a short time in about 1375 James de Nevill and his son died. Most of Muscott township appears to have been abandoned by 1377. This may well have been caused by another visitation of the plague.

In 1410 Sir Robert Tyrwhit purchased Brockhall manor. The Tyrwhit family lived here for a while and the family continued to own Brockhall, but they were an old and powerful family with other interests and property particularly in Lincolnshire and Huntingdon, with a seat at Kettleby.

These new owners were faced with the aftermath of population decline. In 1433 Sir William Tyrwhit took a new departure in physically separating Roughmoor from the rest of Brockhall with a fence or hedge, so that it would no longer be arable, but used entirely for sheep grazing. It was far from the village and on the boundary with Whilton and Brington. By enclosing about 100 acres for sheep he dramatically reduced the labour required.

The strips within Roughmoor were exchanged for others in the main manor. This suggests that there were lands which had reverted to the lord after the departure of his tenants. Even today, after nearly six centuries, the clearly marked ridge and furrow reveals the old arable farming. This must be evidence against those who believe the derivation of the name means "area of waste". Such clear ridge and furrow after so long must indicate many centuries of cultivation before enclosure. From 1433, when Roughmoor was referred to as "the new inclosure next to Whilton," its history changed as it became permanent pasture.

The Tyrwhits let Roughmoor to tenants and sub tenants. In 1538 Lawrence Wassington of Northampton took on a lease of "the manor and a close called Roughmer", paying annually "at the front stone in the cathedral church of St Paul in London, £33.6.8." Robert Tyrwhit, esquire for the body of the King, would often have been in London. By 1578 William Salter and Henry Roper of Daventry were paying an increased annual rent of £100, paid half yearly to Sir Robert Tyrwhit, "at his mansion house at Kettelbye". The lease allowed these tenants to take the "shredde tops and lopps" of all manner of oaks, ashes, willows, elms and all manner of thorns growing "in and about the said Close of Riughmere as in and about the manor and premises." "Shredding" is a traditional method of tree pruning by which all side branches are removed repeatedly leaving the main trunk and top growth.

The Tyrwhits were a powerful family, and through Tudor times were present at all the royal courts. However, mixing in such elevated circles had its disadvantages. In 1580 Sir William Tyrwhit was committed to the Tower, a suspected Catholic sympathiser, and as Tyrwhit fortunes fell, Brockhall manor was sold in 1583.

Roughmoor was now established as a sheep farming close, and after a time in the ownership of Lawrence Eyton, it was sold to Robert Andrew of Harlestone. Late Elizabethan records give us some details. Robert Langton, a Whilton farmer recorded that: "*Roomer. .. will keepe about x score sheepe and so manie hath the sayd Mr Eaton kept on the same yearely and most of the sheepe have benne ewes and of them hath had lambes everie lamb he estemeth to be worth iis vid.*" Robert Linnell of Whilton cautiously agreed with him that Roughmoor could: "*bear ii hundred sheepe or thereabout but what number of sheepe and lambes or other beastes the seyde Mr Eaton hath kept thereon he this deponent doth not knowe.*"

In the mid seventeenth century Henry and Barbery Smith were farming Roughmoor and there was a house there by 1649. By the 1700s Roughmoor had been divided in to several closes. In 1738 woadman John Lawson had a short tenancy of Banky Roughmoor and Roughmoor Meadow, but his agreement stipulated that woad could not be grown on these fields, so they remained as pasture.

Roughmoor was farmed for most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Judkin family, descendants of Whilton carpenter and farmer, George Judkin. By 1807, however, they were the tenants of the Thorntons of Brockhall, who had gained Roughmoor through marriage into the Andrew family. As part of the Thornton estate, Roughmoor had a stone pit, which was in frequent use when the Thorntons altered the roads across their property, especially in the 1830s. All trace of this pit has disappeared.

The Judkins were graziers. They bought and sold at Northampton Fair and their produce was of good quality. For example in December 1860 the Mercury reported on the Christmas Meat Show, which included "some very fine oxen and heifers, fed by several farmers including ...Mr Judkins, Romer Grounds". This prosperity was in the years of high farming and before the agricultural depression of the late 1800s. William Judkin, who died in 1871 was sometimes described as farmer, but also as "gentleman".



Anne Judkin, who married farmer James Emery about 1830

By late Victorian times the Judkins had left Roughmoor. For a short time James and Hester Stevenson with their five young children lived there, and they were followed by a family from Devon, named Burgoin. In 1901 Susan Burgoin was continuing to farm there as a widow.



*Roughmoor Grounds in the time of the Prides*

In 1908 a couple from Gloucestershire took on the tenancy. When they arrived George and Sarah Pride already had one little daughter, Freda, and in 1910 another little girl was born, named Blanche Elizabeth, but always known as Betty. George struggled to make a living in the early years, but the Thornton Estate was also drawing in its horns. In 1920 George Pride had the option to buy his farm, for £4,300, which he was able to do by realising some investments, and not taking on a mortgage, which was a matter of principle for him.

The Prides remained there for another 30 years. Towards the end of George's life Sarah and her two daughters kept the farm going with help from prisoners of war. George Pride died in 1946, and Sarah in 1951. The Misses Pride came to live in Dormer Cottage in 1966 and sometime before that Roughmoor was transferred to Fred Richmond, a race horse breeder and builder involved in various speculations. After five years he moved on and the farm was purchased by the Wilson family, who farmed here for four years before selling to Joan and Griff Davies in 1970, happily remembered by many in Whilton. A new house and stables have now been built on the site of the old farm, and this is now the home of Andrew and Margaret Jack, Margaret being the daughter of Griff and Joan Davies.