

WHILTON LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The society met on 12th September 2013 when the subject was

“THE BROOK PROJECT: PEOPLING THE MAP.”

In this project we are looking at the history which surrounds the stream which passes Whilton, and then runs down towards the Nene. After marking the map with coloured flags to represent historic figures along the route we heard about two locations passed by the stream.

MUSCOTT VILLAGE

Today there is hardly anything left of Muscott beyond the farm and two or three cottages. This makes it hard to imagine the bustling agricultural community there in the 1200s and 1300s. Between 1301 and 1377 there was a startling drop of taxpayers in Brockhall and Muscott together from 48 to 5; even allowing for some discrepancies, this must indicate a major disaster, and it is most tempting to look to the Black Death, whether people simply died or chose to abandon the village.

We do have some clues about the people of Muscott before the disaster. Surnames were only just beginning, so many people had only one name and a description which would later become a surname. This was particularly important as Richard was so popular!

Walking through Muscott in the 1200s, we might have met William, son of Stephen of Brockhall, who had a son called Geoffrey and owned a toft in Muscott next to the ditch by the yard of Nicholas Albe.

Richard, son of Nicholas of Muscott, and married to Cecily, had property in Muscott, Buckby, Throp and Brockhall. Another Richard, son of Elys and Matilda, had a house in Muscott, for which he paid one silver mark and service to John “le Louerd” and paid the chief lord of the fee one clove gillyflower annually. Some of his land lay beside land farmed by Geoffrey Bercarius (Shepherd). Henry le Somynour of Muscote, had a son named Thomas. Perhaps Henry’s job was to summon people to the manor court.

In 1328 Richard, son of Richard Elyot of Muscott had a house and land, which he held for the service of providing one candle and one lamp worth 12 pence each year and paying the lord or lady of Brockhall 2 shillings annually. Another villager held his “messuage and toft in the town of Muscott” for performing the services due to the altar of the parish church of Brockhole. This man had a surname: Richard Molt of Muscott. This was probably the Richard Mold listed in the 1301 tax list. It is possible that this surname is an abbreviation of the Latin “molendinarius” or miller. In this case it might be an early record of a miller called Richard at Muscott Mill.

WHILTON MILL IN VICTORIAN TIMES

Many of the stories concerning the area around Whilton Mill were less cheerful, but the following tale dating from 1844 has a happy ending. There was a nasty bend as you came down Whilton Hill to cross the bridge. Drivers needed to pay attention. It was tempting to come down too quickly especially if you had already partaken of refreshment at Northampton Market.

Perhaps this is what had happened to two gentlemen from Welton, on a Saturday evening in May 1844. Mr Thomas Derby and Mr William Jones were returning home from Northampton Market.

“The night being dark they came into contact with a stone bridge near Whilton Mill (which is a very dangerous place), by which the gig was upset, and the shafts both broken off. The horse, a spirited animal, finding himself at liberty, started off at a furious rate through Norton, and proceeded on to Daventry, and was stopped soon after it had passed through the town, and although at the time it came through the streets there were great number of people about, only one person was knocked down by it, and fortunately he was not injured.

The horse was dreadfully cut on one leg, and he will be some time before he will be able to work. Immediately the horse reached Daventry several persons started in search of the gig, expecting to find the parties injured. When they arrived at Whilton Bridge they found the body of the gig in the

road, and the two gentlemen enjoying themselves at a friend's house close by. Mr. Jones escaped unhurt, but Mr. Darby had received a very severe bruise on the ankle, and it is a miracle they were not both killed on the spot.”