

A Brief History of Shotesham

There is very little evidence of Shotesham's ancient past, other than some Stone Age flint tools that have been found in Shotesham and the surrounding area.

There are no Roman remains and the only survival from Saxon times is the village name although its meaning is not certain. 'Ham' is a common Anglo-Saxon place-name ending, meaning a village, an estate or a homestead. Thus Shotesham may mean the 'ham' of the Scot (or Irishman).¹

There are various spellings of the village name in the Domesday Book of 1086, including Scotessam and Scotesham. There were seven main landowners, namely, in order of size of landholding:

The Abbott of St Benet's at Holme, Roger Bigod, King William, the Abbott of Bury St Edmund's, Walter Giffard, the Bishop of Bayeux and Robert Malet.

At one time there were four parishes in Shotesham - All Saints, St Mary's, St Martin's and St Botolph's. The Parish of All Saints was also known as High Shottisham whilst the three other parishes comprised Low Shottisham. In 1311, St Mary's and St Botolph's were joined and all four parishes were joined together in 1731.

All Saints Church - the date of the original church is not known but it was apparently rebuilt around 1000AD, rebuilt again around 1200 by Sir Robert de Vaux and again in 1550 after being partially destroyed during the Reformation. Both All Saints and St Mary's were extensively renovated at end of 19th century, largely by the Fellowes family.

Traces of 15th century wall paintings can still be seen. In the early 16th century, many in the village died of the plague and were buried under the present vestry.

St Mary's - a church has been here since at least the 11th century. The chancel and north chapel were built in 1486 by the local squire, Bartholomew White. The church was listed in a 1602 return of ruined and decayed churches.

St Martin's - in around 1050 the church was given by Edward the Confessor to the Abbot of St Benet's at Holme (on the river Bure on the Norfolk Broads). The church was largely destroyed during the Reformation under Henry VIII around 1560. An excavation in 1933 found that the

church had been burnt. In 2009 work was begun to remove the ivy and vegetation and consolidate the tower and the remaining walls so that the ruins can now be visited again.

St Botolph's – the church was granted by King Canute around 1020AD to the Abbot of St Benet's. It was totally destroyed around 1560. A small section of a wall can be found in the churchyard on the corner of St Botolph's Way at Hawes Green, opposite Church Cottage which was once the Priest's House.

There are still faint traces of the deserted villages of Low Shottisham in the fields around St Mary's and St Martin's. Factors in the decline in population include the Black Death in 1348-9 and subsequent plagues, the change from arable to sheep pasture, with a reduction in labour required, and the enclosure and buying up of land.

By the early 1400's there were only about 10 households in St Mary's and St Martin's. The houses are still mainly concentrated around Hawes Green – apparently named after William Hawes who was farming here in 1836.

Shotesham Common

Following the 1781 Enclosure Act, most of the land of the parish was enclosed and awarded to Robert Fellowes. Shotesham Common was created at this time with an area of 49 acres and a further 4 acres at Stubbs Green Common.

Originally the inhabitants of 68 cottages within the parish had grazing and other rights on the Common. Since 1928, the Common has been governed by the trustees of the Shotesham Common Charity.

Shotesham Park – completed by 1789, the house was designed by the architect Sir John Soane for Robert Fellowes. His father, William (1706-1775), had bought the estate in 1731 from the D'Oyley family and thereafter spent much of his time and money on improving the estate and on philanthropic activities in Shotesham and Norfolk.

For example, Francis Blomefield in his book of 1806, described that "there is a very agreeable cold-bath in the parish of St Mary, fitted up for public benefit, at the expense of Will. Fellowes, Esq. of Shotesham."²

Many houses and farms in the village originally belonged to the Shotesham Park Estate. The estate was largely broken up and sold in the 1920's.

Shotesham Infirmary - Shotesham's main claim to fame is that one of the earliest cottage hospitals in England was founded at Hawes Green by William Fellowes, at a date prior to 1754. The village GP, Dr Benjamin Gooch, developed his surgical skills here and wrote several books on surgery, through which his reputation spread widely.

The complex consisted of the hospital, a mortuary, the Doctor's house, the Nurse's house and possibly a house for the mentally disturbed.

In 1758, Gooch was commissioned by Thomas Hayter, the Bishop of Norwich to visit and report on the hospitals in London, with a view to establishing one in Norwich. After the bishop's death in 1761, the scheme was finally revived in 1770 by William Fellowes and, with the advice and support of Gooch, the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital opened in 1771.

The graves of Benjamin Gooch (died 1776) and other members of his family are just below the East window in All Saints churchyard.

[See elsewhere on the website for more information about Benjamin Gooch.]

Trinity Hospital - A chance event in 1539 has had a lasting impact on the village. Henry Howard, the Earl of Northampton, was born in **Grove Farmhouse** as his mother was passing through the village. Henry held various posts under King James 1 and died a wealthy man in 1614. He founded 3 charitable 'hospitals' – at Greenwich in London, Castle Rising in Norfolk and Clun in Shropshire.

The Mercers' Company of London are the Trustees of The Earl of Northampton's Charity and in 1879 they decided to build an almshouse in Shotesham so that local beneficiaries of the charity did not have to leave the village and go and live in Greenwich.

The Hospital was dedicated to the 'Ever Blessed and Glorious Trinity' and opened in 1885 for eight Shotesham bachelors or widowers who, under the terms of the founder's will, were of good character, poor and aged over 56 years.

It was modernised in 1960 and again in 2009 when the eight apartments were converted to six. There is a central community hall, which the rest of the village is also very fortunate to be able to use.

There are a number of other interesting buildings in the village which reflect its history and the changing lives and occupations of its inhabitants.

Old Hall Farm – once owned by the D'Oyley family, the present Old Hall Farm was built in the 17th century. The size of the moat suggests that there was once a much larger house on the site. The moat is circular rather than the more common rectangular shape and may date from the early twelfth century.

The Duke's Head – the main front part of the house was built in 1712 as an addition to the older traditional farmhouse. Dr Benjamin Gooch lived here and subsequently the Mingaye family.

In the 1880s the house was owned by the Fellowes family and it was converted to a coaching inn. Known as the Duke's Head, it was an inn for around 25 years until 1918 and was visited by the artist Sir Alfred Munnings.

Henstead Cottage & Hillview – this pair of cottages, on the hill out of the village on Brooke Road, was once a single building as suggested by the off-centre chimney stack. It was opened in 1783 as 'the house for the poor'. The following year, the workhouse was renamed 'Town House' – the 'Town' being the four parishes of Shotesham, which bore the running expenses. The house accommodated between 20 and 30 men, women and children. By 1837 the numbers were much reduced and the house was closed.

Village School – now part of **Tudor House** next to All Saints church. The older, thatched part is thought to have been the first rectory. Robert Fellowes was responsible for building the Victorian schoolhouse in 1874. In 1926 there were 113 children under the headmistress Miss Annie Best. In 1976 there were 30 children and the school was closed in 1982.

The Old Chapel – formerly a Methodist Free Church that was built in 1879 in Chapel Lane. It was converted into a private residence in 2004.

Tollgate Cottage – opposite Tudor House. One of the village's tollgates was still across the road here until around 1930. There were others on Roger's Lane at Falgate (previously Foldgate) Farm, on Hollow Lane near the ford and on the hill at the far end of the Common. In the early 20th century, the cottage was a general store known as Andertons and later on it was run by William Laws and his wife.

The **War Memorial** (erected in 1920) records the names of the 18 men who were killed in the First World War and 3 men in the Second World War.

The numbers could have been much higher as a V2 rocket landed in a wild orchard about 120 yards from the village school at 9.25am on 6th October 1944. Fortunately there were no injuries although the church, school and some houses suffered some damage from the blast.

As well as the main farming and related activities, other occupations in the village over the years included two funeral directors, a mill, private schools and post offices in various locations and several shops. Weavers Cottage, on Roger's Lane, had looms producing Shotesham tweed in the early 20th Century. The last shop, the butcher D W Dix, closed in September 2000 leaving only The Globe public house to sustain the village.

The census of 2001 showed a population of 539 in 210 households. The area of the parish is given as 1,450 hectares. The census of 1836 gave a population for all four parishes of 367.

This brief history was compiled by Sara Webber who is currently researching the history of Shotesham. Please contact her at webber.sj@btinternet.com if you have can help or can lend any historical information, documents, artefacts or photographs.

¹ 'The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-Names' 4th Ed by Eilert Ekwall p213, p419.

² 'An Essay towards a Topographical history of the County of Norfolk; volume 5' by Francis Blomefield p517.