

Pattishall: a pocket history



“...in the Town of Pateshull are four and forty houses...in Fosters Booth 4 houses...Astcote...a village of seven and twenty houses...Eastcote...now a village of four and thirty houses and Dalscote a village of fourteen houses.”

Since 1720, when John Bridges wrote this description, the parish has seen many changes; but the dispersed nature of the component hamlets in parish has remained - a reminder of its antiquity as a settlement. Place names ending with cote or cot are a unique feature of the Towcester region. A cot/cote was a sheiling, a sheepfold or farmstead. The settlements are Anglo-Saxon in origin and each continued their separate existence both before and after the Norman Conquest in 1066. The prefixes often denote personal or folk/tribal names. Astcote was 'Aefic's cot' - attributed by some to a monk of Evesham Abbey. Pattishall was Pascelle – Paetti's or Paettel's Hill'. The Paetti could be a derivative of Paetta – the hill or hall of Paetta's people. Neither Dalscote nor Eastcote are mentioned in Domesday Book in 1086 but they each have pre-Conquest linguistic roots; Dalscote was Deor(e)'s cote and Eastcote was Eadwine's cot. The consolidation of these settlements into one parish took place during the re-conquest of Danelaw by the Kings of Wessex. Into this settlement came Walter the Fleming and his heirs as lords of the manor controlling a population estimated between 201 and 274, depending on the multiplier used.

Population, work and lifestyles have been transformed over the years. In 1777 there were 76 males between the ages of 18 and 65 shown in the parish as eligible to serve in the Militia. Twelve of these were farmers including 4 farmers' sons. The bulk of the men listed were servants, i.e. farm servants, who lived on the farm. To these were added 17 labourers – a term concealing many skills from hedge-laying to well-sinking, flailing and working with horses. There were traders and craftsmen central to a rural community and these included textile workers – 3 frame-work knitters and 3 weavers, two woolcombers and 4 shoemakers. (It is a statistical fact that well into the 18th century the county was dominated by textile craftsmen & traders, not the proverbial shoe-worker!). The three butchers and three bakers were probably distributed amongst the separate settlements. The absence of shepherds and millers does not mean they did not present, they could have served before or were too old to serve. We know there was a water mill on Banbury Lane and

a wind-mill further east below Eastcote. A wheelwright and a blacksmith also figured in the list. In 1900 a descendant of the latter shod the hooves of Welsh ponies as they were 'droved' from Wales along the Welch and Banbury Lanes to the Horsemarket and the Marefare at Northampton – a task his predecessors had done for generations. This clutch of tradesmen and craftsmen was leavened by the presence of small proprietors and professionals. These together with the scattered nature of the settlements and the absence of one dominant land-owning family created a degree of independence of which later commentators were to complain.

Using the Militia List we arrive at a population of approximately 370 for the parish. In 1801 the figure stood at 551. Between 1841 and 1871 the population rose by almost 25% (237).

2.

The nature of this growth can be demonstrated by one hamlet – Eastcote. In 1871 it was swarming with children and young persons; 59% of the population being under 20 with a superabundance of boys! The adult workforce consisted of 68 males and 71 females. The pressures on housing and education were to be felt in the years to come. There were two solutions: build more houses or leave the parish. The older houses close to the centre had long burgage plots behind them. These cottages were built to form yards such as Hornsby's Yard in Astcote.



The fall in population, partly caused by emigration and partly by a search for betterment, began in 1881. By 1901 it had fallen from 930 to 860, by 1931 to 804 and a further drop to its lowest in 1951 to 720. Since then there have been housing spurts, beginning with Festival Road in 1953 (Festival of Britain,

South Bank, 1951) and the demolition of old dwellings following from a county concern at the state of rural housing. Next Leys Road was built over fields which, in the 16th century had been undersown with clover and vetches.

The developers had initially been keen on having a clear separation of the estates so that between Leys Road and Festival Road there was a respectable distance. The Parish Council, to its credit, would have nothing to do with the notion. From 1970 onwards the villages have seen small estates and piecemeal infill. The population has mounted to over three times it was in 1801 standing at nearly 1650 today.

These changes are reflected in the house-types from inter-war mansard-roofed council housing to mixed constructed bijou residences occupying former workshops and fields. The houses of yeomen farmers survive in each of the hamlets: they are stone built former end-chimney or open fire halls of the 'great rebuilding' which took place in the 16th and 17th century. They originally had thatch for covering and 'ovulu' moulded window mullions, date-stones and large threshing barns alongside.

Religion and drink have played their part in the lives of the community. Before 1066 a church of some importance stood on the present site of Holy Cross. It has been suggested that it was a basilica or transeptal plan with several altars and oratoria and possibly a collegiate structure attached. The village below it was larger, shaped in a double loop or figure "8" on its side. There were several large fish ponds for the use of the community. After the Norman Conquest outside influences came into play. In came Walter the Fleming and his children & grandchildren. They left some of the Saxon fabric including the chancel arch. Under the influence of the new patrons – the Convent of Godstow and the Priory of Dunstable – together with the wealthy elites such as the de Wahulls, the Pattishalls and their like the church took on some of its present form. Godstow & Dunstable houses were also associated with the foundation of a chapel for the Templars, this stood in Astcote Bury Field.

3.

As an 'open' and not an 'estate' village and without the controlling influence of an Anglican 'squareson' the parish attracted non-conformists from both Towcester and Bugbrooke who set their seal upon the lives of the community in different ways from the established church of the time. In 1838 the Baptist chapel at Eastcote was opened. In the following year Pattishall Baptist chapel was opened in Fosters Booth Road on land given by Earl Pomfret of Easton Neston. To-day the Manse and Chapel still stand in other guises. The Baptists had been preceded in late 18th century by the Methodists. Their chapel was opened in 1811 in Astcote. After a period of relative decline a revival led to a new chapel being opened in 1874. Like Holy Cross it has undergone face-lifts and internal rearrangements and flourishes to-day.

In 1910 there were 9 public houses in the parish one of which, The Maltshovel, stood opposite the footpath westward from the tower of Holy

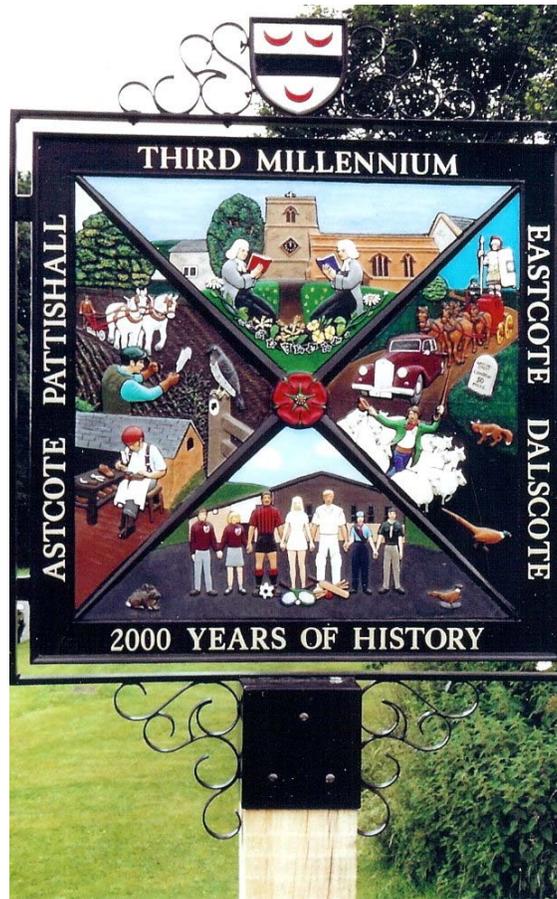
Cross. The carrying trade along Watling Street was catered for by three of these and in each hamlet there were 2 or 3 pubs and beershops. To-day there are 2: The Red Lion in Fosters Booth on the Watling Street and The Eastcote Arms in Gayton Road, Eastcote. 'The Four Pillars' formerly Peggotty's Restaurant and before that The George & Dragon, was a coaching Inn on Watling Street, the Red Lion a waggoners' hostelry. The hamlets were once served by shops. In 1874 there were 8, in 1953 there were two in Pattishall – a Post Office and General Store and a shop at the end of Fosters Booth Road. A butcher's shop stood near The Eastcote Arms and a general store in Astcote High Street. To-day there are none.

The mid-nineteenth-century population pressure on schooling required changes in the existing provision. In 1684 Thomas Young had provided funding for apprentice's in the parish to receive education. The trustees set up a house for the master within which the children were taught. In 1819 the curate reported that 'the poorer classes are satisfied with the means of education they possess.' Such sentiments were not enough. In 1855 a girls' and infant school was built near the school house but by 1872 the Inspectors condemned the school. Enlargements were made and in 1887 the infants were moved to a new site where the present school stands. After World War II the school house and old school in the west corner of Holy Cross churchyard were demolished despite the protests of the community to re-use them as a village centre to replace that which they used in School Road. The parish hall was none other than the Guard Room for a World War I POW Camp. The camp itself occupied the ground between School Road and the top of Bird's Hill Road, Eastcote. From 1914-16 it was an internment camp for foreign merchant seamen and aliens. They built the camp complete with reservoir, dining hall and other amenities. In 1916, following the sinking of the Lusitania and resultant hostility to all German nationals it was transferred to the military as a POW Camp and used as such until 1919. In World War II the road in front of the camp down to the cross-roads on Butcher's (Banbury) Lane was used to park military vehicles in preparation for the 'D' Day landings in 1944.

4.

The Coronation of George V in 1911 was marked by planting a chestnut in the field where the POW Camp stood. The Coronation of George VI by a bench opposite the Junior School and that of his daughter Elizabeth II by a red hawthorn on Pattishall Green.

By such marks the community celebrated events beyond its boundaries. In 1995 a major commemoration of 50 Years' Peace in Europe was marked by inter-hamlet celebrations and competitions concluding with a drum-head service before the 'new village hall' of 1983. The Millennium was likewise marked by celebrations including fireworks and the burial of a time capsule in the chancel of Holy Cross.



Beneath these transient gestures flows the slow measure of continuity – the brooks and watercourses of the parish whose presence has been an abiding feature of changelessness in the face of change. The water mill has long since gone but the monk of Ely who recorded its presence in 1086 would, if he could return, find the stream runs its course still beside the ancient trackway.

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