

THE BOOK OF SALHOUSE & WOODBASTWICK

Colin McCormick

Neighbouring villages on the Norfolk Broads with much in common but with distinct identities, Salhouse and Woodbastwick lie 5 and 6 miles respectively north east of the City of Norwich, each bounded to the north by the River Bure. Historically, the two villages have at times shared common ownership and at other times gone their own way. In mediaeval times both were near the centre of an economic powerhouse based on peat digging; in the nineteenth century each was home to a wealthy landowner who spent lavishly on their own mansion and on the village surrounding it, and whose influence can still be seen. While agriculture has always dominated, the villages in modern times have become largely residential but a smattering of rural trades continues to flourish.

Exactly halfway between the two villages lies Salhouse Broad, a tourist destination since the nineteenth century, arguably the most beautiful setting of any in Norfolk, in an undulating landscape that is far from flat.

Unscathed, but not unaffected by war, enemy action was never far away and the influence of an American airbase nearby is still well remembered.

In this book we discover how the villages and their landscapes were influenced by early history and later by the changing fortunes of landowners and the changes brought about by improved communications. Personal reminiscences recall many forgotten aspects of life in the twentieth century, we look at people and social activities, and we look at the churches, schools, houses and street scenes, much of which has changed in recent decades but some of which has remained very much the same.

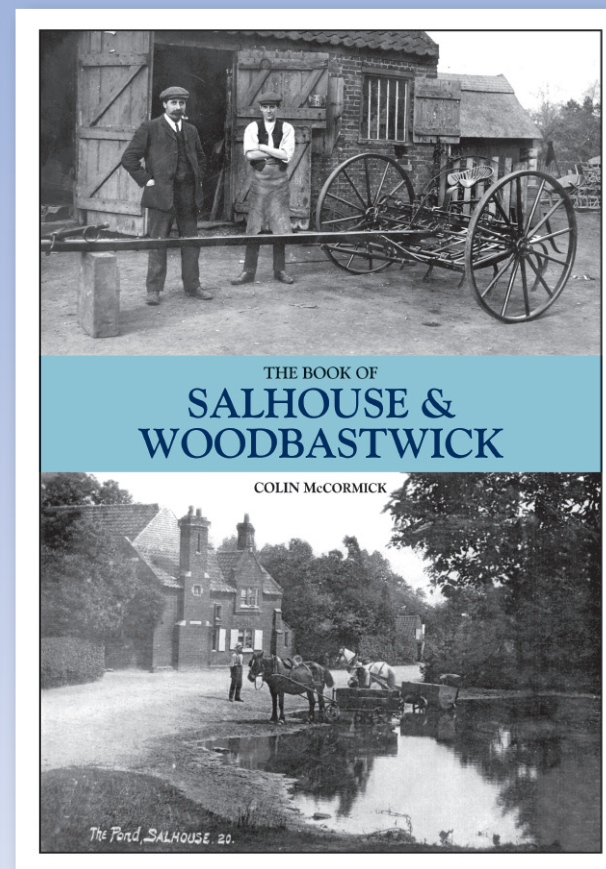
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Although having had a lifelong interest in all things historical, this is the first book that Colin McCormick has attempted. Inspiration came from the earlier work by Roy Bullers, who was unofficial local historian for many years, and was the author of many articles and talks on the subject. Roy's aim to produce a history book was sadly never realised, but after his death in 2014, Colin recovered his archives and set about collating them. From this starting point, Colin has re-edited all the original texts and written a number of new chapters, assembling a wealth of new material and photographs, including a vital part of Roy's legacy, the verbatim accounts of older people in the village he interviewed in the 1980s and '90s.

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Early twentieth century view of Lower Street looking east, the Reading Room porch is extreme right, next are Loke End Cottage and Holly Tree Cottage, both now much altered. The easily recognizable gable end of Wykeham Cottages is in the right-centre and 'Sallowes' behind Tooke's shop, is centre distance.



Right: Salhouse Bell Bowls Club practice evening, c.1993.



Below: School Christmas Party, 1946. Head Teacher Mr John Denton is standing at the back.

Chapter 11

Transport

The Parish Roads

On the orders of Queen Mary (1553-1558), the Highway Act of 1555 created a new officer for each parish. The Surveyor of Highways. The surveyor was elected each year for a twelve-month, without payment. He was tasked to direct the reluctant and not very effective efforts of his fellow parishioners towards filling in ruts and potholes in the Parish roads.

The Act transferred responsibility for the roads from the Lord of the Manor to the Parish Vestry Meeting, held annually, usually with the vicar as chairman. Each adult in the parish owning a plough-land in village was liable to provide a cart for four days a year with four days labour (increased to six days in 1691). One could commute this labour by payment or providing men in lieu. The Surveyor, appointed in each parish to inspect the roads three times a year, was appointed by the churchwardens. In 1602 this was changed to appointment by elected representatives at the Parish Vestry meeting. By 1691 the parish officers merely supplied a list of candidates to the Justice of the Peace for their approval. The six days labour was replaced in the 1835 Highway Act by the levy of a parish highway rate on householders.

The large scale enclosure of land required the making of new and better roads to take account of the larger holdings. Such roads were usually straight with wide verges and a width of 40ft hedge to hedge; one such is the new Norwich Road, built about 1820. This road is wide and mostly straight for 5 or 6 miles, from Panworth through Salhouse as far as the City boundary.

The old Norwich Road which would have preceded this probably ran from Panworth to Woodbastwick, on the roads that still exist as narrow lanes, on into Salhouse Lower Street, past the Bell corner, along Hall Drive, past the grounds of Salhouse Hall and along the line of the present day footpath to Station Road. From here its route has long been lost with the building of the railway and housing, but it must have intersected Green Lane West, Rackheath and may have cut across what is now Rackheath Park and Sparrow Woods to Norwich.

Hewlett's Lake, then known as Old Hall Lane, was a track which ran from Dackham Lane (Muck Lane/Station Road) to Wroxham, but was bisected by the construction of the railway in 1876. A remnant of this old route now forms the public bridleway running through Norman's Farm to Bear's Grove.

In Woodbastwick, an interesting 'lost road' is Horning Ferry Way. This route cut north east across what was then the northern part of Mouseshold Heath, intersecting Lower Street close to what is now Salhouse Broad car park. From there it continued past the brick kiln cottage, north-east across Broom Hill and what is now Woodbastwick Park, past the front of Woodbastwick Old Hall to Ferry Farm, and then onwards to the ferry crossing. When the estate was developed with the 'emparkment' of farm land from around 1820 onwards, most of this route disappeared, although some can still be traced on estate maps. The route to Woodbastwick from Salhouse was diverted along Slad Lane to Woodbastwick Green, past the estate entrance and the church, and onward via the newly constructed Horning Ferry Road. This route had far more significance in the eighteenth century than it does today, as the Horning ferry was at that time a major crossing point on the River Bure for traffic towards North Norfolk.

Following the 1888 Local Government Act which transferred responsibility for main roads to the newly established Norfolk County Council, the Salhouse Vestry Meeting of 1893 asked that the County Council take over that portion of the parish highway from Rackheath to Wroxham. However, there appeared to be very little response, as in the following year the Vestry Meeting asked the County Council to take over the parish road from Salhouse Station to Woodbastwick and also 'that portion that was applied for last year'.

Parish roads were mostly dirt roads which became rutted by the passage of vehicles in wet weather and being repaired by infilling the ruts with stones or gravel. But with no bonding agent the filling was pushed aside or deeper into the ruts. In the early 1900s experiments were made by mixing tar with the gravel and by the 1930s most of the parish roads were waterproof in winter and free from dust in the summer. The Parish Council, having taken over from the Vestry Meeting following the 1894 Local Government Act, abolished the post of Surveyor and itself had to propose to the County Council the priority of roads to be metalled. Some ancient roads were

Billy Lawrence, Salhouse's 'Lenghtman' photographed at Thieves' Lane junction on 26 November 1959.

Norwich Road, looking west towards the railway crossing, January 1987. Snow had blown off the fields and the village was cut off for two days. Since then a hedge has been planted on the left side of the road.

Salhouse railway bridge, 2013, still flooding almost 120 years after complaints were first made.

By Colonel Cator of Woodbastwick Hall. Every time the car went through the village everyone came to stare at it and got covered with dust. At the same time, Squire Ward of Salhouse Hall preferred to keep his horse-drawn carriage.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the roads in Norfolk were maintained by local 'roadmen', most of whom were known as 'lenghtmen'. A lenght-



Example of a double-page spread.