

**Historical notes on Broomscot Common, compiled from *Garboldisham, Village of my Youth* by George Ling and from the minute books of the Garboldisham Parish Charities**

Mary Feakes, June 17<sup>th</sup> 2010

**From George Ling's book *Garboldisham, Village of My Youth*:**

*The large Broomscot Common was controlled by the Parish Trust who allowed people to graze their cattle or horses from May to Michaelmas for just a few pounds per head.*

*The bye-laws of the common were pinned to a post at the Smallworth end of the area. John Sillett, from Prickwillow was the keeper or warder of the parish lands. It was his duty at letting time in the early spring to see that all the fences were intact. Invariably some of the locals would create additional work for John as they went 'sticking' on the common in winter, where they collected the dead wood, even if it was in a boundary fence, it would soon be pulled out and taken to home to fuel a cottage fire.*

*Broomscot Common had a pond and a stream which ran towards the fen, these were the only sources of water for the cattle. I can just remember the drought of 1921 when it was possible to walk across the bed of the pond, which was scoured with large cracks, reminiscent of African drought scenes.*

*Apart from the war years when the common was cultivated, gorse has always grown on this light land - virtually sand in many parts. In the spring it would present a grand sight with masses of blossom, king cups and ragged robin grew by the pond and stream, together with many other water loving wild flowers. Away from the boggy area grew little white 'cuckoo' flowers, buttercups, daisies, and in the hedgerows, wild or 'dog' roses. Snipe and moorhens would nest by the stream, whilst the gorse bushes were a haven for many small birds, such as linnets which could conceal their nests deep in the bushes whose prickly spikes also served as defence mechanisms.*

*In early March the undergrowth on the common were generally tinder dry, making it a target for mischievous village lads, who, as soon as darkness fell on a dry night with a little wind, would set light to it.*

*During a dry summer the cattle did not get very fat as only a small portion of the common was good pasture land. The majority of it was very dry and sandy and occupied by rabbits. Some locals did a bit of illegal ferreting, but in hot weather there was little meat on the rabbits, making it hardly worth the effort to catch them.*

Notes from the minute books held by Mary Feakes, which start in 1925:

Somebody was employed regularly to kill the rabbits - in 1925, for 6 months, Mr H Brock received £4.0.0, but this fell dramatically by 1938 when the payment was only £1.0.0. (old money) - probably a reflection of the hard times farming experienced during the 20's and 30's.

Mr Ling talks of Mr Sillett, but the first named in the minutes is Mr David Long,

followed by Mr W Bartram. The term used in the minutes is the "Pinner" - this is not a term I am familiar with it - whether it is a diminutive of Poundfolder, but as Mr Ling states, he looked after the common and was paid £3.5/- (three pounds five shillings) annually.

On March 6<sup>th</sup> 1931 Mr H Davey (father of Mr Davey who lives next to the common) was asked to refrain from training his greyhounds on the common, as this was not in the interests of the persons who have cattle on the common, nor the persons who have the shooting rights and the rabbits.

In March 1933, it was reported that there was a lot of gorse on the common, and Mr Sillett, the pinner was instructed to burn it as soon as possible.

In 1934 the pit and stream across the common required clearing, as the water was being held up from going under the road into the fen. However, following inspection, it was felt that it would be too expensive to do this, and by 1936 there was so much water in the stream that it was impossible to do it anyway.

March 15<sup>th</sup> 1937 it was suggested that some of the furze on the common could be cut for the bonfire to be held to celebrate the Coronation (Edward VIII or George VI?). There was still too much water in the ditch to do anything about clearance.

May 8<sup>th</sup> 1940, the amount to be paid for feed on the common per head of cattle for the 20 weeks of summer was 30/- per head of cattle. All animals to be the bona fide property of the person who put them on the common. Should anyone be found to have put on in his own name animals not belonging to him, such animals to be removed and all rights for the season forfeited. Non parishioners to be charged 40/- per head for the 20 weeks.

September 18<sup>th</sup> 1942, Mr Sillett had put in a lot of work cutting the hedge on the Hopton Road, and was to awarded a further £1 in wages.

During 1942 it was suggested that the common could be ploughed for food production and Mrs Ling's sons would be approached to letting some or all of the common to them for cultivation. It was suggested that to allow food cultivation, the water course culvert under Hopton Road would have to be dropped to drain the water from the common, but this was not agreed owing to the high expense.

It was agreed that Mrs Ling could have the common for £20 annually for the duration of the war and then for a further three years, after it must be put back to grass as required by the Trustees

March 28<sup>th</sup> 1956 the RAF hired part of the common as a radio site, paying £5.10/- per annum, but by December 10<sup>th</sup> 1958 the RAF no longer required this facility.

March 26<sup>th</sup> 1958, the trustees were approached by the Football Club with a request to use the common, which was agreed. They continued to use the common at least until 1975

when the Recreation Ground was laid down and the Jubilee Pavilion built. I don't know whether this was continuous use or not.

Mr Worby had the grazing rights for several years up to 1998, and Mr George Davey took these over in 2000 to 2008, but never grazed it.

In 1989 Mr Mervyn Lambert cleared the culvert and the pond for the sum of £115.

Reeds from the Fen were cut regularly with the sum of £80 being received in 1999.