

# Water, Water Everywhere

## And not a drop to drink

The village of Goxhill can be described as a village on a hill surrounded by a flood plain, which was reclaimed from the Humber by a flood bank and a drainage system of open drains and dykes, beginning many centuries ago. The first residents being Marsh Shepherds and Peasants building their dwelling, or should I say Hovel, on the highest hill on what is now the village centre. These Hovels would be built where the highest ground was, and the area would expand as the dykes dried out the land, thus building on dry ground around the wet areas is why the dwellings had strips of low Un-built-on land between them 60 years ago. I have seen a reference made in records of a bridge in Howe Lane in the 18th century, this means there would be a drain or stream crossing the lane somewhere at the lowest place, which would probably be the Station area and passing across Greengate Lane towards Ferry Road and Sykes Lane, draining a large area behind the Brocklesby Hunt and beyond. I expect this drain would be eliminated when the railway was built in the 1840s and the water redirected elsewhere. Today some of these wet belts have been built on.

All the Drains, Dykes and Ditches were dug by Hand (the Armstrong Patent) for there were no other means by the early Goxhill settlers... not for fun but to Drain a Village on a Flood Plain, of which they would have had experience of flooding many times, so would get the job done right for its own sake. This proves it did rain before Global Warming was *Invented* ...

It has rained in the past many times and was soon forgotten because the drainage system did its job and no dwellings were flooded. Living in the countryside in the bygone era, life was cruel. Crops often failed, due to drought or a wet summer, wet seasons occurred in 1764 and 1775 (the year of the Enclosure Act at Goxhill), which meant starvation for many villages and the occupants fled to the towns leaving deserted villages throughout England (wonder how Goxhill fared during this Era), which inspired Oliver Goldsmith to write a poem in 1770, 'The Deserted Village', from which I quote a verse:

*"Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay  
When every rood of ground maintains its man  
For him light labour spread her wholesome store  
Just gave what life required, but gave no more".*

I may be wrong, but I think the second line refers to the Church and the Churchyard (?). In the days

when the Church ran villages, and the other four how the church robbed the peasants.

Myself I can remember the wet years of January 1941 when we had three days of continuous rain, and 194 when we had a wet harvest and winter, followed by the heaviest snowfall in living memory in January 1947, when it thawed there were many parts of the country flooded as never before. This was due to the fields being thawed out before the drains and dykes which were full of frozen snow (an example of blocked drains). Even the River Trent burst its banks, flooding thousands of acres of farmland and dwellings. Then in the late 1960s heavy rain activated the Springs, when one in Beck Lane at Barrow came up under the foundations of a bungalow and ran down the road into the beck. With no flooding of dwellings. Only the exception of un-drained fields with land tiles and the usual overspill of dykes on the flood plain. In May 1978 three days of rain fell and flooded large areas of growing crops. From the on, the flooding began to a small degree and increased slowly until the present day as the filling in of dykes extended.

As for the modern flail hedge cutters which leave their pulp in the bottom of the dyke restricting the flow, previously the hedges were cut and dykes trimmed out with manual labour. The trimmings and trash were raked into heaps and burned. No Problems.

On the front of the Gander Newsletter Autumn issue is a photo of Manor Lane in full flood, I can recall the days of a large pond opposite the farm building. Today this pond appears to have been filled in and is overgrown with trees and vegetation. When this pond was dug it would have had a dyke attached which had a dual-purpose: when it rained and the pond was low in water the dyke would fill up to the intended level, after the dyke would then maintain this level and become an overflow, the result, no flooding in the lane. Today the dyke appears to have disappeared like the pond, hence the flooded lane. This example is typical of many places round the village, the old Carp ponds of 3 centuries ago, where the Millennium Green now is, would act as a large reservoir with dykes to feed it and more dykes for overflows. Today all are gone.

Then came the years of Progress (??) Maybe in the 1960s the modern trend of filling in dykes around the village began with the arrival of larger tractors which needed fields to match and in 1976 a new Clew was constructed at the Haven, deeper

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