

## Stories from the Archives

### Hope in the 1850s

#### 1. Introduction

The year is 1851 and a census has just been taken throughout the country. Four years earlier the Tythe commissioners produced a map of our village with details of land ownership, tenancy and acreages. These two documents give us a unique window into life in Hope at this time.

So come with me over the next few months and meet the residents of Hope in the 1850s, hear about their jobs and families and discover what life was like in our village then.

We start at Netherhall Bridge, looking up the lane towards the church and Market Place. The bridge would have been much narrower than at present. The road, part of the Turnpike since 1760, would have been rutted and dusty in summer, even more rutted and very muddy in winter with the passage of carts and coaches over its surface. It was the job of each parish to fill in the inevitable potholes and local people resented the time taken for this. They petitioned the local magistrates to allow them to discontinue this practice.

The first farm on the right (now Smithy Cottage) was the home of Michael (or Micah) Holmes. He was a wheelwright and held the tenancy of the farmhouse and ten acres of land from the Earl of Newburgh, part of the Hassop estate. He was helped on the farm by his son-in-law Isaac Robinson. Also in the household were his daughter, Hannah and his granddaughter Ann and her baby girl. Ann was not the only unmarried mother in the village as we shall see.

Next door Micah's son John and his wife Jane were bringing up a young family of four, the older two being of school age. John was a blacksmith and had two apprentices who were living with the family. The younger, James Johnson, was only 13 years old. Like many people in the village John also farmed, renting 9 acres from the Earl of Newburgh. These smallholdings would be vital to the household economy, where hens and poultry could be kept, cows or sheep grazed and some meadows used for hay to feed the animals in the winter. The smithy where Micah and John worked was on the corner near the Old Hall and was an important place in the village when horses and carts were the only means of transport.

Next time - The Market Place

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*Sources; 1847 Tythe Allotment. 1851 Census Returns. Hope Archive information*