

## CONTENTS

Introduction	2
1833-1870 Nathan Mitchell, Land Dealings & Occupiers	6
1870-1934 James & Godfrey Mitchell Land Dealings & Occupiers	13
1934-2009 Florence Annie Bedford, Harry Mitchell & others	18
The Manor of Wakefield	19
The Deeds & Abstract of Title	21
Census Extracts 1841 – 1911	31
Land Tax Records 1781-1832	41
Manor House Manor Lane & Mark Wilby	42
Sowood Cottage	49
Life in Ossett in the Eighteenth & Nineteenth Centuries	54

Family Trees for Nathan Mitchell and Mark Wilby are included at pages 5 and 48 respectively

# THE HISTORY OF BLEAK HOUSE, MANOR ROAD, OSSETT

## Introduction

Standing to the west of the junction of Manor Lane and Manor Road Ossett is a double fronted house having the appearance of a mid Victorian dwelling probably built for a family of some means. In 2009 the dwelling has an address of 98 Manor Road but a map of 1890 shows that it was then known as Bleak Cottage. Property Deeds reveal that it was also known as Bleak House.

The house was purchased by the present owners in 2004 and they have in their possession an Abstract of Title prepared in September 1934 for **Mrs Florence Annie Bedford** in connection with her purchase of the land and property then '*situate and known as Bleak House and land in Manor Road Ossett*'. The Abstract records transactions involving the house and land over a period of 40 years between 1894 and 1934 but it also holds clues as to some of the owners and occupiers of the house and land in the years before 1894.

In many ways the Abstract is unremarkable and records several mortgage transactions undertaken by previous owner(s). A summary of the Abstract appears elsewhere in this study but it is worth mentioning at this early stage some of the names mentioned in the Abstract as having been here or hereabouts. The extent of their involvement in the history of Bleak House will be examined more fully in the following pages.

The names include *Godfrey Mitchell*, the nephew of *Nathan Mitchell*. Nathan built Bleak House in 1864 and on his death in 1870 he left the house and land to his brother, James Mitchell, with the proviso that when he died the house and land was to pass to James' only son Godfrey. James died in 1893 and the property, which at that stage included Bleak House, 7 cottages and approximately 2.5 acres of land, was devised to Godfrey Mitchell.

*Godfrey Mitchell's* sons and executors were *James Mitchell* and *Charles Robinson Mitchell* and it was they who sold Bleak House and land to *Florence Annie Bedford* in 1934. The conveyance relates only to Bleak House and the 2.5 acres of land and it is assumed that Godfrey's sons sold the cottages to a third party at some later stage.

But the cottages themselves play an important part in the history, and the search for the origins, of Bleak House and the Abstract refers to some of the families who lived in them. The names include *Mark Chappel*, *Nathan Wilby*, *John William Dews*, *William Farrer*, *Charles Grundhill*. These families, and many others, rented the cottages, four of which had frontages and addresses on to Manor Lane, three of which had frontages on to Manor Road.

Two further names are mentioned in the Abstract which tell us something of the history of the house and this part of Ossett Common or Middle Common. These are *Phillip Scott Wilby* and *Mark Wilby*. In 1866 Philip was a purchaser of 1 acre of land from Nathan Mitchell to the south west of Bleak House. Mark on the other hand is mentioned in the Abstract as being in occupancy of the close of land and the dwellinghouse (Bleak House). Researching Mark's family history and his connection with Bleak House has been particularly interesting and elsewhere I include a section on Mark, his family and his home at Manor House, Manor Lane on land he purchased from Nathan Mitchell in 1869.

For those of faint heart and little time the following is a summary of the findings which follow. For those who have time, patience and a preference for a bit of suspense – skip this page.

In **1813** Joseph Scott yeoman and book keeper of Ossett was allotted the land on which Bleak House was built. In **1833** Nathan Mitchell bought the land and probably some cottages built by Scott between 1813 and 1833. Joseph Scott died in 1837.

A map surveyed in 1840 indicates buildings on the site of the present day Bleak House. Whilst uncertain there is evidence from Land Tax records and Censuses that these were occupied by Randolph and David Wilby between 1820 and 1851.

Between 1833 and 1864 Nathan bought and sold land to assemble a frontage site on to Manor Road and a close of 2 acres or so to the south. In **1864** widower Nathan Mitchell sold his house at Giggall Hill, built a new home, moved in with his housekeeper and made his Will. In 1870 Nathan died.

Bleak House was inherited by Nathan's brother James Mitchell, Low Common farmer, with the proviso that the House be left to his only son, Godfrey Mitchell when he (James) died in 1893.

In **1871** Bleak House was rented to Albert Speight, Mungo Manufacturer, who died aged 30 in 1876. In **1881** Bleak Cottage (as the Census of that year had it) was occupied by Charles Abell, Bank Clerk.

I doubt he was here for long and by **1891** Albert Farrer Smith, Insurance Agent and the son in law of Mark Wilby who lived at nearby Manor House Manor Lane, lived here. By this time there were seven cottages adjacent or near to Bleak House all owned, with a close of approximately 2 .5 acres to the south, by Godfrey Mitchell.

The Census for 1901 is inconclusive as to the occupier of Bleak House but between 1905 and 1916 it was occupied by Wilson Briggs, Rag Merchant who ran a Rag Warehouse on land to the west of Bleak House which was built in the 1840's by John Humble, Manufacturing Chemist.

In **1918** John Walker, Rag merchant and his family were living at Bleak House. His 21 year old son Private Clifford Walker died in France in November 1918. Godfrey Mitchell (who never lived here) died in 1931 and in **1934** his sons sold Bleak House and the close of land to Mrs Florence Annie Bedford of Hope Street Manor Road Ossett. At the time the House and close was occupied by Mr JW Crosland.

In **1953** Mrs Bedford (who never lived here) sold the land to the rear of Bleak House to Ossett UDC for housing and in 1964 she sold the remainder of her ownership to Harry Mitchell of Bleak House. Mr Crosland was also still here. The lock up shop was occupied by Mrs Woodson.

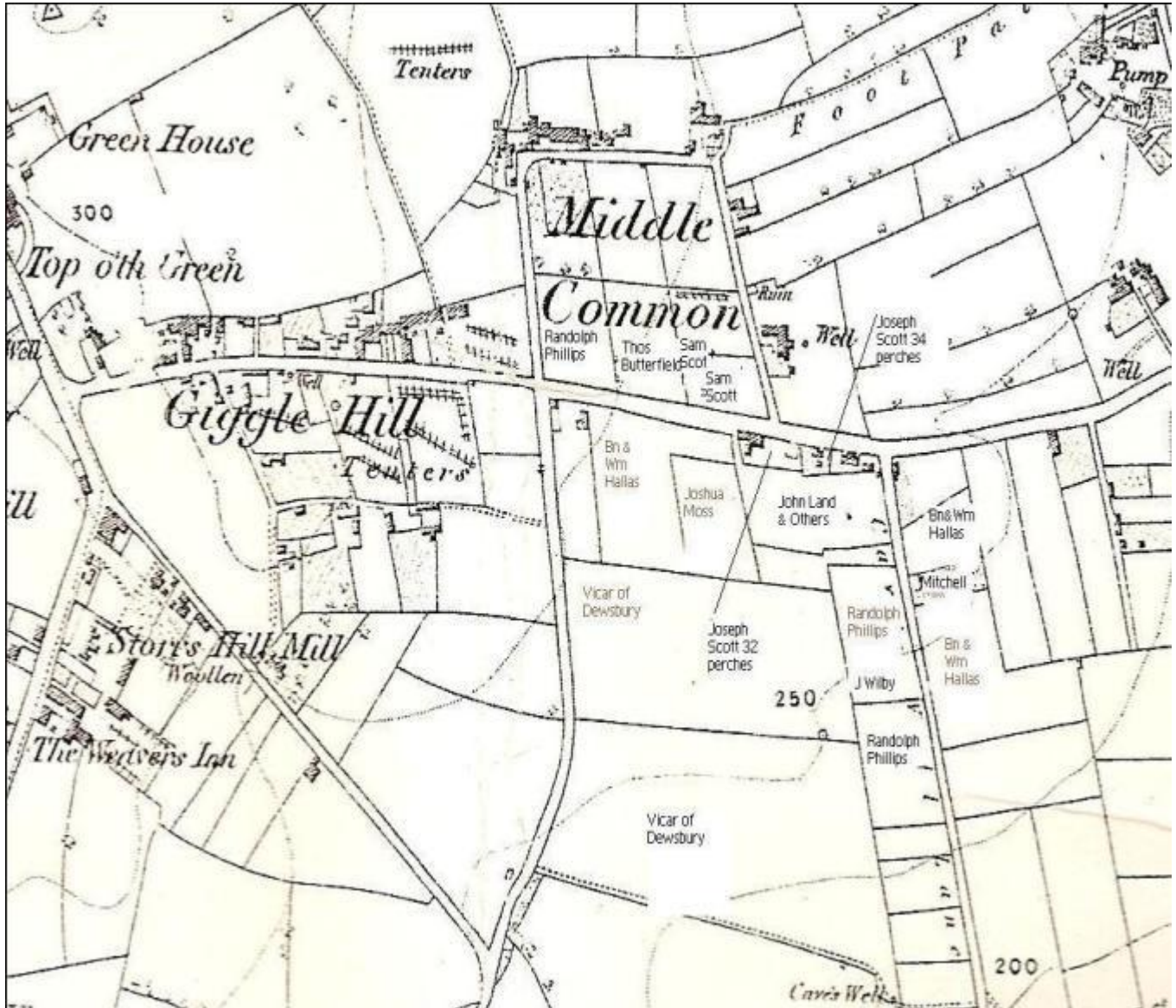
Harry Mitchell was still living here in **1969** and subsequent owners were Mary Lister, Mr and Mrs Pinchbeck from about **1987** to **2001** when Bleak House was sold to Michael and Annette Smith who sold some adjacent road frontage for building. The current owners bought Bleak House in **2004**.

Put like that it makes one wonder why it took so long. Hopefully that's why the remainder will still be worth reading. Acknowledgements and thanks as usual to the staff at West Yorkshire Archives, to Steve Wilson of the Ossett website ([www.larkshill.org](http://www.larkshill.org)) for his help and enthusiasm, to the owners of Bleak House for the opportunity to undertake the research and to my wife for her patience.

Alan Howe

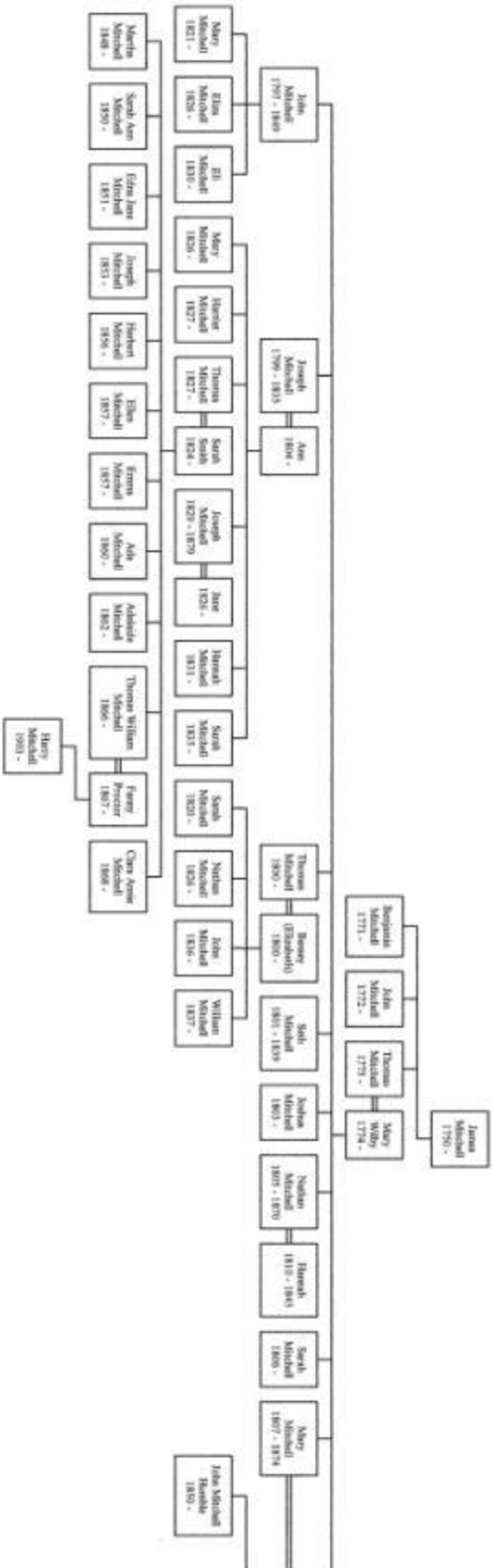
The Cottages Haggs Hill Road Ossett

March 2009



Map of 1851 surveyed in 1840 annotated to show relevant land ownerships in 1807

*Descendants of James Mitchell*



## NATHAN MITCHELL AND HIS LAND DEALINGS & OCCUPIERS 1833 TO 1870

The land on which Bleak House was built was purchased by **Nathan Mitchell(1805-1870)** from **Joseph Scott** in 1833. Nathan Mitchell is the main character in the history of the Bleak House having first purchased the land when he was in his late 20's and, some 30 years later, building the house in 1864 as he approached the age of 60. Sadly it seems likely that he was to live in the house for less than six years and he died in August 1870.

Nathan Mitchell was born in Ossett in 1805, the sixth born and sixth son of **Thomas Mitchell** (born about 1775) and **Mary Wilby**. Thomas and Mary were married on 9<sup>th</sup> January 1797 and had thirteen children between September 1797 and April 1817. The Mitchell Family Tree is included elsewhere in this study. The Mitchells of South Ossett were Farmers and Clothiers and in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> Century they had significant land ownerships on Ossett Low Common (the present day Teall Street/ South Parade area) and Ossett Lights ( to the east of Teall Street and south of Manor Road).

In those days Teall Street was known as Teal Town Road ( because most of the families who lived there in cottages and tenements were called Teal). South Parade was known as Low Common Road and Manor Road was known variously as Horbury Road and (parts) as Middle Common Road. The area in which Bleak House was built was known as Common or Middle Common. Manor Road was an important drover route from Lancashire through Thornhill across the Calder River ford at Healey over Snapethorpe and hence to the City of Wakefield. It is said to have once gone by the name of Royal Road because of its relative importance as a main highway.

The Scott family were major land owners on Middle and Upper Common with land ownerships along Giggall Hill, the junction of Station Road and Manor Road (then both known as Middle Common Road) and on Park Square. The Mitchells on the other hand had most of their landholdings further east at Low Common.

Joseph Scott and his siblings David, Charles, Francis, Sarah, Fanny and Mary Scott were born in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century. David and Charles were Clothiers and landowners but Joseph, a book keeper and yeoman was the most active in terms of land acquisitions. Their father was Benjamin Scott born in 1719 the son of 'Benjamin of Ossett' who most probably was born about 1790. Both Benjamins were cloth or feltmakers. Benjamin of Ossett was married to Sarah Ingham the daughter of Gervase Ingham a member of a well known land owning Ossett family. Even then money was marrying money.

The Scott land ownerships in 1807 are shown in the map which follows. The family are best remembered for their ownership of Scott's Yard situated next to the Silver King Bar and Bistro (formerly the Victoria Public House) on the Giggall Hill section of Manor Road. The Yard and the eight properties which once stood there was originally purchased by Joseph Scott from David Wilby in 1807. The Yard was previously in the ownership of David's father, Isaac Wilby(born 1763). Joseph Scott made his Last Will and Testament on 22 December 1837 and named as executors his nephew Samuel Scott, and Abraham Pickard. Abraham or Abram Pickard was a Clothier born in 1792. He was the son of Mark Pickard and Hannah Heald of Low Common Ossett and it is almost certain that Abraham was born at 9 Hags Hill Road Ossett. This is the house in which the author of this history now lives. Joseph Scott died on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1838.

His Will was witnessed by Clothiers George and Edmund Wilby of Ossett Middle Common. George was the father of Mark Wilby who we will hear more about later.

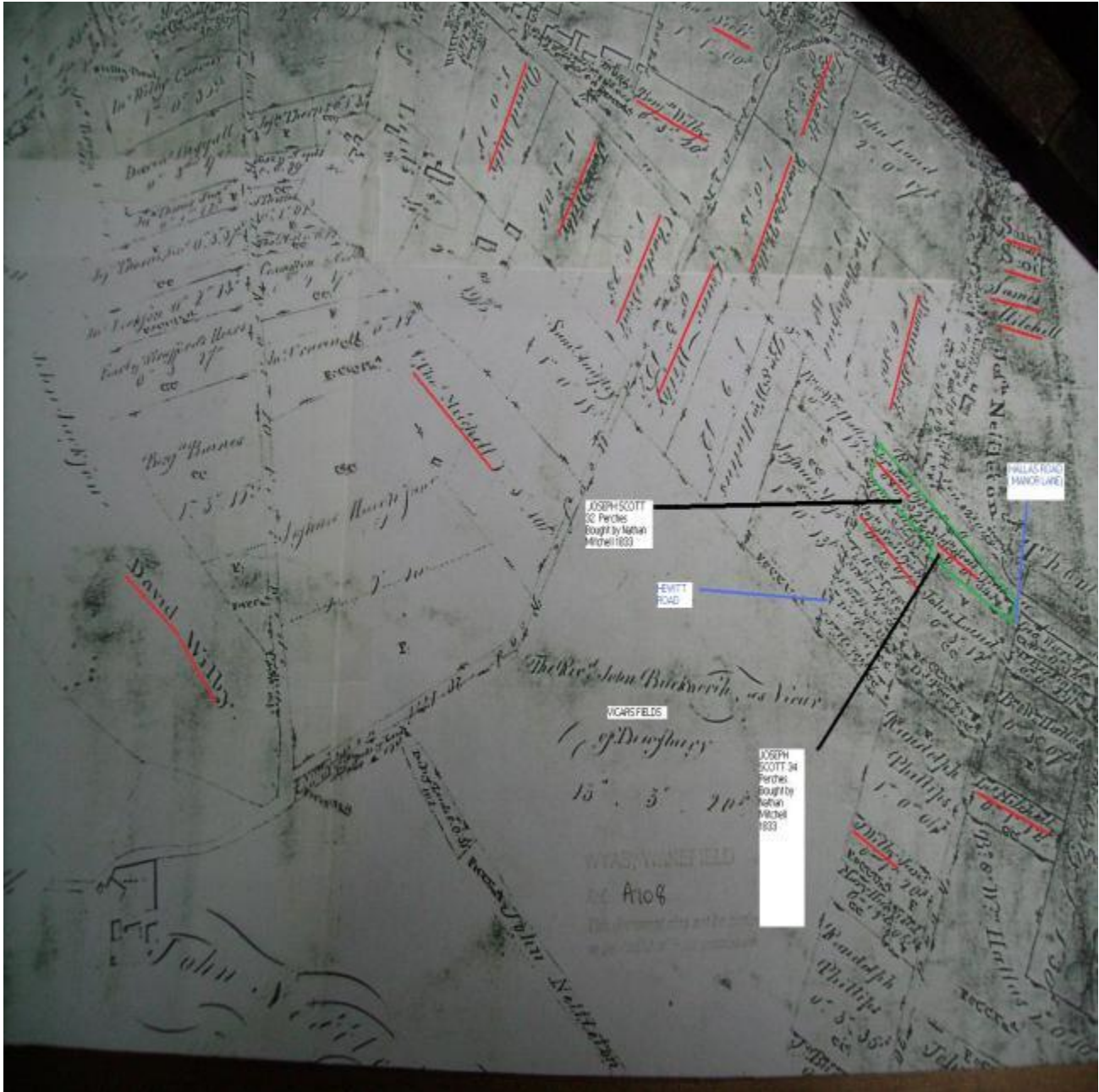
The Deeds section of this history details the land transactions in which Nathan Mitchell was involved between 1833 and 1869. The earliest of these, and the most important in this history, is in May **1833** (West Yorkshire Archive Service[WYAS] ref 1833 LN 344 324) when Nathan purchases three pieces of freehold and copyhold land and dwellings from Joseph Scott. Each of the three parcels of land is relatively small comprising

- 1) 34 perches at the junction of Horbury Road (aka Manor Road) and Hallas Road (aka an Occupation Road, Cave Well Lane and Manor Lane). This is the land on which Bleak House will be built some 30 years later in 1864.
- 2) 32 perches adjacent to the above and to the west. This is the site on which John Humble builds his chemist's manufactory in about 1840
- 3) 12 perches adjacent to Hallas Road which became a part of the 2.5 acre site to the rear of Bleak House.

This was the first sign of Nathan beginning to establish himself on Middle Common. The first two of these acquisitions were freehold and copyhold compounded and undistinguished. As best as I can tell this means that there was uncertainty as to which parts of the land were freehold and which parts were freehold. Consequently the freehold transactions could be dealt with by Deed but the copyhold transactions required the consent of the Lord of the Manor of Wakefield. I have included some notes of the *modus operandi* of the Manorial Court in a separate section.

The 1813 map from the Ossett Inclosure Order of that year does not appear to show any structures on the land which Nathan purchases from Joseph Scott in May 1833. However the 1833 does indicate that there are dwellinghouses or cottages on some of these allotments and that they were built "lately" by Scott. The 1840 map of the area does show buildings on the 32perch and 34 perch plots fronting on to Manor Road though non are shown on the 12 perch plot to the rear. These structures must be the houses referred to in the 1833 Deed and purchased by Nathan Mitchell.

A year later in **1834** Nathan purchased 1 acre and 4 perches from his brother Seth Mitchell (born 1801) a Surgeon and Apothecary of Rothwell. This land, with a frontage on to Manor Lane, was part of the 2.5 acres close which was to the rear of Bleak House. The land must have been purchased by Seth Mitchell from John Land (who owned the land in 1813) between 1813 and 1834. The Deed was witnessed by Joshua Phillips, the grandfather of Thomas William Phillips who was the son in law of Mark Wilby of Manor House. Thomas was to become Mayor of Ossett some 60 years later. The site of 1 acre and 4 perches. This land was part of the 2.5 acres close which was to the rear of Bleak House. The land must have been purchased by Seth Mitchell from John Land (who owned the land in 1813) between 1813 and 1834.



**1813 Ossett Inclosure Order** Map annotated to show Scott, Wilby and Mitchell ownerships (underlined in red) on Middle and Upper Common in about 1813. The 32 and 34 perches on Manor Road bought by Nathan Mitchell from Joseph Scott in 1833 are shown with a green boundary. The Inclosure Order was the result of six years work to implement the Ossett Inclosure Act 1807. This Act was one of many in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> Century commissioned by landowners throughout England. The purpose of the Acts was to authorise the enclosing of common land hitherto used by commoners for cropping and grazing animals. In Ossett this meant that the Act would mainly feature land in the area of the Low and Middle Commons to the south and east of the Town Centre. The Act was approved by Parliament in 1807 but, because of the death of the Commissioner in 1810, it was to be 1813 before the exercise of enclosing and allotting lands was completed. The Order document contains a great deal of information and a few 'maps' regarding land ownership, allotments, encroachments, footpaths and roads in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In **1841** the 35 year old Nathan Mitchell is living on Giggall Hill Ossett with “Annah” who is also 35 years of age. Her given name is probably Hannah. There is a record of a marriage in Bradford in **1836** between a Nathan Mitchell and a Hannah Sowden and a record of the birth, in Bradford, of a Hannah Sowden in 1805. These dates fit the profile but it is not known for certain whether this is “our” Nathan’s marriage. Indeed whilst Nathan and Annah were living in the same household it is not certain that they were married. The 1841 Census, which was the first national census, does not record marital status and 1837 was the first year in which the registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths was mandatory. The Census does reveal that Nathan’s occupation was “Independent” suggesting he was not without wealth and it is likely that he derived his income from his parents and rents from their landholdings.

Nathan’s next land transaction is in September **1843**[WYAS ref 1843 OQ 654 562] when he, and his brother John Mitchell, is purchasing land from Joshua and Thomas Moss, farmers and butchers, and Jane Brooke widow of Horbury (Jane was probably a Moss before her marriage). The land was freehold and comprised 1 acre and 13 perches. This is the land to the south of Manor Road and to the west of the Bleak House site. It is shown on the earlier map of 1813 in the ownership of Joshua Moss See map above). Joshua Moss and Joseph Scott were brothers in law; Joshua having married Sarah Scott who was Joseph Scott’s sister.

Nathan was to add to his ownerships on Middle Common when in May **1844** he was a party to an agreement with John Humble, manufacturing chemist of Ossett in respect of 20 perches of the 32 perches plot purchased by Nathan in 1833. The Deed reads “.....20 perches being the freehold part of an allotment on Ossett Common containing 32 perches...at the west end of the said allotment.....and also all that building or manufactory recently erected upon the said freehold part...and now in the occupation of John Humble and all that steam engine of six horses power boiler shafting going gear machinery and apparatus to the said building or manufactory belonging and appertaining”.

John Humble was Nathan Mitchell’s brother in law having married Nathan’s sister Mary. The full deed tells us that Humble’s business is in trouble and that there is some form of works(he was a manufacturing chemist) on the 32 perches of land to the west of the Bleak House site. Humble had erected a manufactory here“recently”. The map of 1840 shows buildings at the west end of the 32 perch allotment and it seems likely that this was the manufactory and that it was built in the late 1830’s by or for John Humble. Nathan must have let or sold the land to Humble who built his ‘manufactory’ and this Deed sees Nathan acquiring or re-acquiring the 32 perches site(or perhaps simply buying the buildings and equipment) which would at least provide some funds for Humble to settle some of his debts to Geo Thos Parkinson and his other creditors. The Deed also tells that Nathan was a farmer and coal dealer. It now seems he also owned a manufactory on Manor Road.

Things appeared to be going rather well for Nathan as he continued to acquire land on the south side of Manor Road. By 1845 he had acquired a total of 2.5 acres. Sadly in **1851** he is described as a widower aged 45. There is a record of a Hannah Mitchell passing away on 27 November **1845**. She was buried at the Ossett Green Congregational Church Burial Ground at Dimple Wells. Neither the Church nor the Burial ground remain today and it is known that Hannah’s remains, with others, including Nathan’s [who was buried there in 1870] were exhumed in the late 1960’s and removed to a Burial Ground at Gawthorpe. In 1851 Nathan is described as a farmer employing one man and he is still living on Giggall Hill. Living in the same household is 32 year old house servant Mary Fothergill and the farm hand. The Fothergill’s were also a farming family from South Ossett.

Nathan's next foray into the Ossett Middle Common property market is in **1860** when he is selling land close to (present day) Ossett Spa to his brother Eli Mitchell. The land in question is 1 acre and 2 roods and is known as Pauper Close. This land is situated between Spa Lane (aka Emmerson Mill Road) and Spa Street to the south of Manor Road. To the east of the close and adjacent to it at one point is Pauper Park a 4 acre plot of land devised by the Commissioners of the 1813 Ossett Inclosure Order to the Churchwardens and Overseers of Ossett for the use of the poor of the town. It seems probable that Nathan inherited this land from his father who himself may have been left the land. Nathan was in his 60th year and perhaps he was disposing of some of his land interests and running down his farming activities whilst also providing funds for his retirement and/ or for the building of Bleak House.

Nevertheless he appears to remain determined to consolidate his ownerships at the junction of Manor Road and Manor Lane and a Deed of July **1861** sees him purchasing 16 perches with a Manor Lane frontage from David Peace. This plot of land would form part of the 2.5 acres of land at threat of the yet to be built Bleak House. The 1861 Census shows 56 year old Nathan living at Giggall Hill [though it appears to be in the area between (present day) Horbury Road and Sowood Lane]. As he was in 1851 he is living with his house keeper Mary Fothergill. His occupation is 'Landed Proprietor'

**1864** is an important year in the history of Bleak House and its owner Nathan Mitchell. He is in his 60th year and a widower without children. In March he sells his house and land on Giggall Hill and four cottages on the east side of Park Square. In June he makes his Last Will and Testament which refers to the land and seven cottages at the junction of Manor Road and Manor Lane "*and also all that other dwellinghouse now in the course of erection adjacent or near to the last mentioned cottages.....*" This other dwellinghouse is Bleak House. The land on which Nathan builds Bleak House, the cottages and the adjacent land have been assembled over a period of 30 years. The activity of 1864 is a sign of a man raising money for his retirement and putting into place his last major venture - the building of a new home for his retirement. The Deed tells us that 1864 is the year in which Bleak House is built. Nathan's Will is included elsewhere.

There are two further land transactions involving Nathan which are worthy of examination to understand the reference in the Abstract of Title to *Philip Scott Wilby* and *Mark Wilby*. I am sure these characters were related but I have not been able to discover the family link. In the event in **1866** Nathan sells 1 acre and 12 perches to Philip Scott Wilby, Cloth Manufacturer. This was the land, described earlier, which Nathan had purchased from the Moss family in 1843. The deed includes a right of road from Manor Road to enable Philip to access the site from that direction.

In **1869** Nathan sells land (2 acres 1 rood and 27 perches) at the rear of his new home at Bleak House to *Mark Wilby*. There is a section later in this history which examines Mark's life and history but suffice to say here that this is the land on which Mark builds his home, Manor House or Manor Villa on Manor Lane. In 1871 the Census shows him living with his family at Manor Villa. At some later stage, in the early 1890's, Mark appears to rent and sub-let Bleak House and this is examined later in this study. This explains the Abstract of Title references to Mark Wilby.

Nathan Mitchell passed away on the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1870 and consequently none of the Censuses will record him living here. He had made his Will on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1864 and it was proved at Wakefield on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1870 when his executors, Eli Mitchell (his brother and an Attorney At Law) and Godfrey Mitchell (the only son of Nathan's brother, James Mitchell) were granted probate.

*'This is the Last Will and Testament of me Nathan Mitchell Farmer.....all that close of land situate near Ossett Streetside in Ossett aforesaid called the Lights Bridge Close otherwise Coal Pit or eeds Close now in my own occupation to Eli Mitchell, my brother, and I charge same with the payment of an annuity of £6 per annum to my housekeeper Mary Fothergill for her natural life. I give and devise all that close of land situate on Ossett Middle Common now in my own occupation and also all those four cottages or dwellinghouses adjacent to the same close belonging three of which cottages are now in the several occupations of George Farrer, Sarah Ann Robinson and Joseph Scott and the other is unoccupied and also all that other dwellinghouse now in the course of erection adjacent or near to the last mentioned cottages or dwellinghouses....unto my brother James Mitchell and I do charge the same with the payment of an annual annuity of £6 to Mary Fothergill and from the decease of James Mitchell I devise same close of land cottages and dwellinghouses erections and buildings unto the use of my nephew Godfrey Mitchell, the son of James Mitchell who is charged with the payment of an annuity of £6 per annum to Mary Fothergill for the rest of her natural life. My Goods chattels horses carriages to my brother Eli and nephew Godfrey, Farmer..... The balance of Nathan's estate is to be sold in trust by Eli and Godfrey and distributed as to quarter shares to Nathan's brother James, his sister Emma Jewison, a quarter share to be invested for his sister Mary Humble and on her death to his nephew John Mitchell Humble. The Will is witnessed by Thomas Haigh Solicitor of Horbury Bridge and Samuel Pickard.*

By the time of his death in 1870 Nathan's Will identifies that his Middle Common ownerships totalled four cottages, a dwellinghouse and a close of land at Manor Road. His land assembly had begun in 1833 with the acquisition of two closes of land; one of which was of 32 perches and the other was of 34 perches on which Bleak House was to be built. In 1834 he bought a further 1 acre and 4 perches, to the rear of the 34 perches plot (but not adjoining) from his brother Seth Mitchell which was previously in the ownership of Randolph Phillips. Immediately adjacent to the 34 perches plot, John Land owned 3 roods and 12 perches of copyhold land. To the west of this and immediately behind the 32 perches ownership were seven strips of copyhold land totalling about 4 roods. I suspect Nathan purchased these between 1833 and 1860.

The total of these acquisitions was about 2.5 acres. Unfortunately for Nathan the pieces of land were not contiguous. Separating his ownerships along Manor Lane was a 30 perches plot of land owned by David Peace. Nathan was unable to purchase this land until 1861 and it is probably no coincidence that by 1864 he had built his new home, Bleak House with an adjacent close; in total the land holding was approximately 2.5 acres. It had taken Nathan almost 30 years to assemble the land holding which was to become his home.

From the beginning of this research I have been intrigued as to the origins of the name of Nathan's home Bleak House. It is not bleak by any description. The house is well appointed and typical of its age. A classic mid Victorian gentleman's house. It was located, and still is, in one of the better parts of the town. Green belt was to the south and whilst, increasingly, dwellings were being developed on Park Square. So why Bleak House? Readers are likely to have their own views of the origin of the name. This is mine.

Between March 1852 and September 1853 Charles Dickens serialised what many consider his best novel. The novel was woven around a long running and contentious legal battle in the chancery courts which left the parties to the action penniless and the legal profession much richer. The novel was *Bleak House* and I wonder if Nathan's 30 year long, and no doubt expensive, battle was his way of letting Ossett know he had been through something similar in his long winded experiences to assemble land for his home on Manor Road. When I put this suggestion to a friend I was also reminded that Bleak House was, of course, 'a happy house'.

The next section looks at Bleak House after Nathan's death in 1870.

## James and Godfrey Mitchell land dealings & Occupiers 1870 - 1934

When Nathan Mitchell died in August 1870 his brothers Eli and James inherited most of his estate. Eli inherited land and cottages on Street Side Ossett and James inherited the land and property at Bleak House.

James Mitchell was born on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1813. He was the eleventh child of thirteen, and the youngest son born to Thomas Mitchell and Mary Wilby of Ossett. Thomas was a farmer who lived and worked all of his life on Low Common Ossett. The 1813 Inclosure Order shows him as a landowner in the Low Common Road (South Parade) Horbury Road (Manor Road) area. He must have been a man of some wealth for in 1841 his son Nathan is described as Independent. Though later he described as a farmer. James was to follow his father, Thomas into farming.

In 1851 he is living with his wife, Charlotte (**Robinson**), and his family on Low Common. He is a farmer of 37 acres. In 1851 he is farming 55 acres and employing one man. His only son Godfrey is 16 and a farmer's son. By **1871** he is 58 years of age and farming only 8 acres. In 1881 he is retired farmer and in 1891, aged 78 he is "living on own means". It appears that he is living in the same house he was in in 1851.

Meanwhile an analysis of the 1871 Census suggests that Bleak House was occupied by 25 year old **Albert Speight** Manufacturer of mungo and shoddy and his wife and one child. They have a servant. This analysis is subsequently confirmed by Deeds shown elsewhere which indicate the presence of Albert Speight around this time. Since Nathan passed away in August 1870 the family have wasted no time in letting the house. It seems likely that Albert Speight and his family may have been here until Albert's untimely death at the age of 30 in late **1876**. He left a widow, Sarah Ann and two children aged 7 and 1. In 1881 they living on Headlands in west Ossett.

In **1881** the Census, for the only time, records the name Bleak Cottage. Living here is Charles William Abell Banking Clerk aged 31 born in Leeds with his wife Elisabeth aged 24 born Stafford and son Percival Edwin aged 1 and born Wakefield. They have a domestic servant, Mary Ellinor Roberts aged 19 born in Wales. Charles is the son of a Shopkeeper and warehouseman James Abell and his wife Elizabeth. In 1851 Charles is aged 2 living with them in Leeds. He is the only child. The Abells appear to have lived a fairly itinerant life and by 1891 they are gone. I rather suspect they weren't at Bleak House for very long. There is some more information about the Abell family in the Census notes section later in this study. Charles' occupancy is not mentioned in any Deeds as being in occupancy here which reinforces the view that he was not at Bleak House for any length of time.

In **1883** a Deed (WYAS ref 893 436 512) involving a Mary **Robinson** Nettleton Spinster and **Blanche** Nettleton Nettleton Spinster before of Belfast now of Wakefield and Benjamin Watson of Wakefield. I believe the Nettleton spinsters are lending to Watson and securing their loan against a variety of property mentioned in the Deed. One of these property ownerships is relevant to the Bleak House story in that security for the loan is Bleak House and adjacent land and cottages. The deed indicates the close and House was lately occupied by Albert Speight and more recently by Mark Wilby. It also tells us that four cottages *were lately erected* and names the occupants of these and the other three cottages. This suggests that the four cottages must have been built in the early 1880's or late 1870's.

It is not possible to tell if they were the first dwellings here or if they replaced earlier, demolished, dwellings. The Nettletons agreement of 1883 is with Benjamin Watson not with a Mitchell but plainly the land and property has been pledged as security for the monies provided by the Nettletons to Watson for him to lend to

Godfrey Mitchell and others. We see below that in 1894 Watson has been lending to Godfrey Mitchell. For the avoidance of doubt *Blanche Nettleton Nettleton* is the actual name in the deed. Interestingly *Mary Robinson Nettleton* carries the same name as Godfrey Mitchell's mother, Charlotte **Robinson**; one of his sons is Charles *Robinson* Mitchell and Godfrey's first born was called **Blanche**. I think the Nettleton spinsters, born in the 1850's, were Godfrey's cousins. I suspect that Benjamin Watson may also have been a relative. No banks required when family money was available.

Nathan Mitchell's Will of 1864 mentions four cottages adjacent to Bleak House and another was built by Thomas Mitchell in about 1849 on 192 square yards of land there i.e five in total; four of which were in Nathan's ownership. In **1883** the above Deed suggests there are four newly erected cottages but only three existing cottages suggesting one existing must have been demolished. Assuming it was still there, the one which Thomas built would result in eight cottages in total; seven of which were in Nathan's ownership . An 1894 indenture below indicates that in that year there were seven cottages in Nathan's ownership and if the house which Thomas built in 1849 was still there then there would be eight cottages; seven would be in Nathan's ownership. So in the 1891, and maybe 1881, Census one would expect to see eight cottages adjacent to Bleak House on Manor Road and Manor Lane. The 1891 Census appears to show nine cottages(one was a one room household) and 1881 shows eight.

In **1891** my analysis of the Census for that year suggested that Bleak House may be occupied at that time by Alfred Farrer Smith. Examination of Deeds shown elsewhere confirms that to be the case. Alfred, an Insurance broker in 1891, was born in Birstall in 1847. He is living in Bleak House with his wife, Ossett born Jane Ann (Wilby) aged 38 and their children Maud (15), Gertrude(11), Harold(9), Alice(8), Mark (6). Jane is the daughter of Mark Wilby of Manor House Manor Lane. They have a servant Sarah Jackson. All the children are scholars and all were born in Ossett. In 1901 the family have moved to the "posh end" of Low Common – New Harrogate. This would have been named after the abortive attempt to replicate the Harrogate Spa's by drawing on the chalybeate waters at Ossett Spa. Alfred is now a father of 6, Bernard having been born in 1893. His wife is not recorded in the 1901 Census for she has returned to Manor House on census night and is there with her widowed father and most of her siblings. Albert Farrer Smith is now an "agent for athletic goods". In 1881 Alfred and his family were living at Prospect House which stood at the junction of Manor Road and Station Road (this section of Station Road had earlier been known as Park Square or Middle Common Road). He was a Woollen Manager. He and his wife have 3 children and a servant. I think the Wilby family may have owned Prospect House

James Mitchell died in November **1893** and Charlotte passed away less than 4 months later in the first quarter of 1894. They had been married for 58 years. When James passed away the land and property at Bleak House was inherited by Godfrey in accordance with Nathan Mitchell's Will of 1864.

In **1894** an Indenture appears to signal the release of a charge by Benjamin Watson who I assume had lent money to Godfrey perhaps for the building of the three cottages mentioned below (which were not here in 1870). The document identifies Albert Speight as a former occupant of Bleak House and the close and Mark Wilby as the present occupier of both. This Deed also tells us that there are seven cottages here in Godfrey's ownership whereas there were four here in 1864 when Nathan made his Will. It is assumed that the (net) three additional dwellings had been built by Godfrey or James Mitchell on the land between Bleak House and Manor

Lane. We also see more names of those who lived here some time before 1890. Sadly the current occupiers in 1894 are not identified.

Godfrey Mitchell (1845-1931) was the fourth child and only son born to James and Charlotte. The Census for 1851 and 1861 sees him living with his parents on Low Common. In 1871 he has moved to Balby near Doncaster with his Ossett born wife Louisa (nee Mitchell – was she a cousin?) and 2 year old **Blanche**. There is no sign of Blanche after the 1871 Census. Godfrey was a Railway Guard. Godfrey and Louisa were to have five children including two boys. Charles Robinson Mitchell and James Mitchell. In 1901 the family are still living at Balby Doncaster.

1894, the year after James Mitchell's death, sees his son Godfrey realising the value of the estate. There are several deeds, none affecting Bleak House, showing land and property disposals in and around Ossett Low Common. These are included in the Deeds section of this research.

The **1901** Census has not revealed any obvious candidate for the occupancy of Bleak House.

In **1904** Godfrey offers, as security for a loan of £210 from Thomas Harris, Bleak House, seven cottages and the adjacent land of 2 acres 2 roods and 17 perches (about 2.5 acres). The details of this transaction are included in the Abstract of Title.

In **1910** the Inland Revenue land and property survey of that year (the so called Domesday Survey) records Bleak House in the occupancy of Wilson Briggs and his family. The 1911 Census confirms they were still living here in that year. The Burgess Roll for 1905-06 has Wilson Briggs with a Manor Road address (in 1901 he was living at West Wells) and so it seems likely that he was living here from **1905** and probably earlier. In **1913-14** the Burgess Roll records Wilson with a Manor Road address.

Wilson Briggs was born in Ossett in Spring 1852 the son of Henry and Ruth of Blindwell Ing, West Wells. Henry was a Cloth Manufacturer employing one man. Wilson was the ninth of ten children born between 1830 and 1855. In 1901 Wilson, his wife Clara and two children are living at Blindwell Ings West Wells Road. It seems likely that he had lived there all his life. Wilson was a Mungo manufacturer. In **1911** the occupant of Bleak Cottage was Wilson Briggs (58), his wife Clara (48) and son Arnold Briggs (24) from Briggs' first marriage. Wilson Briggs was a Rag and Mungo Manufacturer who, over the years, had various business premises in Ossett and in 1927, his rag warehouse was located on Manor Road to the west of Bleak House in the Humble Manufactory buildings built by John Humble in the 1840's. The 1910 Inland Revenue Valuation describes this as "Rag Warehouse – now Manor Foundry Factory" and in the ownership and occupation of Wilson Briggs. The Wilson Briggs mill on the river Calder at Healey is still operational today.

There is a record of a Wilson Briggs death registered in New Forest Hampshire in 1916. Whilst uncertain as to whether this was 'our' Wilson Briggs it fits the knowledge we have that about this time Bleak House was occupied by the Walker family.

Over the years 1904 to **1914** the Abstract records the deaths of a number of lenders and their replacement by other lenders. Godfrey appears to be a good risk and keeps up with the interest payments on the loan which has grown to £300 by the time of his death in 1931.

In 1918 John and Annie Ada Walker were living at Bleak Cottage. Sadly their son Clifford had died on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 1918 in France whilst serving in WW1 in the Army Service Corps. He was not Killed in Action but died

of Influenza. Perhaps the flu pandemic (Spanish flu) which was sweeping Europe at the time and, it is said, killed more than double the number of those killed in WW1. The disease was first observed in the USA in March 1918 and by August 1918 a particularly virulent strain was identified in Northern France. Private Clifford Walker aged 21 is commemorated as giving his life for his country on the Plaque in the Manor Road Burial Ground and at St Sever Cemetery in Rouen France.



Clifford was born in Ossett in 1898 and in 1901 he was living with his parents, 33 year old John and 32 year old Annie Ada together with his sister Marian (born 1896). They are living on Intake Lane (near Sunnydale) and John Walker is a rag merchant. In 1891 John was living in Horbury with his parents. He was an Insurance Agent. His father George was a Cloth finisher.

The 'Ossett Observer' for the 16th November 1918 carries the following report about his unfortunate death just six days before the end of the war: "*Private Clifford Walker (21), only son of Mr. John Walker of Bleak Cottage, Manor Road, South Ossett, died on the 5th November 1918 in hospital in Rouen, France from influenza. Deceased who was a scholar of the Wesley Street, Wesleyan Sunday School and actively associated with the Temperance Hall enlisted in the KOYLI two years ago, but has latterly been attached to the Army Services Corps, remount department. He had previously suffered from pneumonia whilst in the army.*"

Opposite photograph of Clifford and his sister Marian taken in about 1902.



**In Memory of  
Private CLIFFORD WALKER**

**R/405568, 17th Base Reserve Depot, Army Service Corps  
who died age 21**

**on 05 November 1918**

**Son of John and Annie Ada Walker, of Bleak Cottage, Manor  
Rd., Ossett, Yorks.**

**Remembered with honour**

**ST. SEVER CEMETERY EXTENSION, ROUEN**



**Commemorated in perpetuity by  
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission**

In **1934** Godfrey's sons, James and Charles Robinson Mitchell, as executors, enter a conveyance with Florence Annie Bedford (nee Dale-wife of Joe Bedford) of Hope Street Ossett for the sale of part of the land and property at Bleak House. The details of the transaction are shown in the Abstract of Title & Plan and the conveyance is summarised in the deeds section. In essence the Mitchell boys sell Bleak House, a lock up shop and the 2.5 acres or so to the south of Bleak House. The seven cottages are not included in the sale. The deed tells us that the occupant of Bleak House and the adjacent land is a Mr.J W Crosland and that the lock up shop is occupied by Mrs A Woodson. There is no suggestion of a second tenant at Bleak House at this time (1934). Florence Annie Dale and Joe Bedford were married in Spring 1919. Florence's address in 1934 was 12 Hope Street Ossett and there is no sign of her ever living at Bleak House.

## FLORENCE ANNIE BEDFORD AND BEYOND 1934-2009

In **1953** Florence Annie Bedford of 12 Hope Street sells 2.286 acres of land to Ossett Urban District Council. Council housing and Manor Avenue were subsequently built on the site.

In **1964** a conveyance is recorded between Florence A Bedford and Harry Mitchell dated 31 March. Florence is a widow of 12 Hope Street and Harry Mitchell is a retired farmer of Bleak House. *“ all that piece of land situate and being a frontage to Manor Road Ossett AND ALSO all that messuage or dwellinghouse known as Bleak House with the garage outbuildings and conveniences thereto in the occupation of Mr JW Crosland and also the lock up shop in the occupation of Mrs Hannah Garlick...All which said property is the residue remaining unsold of the property comprised in a conveyance dated 26<sup>th</sup> October 1934 between James Mitchell and Charles Robinson Mitchell and the vendor....”*

This conveyance tells us that Mr JW Crosland, who was at Bleak House in 1934 when Mrs Bedford bought the House and land, was still living here in 1964 when she sold it. The purchaser, Harry Mitchell, also has an address of Bleak House. I had thought this was evidence that the house may have been converted to two homes. It may or may not be for Mitchell and Crosland may, of course, have been living in the same house. Even though the conveyance has Harry's address as Bleak House, the body of the conveyance mentions only Crosland as an occupier.

There are Deed transactions for Harry Mitchell in 1966, 1968 and **1969** but none relate to the land at Bleak House. However the Deeds do reveal that Harry Mitchell was still living here in 1969. After 1972 all registered Deeds are recorded at the Land Registry Nottingham. It is possible to see a record of ownership (if the land was registered) but the Deeds themselves are not kept.

Harry Mitchell, retired farmer was born in 1903 and lived with his parents at Sowood Cottage at the junction of Manor Road and Station Road. Harry was the great grandson of Nathan Mitchell's brother Joseph Mitchell. Nathan would surely have been pleased that the home he built in 1864 would return to Mitchell ownership exactly 100 years later in 1964. There is more about Harry Mitchell in a later section on Sowood Cottage.

But nothing is forever and it is thought that Harry Mitchell, or his beneficiaries, subsequently sold Bleak House to a Mary Lister who also owned the hairdressing salon at 100 Manor Road, next door to Bleak House. A couple called Pinchbeck had the property from about **1987**, then Michael and Annette Smith bought Bleak House in **2001**, selling to the present owners in **2004** after some renovation work was carried out.

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## THE MANOR OF WAKEFIELD

It is not imperative to the history of Bleak House but it may be helpful to understand a little more about the Manor of Wakefield the activity in which it was involved and in particular the *copyhold* nature of some of the land transactions involved in the history.

The Court of the Manor of Wakefield began earlier than the thirteenth century (records survive from 1274) and continued its sittings until the twentieth (1926). It is rare for a Manorial Court to have survived for so long a period which ended only with the reforms in land law in 1922 and 1925. The Manor consisted of two large tracts of land in the West Riding of Yorkshire. It contained not only the town of Wakefield but also such places as Halifax, Brighouse, Ossett, Normanton, Hartshead, Heptonstall, Northowram and Kirkburton.

The Manor itself dates from before the Norman Conquest when it was held by the King, Edward the Confessor (1003-1066) in his own name. Sometime between 1066 and 1121 The Manor was granted to the Warrene family probably in recognition of Warrene's service to the King in the Battle of Tinchebrai in 1106. The Court records survive mostly in remarkable condition and are now in the archives of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society (YAS) whose office is now based in Leeds.

In the thirteenth century it was the court of a great feudal lord, the Earl Warrene. Presided over by his steward it settled civil disputes between the Earl's tenants, enforced his manorial rights and received and re-granted parcels of land held by his tenants within the Manor. From the beginning the substantive law which was applied in the manorial court was the *custom* of the manor. Early court rolls show that where a point was disputed a jury was empanelled to inquire into it and declare the custom. By the time the Black Death arrived in 1349, for example, it was no longer the custom for runaway serfs to be brought back to their manor of origin. For several hundred years thereafter though there was a system of fines and penalties for those who failed to comply with the law or the custom of the manor. These were exercised through meetings of the twice yearly Tourns – a Court Leet which had jurisdiction over minor criminal matters; though some were excluded by Magna Carta.

The Tourns heard a variety of offences and non appearance to answer charges was itself an offence. Fighting and drawing blood were common ones as were anti social activities such as stopping up paths diverting watercourses and throwing down fences. Brewing and selling ale not of the required quality was also an offence. In the latter case the offenders were mainly women. Failing to scour ditches, ring pigs (to stop them rooting up crops) and for digging up coal from the highway fell into the same categories.

A constant element in manorial court business was the recording of transfers of land. Freeholders, who rendered services to the lord for their land, needed a licence from the lord to sell the land to someone else. These services could be ploughing the lord's land, providing men at arms, furnishing a sword for the King's use and so on. *Villein* tenants could not alienate their land at all, except by surrender of it to the lord and his admitting the purchaser into possession. The villeins did not hold a freehold interest in the land. That was held by the lord. These transactions were recorded on the court roll which provided the only written evidence of the purchaser's title in the same way as deeds and charters were evidence of title of a freeholder. **These transactions were copyhold.** [Villein tenants were feudal serfs who by the 13th century had become freemen in their legal relations to all except their lord, to whom they remained subject as slaves].

The word deed, incidentally, came about as, originally, transfers of land in this way were finalised by the committing of an action or "a deed"; usually the giving of a sod or turf of the land in question by the vendor to the purchaser. The evidence of the transaction was purely in the memory of the parties. Later of course the "deed" became a written document. Copyhold transfers were thus called because the record of the admittance was copied from the court roll onto a small strip of parchment which was given to the purchaser as his (or very occasionally, her) proof of title.

In addition to the control which this structure provided to the lord it also had a further major benefit. All transgressions heard and found through the tourns resulted in a fine which, of course, was retained by the lord. In a similar way Villein land transfers were subject to a 'fine' or fee and these too went to the lord. By 1925 the whole business of the court consisted of the recording of copyhold land transfers. It had become a cheap, local system of the recording of registration of title. Even then the levying of fees did not cease as the first transfer of a piece of copyhold land after The Land and Property Act 1922 was subject to a payment to the Manor by way of compensation for not being able to levy fees on future transfers. This was termed a fee for "the extinguishment of manorial incidents".

In the case of Bleak House this is why the Abstract of Title makes reference to such matters as the surrender in to the hands of the Lord and the extinguishment of manorial rights. This was because part of the land upon which Bleak House was built was copyhold land. As such any disposal of an interest in the land required the payment of a fee and required the existing Lord's tenant (to almost all intents and purposes the owner) to surrender his interest to the Lord of the Manor who would then admit the new "tenant" (ie the new owner). This process was only eliminated in 1925. Even then the first disposal after this date required the payment of a fee to the Lord of the Manor. This was rather quaintly known as a fee for "the extinguishment of manorial incidents"

In 1894 Godfrey Mitchell was admitted as a tenant of the Lord (on the death of his father who would have been tenant on inheriting the house and land from Nathan Mitchell in 1870.

In 1934 the Abstract makes reference to the "manorial incidents reserved to the Lord and Lady" which would have required a fee to be paid by the vendors before they were able to dispose of the house and land to Florence Annie Bedford.

## THE DEEDS

**1833** (WYAS reference 1833 LN 344 324) JOSEPH SCOTT to NATHAN MITCHELL

*Registered on 31 May 1833 near five in the afternoon an Indenture of lease and release bearing the date respectively the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty three the lease made between Joseph Scott of Middle Common in Ossett in the Parish of Dewsbury in the County of Yorkshire Yeoman of the one part AND Nathan Mitchell of Ossett Common in Ossett aforesaid farmer of the other part and the release made between the said Joseph Scott of the first part the said Nathan Mitchell of the second part and William Hallas of Ossett aforesaid Cloth Manufacturer of the third part of and concerning all that freehold plot piece or parcel of land containing 18 perches being the freehold part of an allotment situate on Ossett Common containing 34 perches and which said freehold part is situate at the eastward end of the said allotment and which said allotment is bounded eastward by Hallas Road westward by another allotment awarded to the said Joseph Scott, northwards by Horbury Road and southwards by an allotment awarded to John Land AND ALSO all that freehold part piece or parcel of land containing 20 perches being the freehold part of an allotment situate at Ossett Common containing 32 perches which said freehold is situate at the westward end of the said allotment and also so much and such part or parts as is or are of the nature of or tenure of freehold of and in the residue of the said allotment being 12 perches at the east end of the same and is freehold and copyhold compounded for undistinguished and which said last mentioned allotment is bounded east by another allotment awarded to the said Joseph Scott, west by Hewitt Road, North by Horbury Road and south by an allotment awarded to the master Fellows and Scholars of Jesus College AND ALSO all that other allotment situate on Ossett Common containing 16 perches bounded East by allotments respectively awarded to John Land and David Peace, west by Hewitt Road and north by allotments awarded to Matthew Glover and South by an allotment awarded to the said David Peace AND ALSO **all those several cottages and dwellinghouses lately erected** and built by the said Joseph Scott upon some part of the said allotments of land and now in the possession of the said Joseph Scott his assigns or undertenants.....witnessed by Eli Mitchell of Ossett aforesaid Gentleman and Joshua Whitaker of Ossett aforesaid ffarmer and Maltster.*

**Notes;** A lease and release was given the same meaning as a freehold conveyance by an Act of 1845. I suspect William Hallas was a party to the transaction because he provided funding to Nathan and his loan was charged against the property. Eli Mitchell was the brother of Nathan and an Attorney At Law. It appears that in 1813 there were no structures on the land the subject of this conveyance to Nathan but it is clear that “**lately**” Joseph Scott has built cottages or dwellinghouses on the land between 1813 and 1833. The three areas of land mentioned above (being 32 , 34 and 12 perches respectively can be seen on the annotated 1813 Inclosure Act Map reproduced elsewhere in this study) . A map surveyed in 1840 and published in the early 1850’s shows structures on both the 32 perches and 34 perches sites fronting on to Manor Road. It seems likely these were cottages built by Scott in the 1820’s or early 1830’s

**1834** (WYAS ref 1834 LX 68 59) MITCHELL TO MITCHELL

*Registered on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1834 at four in the afternoon; between Seth Mitchell Surgeon and Apothecary of Rothwell and Nathan Mitchell farmer of Ossett being land at Ossett Common comprising 1 acre and 4 perches bounded east by Hallas Road west and north by allotments to the Vicar of Dewsbury Joseph Hewitt and David Peace and south by an allotment to John Wilby the younger. The Deed was witnessed by Joshua Phillips Ossett Grocer of Ossett and Eli Mitchell of Ossett Attorney at Law.*

**Notes;** Seth Mitchell (born 1801) is Nathan's brother. Joshua Phillips who witnessed the Deed is the grandfather of Thomas William Phillips who was the son in law of Mark Wilby of Manor House. A further demonstration of the close relationship between the Wilby Scott Mitchell and Phillips families. Thomas was to become Mayor of Ossett some 60 years later. The site of 1 acre and 4 perches was part of the 2.5 acres close which was to the rear of Bleak House. The land must have been purchased by Seth Mitchell from Randolph Phillips (who owned the land in 1813) between 1813 and 1834. The bulk of the remaining land between the 34 perches plot and Seth's ownership was owned by John Land (he owned 3 roods 12 perches). The land was copyhold and therefore the only record of its sale will be held in the Manorial court records at the Yorkshire Archaeological Society at Claremont House Clarendon Road in Leeds.

**1843** (WYAS ref 1843 OQ 654 562) MOSS to MITCHELL

*Registered on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1843 being a memorial of a transaction between Jane Brooke of Horbury widow of the first part Joshua and Thomas Moss farmers and butchers of the second part Nathan Mitchell farmer of the third part and John Mitchell of Ossett Common Clothier of the fourth part...being the freehold parts comprising 1 acre and 13 perches bounded east by an allotment to J Hewitt and by Hewitt Road, west by an allotment to Ben Hallas the younger and Wm Hallas North by another allotment awarded to them and south by an allotment awarded to the Vicar of Dewsbury*

**Notes;** This is the land shown on the 1813 Inclosure Order map as being in the ownership of Joshua Moss. The land is to the west of the Bleak House site. Joshua married Sarah Scott who was Joseph Scott's sister. Consequently Joshua Moss and Joseph Scott were brothers in law.

**1844** (WYAS ref 1844 OW 575 557) HUMBLE to MITCHELL

*Registered on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1844 at three in the afternoon. A memorandum of an Indenture of assignment and release made between John Humble manufacturing chemist of Ossett of the first part and Nathan Mitchell aforesaid farmer and coal dealer and George Thomas Parkinson of Birstall Plumber and Glazier of the 2<sup>nd</sup> part and the several other persons whose names and seals are subscribed and set to the schedule thereunder written being Creditors of the said John Humble of the third part*

*CONCERNING first all that freehold allotment plot piece or parcel of land comprising 20 perches being the freehold part of an allotment on Ossett Common containing 32 perches...at the west end of the said allotment.....and also all that building or **manufactory recently erected** upon the said freehold part...and now in the occupation of John Humble and all that steam engine of six horses power boiler shafting going gear machinery and apparatus to the said building or manufactory belonging an appertaining.*

*SECONDLY 2 roods and 15 perches situate east of Middle Common Road ....south by Horbury Road.....[This is to the north of Horbury Road and not relevant to the research.]*

**Notes;** John Humble was Nathan Mitchell's brother in law having married Nathan's sister Mary. The full deed tells us that Humble's business is in trouble and that there is some form of works(he was a manufacturing chemist) on the 32 perches of land to the west of the Bleak House site. Humble had erected a manufactory here "recently". The map of 1840 shows buildings at the west end of the 32 perch allotment and it seems likely that this was the manufactory and that it was built in the late 1830's by or for John Humble. Nathan must have let or assigned the land to Humble who built his 'manufactory' and this Deed sees assignment released on the 32 perches site(or perhaps simply buying the buildings and equipment) which would at least provide some funds for Humble to settle some of his debts to Geo Thos Parkinson and his other creditors. The Deed also tells that Nathan was a farmer and coal dealer.

By 1872 the manufactory appears to be in the ownership of Henry Castile Scott (of Mona Cottage Manor Road, Park Square).It appears, notwithstanding John Humble's trading difficulties which seem apparent from the above, that Humble is still in occupation of the manufactory(steam engines and all) which still stood here in 1872.

#### **1849 (WYAS ref 1849 QL 318 358)**

*A Deed dated 26 November 1849 involving Nathan Mitchell of the first part Thomas Mitchell, Clothier of Ossett Common of the second part and John Mitchell, Clothier of Ossett Common of the third part being 192 square yards on Ossett Common and also all that cottage or dwellinghouse **lately** erected and built upon some part of the said plot and the said cottage is now in the occupation of Thomas Mitchell and is bounded on or towards the north by Horbury Road....east by Hallas Road...on the south and west by other land belonging to the said Nathan Mitchell. The Deed is witnessed by Eli Mitchell*

**Notes;** This appears to be a sale by Nathan to Thomas and John Mitchell. All brothers. It is land and a recently erected cottage built upon it at the corner of Manor Road and Manor Lane. The 1851 Census does not have a Thomas Mitchell living in the vicinity so perhaps Thomas sub-let the dwelling. The dwelling is lately erected and so was probably built in the 1840's. This land would be part of the 34 perches plot bought by Nathan in 1833 from Joseph Scott.

**1860 (WYAS ref 1860 WC 509 563)**

This Deed relates a rare transaction in which Nathan is selling land to his brother Eli Mitchell. The land is “ *an allotment called or commonly known by the name Pauper Close on Ossett Common being 1 acre 2 roods and 25 perches bounded east by an allotment awarded to the Duke of Leeds [he was the Lord of the Manor of Wakefield] and Pauper Park west by Emmerson Mill Road North by an allotment to William Ingham and south by an allotment awarded to John Fletcher which said allotment was awarded by the Commissioners to Joseph Mitchell late of Ossett Common Yeoman deceased and by him devised to John Mitchell late of Ossett Common Clothier deceased and now is in the possession of Nathan Mitchell. The Deed is witnessed by Philip and Eli Ellis Manufacturers*”.

Notes; This land is situated between Spa Lane (aka Emmerson Mill Road) and Spa Street (aka Horbury Road). Pauper Park itself stood at the southern corner of the junction of Manor Road and Spa Street. It seems likely that Nathan was left the land (Pauper Close) by John Mitchell, his brother, who I suspect inherited it from Joshua Mitchell in whose ownership the land is in 1813. I have no record of a Joshua Mitchell around this time and it is probable he was an Uncle or Great Uncle of John and Nathan. The Commissioners mentioned in the Deed was the Commissioner of the Inclosure Order 1813. Pauper Park was a 4 acre area of land allotted in the Order to the Churchwardens and Overseers of Ossett for the use of the Poor in the Town. Perhaps Nathan was disposing of some of his land interests and running down his farming activities as he approached 60 years of age and, perhaps, also in order to provide funds for the building of Bleak House.

**1861 (WYAS ref 1861 WH 657 684)**

*A memorial of a deed dated 5<sup>th</sup> July 1861 between John Peace and Nathan Mitchell in which Peace is selling 14 perches of freehold land of an allotment comprising 30 perches. The balance of 16 perches is copyhold land which (no doubt) Peace also transferred to Nathan following the consent of the Lord of the Manor of Wakefield. The land is bounded east by Hallas Road west by an allotment to David Peace and Joseph Scott North by an allotment to John Land and south by an allotment to Randolph Phillips and awarded by the Commissioners to David Peace as purchaser from Thomas Hebblethwaite and which said allotment and two others adjoining thereto being copyhold as one close then occupied by John Humble but the same is now occupied by Nathan Mitchell and contains in the whole 1 rood 36 perches.*

**Notes;** This land can be seen in the annotated 1813 map shown earlier. It is shown in the name of Dd Peace and has a frontage to Manor Lane. It lies between land held by Randolph Phillips and the site on which Bleak House was built. It would form part of the 2.5 acres adjacent to Bleak House and is likely to have been the final piece of the land assembly commenced by Nathan in 1833.

**1864 (WYAS ref 1864 XR 658 756)**

*A Deed between William Gartside of Ossett Dyer of the first part Nathan Mitchell Farmer and formerly Clothier of the second part and Samuel Pickard Clothier of the third part being a messuage occupied by Nathan Mitchell and adjacent land near Giggall Hill being 1 acre and 8 perches bounded by land of Benjamin Marsden (bought from the Duke of Leeds) by land of David Wilby and Isaac Wilby (bought from the Commissioners of the 1813 Inclosure Order) and Samuel Audsley and by allotments of Thomas Mitchell and John Craven AND ALSO a plot adjacent to the aforementioned being 1 acre and 8 perches bought by Samuel Audsley from the Commissioners all of which allotments were occupied by William Armitage and after by John Ellis now by Nathan Mitchell.....SECONDLY 2 roods 12 perches on Ossett Common a moiety (part/half share) bought by Charles Scott from the Commissioners being Lot 11 bounded north by the other moiety held by George Pickard and land of the representatives of John Scott east by an Occupation Road from Ossett to Horbury south by the first mentioned premises and west by land belonging to Joseph Mitchell now in the occupation of Nathan Mitchell THIRDLY 850 sq yds part of an allotment bought by Benjamin Marsden from the Duke of Leeds and devised by him to Hannah Marsden and bounded partly by property of Henry Castile Scott.....the deed is sworn by Eli Mitchell and Edmund Teal Book keeper*

**Notes;** This Deed tells us that in 1864 Nathan sold the house in which he lived on Giggall Hill. The Census has him living there in 1841. The house is actually situated on land to the west of Sowood Lane/Road and to the north of (present day)Horbury Road. Nathan made his Will in the same year (1864) He also sells two other pieces of land which do not have any bearing on the Bleak House history except to the extent that they would generate funds to build Bleak House or provide for Nathan in his retirement, In 1864 he was 59 years of age. The third plot of land in the sale is adjacent to land of Henry Castile Scott who lived at Mona Cottage on the north side of Manor Road almost directly opposite Bleak House. 1864 appears to be a fairly significant year in Nathan's life.

**1864 (WYAS ref 1864 XR 657 755)**

*Nathan sells four cottages at to Samuel Pickard Clothier being four messuages cottages or dwellinghouses at Ossett Lights lately in the occupation of Joseph Tomlinson Joseph Smith and Benjamin Battye but now of Ann Tomlinson Joseph Ramsden and William Westerman and also a close of land at Ossett Lights called the Low Croft being 1 acre and 12 perches now in the occupation of Nathan Mitchell.*

Notes; not directly related to Bleak House but another example of Nathan disposing of land interests in 1864; the year he wrote his Will, sold his home and other land near Giggall Hill and built Bleak House. The land and property mentioned in this deed refers to Ossett Lights but Ann Tomlinson and William Westerman are shown in the 1861 Census as living on Middle Common adjacent to Henry Castile Scott. This puts the cottages on the east side of Park Square. James Mitchell owned land here in 1813. Samuel Pickard (1813-1883) was the son of Robert Pickard and the nephew of Abraham Pickard who is shown elsewhere. Both Abraham and Samuel will have been born at 9 Hags Hill Road which is now (2009) the home of the author of this history.

**1866 (WYAS ref 1866 ZA 569 650)**

*This is a Deed between Nathan Mitchell and Phillip Scott Wilby, Cloth Manufacturer where Nathan is selling 1 acre and 12 perches bounded east by an allotment awarded to Nathan Mitchell, west and north by land of William Ingham representatives south by land of the Vicar of Dewsbury and a right of road 4 yards long and 4 yards wide from the north east corner.*

**Notes;** This is the land purchased by Nathan in 1843 from the Moss family who owned the land in 1813. The right of way enabled access to be taken from Manor Road. Phillip's parents were Randolph Wilby and Mary Scott

**1869 (WYAS ref 1869 630 607 752)**

*A Deed between Nathan Mitchell, Gentleman and Mark Wilby Cloth Manufacturer being the sale of 2 acres 1 rood and 27 perches bounded east by Hallas Road west by land of the Vicar of Dewsbury north by land belonging to Nathan Mitchell and south by land belonging to Ebenezer Fothergill which close or piece of land was lately occupied by Nathan Mitchell but now by Mark Wilby. The Deed is witnessed by Eli Mitchell, Solicitor and David Pickard Manufacturer Ossett*

**Notes;** This is the land on which Mark Wilby built Manor House or Manor Villa. This Deed makes no reference to a structure – only land- and consequently Mark must have built the house around this time. In the 1871 Census he is shown living at Manor Villa Manor Lane Ossett. The land is copyhold and Nathan must have purchased this land between about 1830 and the 1860's. Nathan would, once again, be faced with multiple ownerships for in 1813 it appears that four owners, including part of the land (Vicar's Fileds) owned by the Vicar of Dewsbury. With the exception of the Church land the other land, fronting on to Manor Lane was copyhold.

Nathan Mitchell died in August 1870 and the following Deeds relate to those involving subsequent owners of Bleak House and the close of land to the south.

**1894 (WYAS ref 1894 24 232 110)**

*This is an indenture (a contract between two parties) between **Benjamin Watson** of Wakefield Wholesale Grocer, John Thomas Hall, Bank Accountant of the first part and Godfrey Mitchell of the other part .....a close of land some time since in the occupation of Nathan Mitchell deceased more recently by Albert Speight but now Mark Wilby and ALSO all that dwellinghouse adjacent to the said close of land also some time since occupied by Nathan Mitchell more recently of the said Albert Speight but now of Mark Wilby with the gardens yards and outbuildings AND ALSO all those four cottages in the occupation of James Brooke, Thomas Parkinson, Dyson and Henry Lockwood adjacent to the said close of land with the yard thereto belonging now in the several occupations of Mark Chappel, Nathan Wilby, John Wm Dews and another. AND ALSO all those three cottages near to or adjacent to the four last mentioned and some time since in the occupation of William Farrer Charles Grundhill and one unoccupied. But now of.....[blank]..... bounded north by a highway and gardens and partly by land owned by Jesus College on the east by the Occupation Road south by property some time since sold by*

*Nathan Mitchell to Mark Wilby and partly by land owned by the Vicar of Dewsbury and west by property sold by Nathan Mitchell to Philip Scott Wilby...in all 2 acres 2 roods and 17 perches.*

Notes; James Mitchell inherited this holding in 1870 on Nathan Mitchell's death. The proviso in Nathan's Will was that the property pass to James' son Godfrey on James' death which occurred in November 1893 (Will dated 26 November 1892 proved at Wakefield 20<sup>th</sup> December 1893). This Indenture appears to be the release of a charge by Benjamin Watson who I assume had lent money to Godfrey perhaps for the building of the three cottages mentioned below (which were not here in 1870). The document identifies Albert Speight as a former occupant of Bleak House and the close and Mark Wilby as the present occupier of both. The Deed also tells us that there are now seven cottages here which is three more than in 1870 when Nathan died. It is assumed that these cottages (was it three or four with an older one demolished to accommodate the new? I ask this because the deed below of 1883 suggests four are newly erected.) had been built by Godfrey or James Mitchell on the land between Bleak House and Manor Lane. We also see more names of those who lived here some time before 1890. Sadly the current occupiers in 1894 are not identified.

There is also a Deed of **1883** (WYAS ref 893 436 512) involving Mary Robinson Nettleton Spinster of the first part Blanche Nettleton Nettleton Spinster of the second part before of Belfast now of Wakefield and Joseph William McClughan Dublin Accountant of the third part AND **Benjamin Watson** of Wakefield as the fourth part. I believe the Nettleton spinsters are lending to Watson and securing their loan against a variety of property mentioned in the Deed. One of these property ownerships is relevant to the Bleak House story....." *AND ALSO all that close of land at Ossett Middle Common lately in the occupation of Nathan Mitchell deceased then Albert Speight and also all that dwellinghouse adjacent to the said close also then lately occupied by Nathan Mitchell and then by Albert Speight and also all those **lately newly erected cottages** in the occupation of James Brook, Thomas Parkinson, Dyson, Henry Lockwood adjacent to the said close and also three cottages adjacent or near to the four aforementioned and occupied by Wm Farrer Charles Grundall and one unoccupied...."* The Nettletons agreement is with Watson not Mitchell but plainly the land and property has been pledged as security for the monies provided by the Nettletons to Watson for him to lend to Godfrey Mitchell and others. For the avoidance of doubt Blanche Nettleton Nettleton is the actual name in the deed. Interestingly Mary *Robinson* Nettleton carries the same name as one of Godfrey Mitchell's sons Charles *Robinson* Mitchell suggesting that they may be related.

The next four deeds of 1894 involve Godfrey Mitchell selling land ownerships left to him by his father James Mitchell. None relate to the Bleak House land but they do demonstrate Godfrey disposing of his late father's land holdings on Low Common.

**1894** (WYAS ref 1894 13 58 30 ) *Godfrey Mitchell selling land at Low Common to Benjamin Marsden and Ezra Dews. Bonney Close 2 acres 3 roods previously the property of James Mitchell deceased.*

**1894** (WYAS ref 1894 13 550 292) *Godfrey Mitchell selling to Joshua Fearnside by Auction at The Fleece Hotel Horbury for £676- 6s-6d as the highest bidder 4 acres 3 roods and 27 perches at South Parade/Manor Road known as Laithe Close in occupation of Thomas Mitchell and afterwards James Mitchell but now Joseph Burton Law and also all those 3 one storey cottages barn stable or cowhouse now occupied by John Jowett Fred Lodge and A Johnson and the barn etc in the occupation of Fred Fothergill.*

**1894** (WYAS ref 1894 13 789 410) Godfrey Mitchell selling to Joe Clegg of South Parade Butcher two messuages or dwellinghouses formerly occupied as one with gardens front and rear at South Parade Low Common being 1 rood 27 perches now or late in the occupation of James Mitchell decease and Fred Harrison but now of Fred Harrison and one unoccupied....

**1894** (WYAS 1894 26 378 183) Godfrey Mitchell to Frederick Dews of the Northern Hotel Wakefield hotel proprietor all those lands in an Indenture dated 20 Nov 1890 (Vol 38 page 569 number 290). This Deed of 1890 was Mary Harriet Dews wife of John Dews and James Mitchell selling to William Dews of Horbury, hotel Proprietoris extensive and not reproduced here but it deals with land on the west of Spa Street on which Dews Row and Whinfield Terrace had been built.

The next Deed of significance to the Bleak House history is in 1904 the details of which are included in the Abstract of Title mentioned elsewhere.

**1904** (WYAS ref 1904 23 353 167) This is shown in full in the Abstract but in brief *it is an agreement between Godfrey Mitchell and Thomas Harris whereby Harris lends £210 to Godfrey Mitchell and secures the loan against the land inherited by Godfrey, upon his father's death, from Nathan Mitchell. The land and property comprises Bleak House (then or late in the occupation of Mark Wilby), four cottages (in the occupation of Mark Chappel, Nathan Wilby, John William Dews and another) and also three cottages (occupied by William Farrer Charles Grundhill and one unoccupied). In total the land extended to 2 acres 2 roods and 17 perches.*

**Notes;** In 1870 according to Nathan's Will there were only four cottages (George Farrer, Sarah Ann Robinson, Joseph Scott and one unoccupied) on Nathan's land. A deed of 1883 suggests that four had been recently erected which suggests that one may have been demolished to accommodate the building of new dwellings.

**1911** (WYAS ref 34 231 85) Also in the Abstract. *Thomas Harris lends a further £50 to Godfrey Mitchell.*

**1912** (WYAS ref 28 337 120) Also in the Abstract. It seems that *Thomas Harris had died in 1908 and that Thomas Harris' name was 'inserted [in error] therein instead of the name of the said J Wilson' Nottingham Farmer and Sole Executor of Thomas Harris. Godfrey Mitchell fully discharges the loan of £300. Deed dated 28th June 1912*

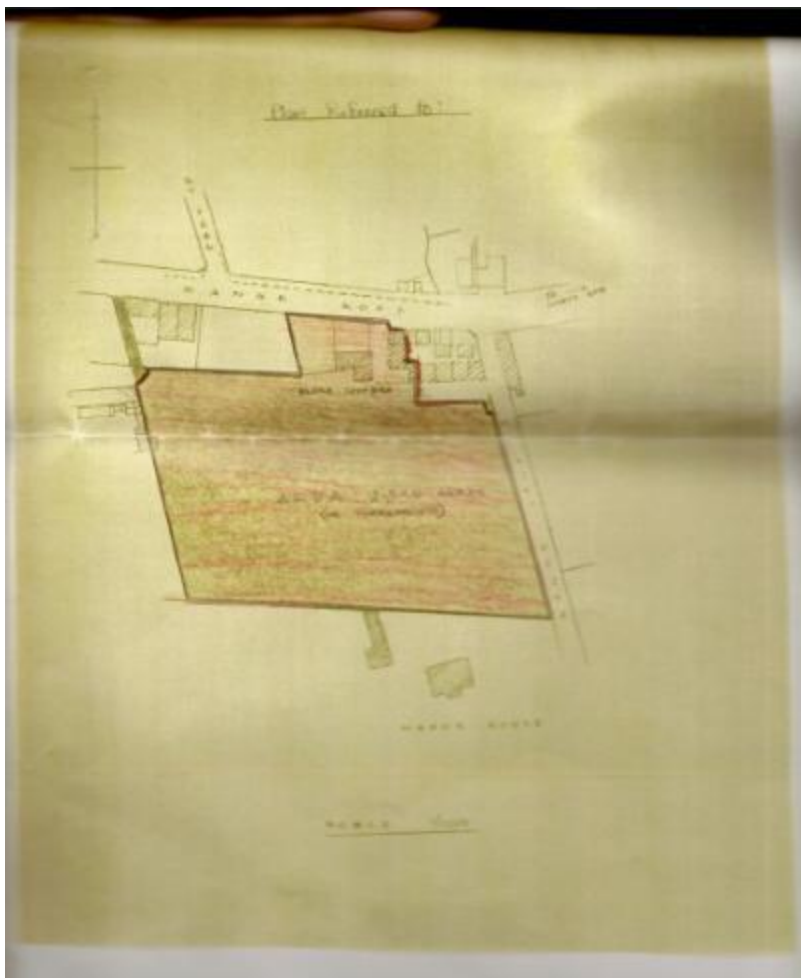
**1912** (WYAS ref 1912 28 625 232) Also in the Abstract. *On 29<sup>th</sup> June 1912 Godfrey borrows £300 from Mary Ann Newbould secured against the Bleak house land and cottages.*

**1914** (WYAS ref 1914 29 944 323) Also in the Abstract. *Transfer of the mortgage of £300 (above) to Edith Agnes Anderson by Clement Arthur Newbould executor of Mary Ann Newbould deceased. The transfer was in lieu of Agnes' legacy under Mary Ann's Will. Agnes' loan is secured against Bleak House etc. Mary Ann, Clement and Agnes were siblings.*

The following is in the Abstract. In 1929 Godfrey Mitchell makes his Will and appoints his sons James Mitchell and Charles Robinson Mitchell as executors. In September 1931 Godfrey dies and probate is granted in Wakefield on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 1931. In April 1934 Agnes Anderson dies and in September 1934 the Mitchell boys discharge the loan of £300 to Agnes' trustees and executors. This leaves the Mitchells free to dispose of their inherited land and property at Bleak House which at this point includes 7seven cottages and 2.5 acres of land adjacent and to the south.

**1934** (WYAS ref 162 706 236) In the Abstract. *Godfrey Mitchell's sons, Charles Robinson Mitchell and James Mitchell, sell to Florence Annie Bedford of Hope Street Ossett. The land and property in question is included in a plan attached to the Abstract and this reproduced below. The land sale includes Bleak House, with the garden yard outbuildings and garage in the occupation of JW Crosland and also a 2 acre close to the rear also occupied by JW Crosland and also a lock up shop (in the occupation of Mrs A Woodson) and a right of way from the north west corner of the close into Manor Road.*

Notes; The disposal by the Mitchell boys does not include the seven cottages which I suppose were sold by the brothers sometime after 1934.



**Plan showing the land, property and right of way in the 1934 sale by the Mitchells to Bedford**

**1953 (WYAS ref 110 737 349)** this is short deed whereby Florence Annie Bedford of 12 Hope Street is selling 2.286 acres of land to Ossett Urban District Council. Council housing and Manor Avenue were subsequently built on the site.

**1964 (WYAS ref 1964 95 541 231)** A conveyance between Florence A Bedford and Harry Mitchell dated 31 March 1964. Florence is a widow of 12 Hope Street and Harry Mitchell is a retired farmer of Bleak House. " all that piece of land situate and being a frontage to Manor Road Ossett AND ALSO all that messuage or dwellinghouse known as Bleak House with the garage outbuildings and conveniences thereto in the occupation of Mr JW Crosland and also the lock up shop in the occupation of Mrs Hannah Garlick...All which said property is the residue remaining unsold of the property comprised in a conveyance dated 26<sup>th</sup> October 1934 between James Mitchell and Charles Robinson Mitchell and the vendor

There are Deed transactions for Harry Mitchell in 1966, 1968 and 1969 but none relate to the land at Bleak House. However the Deeds do reveal that Harry Mitchell was still living here in 1969. After 1972 all registered Deeds are recorded at the Land Registry Nottingham. It is possible to see a record of ownership (if the land was registered) but the Deeds themselves are not kept.

## CENSUS EXTRACTS 1841-1911

*NOTE The following notes were prepared prior to an examination of Deeds and other records. To some extent they have been amended to reflect some, but not all, those findings. They are then working notes and should be treated with caution. Some comments may contradict findings reported elsewhere.*

The following notes are based on the Census information taken at 10 yearly intervals between 1841 and 1901. For the years 1871 to 1901 the Census identifies Manor Lane. Manor Road shows in years 1881 to 1901. So for these years, if you subscribe to one of the commercial Family History websites, it is possible, with a bit of patience, to attempt a re-construction of the census enumerator's route in recording details of occupants. 1841 to 1861 is much more difficult and consequently more open to error.

Census details are recorded by enumerators in Enumeration Districts. This is usually said to be an area which an enumerator (almost always male) can walk around in a single day. The Census rarely records actual addresses relying instead upon a number allocated to the property by the enumerator on his journey. Occasionally the name of a house is included in the Census and this provides a reference point for the year in which it is notated but it can also provide a reference point for other year's censuses.

In some of the following notes it has been necessary to use a census year, which provides certain or fairly certain information, as a reference point for earlier years where the information is less certain. For example the census information for 1841, 1851 and 1861 do not record the existence of Manor Road and Manor Lane since it is unlikely the highways were known by these names in those years. Instead they were known by the name "Common" or Middle Common". Unfortunately so too was the Park Square area.

However it appears that "Low Common" ended and "Middle Common" began around the Manor Lane junction with Manor Road. This has been helpful. For these years (1841-1861) an attempt has been made to re-create the route of the enumerator in 1861 by reference back to the 1871 census. 1861 is then used as a reference point for 1851 and so on back to 1841.

Consequently the information for 1841, 1851 and 1861 is less certain but I am content that the results are reasonably accurate and probably as close as one is likely to get to a reconstruction of the Manor Road and Manor Lane area of Ossett in those times. Research elsewhere points to Bleak House being built about 1864 but the Map surveyed in 1840 (published in the early 1850's) shows structures on the land where Bleak House now stands. Consequently for Census years earlier than this it is likely that the findings relate to dwellings which stood here, or hereabouts. Of course the census is but a snapshot on one night each ten years. Other families may have, and probably did, live here in the intervening years.

The question as to whether there was a house at that time is examined elsewhere but suffice to say that the earliest available map of the area, surveyed in 1840 and published in 1854, most certainly shows a building or buildings here in that earlier year. Other research referred to later in this study suggests that Bleak House was built around 1864 and so the 1840 survey must record earlier structures which were subsequently demolished). Since there was no structure here in about 1810 (Ossett Inclosure Order 1813) it is a reasonable assumption that the structure(s) shown in 1840 made way for Bleak House.

The rationale used and the findings of an examination and interpretation of the Census information is shown below and as a reference point, overleaf I have shown the plan from the Abstract of Title provided to me by the current owners of Bleak House or Bleak Cottage.

### **1901**

Mark Wilby is living at Manor House on Manor Lane. The 4 cottages at the head of **Manor Lane** are occupied by James Tattersley(2 rooms), Fred Hall(2), Thomas Land(2) and John W Dews(2). Each dwelling has 2 rooms. The adjacent **Manor Road** cottages are occupied by Thomas Laycock (2 rooms), Emily Powell(2), Samuel Matthews(2), George Firth(1), Martha Ellis(3), Rachel Goldthorpe(3), Joseph Gomersal(3). **NB In this year there are 7 households here on Manor Road between Bleak House and Manor Lane.** In 1891 there were only 4. It appears to be the case that two of the new houses have 3 rooms and one has 2 rooms.

In earlier years the Census provides a ready conclusion as to the occupant of Bleak House. Wherever possible the conclusion is corroborated but this has been difficult in 1901. In earlier years one family has appeared to be the “natural” occupant based on the occupation of the head of the family in comparison with those in nearby dwellings. This is not apparent in 1901. On the other hand it does appear that in 1901 there are three more dwellings at the Manor Lane/Manor Road junction than there were in 1891. This, and the absence of an “obvious” family for Bleak House, leads me to believe that two families may have been living here in 1901 and that the other dwelling (to make the four cottages there in 1891 up to the seven in 1901) may have been a new build or an extension to one of the existing dwellings.

The seven families living on this part of Manor Road are shown above. Thomas Laycock was here in 1891 in 2 room accommodation so he is unlikely to have moved to (a part of) Bleak House in 1901. George Firth is in single room accommodation which also existed in 1891. These two families can be eliminated as possible occupants of Bleak House leaving five possible families as Bleak House occupants. The two families shown next to South Field House are the Gomersals and the Goldthorpes. On this basis and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary I believe the 1901 occupants of Bleak House to be these families.

Evidence from other sources suggests that around this time Mark Wilby may have been considering the sale of his home at Manor House on Manor Lane. In 1891 Mark's daughter and son in law were living at Bleak House. If there were significant changes afoot in the Wilby extended family it may be that Bleak house was vacant in 1901. I would be tempted by this alternative were the census to record a vacant or uninhabited dwelling here.

Next on Manor Road is **South Field House** occupied by **Henry Ellis** woollen manufacturer and family. No room numbers for this house are shown in the Census which tells us that it had more than 5 rooms - as in 1891. This property known in this Census as South Field House stands to the west of Bleak House ie in the direction of Sowood Lane.

There follows a little more information about the occupants of the Manor Road and Manor Lane cottages which were to the east of South Field House . The 7 Manor Road/ Manor Lane Cottages (following the Census from west to east) are occupied by Joseph Gomersal (Lampighter Gas living in 3 rooms), Rachel Goldthorpe (widow and no occupation in 3 rooms), Martha Ellis ( widow aged 70 a Grocer in 3 rooms), George Firth (Coal Miner in 1 room), Samuel Matthews ( a miner in 2 rooms), Emily Powell (feeder of comb and scribbler wool -2 rooms), Thomas Laycock (Check Weighman 2 rooms).

Around the corner on Manor Lane there are 4 cottages before reaching Mark Wilby a 73 year old widower living at Manor House. He is a retired Woollen Manufacturer. The 4 cottages (each has 2 rooms) are occupied by John Dews (Weaver), Thomas Land (stone mason), Fred Hall (Painter Journeyman) and James Tattersley (Coal Miner)

### 1891

The 4 Cottages at the head of **Manor Lane** are occupied by *John William Dews* - Cloth weaver (2 rooms-first address on Manor Lane) Next door is Thomas Land Stone Quarryman (2 rooms) Following this entry (next door) is William Goldthorpe Stocktaker (2 rooms) *Mark Chappel* 38 Wool Spinner (2 rooms)

I suspect the 4 cottages above are the 4 mentioned in the Abstract and plan shown in the abstract.

Following on the journey **down** Manor Lane is Joseph Firth (3 rooms)

Next on Manor Lane is Mark Wilby living in the Manor House. [The abstract suggests that Mark Wilby "occupied" Bleak House at some stage. I believe this to be in the 1890's and that he was the tenant of the property but never lived here. Rather was it that he sub let Bleak house to his daughter and son in law].

Returning to the 1891 Census for Manor Road, **before** the Enumerator arrives at John Williams Dews' house (see above), it is clear from later census sheets in this district series that the enumerator is walking from west to east.

Just before John Dews in the census record is the following;

Thomas Laycock 2 rooms

Susannah Russell 3 rooms

Mary Williamson 1 room

John Blackburn 2 rooms

These properties were the Manor Road Cottages to the east of Bleak House ie between the house and Manor Lane. To the west of these 4 cottages is I believe Bleak House. It is occupied by **Alfred F Smith** and his family. The house has more than 5 rooms. It must be Bleak House. Next door to the west, towards Sowood Lane, is Joseph Peace.

### 1881

In this year **Chas Abell**, I believe, is living at Bleak Cottage (the Census includes the name of the house) and next door( in census terms) is Joseph Peace as he was in 1891. As in 1891 there are 4 (Manor Road) cottages to the east of Bleak House before reaching Manor Lane. The occupants are George Poppleton, Hope(?)Devenport, Jane Smith, Abraham Haigh. The Enumerator then turns down Manor Lane and records Rachel Laycock, Thomas Land, Wm Hinchcliffe and Joseph Stacey. Next is Mark Wilby. The Census only began to record house room numbers in 1891.

### 1871

In this year Manor Lane is recorded as such but Manor Road is shown as "Common". Mark Wilby is 43 and living at "Manor Villa" on Manor Lane. The 4 Manor Lane Cottages between the Villa and Manor Road( now shown as "Common")are occupied, in order, by John Mitchell (a carrier from Beckenham married to Nancy? of Ossett –he may not therefore be of the Ossett Mitchells),Wm Hinchcliffe, Thomas Parkinson, James Brook.

The enumerator then records properties on Manor Road – or Common as it was then known – George Poppleton (Mason), *Charles Grundell* herbalist from Beverley. Then 2 houses uninhabited (were they old and in decline or new and not yet occupied? I think they were probably new since in 1881 there were 4 occupied cottages here).

The record then shows, what is probably, Bleak House occupied by 25 year old **Albert Speight** Manufacturer of mungo and shoddy and his wife and one child. They have a servant. Further along the "Common" towards Sowood Lane are 2 more houses - both uninhabited. The next address is Park Square. The house in which Speight is living is the only **occupied** house on the south side of "Common" (Manor Road) between Sowood Lane and Manor Lane. However Joseph Jackson and Thomas Mitchell who are recorded in 1861 as being on the "Common" are shown in 1871 with Park Square addresses.

NB in 1861 Grundell was a wholesale herbalist in Leeds lodging with his wife Emma. In 1881 he was living in Dewsbury – a herbalist with his wife and 6 children.

## 1861

The Census does not differentiate between Manor Lane and Manor Road and both appear to be listed under the heading "Common". Moreover some residents on Manor Road (at the Sowood Lane end-then known as Denton Lane) appear to be shown as Park Square. It is possible that the current Manor Road stretch between the Park St junction with Manor Road and Sowood Lane was then known as (part of) Park Square. Thus Park Square in those days may have had 4 sides named Park Square. The 1851 map of the area (surveyed in 1840 does not show any properties down Manor Lane though there are buildings shown at the junction of Manor Road and Manor Lane.

There is therefore less certainty regarding the occupants of a building on the Bleak house site and the adjacent cottages on Manor Road and Manor Lane (if they were there) and interpretation and reconstruction becomes more problematic. My best assessment is that **Edmund Tomlinson** and his family were living closest to the site upon which Bleak House was to be built. There is no sign of Mark Wilby so it is supposed Manor Villa was built between 1862 and 1871.

What is the rationale for considering Tomlinson as being on the site in 1861? 10 years later in 1871 there were 11 houses (including 2 uninhabited) between a William Westerman, who was the resident living in the last house on Manor Lane and Albert Speight at Bleak House. In 1861 there are 9 houses between Wm Westerman and Edmund Thomlinson. Manor Villa was not built in 1861 so that one might expect that Westerman and Tomlinson were 10 houses apart rather than 9 but it is quite possible another was built on Manor Lane between 1861 and 1871.

To the west of Tomlinson are only 4 houses up to Sowood Lane – 2 could be those empty in 1871 (they were probably old and derelict in that year) leaving 2 others which in 1871 appear to be occupied by Thomas Mitchell and Joseph Jackson. In 1861 the 4 are occupied by Thomas Mitchell, Joseph Jackson, Francis Mitchell and Robert Smith.

I have not been able to locate Mark Wilby or his family in 1861. I suspect the Wilby name has been wrongly transcribed or that the family were out of the country. In any event he is not on Manor Lane which puts Manor House/Villa as being built between 1861 and 1871. In 1851 and 1841 Mark is living elsewhere in Ossett.

## 1851

This year has interpretative problems similar to those in 1861 i.e. no differentiation between Manor Lane and Manor Road. Almost all properties are now shown as "Middle Common" and this includes Park Square. Moreover the enumerator's recording appears odd. He records many properties on "Middle Common" then records several on Storrs Hill a few on Denton lane and then again a further 3 on Middle Common before going on to Low Common. It seems an odd route though on occasion properties were missed on a route and then added later.

However, as a reference point, the 1871 Census reveals 11 houses between the last resident on Manor Lane and the "Bleak House site". How does 1851 compare? Almost certainly the last resident on Manor Lane in 1851 is John Ramsden (last because the next person in the census is Sam Scott who we know was living at Mona Cottage suggesting the enumerator finished his Middle Common Road north side records – then walked to the bottom of Manor Lane and began to record as he walked back up Manor Lane). In 1851 there are 10 houses between Ramsden (including some occupants who were there in 1861) and **Thomas Audsley** Yarn Manufacturer. However the census shows the next name to Audsley as **Randolph Wilby** Rag Merchant and father of Philip Scott Wilby who is mentioned in the Abstract (but not as an occupant of Bleak House). Either Wilby or Audsley could be living in a house situated in the location where Bleak House would be built some years later. In the Census Thomas Audsley is shown to the east of Randolph. So if Thomas is living here then there was another house between the Bleak House site and Manor Lane. If Randolph is living here then there is another house to the west between the Bleak House site and Sowood Lane.

### **1841**

Similar difficulties and reasoning as for 1851. In 1841 there are 9 houses between the resident at the end of Manor Lane and the persons most likely to be the occupants of the Bleak House site. Once again I think there are two possibilities. One possibility is **David Wilby** (who is probably in the house which Audsley occupied in 1851). The second possibility is Randolph Wilby who is probably living in the same house he occupied in 1851. As in that year either could be living close to the site which was to be Bleak House. It could be both if there were two dwellings here prior to Bleak House. This must be a real possibility. In the Census David is shown to the east of Randolph.

Two places to the west of **Randolph Wilby** is Joshua Moss. The 1807 Inclosure map shows his ownership to the west of Bleak House land towards Sowood Lane. Randolph is the father of *Philip Scott Wilby* who is mentioned in the Abstract (though not as an occupant of the House). Philip was living with his father Randolph in 1841 and 1851. Philip Scott Wilby was a grand nephew of Joshua Moss.

### **Summary of possible residents Bleak House site (1841-1861) and Bleak House (1871-1911)**

1841 Randolph Wilby and/or David Wilby Clothiers

1851 Randolph Wilby (Rag Merchant) and/or Thomas Audsley (Yarn Manufacturer)

1861 Edmund Tomlinson Woollen cloth manufacturer employing 4 men 6 women

1871 Albert Speight Mungo and Shoddy Manufacturer

1881 Chas William Abell 31 Bank Clerk

1891 Alfred Farrer Smith Insurance Broker and Mark Wilby's son in law

1901 Joseph Gomersal and Rachel Goldthorpe [or Vacant]??

1911 Wilson Briggs aged 58 Rag and Mungo Manufacturer

The above information is based on Census information only. The analysis is updated elsewhere to incorporate findings from Deeds and other sources.

Below is more detail regarding some of the above families.

### **1841 Randolph Wilby[Clothier] and/or David Wilby[Clothier]**

The 1841 Census was taken the night of 6<sup>th</sup> June 1841 and shows 40 year old Clothier Randolph Wilby living on the "Middle Common" with his wife Mary ( nee Scott) and their children Sarah(20), William(20),Edwin(15),Phillip (10), Alfred (9),Mary(5) and Andrew(2). The ages shown in all censuses can vary in their accuracy but in 1841 ages of people over 15 were rounded down to the nearest 5 years. So someone aged 24 would be shown as aged 20.

**Randolph Wilby** was born in Ossett in 1797 and christened on 10 December 1797 in the Wesleyan Chapel, Wesley Street, Ossett. He was the son of Benjamin Wilby and Sarah Phillips. Randolph married Mary Scott on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1819 at All Saints Church Dewsbury. Mary Scott was born 1 August 1797 and christened 13 August 1797 at Ossett Independent Congregational Church, The Green. She was the daughter of James Scott and Martha Whitaker. Witnesses at the Wedding were Benjamin Wilby (Randolph's father) and Joseph Mitchell (the son of Thomas Mitchell and Mary Wilby)

[An aside - Randolph was the nephew of David Wilby the man who sold Scott's Yard on Giggie Hill to Joseph Scott who was Mary's great uncle] All Randolph and Mary's children were christened at Ossett Holy Trinity Church. One, William Wilby was to die in the Dewsbury Union Workhouse in April 1898 aged 77. Randolph died in 1868.

**David Wilby** is shown in the Census living "next door", (to the East) of Randolph. David is a 50 year old Clothier married to 50 year old Mary. They have the following children living with them. David (20), John(20), Enoch(15), Ann(15), Benjamin(12),Daniel(9),Henry(3), Sarah Emmerson(15). Other than the head of family, occupations were not given in the 1841 Census but it seems likely that Sarah Emmerson was a servant. The Emmerson family lived four doors away. Two Scott families are living in houses next to David on Middle Common illustrating the extent to which the Scott and Wilby families were represented here and hereabouts. Other than in 1841 I cannot locate any census record for David but a David Wilby's death was registered at Dewsbury in the July quarter 1841 which was shortly after the Census was taken. David Wilby was christened on 15 September 1787 at Dewsbury; the son of Jonathan and Sarah. David was the grandson of Isaac Wilby the owner of Scotts Yard prior to his(Isaac's) death in 1807.

### **1851 Randolph Wilby[Rag Merchant] and/or Thomas Audsley [Yarn Manufacturer]**

In 1851 **Randolph** is described as a 53 year old Rag Merchant. He is living with his wife Mary and children Edwin(26), Phillip Scott(27),Alfred(19), Mary Ann (15) and Andrew (11). Mary Ann and Andrew are scholars and the other children are all clothiers.

**Thomas Audsley** is 37 and a Yarn Manufacturer living with his wife Hannah(37) and children Thomas Moss Audsley(13),Samuel Edward(17),Abigail Ann(8), Eli(6),David J (4)and Joseph Audsley aged 28 a school master and brother of Thomas. All were born in Ossett except Thomas Moss and Abigail Ann who were Wakefield born. The family are shown living to the east of Randolph Wilby.

Thomas Audsley's father, Samuel was also a Yarn Manufacturer and Thomas his wife Hannah, 4 year old Thomas Moss and 2 year old Samuel were living in Wakefield in 1851 with Thomas' parents. The ages and birthplaces of the children points to the Audsleys returning to live in Ossett in the mid 1840's. In 1861 Thomas Audsley, his 48 year old wife Hannah and his family (Samuel, Eli, David and 1 year old Mary A) have moved to Batley where he is described as a wool weaver. He is shown in 1871 and 1881 still with Hannah and in Hanging Heaton – a weaver. It seems his more wealthy days of Yarn manufacturing were long behind him.

#### **1861 Edmund Tomlinson [Wool Cloth Manufacturer]**

**Edmund Tomlinson** was born in Ossett about 1825 and in 1861 he is living on, or in the vicinity of, the site on which Bleak House was to be built. He is with his wife, 40 year old Annis and their children Sarah(6), Ann(4), George(1) and Elizabeth(4 days). They have a servant Elydia Fothergill aged 37. He is a woollen cloth manufacturer employing 4 men and 6 women. He had come from more humble roots being the son of a wool weaver and himself described as a "jenney spinner" only 10 years earlier in 1851 when he was unmarried and living elsewhere on Middle Common with his parents and siblings. By 1871 he is living in Oriental Place Armley Leeds where he is an Overlooker. He and Annis have three daughters. He is still in Armeley in 1891 aged 66, a retired Cloth Manufacturer, living with his wife Annis and 2 of their girls both in their 30's.

#### **1871 Albert Speight Mungo and Shoddy Manufacturer**

Albert Speight was Ossett born in 1846 and in 1871 he is living with his Lancashire born wife Sarah Anne and their daughter 3 year old Lillian. They have a servant Louisa Brook aged 14. In 1861 Albert (aged 15) is at College in Huddersfield. In 1851 he is living with his parents on Field Lane Ossett. His father, 48 year old John Speight is a Rag Dealer employing 6 men and 12 women. Albert died in late 1876. His wife Sarah Anne is a widow in 1881 and an Annuitant aged 37 and living with her daughters Lillian and Hannah Mary(9) on Headlands in Ossett. In 1891 widow Sarah is "living on her own means" in Toxteth Liverpool with daughter Hannah Mary aged 19. Albert Speight was probably the first to live at Bleak House after the death of Nathan Mitchell in 1870.

#### **1881 Charles William Abell Bank Clerk**

Charles William Abell Banking Clerk aged 31 born in Leeds is living at "Manor Road Bleak Cottage" with his wife Elisabeth aged 24 born Stafford and son Percival Edwin aged 1 and born Wakefield. They have a domestic servant, Mary Ellinor Roberts aged 19 born in Wales. Charles is the son of a Shopkeeper and warehouseman James Abell and his wife Elizabeth. In 1851 Charles is aged 2 living with them in Leeds. He is the only child. In 1871 the 22 year old Charles is a "Book Keeper Cloth Mill" in West Leeds where he is living with two aunts – both Abells – one of whom is a housekeeper and the other is a school mistress. Whilst it is certain that Charles Abell lived at Bleak house it is likely that his tenure was short. He is not mentioned in any deeds as having been here (whereas Nathan Mitchell and Albert Speight are so mentioned)

In 1891 Charles is a lodger at Brussels Hall in North Leeds where he is a clerk. The Head of the Hall is T. Parker who is described as "Cocoa House Proprietor" and there appears to be approximately 40 others also lodging with occupations including druggist, Agricultural labourers, brushmaker, compositor, bricklayer, fitter, shoeblacker, pavior and so on.



Brussels Street was the Leeds Parish Church District Boys Club. It is not clear if Charles was working here as a clerk or if he was living here. He is described as a lodger in the census and whichever is the case it would be a far cry from the comfort of 1881 Bleak Cottage. In the same year, 1891, young Percival Abell, now 11 years of age is living in Guiseley Leeds with Thomas Humphries, Bootmaker and his family. Percival is described as a "friend". In 1901 Percival is in London aged 22. He is an

"advance manager theatrical" and described as "visiting" in the house of a butcher's assistant's family called Smith. Two of his fellow visitors are described as "comedians". They are Albert Mason and George Atherley. No, I haven't heard of them either.

Meanwhile in 1891 Percival's mother, Elisabeth, was in Shipley as a married "Monthly Nurse" in the house of 25 year old John Coates ["Yarn Manager Baritone Vocalist"] and his wife and 2 month old child. In 1901 she is 42 years old and living in the household of John Cundell (Mechanical Engineer) and his wife and 1 month old child. She is a widow and a "Monthly nurse". Against her name in the census record is the word "sick". I don't doubt it.

#### **1891 Alfred Farrer Smith 44 Insurance Broker**

Alfred Farrer Smith was born in Birstall in 1847. He is living in Bleak House with his wife, Ossett born Jane (Ann Wilby) aged 38 and their children Maud (15), Gertrude(11), Harold(9), Alice(8), Mark (6). Jane is the daughter of Mark Wilby of Manor House Manor Lane. They have a servant Sarah Jackson. All the children are scholars and all were born in Ossett. In 1901 the family have moved to the "posh end" of Low Common – New Harrogate. This would have been named after the abortive attempt to replicate the Harrogate Spa's by drawing on the chalybeate waters at Ossett Spa. Alfred is now a father of 6, Bernard having been born in 1893. His wife is not recorded in the Census for she has returned to Manor House on census night and is there with her widowed father and most of her siblings. Albert Farrer Smith is now an "agent for athletic goods".

In 1881 Alfred and his family were living at Prospect House which stood at the junction of Manor Road and Station Road (this section of Station Road had earlier been known as Park Square or Middle Common Road). He was a Woollen Manager. He and his wife have 3 children and a servant. I think the Wilby family may have owned Prospect House.

In 1871 the 24 year old Alfred is living on Smithies Lane Gomersal with his 66 year old Batley born widower grandfather, Joseph Farrar. Joseph is a Book Keeper and Alfred is an Insurance agent. He is

unmarried. In 1861 Alfred is 14 and studying at Bell Grove House school in Ackworth. In 1851 Alfred is living in Birstall with his parents Benjamin and Ann (Farrer). They live next door to his grandfather. Benjamin is solicitor's clerk.

**1901 Joseph Gomersal (Lamplighter Gas living in 3 rooms), Rachel Goldthorpe (widow and no occupation in 3 rooms)**

Early in this research I believed that Henry Ellis was living at Bleak House which I concluded was then known as South Field House. Further consideration has led me to believe that Henry Ellis lived further along Manor Road towards Sowood Lane. There is no obvious occupant of Bleak House in that year but the families shown next to Ellis on the enumerator's route are Joseph Gomersal and Rachel Goldthorpe. I wonder if Bleak House was home to two families around this time. If this was the case such arrangements were temporary for in 1910 the house is shown in the possession of Wilson Briggs. He is shown in the Burgess Roll in 1905-06 with a Manor Road address and it seems likely he was living here from 1905-06 or earlier. Briggs is shown in 1901 as living on Horbury Road.

The 1901 shows Henry Ellis, a 53 Wool Manufacturer living to the west of Bleak House closer to Sowood Lane. The house goes by the name of "South Field House". Henry is a wool manufacturer and employer born in Ossett as were his wife and family who are living with him. On Manor Road south there are no other houses between this and Sowood Lane. Henry's family comprise his wife Mary (aged 45) and their children John Wm (aged 22 and a Woollen Manufacturer), Charles (21 Rag Merchant), Joseph Henry (19 Rag Merchant), Joshua (18 Overlooker Factory), Ethel M (15), Gertrude (14) and Alfred E (11).

In 1851 young Henry is living on Giggie Hill Ossett with his parents Charles and Hannah and 4 siblings. His Ossett born father is a cloth manufacturer employing 9 men. In 1861 and 1871 the 23 year old Henry is living on Healey Lane with his parents, Charles Ellis (in 1871 a 53 year old Cloth Manufacturer and farmer employing 6 men) and his wife Hannah. Henry has 4 siblings living in the household between the ages of 20 and 28. Like those siblings Henry is unmarried and "Assists in Trade".

In 1881 Henry was living with his wife and 2 sons on Church Lane Ossett. He is a Cloth Manufacturer. They have a general servant. By 1891 the family have moved to School Lane Ossett and there are now 7 children and a general servant.

The 7 Cottages to the east of South Field House, between Manor Road and Manor Lane, are occupied by **Joseph Gomersal (Lamplighter Gas living in 3 rooms), Rachel Goldthorpe (widow and no occupation in 3 rooms)**, Martha Ellis (widow aged 70 a Grocer in 3 rooms), George Firth (Coal Miner in 1 room), Samuel Matthews (a miner in 2 rooms), Emily Powell (feeder of comb and scribbler wool -2 rooms), Thomas Laycock (Check Weighman 2 rooms). Around the corner on Manor Lane there are 4 cottages before reaching Mark Wilby a 73 year old widower living at Manor House. He is a retired Woollen Manufacturer. The 4 cottages (each has 2 rooms) are occupied by John Dews (Weaver), Thomas Land (stone mason), Fred Hall (Painter Journeyman) and James Tattersley (Coal Miner).

## Land Tax Records 1781- 1832

The Land Tax was a national property based tax to raise money to fund the war against France. The records cover the period 1781 to about 1832 and to that extent they precede the ownership and building of Bleak House. However it is known that Joseph Scott sold the land to Nathan Mitchell in 1833 and maps for 1840 show structures on the site of Bleak House. The 1813 map from the Inclosure Order does not show any obvious structures on the site. The conclusion is that buildings were erected on the site between 1813 and 1840. Earlier records have told us that John Humble was building his manufactory to the west of Bleak House in the late 1830's early 1840's

An interpretation of the Census information for 1841 and 1851 also suggests that *Randolph Wilby* and *David Wilby* may have been living here or hereabouts. If that is the case does the Land Tax Record support these conclusions?

There are Land Tax Record references to Joseph Scott in the early 1780's when he appears as an owner occupier of a single property. He would be in his late 20's. The Land Records do not specify addresses and so it is necessary to re-construct the Assessor's route when he was surveying property. It is known, from other information that Joseph lived at the junction of (what is now known as) Station Road and Park Square. In those days the road was known as Middle Common Road.

In 1826 Joseph has a house and land and also eleven cottages which are occupied by the likes of James Scott, Ann Scott, *David Wilby*, Isaac Wilby, Francis Wilby and others. In 1831 Joseph is renting to the likes of Ann Scott, *Randolph Wilby*, *David Wilby*, Frank Wilby, Widow Scott, Joseph Ramsden, John Ramsden, Joseph Richardson, Joseph Fisher and Joshua Illingworth. What conclusions can we draw from these records?

The 1841 and /or the 1851 Census for this part of Ossett mention John Ramsden, Randolph Wilby and David Wilby.; names shown in The Land Tax Record for 1831 as being tenants of Joseph Scott. The Bleak House site was then owned by Scott.

Of course Joseph also owned sites elsewhere but the combination of these different information sources does provide some corroboration for the suggestion that Randolph and David Wilby (and probably John Ramsden) were renting dwellinghouses at the Manor road/Manor Lane junction in the early 1830's and that David Wilby may have been here in the mid 1820's. This being the case the structures shown on the 1840 map were probably constructed in the mid/late 1820's.

# MANOR HOUSE MANOR LANE OSSETT

## MARK WILBY (1827-1912)

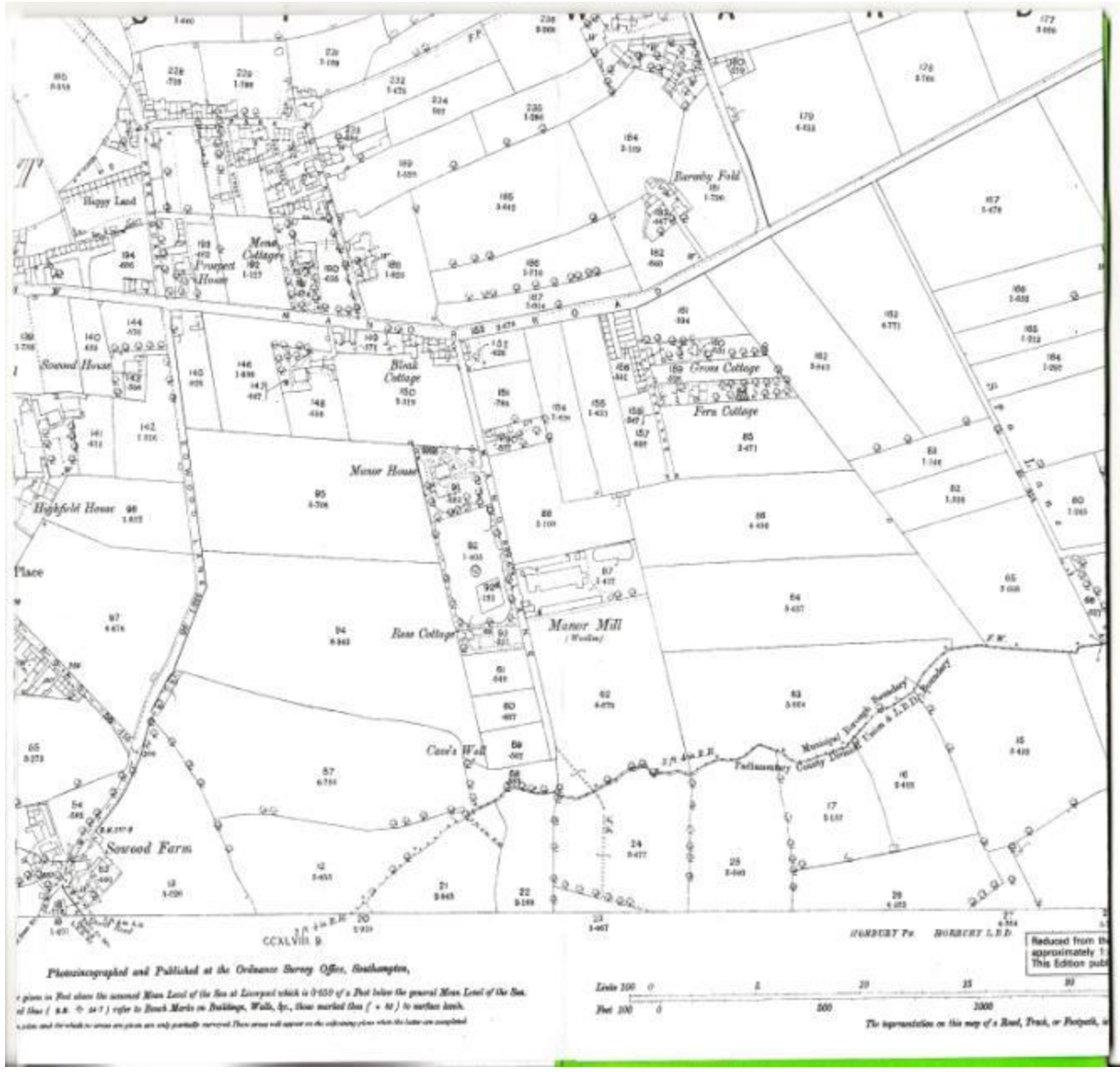
Manor House or Manor Villa as it was once known is situated on Cave Well Gardens just off Manor Lane in Ossett. The house was built in the late 1860's and for most of its existence its location and address was Manor Lane which itself has been variously known as Cave Well Lane, Hallas Road or simply as an "Occupation Road" (being a way to a place of work or occupation).

It seems probable that the house was built by Mark Wilby in 1870 following Mark's purchase of the land from Nathan Mitchell who was, by then the builder and owner of the nearby Bleak House on Manor Road. In 1871 the Census shows Mark Wilby living with his family in Manor Villa, Manor Lane.

In November 1869 (WYAS Deed reference 1869 Vol 630 page 607 no.752) Nathan Mitchell Gentleman and Mark Wilby Cloth Manufacturer were parties to a conveyance whereby Nathan sold 2Acres 1 rood and 27 perches bounded east by Hallas Road, west by Land in the ownership of the Vicar of Dewsbury (known unremarkably as "Vicars' Fields"), north by land owned by Nathan Mitchell (on which Bleak House had been constructed a few years earlier in about 1864) and south by land in the ownership of Ebenezer Fothergill. The land had been "lately occupied by Nathan Mitchell but was now in the occupation of Mark Wilby".

This was the land upon which Manor House (below in 2009) was built. The Deed is witnessed by Nathan's brother Eli Mitchell an Attorney at Law who lived at Little Town End Ossett and by David Pickard, Ossett Manufacturer. David Pickard was the brother of Andrew and Hannah Pickard of "Green Mount", The Green, Ossett who were business associates of Mark Wilby in the Cloth Manufacturing venture at nearby Manor Mill on Manor Lane. The House and Mill are shown on the 1890 map overleaf.





**Manor House and Manor Mill, Manor Lane in 1890**

Ossett grocer and draper, George Pickard (born 1800) married Hannah Mitchell (born 1805) in 1824 and they had four children, two boys and two girls: Sarah, born in 1826; David born in 1830, Andrew born in 1835 and Hannah born in 1838. The family lived in a cottage on the site where Green Mount would later be built, where Southdale Road meets The Green. George Pickard died in 1852 and his wife Hannah in 1862. It is also thought that Sarah Pickard died in her teens sometime after 1841.

Meanwhile, the two boys, David and Andrew had done well and by 1871, David (41) is a "Cloth Manufacturing Master" employing 100 women, 20 boys and 90 men. In fact, he was then in partnership with Mark Wilby and

they were the co-owners of Manor Mill, Ossett which was used for rag grinding and scribbling. David is still single and is living with his unmarried sister Hannah (32) at the Pickard homestead on the Green. Andrew (35) is also single, but had moved to live in lodgings in Leeds where he is described as a "Woollen Manufacturer", with mill premises in Aire Street, Leeds. **Mark Wilby** (1827-1912) was born in Ossett and christened here on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1827. He was the son of George Wilby, Wool Manufacturer (born in Ossett about 1790-died 1879) and Elizabeth who were married on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 1818. Mark was the fifth child of 11 born to George and (Jane or Elizabeth) between 1818 and 1841. George was the son of David Wilby and grandson of Isaac Wilby(1743-1806) the owner of Scotts Yard, Giggal Hill until his death in 1806

The first sign of Mark is in the **1841** Census at the age of 14 when he is living on Middle Common with his father George, mother **Jane** and 8 of his siblings. His eldest brother, John(aged 20), is living next door with 70 year old Sarah Wilby. His younger brother, Obidiah, born 1837 appears to have died before 1841.

By **1851**, at the age of 24, Mark is married to Martha Clegg and they are living on Upper Common with Martha's widowed mother Ann Clegg(45) and her son Frank Clegg (20). Ann is a shopkeeper and Frank a wool manufacturer employing one man. Mark also describes himself as a wool manufacturer. There is no occupation recorded against Martha's name. Elsewhere Mark's parents George and Elizabeth were getting on with their lives. Mark's mother was recorded as Jane in 1841 – I cannot locate a marriage for George in the 1840's or a death of a Jane Wilby so it may be that his mother was Elizabeth Jane. In any event, in 1851, George and Elizabeth are still living on Upper Common with 6 of their children. 58 year old George is a Wool Manufacturer. I have been unable to find the family in the 1861 Census.



**Mark Wilby's initials on Manor House (2009)**

**1871** sees Mark and his wife Martha (born 1829) living for the first time at "Manor Villa" Manor Lane. He is a Woollen Manufacturer and he and Martha have six children born between 1853 and 1866. Jane Ann Wilby was born in 1853, Eliza (1856), Emily (1859), Sarah Ellen(1861), Frederick Atkinson Wilby(1863) and Kate or Catherine born in 1866. Their next door neighbour is Ebenezer Fothergill who is mentioned in the 1869 Deed by which Mark acquired the land from Nathan Mitchell.

Mark made certain that future generations knew of his achievements and his initials are carved high on the front of Manor Villa as shown opposite.

Mark's father, George was still alive in 1871 (aged about 80) and he is shown then living on Ossett Common as a farmer of 6 acres. He was to die in 1879 in his mid 80's.

In **1881** Mark is a Woollen Cloth Manufacturer employing 40 people. The eldest of Mark and Martha's children, Jane Ann has married and left Manor House. The other five children remain there with their parents. What a party they must have had at Manor House in 1875 when Jane and Alfred Farrer Smith married. Alfred was born in Birstall in 1847. In 1881, 6 years after their marriage, Alfred, Jane Ann and their children Maud Lillian (5) Kathleen (2) and Gertrude(1) were living at Prospect House which stood at the junction of Manor Road and Station Road (this section of Station Road had earlier been known as Park Square or Middle Common Road). They have a domestic servant. Alfred was a Woollen Manager having previously been an Insurance Agent. He was "of good stock with a father who was a Solicitor's Clerk and a Grandfather who was a Book Keeper. In 1891 Alfred and Jane Ann were living at Bleak House.

Manor House in **1891** is still home to 64 year old Mark but his wife Martha passed away in 1886. Mark is living with one of his daughters, Eliza(35) and grand daughter Kathleen Smith the daughter of Alfred Farrer Smith and Jane Ann Smith (nee Wilby) who are living yards away at Bleak House. He has a general servant. Manor House is a large house for three people. There are records (an Abstract of Title for Bleak House and a Deed of 1894) which suggest Mark was in "possession" of Bleak House around this time. He certainly did not own Bleak House and so it seems likely that he rented the house from James Mitchell or his son Godfrey Mitchell who were the beneficiaries of Nathan Mitchell's estate. It is probable that Mark sublet Bleak House to Alfred and Jane Ann Smith.

Two of Mark's other children **Frederick Atkinson Wilby** and Sarah Ellen Wilby had married in 1887 and 1890 respectively. Frederick married 19 year old Ada Sophie Whiteley of Earlsheaton and they had 4 children between 1889 and 1895. Ada was the daughter of Chickenley born David Whiteley who appears to have had a chequered career as a wool blanket fuller(1871), Gentleman (1881) and retired Publican (1891). In 1891 Frederick was a wool Manufacturer living on Park Square and in 1901 he was an Insurance Agent living with Ada and their four children at Prospect House. This was the house in which his sister, Jane Ann and her husband Alfred Farrer Smith had lived in 1881. In 1810 this land was owned by Randolph Phillips and the Wilby and Phillips families were related by a marriage between William Phillips and Mary Wilby in the mid 1830's and in 1890 **Sarah Ellen Wilby** married Thomas William Phillips. In 1910 prospect House is shown in the ownership of Fred Wilby and is occupied by Ada.

Thomas William Phillips was the only son of Charles Thornes Phillips (b. 4 August 1836) of West Wells House situated behind Brookdale Mills on West Wells Road. Between 1871 and 1881, West Wells House had become the residence of Mr. Charles Thornes Philips, the son of Ossett grocer and prominent Wesleyan, William Phillips(b.1796) and his wife **Mary Wilby** (b.1805). Charles T. Phillips was the principal director of C.T. Phillips and Son, merino, mungo and shoddy manufacturers, with premises located at Queen Street, Wakefield Road and **Whitley Spring Mill**, Flushdyke. He was also interested in coal mining, and at one time financed the colliery company, which worked a small mine at Runtlings Lane(see below). This mine had previously belonged to Joshua Wilby (brother of Mary Wilby) of South Leas Farm on South Parade(opposite where St John's Church now stands).

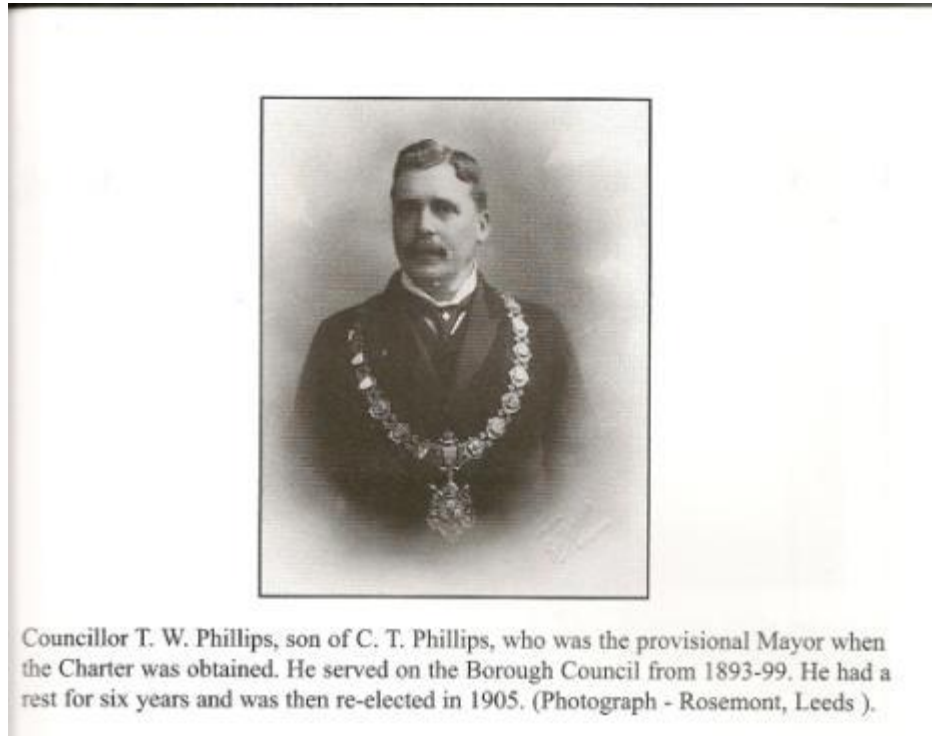
Charles married Esther Tolson in 1861. Charles Philips was also deeply involved in local public life. He was chairman of Ossett magistrates around the turn of the 19th century; the secretary of the old Mechanic's Institute in 1852; member of the old Board of Surveyors in 1865; vice chairman in 1866; chairman of the Local Board in 1872 and 1874; the first president of the Chamber of Commerce; the provisional Mayor of Ossett in 1890; a former trustee and treasurer of the White Cloth Hall in Leeds and also a West Riding Magistrate.

*Westfield Colliery about 1880 originally owned by Joshua Wilby and located close to the old GNER railway, which connected Ossett with Batley and Wakefield. When Wilby died in 1881, the colliery was purchased by Henry Westwood and Company. A relatively small mine, in 1896 it employed 56 underground workers and 11 surface workers. The manager was Mr. J. Simpkin and the under-manager, Mr. J. Wilkinson*



Sarah Ellen

Wilby and her husband Thomas William Phillips (born 1865) were living at "Homefield" West Wells in 1901 and their address in 1891 was at Queens Street next to Mallin Cottage close to Thomas' father's house at West Wells (opposite). In 1891 Charles was visiting Harrogate and in 1901 he was in Scarborough with his daughter Clara. Charles Phillips died at the age of 82 in December 1918 and was buried in the Wesleyan Burial Ground at South Parade. Meanwhile in Ossett, Thomas is running the family business. In 1891 he is described as a cloth



Councillor T. W. Phillips, son of C. T. Phillips, who was the provisional Mayor when the Charter was obtained. He served on the Borough Council from 1893-99. He had a rest for six years and was then re-elected in 1905. (Photograph - Rosemont, Leeds ).

manufacturer and in 1901 as a Mungo manufacturer. As far as I can tell Sarah and Thomas had no children. Mr. Thomas W. Phillips, an ex-mayor of Ossett, who was to live at Mallin House, Ossett, died in 1915 aged 50. However, the business at Whitley Spring Mill, Flushdyke was continued after the death of the two principals.

In 1892 Kate or Catherine Wilby (born 1866) married John William Cussons, a manufacturing chemist born in Louth Lincolnshire in 1868. John William was the son of Thomas Tomlinson Cussons. Thomas established and was Chairman of the British soap manufacturing company Cussons & Son. In the early 1880s Thomas opened a chemist in Station Road Ossett (now the Yorkshire Bank) and is recorded there in 1888 but the Cussons do not appear in Ossett in the 1891 Census. In Ossett Thomas also operated as a wine merchant with an exclusive right

to distribute W & A Gilbey Wines in the town. Following the establishment of the Ossett chemist he established an additional chemist in Louth Lincolnshire.

In 1891 he opened a further chemist in Swinton, Salford. John William Cussons was a manufacturing chemist in Pendlebury in 1901 and it is likely that he worked with his father and his brother Alex Tom Cussons who was apprenticed in Ossett. Tom then moved to Swinton Salford with his parents and subsequently took over the company when his father died in 1905. Tom Cussons is best known for manufacturing Imperial Leather soap. It is not known the extent to which John William Cussons was involved in the Company business. John William Cussons and Sarah Ellen appear not to have had children by 1901.

By **1901** widower Mark Wilby is 73 years of age and living at Manor House, the home he built some 30 years earlier. He is a retired woollen manufacturer. Interestingly four of his daughters, two of whom are married are shown to be at Manor House on Census night. Compare this with 10 years earlier when only unmarried Eliza was with her father. In 1901 Jane Ann Smith(48), Eliza Wilby(45), Emily Wilby(42) and Catherine Cussons (34) are present. Jane Ann Phillips is a mile away at West Wells and Frederick is 300 yards away at Prospect House Station Road. A family gathering it seems. Did Mark have something to announce? Perhaps he was about to sell Manor House.

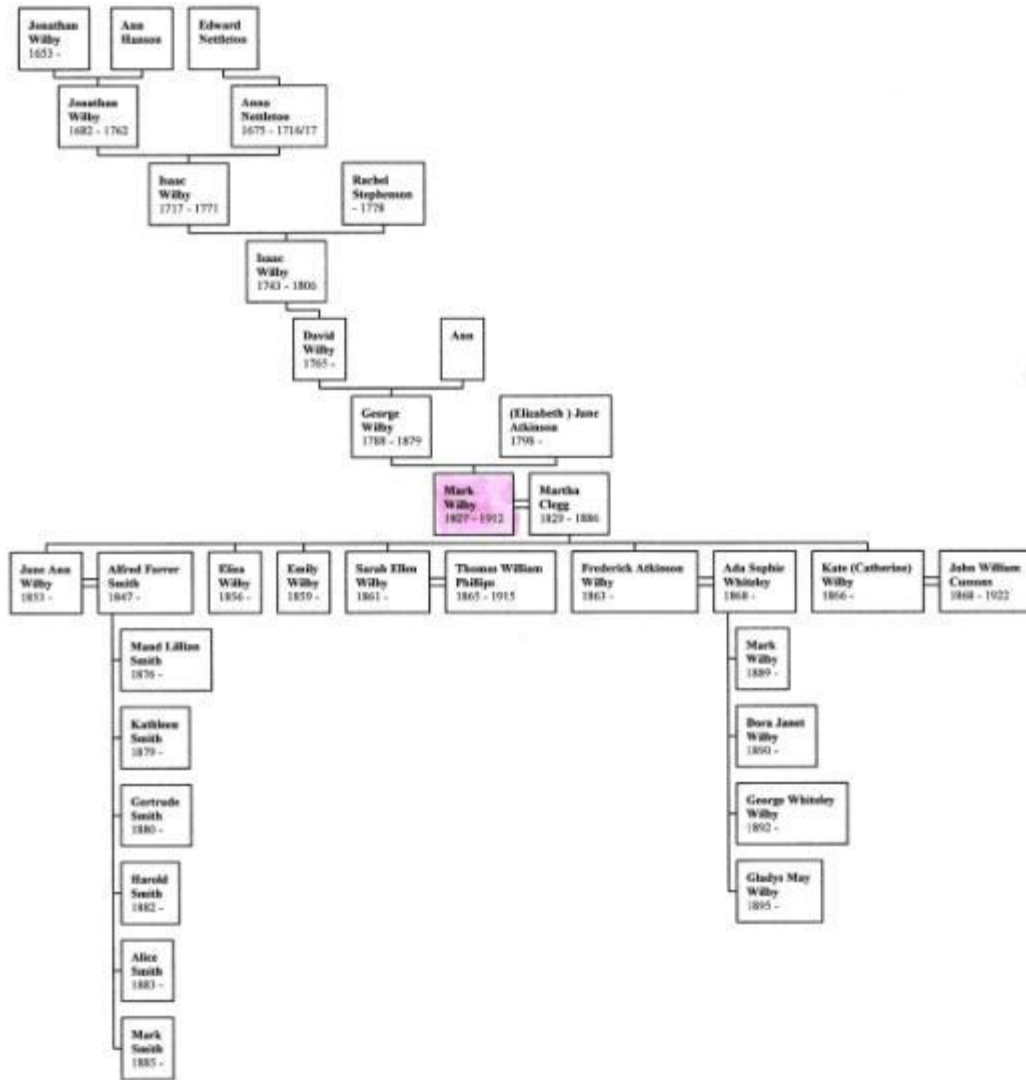
We may never know but in 1905-06 John Thomas Marsden is shown in the Burgess Roll at Manor House Manor Lane. The Inland Revenue Valuation record for 1910 shows that Manor House is owned and occupied by John Thomas Marsden. In the garden and grounds stands a "reservoir" , greenhouse, vinery, stable, coach house and wood shed. The Burgess Roll for 1913-14 also shows him at Manor House. In 1927 Manor House is occupied by the Misses Marsden.



**JOHN THOMAS MARSDEN, J.P.,** Manor House, Ossett; son of the late Joseph Marsden; born at Ossett, December 1st 1852; educated at South Ossett Church Schools. Extract wool, rag and mungo merchant; Managing Director of Marsden Brothers Ltd; Director of Woodkirk Stone and Brick Company; was a member of the Corporation from 1892 to 1899; Justice of the Peace in 1893 when the Borough Commission was first granted; co-opted member of the Technical School Committee. Married, first, Hannah, daughter of the late George Nettleton; second, Annie, daughter of the late John Glover. (Photograph - Pike & Co.).

In 1912 Mark Wilby died at the age of 85. His death was registered in Ormskirk. Perhaps he had left Ossett for the North West for his final years. No doubt he had time to reflect upon his life in Ossett. His legacy remains today in the form of Manor House and he had the satisfaction of seeing three of his girls marrying into successful families of some standing

*Hourglass Tree of Mark Wilby*



**SOWOOD COTTAGE**

**MANOR ROAD OSSETT**



**THE MITCHELL FAMILY**

Sowood Cottage is situated on the south eastern side of the junction of Station Road and Manor Road Ossett. The 1911 Census shows 8 year old Harry Mitchell living here with his parents Thomas William Mitchell (born Ossett 1866) and Fanny Mitchell (nee Proctor born 1867) formerly of Roecliffe near Boroughbridge in North Yorkshire. **Harry Mitchell** was born in 1903 and in 1964 he purchased Bleak House, Manor Road from Florence Annie Bedford. By then Harry was a retired farmer though still dabbling in land transactions elsewhere in Ossett. No doubt, when he bought Bleak House he would have been aware that it had been built exactly 100 years earlier in 1864 by his great grandfather's brother Nathan Mitchell.

The key players in this history;

Harry Mitchell ( born 1903) the son of

Thomas William Mitchell (1866) and Fanny Proctor. The parents of Harry Mitchell

Thomas Mitchell (1827) and Sarah Smith. The grandparents of Harry Mitchell

Joseph Mitchell (1799-1835) and Ann. The great grandparents of Harry Mitchell. Joseph was Nathan Mitchell's brother.

Harry's parents were **Thomas William Mitchell and Fanny Mitchell** (nee Proctor) who married in late 1900. Thomas was a Cart Agent. Sowood Cottage was a new home for Fanny but it seems likely that Thomas William and his family had lived here for many years.

The **1911** Census shows Harry (born 1903) as the only child in Thomas William and Fanny's household. Thomas William (1827) himself was the tenth child of eleven born to **Thomas Mitchell** and **Sarah ( nee Smith)** over the period 1848 to 1868. Thomas and Sarah were both born in Ossett in 1827 and 1824 respectively. Thomas William's siblings were Martha (1848), Sarah Ann (1850), Edna Jane (1851), Joseph (1853), Herbert (1856), Ellen (1857), Emma (1857), Ada (1860), Adelaide (1862) and Clara Annie (1868).

In common with many living in the Ossett Middle Common area at that time , their father, Thomas Mitchell appears to have turned his hand to a bit of cloth manufacturing and a bit of farming. The address at which he lived from 1841,originally with his widowed mother Ann and his brothers and sisters, has varied over the years but it seems likely that each Census has recorded him here at Sowood Cottage.

In **1841** Thomas is living with his widowed mother, Ann (born 1804) and some of his brothers and sisters. The Census address is Low Common but the address is adjacent to Denton Lane which was the name for Sowood Lane in those days (Because the Denton family lived at Sowood Farm and Denton Lane was then the way to the Farm). It seems probable that this was Sowood Cottage.

Thomas' father was Joseph Mitchell who was born on the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1799 and died on 13 January 1835 leaving Ann a widow aged 31 and with five children under the age of eight. Thomas' siblings were Mary (born about 1826), Harriet (1827), Joseph (1829), Hannah (1831) and Sarah (1835). Joseph was interred at the Ossett Congregational Church Burial Ground at Dimple Wells. His was one of eighteen Mitchells whose bodies were

exhumed in the late 1960's to make way for housing development. More than one hundred exhumed remains were re-buried at Gawthorpe Burial Ground but no headstones appear to have survived the re-burials.

In **1851**, Thomas has married Sarah Smith and his mother has passed away. He is a Cloth Manufacturer of Middle Common and they are living with their first three children. The next address in the 1851 Census is Low Common. It seems likely the 'boundary' of Low Common has 'shifted'. As with 1841, and subsequent Censuses, the house in which the Mitchell family lived is the first or last address of a type in the Census Enumerator's Count. For example in 1841 the house address was Low Common with the next address Denton Lane. In 1851 the house address was Middle Common with the next address Low Common. In this sense the house was a 'marker' for Census purposes. A house at a junction of roads was often such a marker. Sowood Cottage was such a property.



In **1861** Thomas is a weaver with eight children. His address is Middle Common and the next Census address is Denton Lane just as it was in 1841. By **1871** Thomas has turned his hand to farming and the Census records him as a farmer of 6 acres employing "self and one boy". His address is Denton Lane End and the next address is Middle Common. I suspect the address in earlier years hasn't been Denton Lane End (even though Denton Lane existed then) because the Census Enumerator recorded the house with a frontage on to Manor Road (or Horbury Road as it then was). Once again though it seems likely that the house in which the Mitchells were living was Sowood Cottage. Thomas William Mitchell was born in 1866 and he was living here with his parents and some of his siblings in 1871.

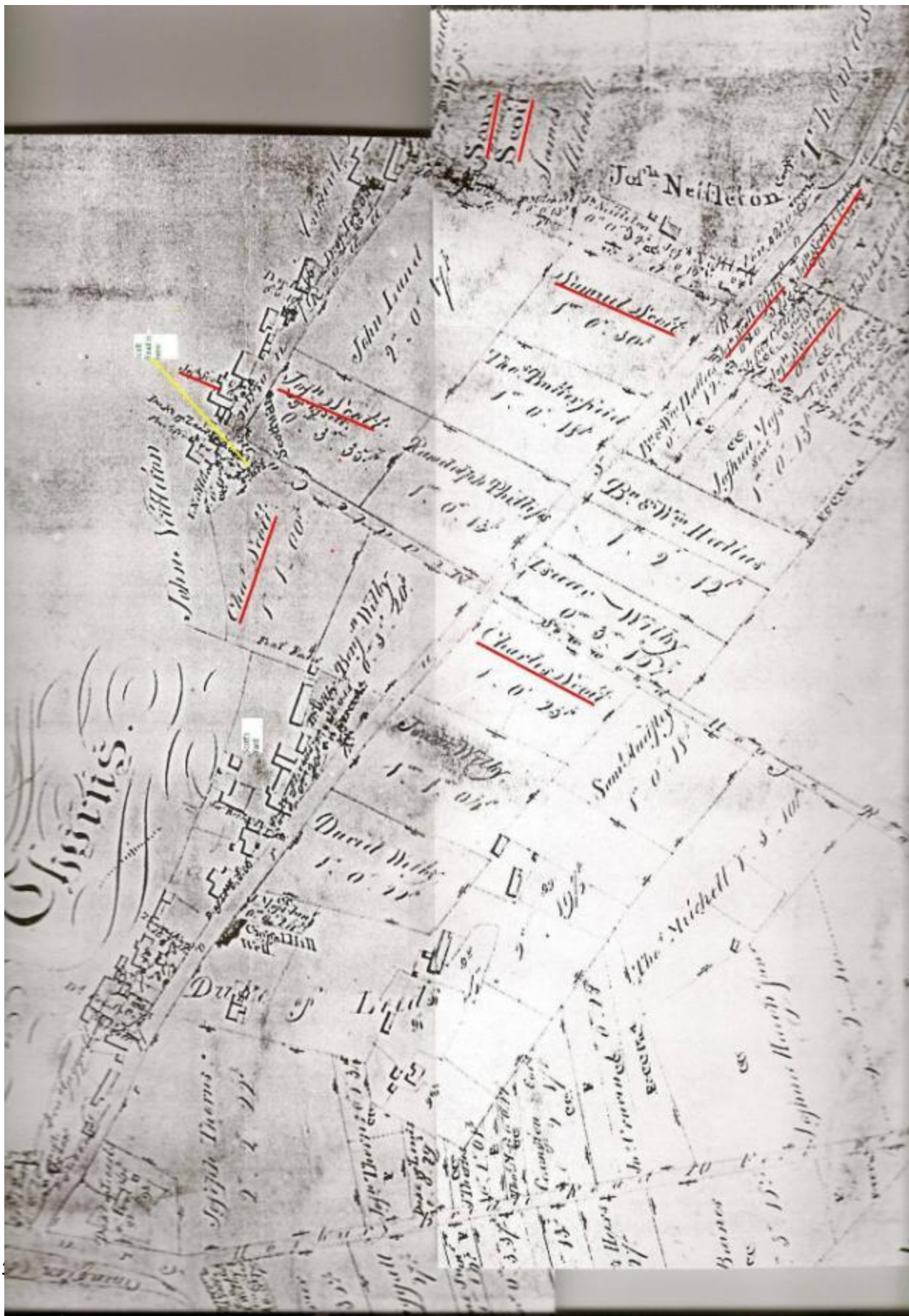
In **1881** and **1891** Thomas is recorded as a farmer with the **only** address on Sowood Lane. The next address is Park Square (Prospect House which was situated on the north east side of the [present] Station Road/ Manor Road junction). This must be Sowood Cottage. Thomas William is shown as a farmer's son.

In **1901** the 35 year old Thomas William (Harry's father) is a Farmer living with his new bride Fanny (Proctor) with an address of Sowood Lane. The next address in the Census is Southfield House which was further to the east along Manor Road. This is Sowood Cottage where Harry Mitchell was to be born two years later in 1903.

The history suggests therefore that the Mitchells were in Sowood Cottage from 1841 and the likelihood is that they were here earlier than that. In 1807 the land upon which the house is built was owned by Isaac Wilby. The Wilby brothers had quite a number of land ownerships, including Scotts Yard, in Upper Common and Giggall Hill around this time. The map supporting the Ossett Inclosure Order does not appear to show a structure here in 1813 and it is supposed that Sowood Cottage was perhaps built shortly after that date. Perhaps it was built for Joseph Mitchell (born 1799) who married Ann in about 1825 and who had their first child, Mary, in about 1826. Isaac Wilby died in 1806 and his son David sold several of his landholdings shortly thereafter to fulfil his father's last wishes that his wealth be left in equal proportions to his children.

The 1813 Order map is shown overleaf and shows the land, at the junction of Sowood Lane and Manor Road, in the ownership of Isaac Wilby. It will be seen that no structures appear on the land at that time. Further along Sowood Lane is land in the name of Thos. Mitchell. This is probably Joseph's grandfather Thomas Mitchell born 1775 who, of course, was also Nathan Mitchell's grandfather.

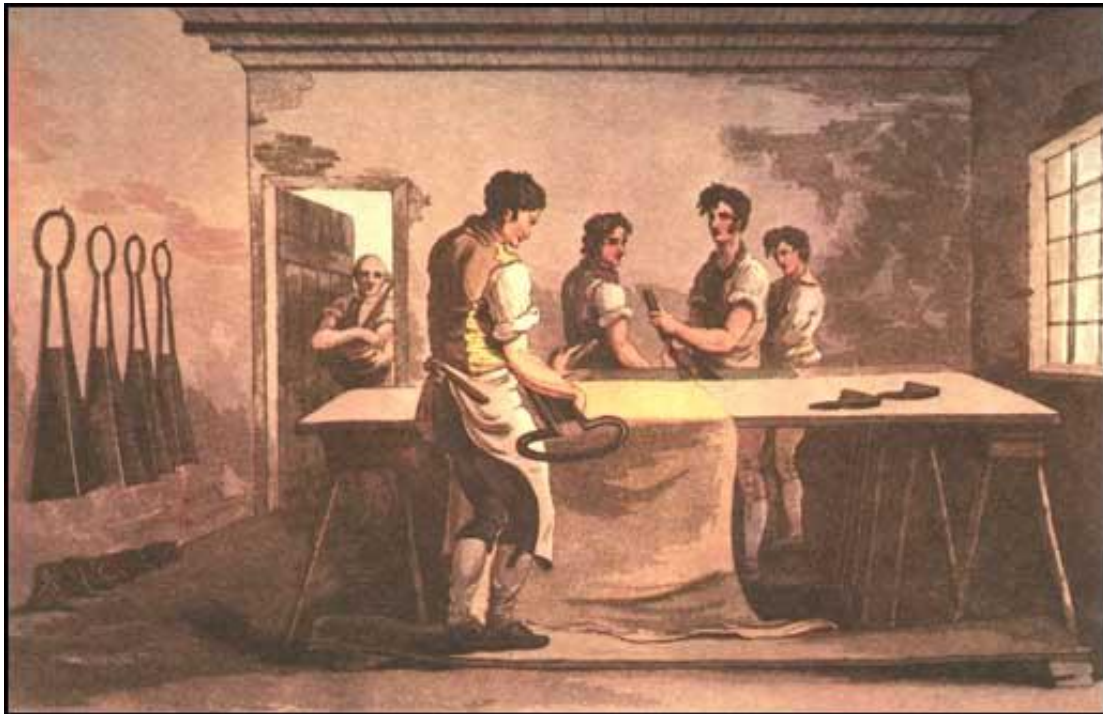
When he bought Bleak House in 1964 Harry Mitchell may have sold Sowood Cottage thus bringing to an end almost 150 years occupancy by the Mitchell family. In early 2009 Sowood Cottage is for sale again. This time is has a price tag of £200,000, reduced from £250,000 some months earlier, and a closing date for offers of 20<sup>th</sup> March 2009.



## LIFE IN OSSETT IN THE 18th AND 19th CENTURIES

The town of Ossett occupies a hill top site off the line of major roads, although the Wakefield and Halifax Turnpike (1741-1870) passed about half a mile to the north of the town centre. By the early **1700's** handloom weavers were working fifteen hours a day at home, the early 'cottage industry', to produce broadcloth. Many homes in Ossett had one or more looms and whole families were involved in the various operations of making cloth. Many Middle Common families worked, almost exclusively, in the weaving and woollen industry. Consequently some of what follows traces the history of weaving as well as the history of the town in which they lived.

In **1764** the population of Ossett was about 450 mainly living at or close to the existing town centre but with other small settlements in other locations including around Middle Common. In the town's Market Place - a Victorian place name – stood the Grammar School, established in 1737-38 as an elementary school (rebuilt in 1834) Around this time James Hargreaves developed the Spinning Jenny which, unlike previous spinning machines, could spin a large number of threads at once. This and the development of the Arkwright waterframe and Crompton's spinning mule meant that handloom weavers were guaranteed a constant supply of yarn, full employment and high wages.



This period of prosperity for handloom weavers was not to last very long and by **1785** Edmund Cartwright had invented a weaving machine which could be operated by horses, a waterwheel or a steam engine. The power loom took a while to become established and even by **1800** only a few hundred were in operation in Britain. However the decline of the handloom weaver was inevitable when the news became widespread that an unskilled boy could weave three and a half pieces of material on a power loom in the time a skilled weaver using traditional methods could weave only one.

Those who owned or worked the power loom were to become prosperous and the home handloom cottage industry continued to decline as the demand for cloth produced by handloom weavers lessened. Those who still found masters willing to employ them had to accept far lower wages than in the past.

*In his book **Origin of Power Loom Weaving**, published in 1828, William Radcliffe described the weavers he knew at the end of the 18th century.*

*Their dwellings and small gardens clean and neat - all the family well clad - the men with each a watch in his pocket, and the women dressed to their own fancy - the church crowded to excess every Sunday - every house well furnished with a clock in elegant mahogany or fancy case - handsome tea services in Staffordshire ware.*



By the time of the first national census in **1801** the population of Ossett had increased to 3424, an eight fold increase over only 40 years but those working in the weaving industry, including the Pickards, were no doubt affected by the inevitable decline of the handloom industry. Throughout Britain, in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, there were major demonstrations, some violent, in support of workers' demands for a minimum wage in the industry. By 1812 groups of Luddites were attacking mills and factories in the North West which were using the power looms

### **17<sup>th</sup> Century properties formerly on Illingworth Street**

By 1815 handloom weavers were having great problems finding work as they struggled to compete with the power loom. In attempts to earn a living they sold their cloth at a lower price than that being produced by the local factories. As a result, the average wage of a handloom weaver fell from 21s in 1802 to less than 9s in 1817.

The extent to which the families in the Bleak House/ Middle Common history were affected by these changes is unknown but it would have depended upon their willingness and ability to embrace the industrial changes as they impacted upon their lives. If they were able to move away from the handloom and into mills using the power loom then they may have escaped many of the deprivations suffered by those who were not as fortunate.

**A letter signed by a 'weaver from Bury' appeared in the *Manchester Observer* on 22nd August, 1818.**

*A weaver is no longer able to provide for the wants of a family. We are shunned by the remainder of society and branded as rogues because we are unable to pay our way. If we apply to the shopkeeper, tailor, shoemaker, or any other tradesman for a little credit, we are told that we are unworthy of it, and to trust us would be dangerous.*

It is known that the majority of workers went into the mills, which were involved in various stages of yarn and cloth making. The mills in Ossett were relatively small compared with those of other towns. It is known that



Spring Field Mills was on the site of Ossett's first documented powered textile Mill, for scribbling, built in 1780/81, and further powered mills were built from the 1780's onwards. There were mills and dye works at Spring End, at Spring Mill, at Victoria Mills and at Manor Mill and so the area was well located in this respect. It is more than likely therefore that those who lived there would benefit from these rapid technological advances. In addition to the woollen industry, small scale coal mining had existed in the area from even earlier times.

The extensive commons and greens of Ossett were enclosed under the powers of a specific Act, the Ossett Inclosure Act of **1807**, and allotted in 1807/08, although an official award was not signed until 1813. This was due to the death of Thomas Gee, the commissioner appointed by the Government to undertake the allotment of lands. Gee's replacement was chosen by a group of six major Ossett landowners. Not far away, in the **1820's**, the area known as Ossett Spa possessed two bathing establishments whose "waters are celebrated for curing the gout, rheumatism and the scrofula". Later in 1877 there were plans to develop these into a second Harrogate. In 1864 the "Ossett Observer" carried the following advertisement

for the baths;-

***"The original Ossett Spa Baths are open daily from 8a.m. and 8p.m. The waters are recommended by the faculty for Scorbutic and Rheumatic Complaints. Sulphureous Baths 1s 3d; Hot Baths 1/-; Cold ditto 6d. Every accommodation in Refreshments, Beds and Stabling" George Shaw Proprietor.***

Meanwhile, in 1813 in nearby Batley, the processing of woollen rags was developed. The techniques enabled waste woollen material to be broken down to a fibrous state and worked into virgin wool to make cloth. The products were called mungo and shoddy. Ossett became an important centre of the 'rag trade', particularly the initial process of rag sorting

Rags arriving in Ossett from a wide area had to be sorted according to colour and quality. In some cases, rag merchants delivered bags of rags to cottages, where women sorted and cleaned them. They were collected and replaced by further waste material, thus providing households with a steady income. The sorted rags were sold to mungo and shoddy manufacturers for processing and after carbonising (to destroy the cotton) and grinding (to pull the fibres apart); the resultant materials were usually mixed with new wool. The processing of rags and the production of mungo and shoddy were to revolutionize the industrial life of Ossett over the remainder of the nineteenth century and whilst handloom weaving continued in Ossett throughout the reign of Queen Victoria, albeit on a slowly decreasing scale, powered looms were not introduced until the beginning of her reign in about 1840.

Ossett's hill top location had resulted in early railway routes and communications by-passing the town; the Manchester and Leeds Railway, opened in **1840**, passed in the Calder Valley to the south, while subsequent railway promotions, including an atmospheric railway to Ossett, had failed. It was to be another 22 years before Ossett was to achieve its first railway link. In 1851 the first Ordnance Survey Map of Ossett was made and this shows numerous tenters, where woven blankets were hung; several of these were at Low Common and one was located at the junction of what is now Station Road and Manor Road. It can be seen in the maps reproduced elsewhere. In 1906 The Ossett Observer carried a series of articles based on personal reminiscences of Ossett half a century earlier in the **1850's**.

At that time the core of Ossett consisted of one main thoroughfare – Dale Street, leading through the town to Queens Street and The Green. Dale Street started at Town End on the old Wakefield and Halifax Turnpike, which also passed close to Gawthorpe. Repairs were made to the roads in those days by spreading a few loads of dross on the surface, to be flattened by horses hooves and the passing traffic. Church Street was a private road known as Dark Lane or Field Lane. Headlands Road was called Westfield Road (not surprisingly this was in the 'westfield' of Ossett); Prospect Road was then Back Lane. Wesley Street was Pildacre Lane (since Wesley didn't come along until later) with a sewage dike along one side. Indeed several of the wretched roads incorporated this feature with the sewage finding an outlet where it might.

The site of the present Station Road was then open fields. A few public wells were constructed from which inhabitants fetched their water in cans often having to queue. Those who could afford them had private wells.



The small and damp cottages, perhaps with flooded cellars were not ideal places to bring up large families

### ***Old Cottages on Bank Street***

The death rate was high, particularly amongst babies and young children. Homes were lit with candles, naphtha lamps or rush lights. Some children ran about barefoot and barelegged, and in summer amused themselves by burying each other in the dust of the roads. There was no compulsory education, but several private schools, with fees varying between 4 1/2d and 8 1/2d per week, were kept, one by Timothy Kitson in Dale Street. Such fees were beyond the means of most families. However, reading, writing and arithmetic were taught in the Sunday schools. Families with a piece of land (*including the Wilbys and maybe the Scotts though I rather think they were a class above this type of work*) maybe kept a pig or two, a cow and a few chickens. Farming families, as well as tilling the land, probably kept cattle but a cattle plague in the 1860's caused severe hardships. Prize fights, cock fights, dog fights, bull baiting and fox hunting were carried on.

The economy of Ossett also relied on its coal mines. Whereas males and females were engaged in textile manufacture, coal mining was male dominated. However in the 1850's several women went round hawking coal, because a full load was too expensive for many householders. The Wakefield and Leeds Railway was opened to a temporary terminus at Flushdyke in **1862**, and extended to Ossett and on to Batley in 1864, when the line was doubled throughout.

The following is an extract of evidence given to Lord Ashley's Mine Commission of 1842 and tells the story of the life and work of a 15 year old female mine worker: -

#### ***Patience Kershaw aged 17, May 15.***

*"My father has been dead about a year; my mother is living and has ten children, five lads and five lasses; the oldest is about thirty, the youngest is four; three lasses go to mill; all the lads are colliers, two getters and three hurriers; one lives at home and does nothing; mother does nought but look after home.*

*All my sisters have been hurriers, but three went to the mill. Alice went because her legs swelled from hurrying in cold water when she was hot. I never went to day-school; I go to Sunday-school, but I cannot read or write; I go to pit at five o'clock in the morning and come out at five in the evening; I get my breakfast of porridge and milk first; I take my dinner with me, a cake, and eat it as I go; I do not stop or rest any time for the purpose; I get nothing else until I get home, and then have potatoes and meat, not every day meat. I hurry in the clothes I have now got on, trousers and ragged jacket; the bald place upon my head is made by thrusting the corves; my legs have never swelled, but sisters' did when they went to mill; I hurry the corves a mile and more under ground and back; they weigh 300 cwt.; I hurry 11 a-day; I wear a belt and chain at the workings, to get the corves out; the getters that I work for are naked except their caps; they pull off all their clothes; I see them at work when I go up; sometimes they beat me, if I am not quick enough, with their hands; they strike me upon my back; the boys take liberties with me sometimes they pull me about; I am the only girl in the pit; there are about 20 boys and 15 men; all the men are naked; I would rather work in mill than in coal-pit.*

*This girl is an ignorant, filthy, ragged, and deplorable-looking object, and such an one as the uncivilized natives of the prairies would be shocked to look upon."*

The subsequent Mines Act of 1842 resulted in the prohibition of mine working by boys and girls under the age of 13. I doubt life was much different for those working elsewhere.

Ossett's ancient small-freeholders, or those of small-copyhold status, had contributed to the strength of nonconformity, and the town's manufacturers were commemorated with substantial memorials in the various chapel yards, and to a lesser extent in the churchyards. Religious zeal led to the erection of various Nonconformist chapels (Methodist, Baptist and Independent) each one seeming to be in competition with the other. The chapels as well as being places of praise, prayer and preaching became social centres with many mid week activities. Their cry for total abstinence from strong drink manifests itself through the Band of Hope.

### ***The Green Congregational church (below)***

The Chapels themselves marked the major ecclesiastical and social significance of nonconformity; the



Wesleyan Chapel of **1868** in Wesley Street was a building with a fine classical façade; the anciently established Congregational cause at the Green was housed in an enormous new Gothic chapel in 1883. The Church of England ancient chapel of ease in the Market Place, existing since medieval times as a chapel to Dewsbury Church, was replaced in 1864/65 by a new parish church, described as a miniature cathedral, while the architecturally humbler church at South Ossett was consecrated in 1851; the nearby Roman Catholic chapel of St Ignatius was built in 1878. The Wakefield and Barnsley Bank opened its doors in 1870. Sadly, when chapel attendances started to decline in the mid 1900's the large and splendid buildings would become a liability.

Until **1871** the whole township of Ossett cum Gawthorpe had been civilly administered by the usual township officers of honorary overseers of the poor, constable, surveyor of highways (and chapel wardens earlier), with paid assistance, and from that date a Local Board elected by the ratepayers administered the township. An 1875 Act of Parliament gave Ossett borrowing powers to spend up to £50000 on street improvements, sewage disposal and water supplies. Civic improvements followed in the form of a public water supply negotiated in **1874** and completed in 1877; sewerage came from 1877 onwards; the new

Mechanics Institute and Technical school in Station Road was erected in 1890, and the Temperance Hall in Prospect Road in 1887. Public lighting was installed in the late 1870's through the local Gas Company of 1855. Ossett Coop opened in 1873. At this time Isaac and his family were still employed in the woollen industry, but by 1881 he had begun to turn his hand to farming and is shown as a cow keeper. his son John was a blacksmith and 16 years young Isaac junior was a factory hand.

### Opposite: Barnados Boy 1875

In **1877** an ambitious scheme was promoted for the development of the two bathing establishments at Ossett Spa; this was to make the Spa and Low Common into a second Harrogate, with sites laid out for residences, boarding houses and other public buildings, the streets being planted with trees 'after the continental style'. Only a very small part of the scheme was implemented, Goring Park Avenue commemorating the scheme and the proposed associated Montpelier Pleasure Grounds.

A new Ossett railway station was opened in **1889**, some 27 years after the temporary terminus was established at Flushdyke, and in conjunction with it, Station Road was developed as a major local artery with the first being turned in 1888. From **1890** the full civic panoply of be-robed and be-chained mayor (Edward Clay) with four aldermen and twelve councillors marked Ossett's situation among the industrial communities of the great West Riding. Ossett had received its Charter of Incorporation as a Borough. In fact what had been a series of small and physically separate communities until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, had by 1890 become largely physically connected, and now only the twin communities of Ossett and Gawthorpe were readily recognizable as different places.



The economy was essentially one based on textiles coal and agriculture. The Wilby and Scotts' lives and the history of The Yard, through the connections with textiles and agriculture in particular, mirror the history of the town. A free library was established in 1890 and was taken over by the new Corporation in 1898; an infectious diseases hospital had been established; a separate Commission of the Peace for the Borough was created at the end of 1893. The London City and Midland Bank opened in 1892

During the same decade the town rejoiced in the existence of flourishing Liberal (1893) and Conservative clubs, a Temperance Society, a Band of Hope, a Benevolent Society, a Tradesman's Association, cricket and football clubs. What had been a series of independent hamlets was now a recognizable town, with the appendage of the still isolated village of Gawthorpe to the north.

By 1891 the population of the town had grown to 10984. In 1880 the population was 10959; the population had hardly grown since 1870 and the town remained dependent upon its staple industries for its wealth and for the employment and well being of its residents. It was essentially a place of small mines and small mills, and although a number of low quality army cloth manufacturers had made fortunes during the Franco-Prussian war, and textile manufacture had continued to be of significance during the ensuing years of depression, the mills of Ossett in West Riding were but small, and their specialties remained in shoddy and mungo manufacture. Some of the mill owners had been able to build their substantial houses although none of these were of mansion status. At Gawthorpe a parish church was built in 1899.

The new century saw many new schools being built especially since West Riding County Council took over responsibility for education under an Act of 1902; Southdale School was opened in 1908 to accommodate 750 children and Flushdyke in 1912 for 264 children. Station Road built in 1889 when the new Ossett railway station was opened was to be part of the route followed by the electric tramway system connecting Ossett with Horbury and Wakefield, and operated from **1904** until 1932; the trams of a different company connected Ossett with Dewsbury and beyond, from 1908. The Grammar School which had stood in the Market Place since being built in 1834 (replacing the earlier one built on the same site in 1737-38) remained in use until 1903, being pulled down in 1906 to make way for a new Town Hall which opened in 1908. New shop and villa sites in the centre of the town still abounded at the turn of the century and the census figures indicate that Ossett was about to undergo a further period of modest growth and expansion.



In 1911 909 males and 946 females were engaged in textile manufacture and 1344 in coal mining; still by far the two largest categories of employment. Not much later in 1912 Henry Castile Scott passed away and left his land ownerships to his children.



*-- Station Road about 1900 --*

