

XII GENTRIFICATION AND THE GROWTH OF A THRIVING DORMITORY SETTLEMENT

A low point for Grasby was probably reached in the late 1960s. The population had declined to 267 (the lowest number since 1811), businesses were closing, the primary school roll was falling and there was a growing number of derelict properties. The last significant employer disappeared when the quarry shut down. Ironically, the closure of this noisy and dusty enterprise probably led to a new and entirely different future for the village as it moved inexorably away from its farming roots. In this respect, the village and the surrounding agricultural land in the parish gradually became separate entities as the few remaining farms no longer looked to the village for labour and agricultural services. At the same time villagers had to look beyond the parish for employment opportunities and eventually, as the country moved towards almost universal car ownership and local shops closed, for all other services. In the meantime, slowly, newcomers began to settle in the village for reasons unrelated to the past.

Between 1951 and 1960 just three new dwellings were built in the village. A further 16 were built between 1961 and 1969. These included some council housing and a few bungalows built by existing residents. By now, however, Grasby began to be seen as a picturesque hillside village, which had a school within the catchment area of Caistor Grammar School, and from which people could commute to work in neighbouring towns and along the Humber Bank. A major obstacle to development was overcome in 1970 when a large capacity sewerage works was opened in the village, bringing mains drainage for the first time.

Some of the early new developments along Vicarage Lane and Clixby Lane were not universally welcomed in the village. Several large dwellings were built in prominent positions on the scarp slope below the A1084, which were seen by some as being out of character with the rest of the village and detracted from the church's position as its focal point.

Nevertheless, the village continued to expand in this linear pattern along these two cul-de-sacs and Station Road to the south. All the new dwellings were spacious detached or semi-detached houses or bungalows with large gardens. Between 1970 and 1982 34 dwellings were built.

In 1981 Lincolnshire County Council approved a County Structure Plan, from which West Lindsey District Council derived a development policy in 1983 for its towns and villages. Policy 3 of this development plan stated: "small-scale residential development will normally be permitted. The suitability of any proposal for such development will be assessed in relation to its impact on the nature, scale and density of existing developments in the village," and, crucially, "Permission will not normally be granted for housing which would intensify the effect of ribbon or scattered development." A boundary was drawn (as shown by thick black line on map below) on the plan provided in the "Development Guide for the Village of Grasby" for the limit of residential development which was designed to prevent further ribbon development in any

direction and encourage infill where space permitted (buildings marked in red/orange show the built-up area of the village in 1906).



GRASBY

SNCI : Site of Nature Conservation Importance; Gy2 & Gy5 : Planned housing development Source: West Lindsey Local Plan 1981

At the time the development guide was published, planning permission had already been granted for 17 new dwellings. These included 7 houses in the old chalk (lime) pit and a further 5 to take up the remaining plots in Vicarage Lane.

Applications for planning permission for houses at the end of Vicarage Lane and on Main Street were challenged by the Parish Council, on the grounds of felling woodland and proximity to Poet's Walk in the case of the former, and access onto a hill with poor visibility for the latter. All three were built and, as long as building was confined to the development area, more applications were granted planning permission than not during this period. On the other hand, an application to build 6 dwellings outside the boundary of the development area on the east side of Station Road was turned down, even after appeal, in 1987.

Although planning permission was granted in the 1980s to Butterley Aggregates for houses to be built in the old chalk (lime) pit, there were long delays before there was any action and the Parish Council

complained on several occasions to the company about the unkempt and dangerous state of the site. It was not until the late 1990s that all the quarry buildings and the old Wesleyan chapel were demolished and the 7 new houses were finally occupied in the new millennium. There is no doubt, however, that this development removed the most prominent eyesore in the village.



New housing built on the site of the old Wesleyan Chapel and in the old lime pits (behind)

When the blacksmith's smithy and workshop closed in 1990 the land on which it had been located on Church Hill became vacant and two large bungalows were built in the space, although the blacksmith's cottage was preserved, and is now named "Blacksmith's Haven".

When Arthur Wilmore retired from farming in the 1990s the old stack yard and farm buildings belonging originally to Glebe Farm became redundant. The house and a courtyard of original brick and tile buildings had long been separated from the farm. Fortunately, these old barns have been preserved and renovated by the owner of Glebe House.



Renovated Victorian Barn – Glebe House



New housing in old Vicarage Farm stack yard

The rest of the yard, however, was demolished and planning permission granted in 1995 for two dwellings, one of which has been named “Stack Yard House” in recognition to the site’s original use. This change marked the disappearance of the final visible link between farming and the village centre.

The only two remaining working farms close to the village are both outside the residential development area boundary. All other farms have been renovated and converted for purely residential use e.g. Canty Farm and Glebe House, or demolished and the site reused for new build e.g. Manor Farm, or simply demolished e.g. White House Farm on Station Road.

Another derelict site in the village, Manor Farm, was also demolished and replaced by a large detached house (but still named Manor Farm –see below) during this period.

A change of use for the Primitive Methodist chapel was agreed in 1993 and following this it was converted to become a residential dwelling.



A completely rebuilt Manor Farm on old foundations

Up until Arthur’s retirement livestock were kept in the yard on Station Road and it was a common sight to see him leading his cattle across the road, through Babb Gate and into the grass meadows beyond. Babb Gate remains and the grass meadows have been granted the status of a “Site of Nature Conservation Importance” (marked SNCI on map above), as has the quarry on the north side of the A1084. Such sites are recognised by Strategic Policy but not, unfortunately, granted statutory protection. Babb Gate and these meadows, along with the faint outlines of ridge and furrow elsewhere, provide the last remaining links in the village between medieval times and the present.

The 1998 development plan agreed finally to two locations in the village for larger scale house building, one on the west side of Station Road for 12 dwellings, just below Glebe Farm (marked Gy2 on map above), and one to the east of Front Street (marked Gy5 on map above), reduced from the original proposal to 0.4 ha and 4 dwellings. Other sites considered at the draft stage of the plan, the field between Middleton Lane and the southern extent of the housing on the west side of Station Road, a larger area in the fields east of Front Street and bordering Clixby Lane were eventually omitted.

The development of the site to the west of Station Road, now called Wilmore Lane, eventually took place after much controversy. Although the site capacity was set at a maximum of 12, in the end 8 substantial “executive” style detached houses were built. It was noted that none met the criterion of affordable housing as described in the development plan and the Grasby Affordable Housing Needs Survey Report of 2012.



Dove-cote Pond, now part of a private garden in Wilmore Lane

As yet the site to the east of Front Street has yet to be developed, but a recent application to build 7 affordable homes was been rejected on the grounds of inadequate car parking, poor design details unsuitable for the edge of a rural settlement and the impact on the ridge and furrow present which is becoming increasingly rare. Although not stated as a reason for the rejection, there remains local concern that there appears to be no mechanism for ensuring that only local people from Grasby and Searby-cum-Owmbly in need of affordable housing would be guaranteed tenure of any dwellings built.

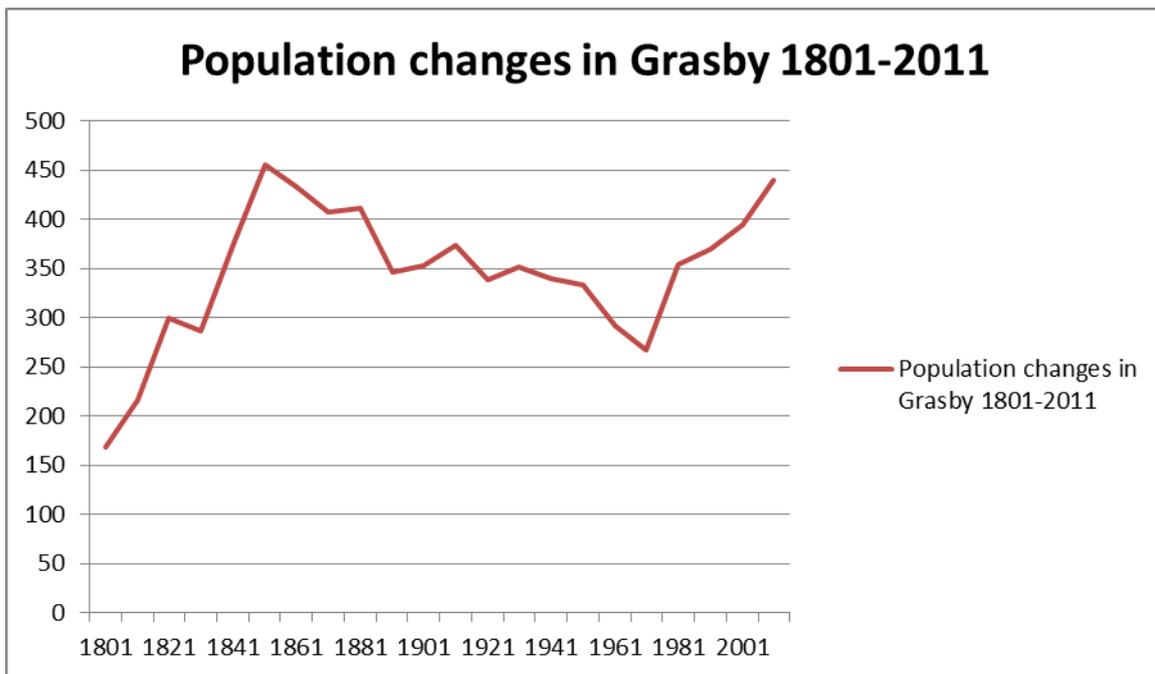
More recently, infilling has continued here and there and three large houses have been built to the west of Church Hill on a new cul-de-sac, Holland Road, bordering the SNCI.

The 2001 Census summary information provides a picture of the village at the end of the C20th. The population had grown to 395, with an average age of 38, which compared with the West Lindsey average of 41. Further comparisons can be seen in the following table:

Table 8 Village Statistics, Source: 2001 Census

<i>Age</i>	Grasby	West Lindsey
Under 19	25%	24%
20-29	6%	8.5%
30-59	54%	43%
Over 60	15%	21%
<i>Economic Activity</i>		
Employed	66%	60%
Unemployed	1%	3%
Retired	13%	17%
Looking after home/family	11%	7%
<i>Housing & Households</i>		
One person	14%	25%
Pensioners	13%	27%
Owner occupied	85%	75%
Rented Council/Social landlord	5%	12%
Private rented	10%	13%
No car or van	5%	17%
Two or more cars/vans	68%	37%
Av. household number	2.6	2.4
<i>Qualifications</i>		
No qualifications	18%	30%
Degree or higher	29%	17%

The population of the parish had grown to about 440 by 2015 and appears set to reach again the previous high mark of 455 in its 1851 heyday, albeit with a very different socio-economic, employment and age profile.



Inspection of a snapshot of residents of Grasby taken in 2000 as part of the Millennium celebrations reveals a considerable degree of movement in and out of the village since then (confirmed by the electoral roll) and while this may seem to suggest that population mobility is a modern phenomenon, in fact, as already shown by the census returns of the C19th, there has always been population movement and change. That is not to say, however, that there are not still some families who can trace their association with the village back through several generations.

Based on its historical status as an “open” (as opposed to “closed”) village, Grasby has, at least since the beginning of the C19th, shown itself to be a dynamic village, constantly adapting to meet the needs of change through both the agricultural and industrial revolutions, two World Wars, the technological revolution and globalisation. Although now a very different place to how it was in the past, it is a thriving community in the C21st, retaining its own primary school, and remains undoubtedly an attractive environment in which to live – it won the Central England Village of the year in 2005. It has been twinned with Saint-Remy-de-Sille, near Le Man, since 1987 and the Post Office collects letters from the gift of a French post box attached to the village hall (Saint-Remy-de-Sille has reciprocated with a street named Rue de Grasby). The village hall, with All Saints, provides a focal point for the community and well patronized by the village.

Grasby has not had its own vicar since 1995 when All Saints became part of the Caistor Group of Parishes, comprising Caistor, Grasby (with All Hallows in Clixby) and Searby-cum-Owmbly, at which point the patronage of the parish was finally relinquished by the Lord Tennysons and passed to the Bishop of Lincoln.