

Millfield – Colsterworth



Millfield is tucked away in a quiet part of the village of Colsterworth. Built in the early 1900s, it was home to a local farmer and his family for many years, but during the 1940s it housed heroes of the famous battle of Arnhem, the soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment. The story of the heroic efforts of the parachute regiment were re-told in the famous film, *A Bridge Too Far*, featuring Sean Connery, Michael Caine and Laurence Olivier.

The Doubleday's of Colsterworth

Up until the turn of the 20th century, this corner of Colsterworth was still an agricultural field in the hands of a Robert Kelham, believed to be Robert Kelham of Beasby Hall in Nottinghamshire. The field was named 'Millfield' because it was the site of a water-mill that still provided water to the house until at least the 1920s.

In October 1890, Robert Kelham sold Millfield to Richard Henry Doubleday, a farmer who had lived in Colsterworth his entire life. The Doubleday family appear to have been a prominent local family in Colsterworth going back to the 18th century and possibly even earlier. Throughout the 19th century, a number of Doubleday's appear in the records for Colsterworth, working as farmers and butchers.

Edwardian Millfield

Richard Henry Doubleday passed away in November 1901 and we know from copies of the deeds to Millfield that it passed to his son, Robert Doubleday. The house that now stands surrounded by gardens known as 'Millfield' was built shortly after Robert Doubleday inherited the land from his father. The architecture of the house, featuring motifs reminiscent of the arts and crafts, along with the style popular during the Edwardian period clearly identifies the house of this time. The house first appeared recorded in the 1910 Valuation survey clearly labelled 'Millfield' and owned and occupied by Robert Doubleday – in fact, the house was not built at the time of the accompanying 1904 map, so for the purposes of the 1910 survey the house was drawn on the map in red ink. A short time later, the 1911 census recorded Robert Doubleday, 47 year old 'farmer and grazier' in the house with his wife Elizabeth and their 20 year old daughter, Martha and 19 year old, Robert Doubleday, the younger.

Wing Commander Oddie

By 1937, the Lincolnshire Directory records Millfield had become the home of Wing Commander Gerard Stephen Oddie. World War I records show that Gerard Oddie fought with the Royal Air Force in some of the first campaigns on the Western Front. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and continued with the Air Force after the war, and in 1927 Oddie was awarded the Air Force Cross by King George V. Both awards honour those who have shown 'valour, courage or devotion to duty whilst flying'.

A Bridge Too Far – The Battle of Arnhem

The military connections with Millfield continued with the start of World War II as records show it was used to billet soldiers and officers from the 2nd Battalion, Parachute Regiment in 1943-44. The 2nd Battalion was only formed in September 1941, with first active service in France in 1942. However, the 2nd Battalion are most famous for their vital efforts in Operation Market Garden - the Battle of Arnhem - in 1944. The heroic efforts of the 2nd Battalion, holding on to key positions at Arnhem Bridge for days, have gone down in history and the story was made into a famous film, *A Bridge Too Far*.

Saved by a penny

One of the soldiers of B Company, 2nd Battalion, Private Vincent Goodwin, completed a drawing of Millfield the day before Operation Market Garden began, showing the house much as it is today, but with a few additions thanks to the presence of the Battalion. A dramatic story unfolded when the present owner of the house told the story of Goodwin returning to the house many years later. Not only did he survive the war, but Goodwin told the extraordinary story of his time at the Battle of Arnhem. After he was advised by his commanding officer, he sewed pennies into the breast pocket of his uniform as additional protection, and on his return to Millfield he presented the remains of one of those pennies that actually saved his life after being hit by a bullet.

After the war

Millfield returned to a family home after the war and was taken by Charles Bailey, manager of the old Ironworks, who brought with him and re-erected a Foster & Pearson plant house. This explains why a Victorian greenhouse is situated in an Edwardian garden today.

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By historian – Melanie Backe-Hansen

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Vince Goodwin with the penny that saved his life during the Battle of Arnhem