

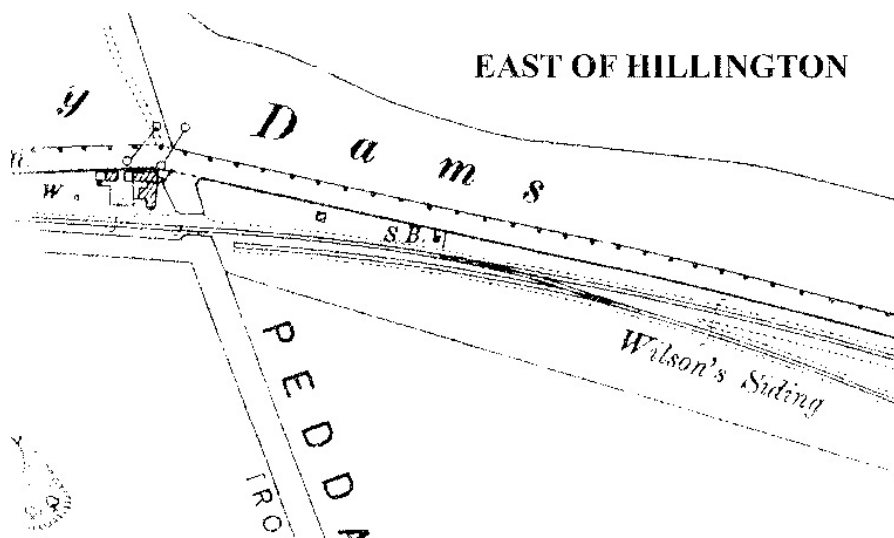
Harpley Dams

How Mr Wilson's quarry
helped to buid a railway and
then helped to win a war

Jim Baldwin



With thanks to the residents of Hutton Cranswick, Nigel
Scarlett, Adrian Vaughan & Ray Bullock (North Norfolk
Railway) Andy Dawson, David Callaby and Bernard Jordan.



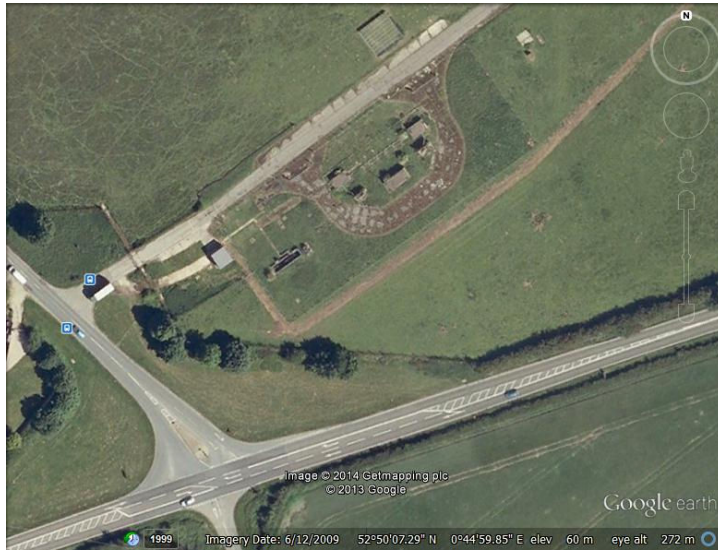
The Lynn and Fakenham railway reached Massingham, its interim terminus in 1876. Throughout its construction it made use of material from a quarry at nearby Harpley Dams (Wilson's siding named after the owner of the quarry). This was to prove useful in the short term but certainly in the future. Once the railway was finished by 1914 the quarry remained unused until 1938 when work started on the building of RAF West Raynham a few miles away. There was a need for a fuel depot to serve this aerodrome and, later, to serve RAF Massingham next door. This was to be built by one of the big oil companies because of their expertise in building such sites although it was not long before the Air Ministry became involved. Fuel was delivered by rail, originating at Hutton Cranswick in Yorkshire via a link to Watton Carr which supplied Driffield and other local aerodromes. The fuel trains ran to South Lynn and on to Massingham where the loco or locos ran 'round the train and then pulled it back to the depot where it propelled the tanks onto the site

By the late 1940s some of the aerodromes had ceased to be operational. West Raynham was as busy as ever and Sculthorpe was being used by the USAF. In 1951 it played host to some giant B36 bombers. They had ten engines and took 24 hours to refuel, and there were 7 of these-fuel hungry mammoths. This was a lot of tanker journeys to Harpley depot. Consideration was given to laying a pipeline but by the time this was in situ the B36s had gone. But the squadrons of the 47th bombardment wing made good use of it during their 10 year residence.

This pipeline was overseen by RAF West Raynham, after all Sculthorpe was technically still an RAF airfield. Security dictated that any inspection required the wearing of civilian clothes and the use of civilian transport. The pump for this pipeline was powered a Rolls-Royce engine. This had a number of brass parts and after the site closed this attracted the attention of thieves who broke through the substantial security fence as part of their recycling plan. The terminus to this pipeline can still be seen at the SW corner of the old airfield.



The pump for the Sculthorpe Pipeline.



The Sculthorpe end of the pipeline
P O L3



The site was connected to the GPSS at Thetford and no longer had to be supplied by rail apart on rare occasions. By 1994 both RAF West Raynham and RAF Sculthorpe had closed and the site became redundant. Today the site is complete with a part-time caretaker looking after things.



The pump for the Sculthorpe pipeline was operated by a Rolls-Royce engine. Once the site was closed this engine became the target of metal thieves who used considerable effort to break through the substantial security fence to get to it. They also took time to remove the standby batteries from the emergency power supply hut. This pipeline was no doubt organised by the Air Ministry depot at Fakenham. At the end of WWII it ceased to be the airfield repair depot and instead concentrated on rebuilding Sculthorpe and West Raynham. It had its own MT section and lots of equipment but acted purely as an admin site, contracting work out.



This depot was situated in High Terrace road. The rather poor photo was taken in 1957