



Shingley & Baildon Scout Council



About



Sconce

Researched by Colin & Margaret Wilson - 1984

The campsite of the Shipley & Baildon Scout Council is situated at Sconce, in a quiet valley on the northern edge of Baildon Moor but in the Parish of Bingley; the stream running to the south side of the site being the boundary between the Parishes of Baildon & Bingley.

The camp consists of three areas - one to the right going up Sconce Lane from the Baildon to Hawksworth Road and numbered 8024 on the Ordnance Survey Map being 1.86 acres in area and known as Rye Crofts. A second 0.76 of an acre and numbered 7515 on the O.S. map to the left of Sconce Lane is where the old hamlet of Sconce was situated before being demolished in 1934/35 and now known as the Old Village Field. The third - Howden Wood Field is our most recent acquisition, being alongside the Old Village Field, 1.58 acres and numbered 8015 on the O.S.map making a total of 4.20 acres in all.

There seems to be some divergence of opinion as to the origin of the name Sconce, one is that it is a derivation from 'Scoria' a slag or dross residue left from the fusion of metals from ironstone workings. It is known that in the 13th century, monks from Rievaulx Abbey held the mineral rights in the vicinity of Faweather, which is about ½ mile up Sconce Lane from the Camp and that workings and smelting was carried out by them in that area. In the opinion of a representative of the County Archaeological Department, Sconce means a fortification, a fort, or fortified enclosure and this is borne out by the contours of the site especially in its relation to the surrounding area.

On the Old Village site there are still indications of the layout of the hamlet, which consisted of thirteen cottages built in the shape of a letter T. From old photographs it would appear that the entrance to the hamlet from the moor was over the stream via a simple bridge wide enough to take a horse and trap and progressing through an entrance flanked by two stone gateposts and into the 'Main Street'.



There was a gate between the stone posts (which may still be seen adjacent to where the iron gate is now) which could be closed to keep out sheep and other animals straying from grazing on the moor. A second entrance led from Sconce Lane, as at present. There is still a right of way up the 'Main Street' and into Sconce Lane via a stile in the boundary wall. On the right hand side of the moor entrance, were three through houses, the backs of which would lead into what is now the Old Village Field camping area. After these three houses were two 'back to back' houses, one entered from the main street and one from the camping area. These were followed by a large building, used for storage or as a farm building or as a barn.



To the rear of this building was at one time a glass conservatory filled with flowering shrubs and plants. To the rear of the first cottage on the right of the main street were three large wooden buildings which were at one time used as stabling, for storage and at a later date for the provision of refreshments. There was also a circular summer house and a seat overlooking the waterfall. Entrance to this area by means of a gate to the right of the first cottage, by the stream, this gateway has since been bricked up but may still be seen. On the other side of the main street and opposite the 'back to back' houses and the barn were four more houses and across the top of the T a further four, evidence of these may still be seen in the wall at the top of the car park. Although the hamlet is marked on a survey map dated 1817 it has been impossible to establish how old the cottages were, but estimates seem to suggest that they were built between 1730 and 1750, probably as miners dwellings for those extracting coal from the seams on Baildon Moor.

Records suggest that coal was first extracted from Baildon Moor in about 1603 but it is also on record that in 1387 John Vavasour, Lord of one of

the two Manors of Baildon, complained that people had been stealing coal to the value of one hundred shillings from the moor.

Various methods were used in the extraction of coal including bell pits, day holes, drift mines and deep shaft mines. The first three methods were used when the coal seam was near the surface, holes were dug and the coal extracted as widely as possible, then another hole was dug and the spoil from the second filled into the workings of the first and so on. Bell pit mines were sunk vertically and many of the old bell pit workings are shown on old maps of the district and are still in evidence on the moor. Coal was mined on the moor to within living memory, the last so far as can be revealed by Mr. Robinson, a Baildon coal merchant.

Women and even young children were at one time employed in the mining of coal, often under appalling conditions, being lowered down the bell pit shaft by means of a hand operated windlass. The mined coal being hoisted from the working area, either by windlass or by means of rope and pulleys and horse power. After an Act of 1842, women and children were forbidden to work in coal mines. There were three deep shaft mines on Baildon Moor - one near the present Golf Clubhouse, the Brancliff Mine: one near the slag heaps on the road to Dobrudden Farm and a third at Lobley Gate on the road to Eldwick: the latter being the last to close because of flooding.

According to Saxton's map of Baildon, of 1610, the area around Sconce was called Northwood, but Sconce is mentioned as such in a register of 1738; although at that time no mention was made of any cottages on the site. The colony was described as being one of weavers and combers, which leads to the belief that the inhabitants were connected with home industry textiles rather than mining. According to the 1841 census there were ninety six men, women and children living at Sconce of these thirty two were textile workers of one sort or another, many of whom would probably work at the Low Mill in Hawksworth Lane, on the present caravan site. This mill belonged to the Fawkes family and was burned down several times, the last being in 1881, thus in the 1871 census, seven people worked in textiles, none were employed by the time the 1881 census was taken.

Another local industry was quarrying or 'stone mining'. To the right of Sconce Lane and rather nearer to Faweather than Sconce are the remains of an old quarry, which in 1891 had got up to be '90 feet deep' having been opened in 1889 for the excavation of flag and roofing stone. There

are records of several quarry men living at Sconce - the site is now occupied by several 'away from it all' holiday bungalows.



It is thought that Sconce hamlet was built (if estimates are correct) between 1730 and 1750 on behalf of the Ferrand family of St. Ives, Bingley and it is thought that there are records of rents for Sconce being collected on their behalf. Belief is that the cottages were built on a much earlier inhabited site. In those days boundaries were very jealously guarded even to the extent of 'riding the boundaries' once a year to keep established their authenticity. In the 1700's one eccentric landowner erected boundary posts round his land and rode the bounds with a shotgun.

Several of these boundary stones are still to be found near the stream above Sconce engraved (William Thompson's Boundary).
On the 22nd July 1868, the Rye Crofts were auctioned in the Angel Hotel, Baildon on behalf of the executives of Mr. Joseph Clough, Schoolmaster of Menston for the sum of £250 to Mr. W.W. Holmes, Worsted Manufacturer of Baildon. At this time only four of the cottages were occupied.

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In 1895 or 1896 the hamlet was owned by Mr Charlie Heppleston, a hardware merchant of Darley Street, Bradford and used as holiday cottages and again sold in 1906 or 1907 to Mr. & Mrs. Lambert of Bradford and continued to be thus used until October 1923 when the land was mortgaged to the City of Bradford Co-operative Society, who sold in December 1941 to Mr. C.E.P. Dobby who in turn in July 1964 sold to the Shipley & Baildon Scout Council for £550. It is interesting to note that the property had appreciated in value in nearly a hundred years by just thirty pounds.



During the latter part of their existence many of the cottages reverted to normal every day occupation. In 1934/35 the thirteen cottages were demolished by order of the Local Council on the grounds of lack of sanitation and services including a town's water supply, the owners receiving £300 in the way of compensation. Much of the stone was used in the construction of houses in Station Road, Hallfield Drive and a property in Browgate, Baildon which used to be the Well Pharmacy.

All the people contacted with reference to their life at Sconce said that in spite of a lack of amenities, no electricity, no gas, no town water and no shops their memories were of a happy and contented community life. They spoke of getting the piano out on to the green and all joining in a good old sing song, of playing games and being able to run wild on the moor without let or hindrance and without a care in the world. Many said that part of their lives spent at Sconce was the best in their lives. This same sort of happy atmosphere seems still to be one of the amenities of our Camp Site today.



Several of the older people questioned remember walking or hiking in the vicinity of Sconce and calling at 'Aunt Aggies' for teas and refreshments, including oat cakes in the shape of pancakes and hung over the fire to

'mature'. Aunt Aggie's café was a wooden structure on the moor edge, a few hundred yards up the stream from Sconce and officially known as Sconce View Bungalow, it was sold during the war and was eventually pulled down in about 1970. The proprietors of the café were Mr. & Mrs. Roland Tidswell, so presumably Mrs. Tidswell was affectionately known as 'Aunt Aggie' and noted for the excellence of her confections.

With reference to the Rye Crofts field it was perplexing to note that on a map of 1901 the site contained a building in the centre of the field with spokes radiating from it to the boundary walls and marked 'Aviary'. It was then learned from a book published in 1891, that at Sconce a 'few years ago' a new industry had been started for the 'artificial hatching of eggs' and that sometimes the feathered population reached one thousand also that the present occupier has a large number of canaries and breeds good class of birds for exhibition. From a later letter it appears that a railwayman and his wife - Mr. & Mrs. Allpress came from Peterborough in 1904 to manage a chicken farm at Sconce for Mr. Lambert and that he made pens for the poultry which would explain the spokes and the name 'Aviary'. It is said he also installed a Ram Pump (similar to the one we now operate for the camp's water supply) as a means of supplying water for the poultry, from the stream without having to use a mechanical pump.

Some years later in 1911, Rye Crofts was converted into a holiday camp with a central building measuring 65ft by 30ft and provision for camping in bell tents in the rest of the field. The holiday camp was initiated by two Bradford men - Councillor Eckersley Mitchell and his brother Percy. Round the perimeter of the field they planted many sycamore trees which on maturity made an impressive site. These trees were all cut down during the 1939-45 war and used as pit props towards the war effort. In 1916 the camp was taken over by Mr. & Mrs. Bottomley and later by a Mr. Jackson when it became known as Jackson's Holiday Camp. From photographs seen the accommodation seemed to be comfortable and homely and amenities included a small shop. In later years the camp enjoyed not the best of reputations and was eventually burned down in the mid-thirties. Amongst the undergrowth in the centre of the field, just below the campfire circle may be found traces of the foundations - though much of the stone has been used to build altar fires. The track from the low entrance to the field to the centre can be followed by a double row of stones, now partly covered by turf.

The history of Howden Wood Field seems to be much older than the rest of the site and some authorities claim it to be the site, along with

Acrehowe Hill and Rerehowe Cross on Baildon Moor of sepulchral ashes of long dead priests, chiefs or heads of tribes.

Notwithstanding its gruesome past, it has amenities ideal for the training of cubs and scouts and when more fully developed will be even more so.

This picture shows the local chapel (far right) which is situated on the left just before Sconce Lane. The chapel can still to be seen though it has now been converted into a house.



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