

HIGHFIELD DAYS GONE BY

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In old maps, Highfield is referred to as a 'Hayfield. It started life as a field and slowly evolved to become a rural village area on the outskirts of Old Southampton. In those days there were farms, fields and grazing animals but at the centre of things, there was the village.

One of the first detailed descriptions of the area in 1779, describes Highfield or 'Hayfield' as coming under the parish of St Mary's, although it later came under the Tything of Portswood, within the Parish of South Stoneham, set in the County or Borough of Old Southampton.

An extract from the rate-book for St Mary's Parish in 1779 gives the number of rateable houses as 57. The number of inhabitants was very small in those days, although some properties did house more than one family.

To conjure up an image of what Highfield must have looked like



then, above is a picture of a man ploughing land on what later became the site of the Brickworks and is now University land.

Later on, in the 1841 Census records, some interesting facts about the residents of Highfield emerge. For example:

- There were 268 residents listed, 117 male and 151 female.
- The average age was 26!
- There were 9 babies under the age of 1.
- There were 19 people aged 60 or over; the oldest was Richard Elcock aged 80 (born in approximately 1716).
- There were 57 properties: 11 properties on Back Lane – now part of University Road and Church Lane, and the remaining 46 were described as being in Highfield.
- The most common surnames were: Heath (20), Page (15), Rolfe (10), Bone (8), Chapman (8), Connor (8) and Willis (8).
- The most common occupation was servant (32 female servants and 13 male servants). Other common occupations listed were: labourer (18), independent means (14), gardener (6), laundress (4), widow (4), carpenter (3), maltster (3) and yeoman (3).

Bibliography: Highfield: A Village Remembered by John Edgar and Peter Ashton, published by Halsgrove in 1998. Dedman, Martin, Highfield Church Centenary Brochure, 1947, 'Highfield Church 1847-1977: A Story of Growth, Change and Development'; Highfield Scout Group Jubilee, 1909-1979. Highfield History.co.uk (for 1841 census information).