

Ravenstown is the name given to what is primarily a housing estate attached to the village of Flookburgh. However it developed much later and independantly of Flookburgh and so we feel it deserves a separate entry in "Village Histories".



Ravenstown 2009 - Pat Rowland

Location

The housing estate now known as Ravenstown is located on raised land to the south west of Flookburgh village. It was built on land farmed with Mireside Farm, Winder Lane. It overlooks Winder Moor, an area of salt marsh and marshy moor land that was reclaimed and enclosed in the early 19th century.

History of the building of the estate

Vickers of Barrow in Furness, the shipbuilding company, were pioneers in the development of airships and from 1908 had established airship production at Barrow in Furness and then on Walney Island. When the Government decided they needed even larger airships than were already being built, to support Naval war work, Vickers were approached. The site at Walney Island was considered to be inadequate for this project and too vulnerable to U-Boat attack following an incident in January 1915.

Winder Moor at Flookburgh suited the requirements for the establishment of a new airship station but lacked the accommodation needed to support it. Therefore it was decided to build 250 houses for staff close to the proposed site.

The airship station would have occupied much of the flat land south of Flookburgh village and even part of the salt marsh beyond West Plain and East Plain Farms. It would have extended nearly to Humphrey Head in the east and it included Winder Lane and Raven Winder Farm to the west. The station would have occupied about 1000 acres of good farmland, 247 acres of salt marsh and 350 acres of sand and mud beyond the salt marsh.

Land adjoining Mireside farm was chosen for the housing estate and on 27 March 1917 work began in setting out the estate which was to be known as Flookburgh Model Aero Village. The house designs adopted were already

being built at Inchinnan, near Glasgow, another airship station. The building contract was awarded, by Vickers, to Messrs Rainey and Messrs Parnell. A railway siding was built from Wraysholme Halt to the airship shed site off Willow Lane, close to Holme Farm, and it was extended to the housing estate so that materials could be delivered to the site.

Cumbria Record Office (Barrow) have a diary written by Sam Grundy, a Vickers employee who oversaw the building work, and Mr Naylor, the site engineer, which gives invaluable information about the development of the estate.

Heavy snow on 10 and 11 April 1917 and wet, stormy weather on 16th delayed matters. Concern was expressed by Sam Grundy about plans to build the houses with 9" thick solid walls in such an exposed position. The builders would not accept a change to the plans arguing that the houses they had built at Walney to this specification were coping with conditions there. Pegging out of "Crescent" Road which was later renamed Jutland Avenue began on 24 April 1917. On 27 April it was too stormy to do any setting out. The railway link was completed on 16 May and deliveries of building materials started on the 22 May 1917. On 18 May it was discovered that the chain being used to measure the excavations was 4" short of its proper length and the excavations of 18" instead of 2' had been dug. Mr Rainey wanted to start building the sewers but Mr Grundy reminded him that the streets needed to be roughly laid out first with kerbs inserted before he could start cutting the sewers. Barrow common bullnose bricks were unobtainable as specified in the building contract but they were able to obtain Askam engineering bricks which were more expensive. However these bricks were more durable in such an exposed position and the building inspector would not have allowed them to use the Barrow bricks anyway. They used slate from Coniston. The building contract specified that some houses should have red tiles and others should have grey slates.

The month of July 1917 was a good, hot month but rain returned on 7 August after

5 weeks of drought. During the night of 24-25 October a severe gale brought scaffolding down and two partially built blocks of Parnell's houses were wrecked. The site also suffered from trespass by farm animals. Moore's sheep and Robert Moore's bullocks were mentioned. Farm work continued and on 3 September 1917 Mr Rigg cut the corn in the field where the sewage works were going to be built.



By the end of 1917 nearly 120 houses built were finished. However in September 1917 the airship shed project had been cancelled by the Government. Work had only started on building the airship shed in July but because of the huge quantities of steel needed the Government decided that as steel was in short supply the steel that was available should be used in other projects that would help the war effort immediately. Plans to build the remaining 130 more houses were postponed. A plan showing the proposed layout of the completed site is held at Cumbria Record Office (Barrow). Work continued during 1918 on finishing the houses and sorting out the many problems on site.

On 11 March 1918 it was reported that Winder Lane up to Mireside Farm and beyond was in very poor condition and needs filling and draining. 20 March the allotment garden plan was submitted and a request was sent to the Postmaster at Carnforth for a postbox. A doctor's surgery for Dr Greene was opened at 9 Jutland Avenue in April 1918. In May an order for 20 street lamps was submitted and on 29 June rubbish bin prices were submitted. During September it was noted that bins had been ordered; the roads were to be metalled but that was up to the Roads Board; lamp posts were not finished; the postbox was still not in place; they were considering building a general shop but it would need sanctioning by the authority; a shed was needed on the allotment to store seeds etc. In November 1918 Mrs Taylor requested if she could have a shop to sell newspapers on the estate. The bad weather continued with it being noted on 16 September there was heavy rain for a week, with much land and crops under water. On 22-23 September there were gales and high tides which caused damage to the sea embankment. There were nine large breaches and several smaller ones.

Problems continued into 1919. On 31 January at 20 Marne Avenue it was reported that a boulder pitched road extended the whole length of the garden and made it useless for cultivation. It was decided that as the road was made by Messrs Parnell for their traction engine to travel over it should be removed by them. Some houses built by Rainey had footpaths down into the back garden which had been left in a very unfinished state. Garden fences were not completely erected and in many cases the fences had been left too high above ground level giving a free run to the cats and dogs. The central space between Marne and Somme Avenue was intended to be fenced around but it was agreed that this was not necessary as the area was only a playground for the children and the fence would be more usefully employed in fencing off the

