

CALLOWLAND FARM, WATFORD



*Photo courtesy of Mary Forsyth

Callowland Farm was located in and around what is now Cecil Street, off Leavesden Road. The name Callowland dates from at least 1379, and means ‘bare land’.¹ In 1646/7 William Wolley and Mrs Leonard were tenants at Callow Lands, and their landlord was Merton College, Oxford.²

A picture of Callowland Farm in the 18th century is provided by descriptions issued when it was up for sale. In 1779, it was described as “part college hold, and part free, consisting of a good farmhouse, with requisite conveniences, and about 205 acres of rich land (almost the whole of which encircles the buildings) on lease to Mr William Toovey, at 115 l [£115] per annum”.³ In 1794, it was described as having a “good Farm House, with requisite Offices, all tiled, with about 191 Acres of Arable, Pasture and Woodland”.⁴

In 1798, the farmer at Callowland Farm was J Toovey, who was also farmer at Lee [Lea] Farm. At that time Callowland Farm had 202 acres of land. The main crops grown were wheat (35 acres), barley (31 acres), seeds (36 acres) and oats (25 acres). There were also 6 $\frac{3}{4}$ acres of meadow, 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres of pasture, and 32 $\frac{1}{2}$ acres of woodland.⁵

In 1844, the tithe apportionment shows Callowland Farm to have 299 acres of land, mostly arable, with 15 acres being meadow. 169 acres was owned by the Earl of Essex, and 129 acres by Merton College.⁶ The occupier of the farm at that time and from at least 1841 was Charles William Moore, farmer, born c1806.

By 1851 and until at least 1861, a farmer named John Connor, born c1813 in Ireland, was resident at Callowland Farm. In the 1851 census, he is described as a farmer of 250 acres, employing 12 labourers. Living with him were his wife, 3 sons, a visitor, 2 female house servants, and 3 male servants, all agricultural labourers. In 1861, he is described as a farmer of 247 acres, employing 9 men and 2 boys. Living with him were his wife, 4 sons, a female house servant, and 4 male servants - a shepherd, 2 carters, and an 'odd boy'.⁷ The fact that there was a shepherd living in his household as a servant, shows that sheep were kept on the farm.

By 1871, there was a new farmer at Callowland Farm, Charles Jones, described as a farmer of 160 acres, employing 3 labourers. He had 4 male farm servants living in his household, the youngest of whom was aged 14, as well as an 18 year old female domestic servant. It is interesting to observe that the practice of having live-in farm servants continued this late at Callowland, as it is said to have become unusual in Hertfordshire by the middle of the century.⁸

By 1881, the farmer at Callowland Farm was Adam Johnston, born c1845 in Scotland, a farmer of 160 acres, employing 5 men and 3 boys. He had one live-in male farm labourer, aged 15, and 2 female general servants, the youngest of whom was 14.

In 1888, in response to the Allotment Act of 1887, vicar Reginald Capell, son of the 6th Earl of Essex, arranged for some land at Callowland Farm to be used for allotments at a rent of 6d per pole per year, the size of the plots being about 10 poles each.⁹

By 1891, the residents of Callowland Farm were Joseph Bird, milk dairyman, his wife, 4 daughters, son, a boarder, and a 17 year old male servant, employed as a dairyman's assistant. Other census records, both before and after 1891, show Joseph Bird to be a hands-on agricultural labourer/ stockman/ cowman,¹⁰ so it seems reasonable to assume that in 1891, cows were being kept for milk at Callowland Farm.

Callowland Farm does not appear in the 1901 census, because by then, it no longer existed, although an old Callowland Farm barn still remains in Cecil Street. Starting in 1894, new side streets, including Cecil Street, were constructed off Leavesden Road,¹¹ and in 1897, Callowland Farm was sold for development by the 7th Earl of Essex.¹² By 1901, all the present Leavesden Road side streets were in existence except Callowland Close, a much later addition.

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- ¹ Ball, Alan W, *Street and Place Names in Watford*, 1973
- ² Longman, G, *A Corner of England's Garden*, 1977, vol 1, p 25
- ³ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser* (London), Thurs Jan 7, 1779
- ⁴ *The Times*, 11th July, 1794, p 4
- ⁵ *Watford Terrier*, 1798
- ⁶ *Watford Tithe Apportionment*, 1844
- ⁷ 1861 census
- ⁸ Agar, Nigel E, *Behind the Plough*, 2005, p 65
- ⁹ Nunn, JB, *The Book of Watford*, 2nd edition, 2003, p 70
- ¹⁰ 1871, 1881 and 1901 censuses
- ¹¹ Nunn, JB, 2005, op cit, p 88
- ¹² *Ibid*, p 32