

THE NORTON FAMILY

By Matt Ottey

Today the village of Scissett thrives as an economically successful and visually eye-catching community. It's hard to stroll through the village without noticing the remnants of past times. Such as the old stonework covering the former mill, or the way in which the river was utilised to power Violet, a tandem compound steam engine from 1886 that still stands today. And of course Bagden Hall, which now operates as a hotel, with its grounds providing a beautiful golf course.

It was in this house that George Norton, brother of Joseph and founder of the mill business, lived. Together, George and Joseph proceeded to develop their textile business, exploiting their extensive premises and employing local workers.

However, one major problem was that their workers, who were living in isolated areas of the Dearne Valley, were so well spread that it became a monotonous task to even reach them. This led the Norton brothers to the idea of building houses close to the mills in order to streamline production and maximise efficiency. These houses are still lived in today, and the pokey, claustrophobic streets that surround them are evidence of the prior nature of their use.

Yet before this, another significant move took place. George and Joseph moved out of their homes in the valley bottom and into their custom-built houses on the hills overlooking their business, and indeed the roots of what was to become the village of Scissett.

George moved into Bagden Hall, which still stands in its entirety today, and Joseph moved into Nortonthorpe Hall. Unfortunately, little of the building still remains, yet unsurprisingly the site where the main building once stood is now occupied by Nortonthorpe Hall School.



The Norton family's ties with the cricket club emanate from the 1950s. Upon the death of George Norton, all of his properties and, more relevantly, land was subject to estate duties. To avoid paying certain amounts of duties on this land, it could either be donated to the community (which had grown considerably by that time) or it could be sold.

However, he chose to outline a deed of trust, which specified that the seven and a half acres of land, which currently form the cricket and football pitch, could only be used for the recreational purposes of the community. This is largely the reason behind the cricket club being called Nortonthorpe instead of Scissett.

As well as the everlasting association between George Norton and the club, his grandson Robert Norton Hastwell played for Nortonthorpe during the 1960s.

The club is indebted to the family for providing them with one of the most beautiful cricket grounds in the area. The special relationship that links so many areas of current-day Scissett to the Norton family outside of the cricketing arena remains. The mill is now a multi-business industrial park drawing in both trade and industry, with the steam engine 'Violet' remaining a permanent resident.

Both Bagden and Nortonthorpe halls have provided the village with centres for tourism and education - two very different, yet equally significant, assets to any community.

With its combination of beauty and brains, the village has grown into one of the most flourishing areas of Yorkshire, largely due to the foundations laid by one family.