

## Alittle History

The Common is registered under the Commons Act 1899, which includes Bye-Laws and the scheme for Regulation and Management of the Common.

In the Westleton Tithe Map of 1842, the Common is shown as area 710, of 46 acres, which has the same boundaries as the present site. It was described as pasture, and had no owner listed, as it was Tithe-free Land. There were a few cottages adjoining the Common, and Ralph's Mill was shown. Also adjoining the Common, the Church had some allotments (where the gun club is now). The area south of the Common was heathland owned by Lord Huntingfield, who was Lord of the Manor of Minsmere/Scotts Hall, as well as a substantial landowner in the area.



Tower Mill, known as Ralph's Mill, 1899 *Alf Fisk*

The Ordnance Survey Map of 1885 shows several gravel pits, which provided gravel for roads and for local builders. Some of these pits, and others, are shown in the Ordnance Survey Maps of 1904 and 1927. There was a pole across the entrance, to allow access for wheelbarrows etc, but no vehicles. In 1942 the gravel workings were taken over by Wimpey and Costain, and the size of the pit increased greatly as the gravel was needed for the construction of nearby airfields during World War II. The numerous 7-ton lorries conveying the gravel away were a familiar sight, as were the loading draglines. From the early 1900s to the 1940s, the Common was owned by the Lord of the Manor of Minsmere/Scotts Hall (Caines family).

Before a mains water supply came to Westleton in the mid-1950s, families living near the Common obtained water in the summer from two 'rock-holes'. A hole 4 to 6 feet deep was layered with clay at the bottom, then straw and stones laid on top. Once filled with water they seldom dried up, night-time moisture and dew would refill them. They can still just be seen under the oak trees beside the path down to the Reckford Road. The slope above, which had no trees then, was used for the first motorcycle hill climbs, before the activity moved to the Mumberry Hills.



View looking north across the gravel workings -  
Bakers Lane houses in the distance 1947 *Alf Fisk*

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(Alf Fisk's photographs are reproduced courtesy of Cana Turner)*