The Burgage Green, Southwell

The Burgage Green was common pasture land at the heart of the Burgage Manor but the Green has been used for many other purposes besides farming.

Burgage Green c 1900

Fairs Fairs have been held on the Burgage Green in April and September from mediaeval times. Nowadays the funfairs have rides such as the Waltzers and Dodgems but as seen in the photograph below traditional roundabout rides have always been popular and may well have been enjoyed by the young Lord Byron.

Funfair c 1900
Livestock Market

The market place in Southwell was located at the centre of the town but limited space would have limited its use for livestock – the Burgage Green was certainly employed for livestock sales from the early 1800s but may have been used for this purpose from much earlier times.

*Livestock sale on the Burgage Green*
Races Informal pony races have been held on the Burgage possibly for centuries.

John Elsam landlord of the White Swan Inn was a keen promoter as seen in an advert of 1815 ‘There will be a pony race on Burgage Green, Southwell on Whit-Thursday, for a Saddle and Bridle; the best of three heats – ponies not to exceed twelve hands. Also an Ass race for a tea kettle (a free prize)’

In the 1880s a more formal race meet involved a course along the Lower Kirklington Road and finishing on the Burgage Green outside the House of Correction. In 1898 the race meeting moved to the modern racetrack site near Rolleston.

Hunts The green has been a frequent meeting place for local hunts such as the Rufford and the South Notts.

Hunt meet on the Burgage Green
Celebrations

**George III’s Golden Jubilee 1810**

Over 80 people attended a grand supper and ball at the Assembly Rooms when many continued their spirited dancing through till five in the morning. Mr Falkner, owner of the Burgage Manor House, paraded his pupils who fired three volleys in honour of the day.

Over three hundred families were supplied with bread and ale and the poor widows and single women of the town with bread and coal. The prisoners in the House of Correction were regaled with beef and plum pie as were the poor in the Workhouse.

**Defeat of Bonaparte 25th June 1814**

Over 1000 persons gathered on the Burgage Green to celebrate this glorious event with a feast of Roast Beef, Plum Pudding and Good Ale.

Later an effigy of Bonaparte, mounted on an ass, was conducted round the Green which after enduring the execrations of the crowd was thrown onto a large bonfire – a suitable reward for tyranny.
Southwell Lights Up – inauguration of the Gas Company 3rd June 1853

For the first time the town was light up by a brilliant light produced from coal-gas. The streets were crowded with people as the shops were aglow in the evening presenting a most animated appearance up to a late hour.

On the following day a bun and penny was given to every child who attended upon the Burgage Green after which to music provided by the Southwell Brass Band, the married and single formed themselves into dance parties which was kept up well into the evening.

. Military musters and parades

1803 Loyal Southwell Volunteers In 1803 Britain faced the threat of invasion from Napoleon’s forces. Throughout the country volunteer militias were raised to defend the realm. The Loyal Southwell Volunteer Infantry commanded by Major W. Wylde had nearly 250 men in its ranks with officers drawn from the local gentry. At the beginning the men drilled in the evenings in coloured clothes but soon they wore full regimental uniforms of scarlet and black. For the next five years the volunteers are recorded on manoeuvres around the midlands but no invasion came. Most of the men eventually returned to normal life but some units continued as part of the county regiments.

Button of the Southwell Loyal Volunteers

Photo kindly supplied by a member of Ashfield Metal Detecting Club who found the button in 2008 - 200 years after the volunteers were disbanded
First World War Recruiting 28th August 1915

On Friday last a large crowd of people welcomed the 14th Battalion of the Sherwood Foresters to Southwell. After lunch and a paddle in the Greet they assembled for a recruiting meeting on the Burgage Green. During the course of the speeches it was remarked that the 7th and 8th Battalions Sherwood Foresters had been highly complimented by Sir John French, the Commander-in-Chief, and that the officer in charge of the 8th Battalion at the time had been Major J P Becher of Southwell (loud applause).

*Convalescent soldiers with nurses on the Burgage*

Recruiting speeches followed including one from a wounded Irish soldier convalescing at the Burgage Manor Hospital. After hearty cheers the detachment set out for Farnsfield.

**Burial at the Crossroads.**

On 8th February 1822, Henry Standley was arrested for the murder of travelling salesman Henry Dale. Standley was examined at the House of Correction in Southwell by the magistrates. He stood for the greater time with his hands in his pockets but when the victim’s watch and shoes were produced he gave a convulsive start, the colour left his cheeks and he dropped senseless to the floor. On his recovery he was committed for trial at Nottingham. He was returned to his cell but the horror of his situation had such an effect on his mind that he hanged himself during the night with a muslin scarf that had once belonged to his victim.

The following day his body was carried on a wheelbarrow to the cross roads at the bottom of the Burgage Green where it was laid on a bench to public view. A crowd of three to four thousand was kept under control by the police. After an hour the body was placed into the hole and a stake said to be the murder weapon was driven through the body. The grave was then filled with quicklime, straw, pebbles and soil. After the ceremony many of the spectators having quenched their curiosity spent the remains of the day in the public houses quenching their thirst.
Commemorations – war memorial.

In 1921, three years after the end of the Great War, a vast crowd led by Bishop Hoskyns of Southwell met on the Burage Green to dedicate the War Memorial.

The Burgage Green today

Today the Burgage Green is pleasant open green space – a popular place for walks, informal games and picnics. In addition to the fair held twice a year are Fun Days organised by the community which provides local clubs and organisations with an opportunity to advertise their activities and recruit support.
In the last few years the Burgage Green has witnessed a strange sight – small groups of diggers, in high visibility vests, peering into holes and sieving heaps of clay soil. These are members of a local archaeological society and to learn more of them and their excavations on the Burgage go to:

http://burgageearthworks.wordpress.com/