

## Chapter 13

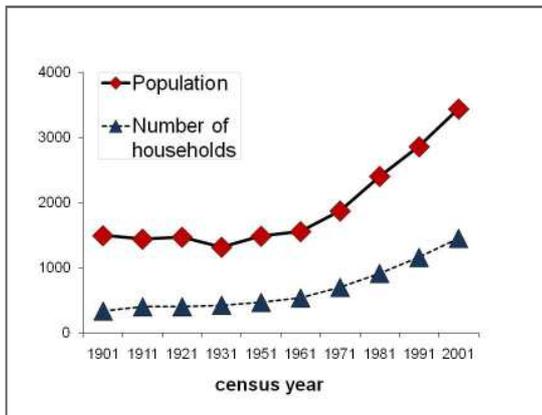
# The Modern Village

### Introduction

Villages in the Vale of Belvoir, like the rest of Britain, have changed enormously during the last hundred years. Although the book looks mostly at what we think of as recent history, this chapter takes a look at Bottesford up to the present day (2009).

### Population and housing

Between 1901 and 1961 the combined population of Bottesford, Easthorpe,



Muston and Normanton remained fairly constant at around 1500 people, apart from during the 1930s, the decade of the Great Depression, when it dropped to about 1300. By 2001 it had more than doubled to over 3,400. There is still very little ethnic or religious diversity; 98.9% being white, 81.5% giving their religion as Christianity. However, the proportion of children and young people under 25 has almost halved, though they still outnumber the increased number of over 65s.

*Population and number of households in the parish of Bottesford and Muston, 1901 to 2001 (see Further Reading).*

The number of households has more than tripled over the same period, suggesting that much of the

| <b><i>Housing and population increases in Bottesford and Muston during the decades since the 1950s (census figures).</i></b> |   |                               |  |
|--|---|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Decade</b>  | <b>Net increase in number of households</b> | <b>Increase in population</b> | <b>Main housing developments</b>                                   |
| <b>1950s</b>   | <b>67</b>                                   | <b>70</b>                     | Silverwood Road  |
| <b>1960s</b>   | <b>165</b>                                  | <b>317</b>                    | Fleming Avenue   |
| <b>1970s</b>   | <b>215</b>                                  | <b>532</b>                    | Bowbridge Gardens, Beckingthorpe Drive, The Paddocks               |
| <b>1980s</b>   | <b>246</b>                                  | <b>456</b>                    | Riverside Walk/Church View, Walford Close, Lime Grove, Walnut Road |
| <b>1990s</b>   | <b>294</b>                                  | <b>580</b>                    | Spire View, Hooper's Close, Laurel Way, Howitts Close              |
| <b>2000s</b>   | <i>No data</i>                              | <i>No data</i>                | Walker's Close (1999-2001)   |

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1950s housing, Keel Drive.

PPO



1970s housing, Cox Drive.

PPO



1980s housing, Church View.

NFO



1980s housing, Lime Grove.

NFO

population increase has been due to people moving into the village. The average size of households has fallen from 4.5 people in 1901 to 2.4 people in 2001. The figure for 1951 was 3.2, almost identical to that in 1931, but it has fallen steadily since then. A curious result is that the net increase in the number of households during the 1950s almost matched that in the population, not because the new houses were all single-occupied but reflecting the decrease in household size.

Walking around Bottesford, the rise in household numbers is apparent in the spread of new housing developments, large and small, as well as individual houses. Most development has been in Bottesford. That in Easthorpe, Muston and Normanton has been mainly of individual houses.



New apartment housing, 2009, High Street, on the former site of Nicholls of Bottesford.

PPO

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The first large development, in the early 1950s, was the Keel Drive-Silverwood Road estate developed by Melton Council in part to replace demolished housing. The majority were semi-detached houses with fairly large gardens (by 21<sup>st</sup> Century standards).

Completion of new sewers and water treatment plant in the early sixties meant that there was capacity for additional housing. The Fleming Avenue and Bowbridge Gardens/Cox Drive estates were built in the late sixties and early seventies. Fleming Avenue is a development of detached and semi-detached chalet bungalows. Bowbridge Gardens-Cox Drive is also dominated by chalet bungalows, detached and semi-detached, and a similar style was subsequently used in the Beckingthorpe Drive area during the late 1970s.

In the late 1980s, a different approach was adopted for the Lime Grove and Walnut Road developments off Barkestone Lane. Detached 'executive style' houses were arranged in intertwining closes. The Church View-Riverside Walk estate of the 1980s has detached houses, bungalows and a few larger individually designed properties. Hoopers Close, built in 1998-99 on the former Bullock & Driffill woodyard on Barkestone Lane, is mostly detached houses, but includes four smaller town houses which front onto the High Street.

In addition to new housing, there have been new buildings for the Bowls and Cricket clubs, for the Scout Group (completed 1971) and the Pre-School Play Group (completed 1988).

### ***'Those wheelie bins'***

Wheelie bins and recycling boxes were introduced in Bottesford by Melton Council in April 2005. The two types of bin, one for general household rubbish and the other for compostable garden waste, are collected on alternate weeks, while the recycling boxes for paper, cardboard, glass, tins and plastic bottles are emptied weekly. In 2008 the recycling level for 'Dry re-cyclets' was 23.23% compared to the 20.52% achieved by the preceding bag-based system. If one includes compostable waste, the 2008 recycling level was about 49%.

There is also a local recycling centre ("The Tip") where residents can easily dispose of other rubbish. A notice indicates that about 70% of the waste taken there is now recycled.



*Thursday bin parade, Church Street.*

*NFO*

### ***The Village Appraisal***

In 2000, a Village Appraisal questionnaire was sent to every household to ask what residents felt about Bottesford. Completed questionnaires were returned by 904 households (62%). An overwhelming majority thought it important to retain

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the rural village atmosphere and opposed further large-scale housing development, although many accepted infill and brown-field site developments, particularly if they included more starter homes. Developments since 2001 seem to have met these criteria. For example, in 2008 a small apartment building was constructed on the corner of Belvoir Road and High Street, then six 'town houses' on the site the former Nicholls of Bottesford (garage and car sales).

Reasons given for choosing Bottesford as a place to live included its amenities, particularly its schools, shops, doctors and public transport links. The Appraisal found that there were about 30 organised leisure activities taking place, in addition to activities linked to the Churches and Adult Education at

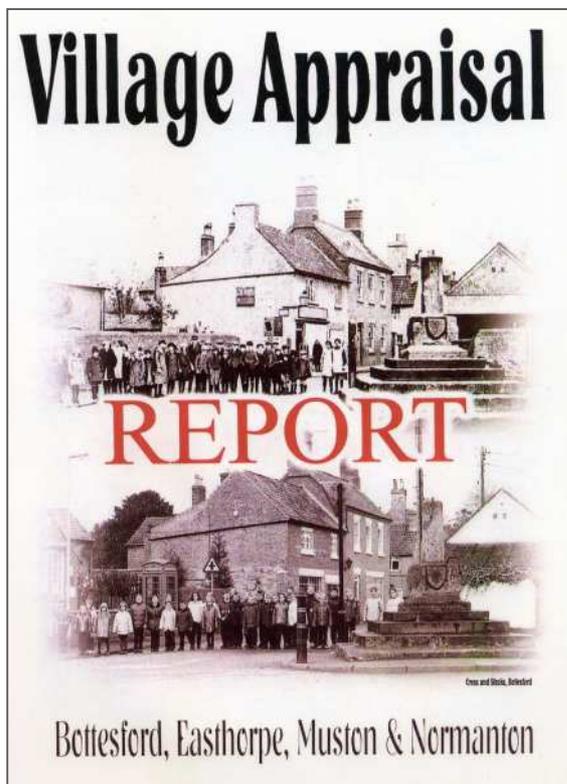
the Community Centre. Most are still flourishing in 2008-9, including sports, dancing, gardening and local history. The Vale of Belvoir Art Society holds regular exhibitions and there are other small Arts groups such as Literature and Music (LitMus).

Some are long established organisations such as the Mothers' Union, the Women's Institute, Football, Cricket and Bowls Clubs, the Angling Society and the Bottesford Local History Society. The Vale of Belvoir branch of the University of the Third Age was established in 1993 to provide educational, creative and leisure opportunities for the over 55s. It has grown to about 200 members with some special interest groups ranging from art history to play-reading and singing. Not all clubs have fared so well. The long established Forget-Me-Not club ceased to meet during 2008.

Some of the sports clubs have sections for children and young people, while the long established Guide and Scout groups are still very active. In 2008 there were two Guide groups, two Brownie packs, two Rainbow groups, a Scout Troop and a Cub Pack. There is also a council-run Youth Club.

Lack of information was one of the reasons given for not participating in local activities. The Belvoir Country News with its 'Village Diary' had ceased in 2001. In September 2002 a group of volunteers launched a new bimonthly newsletter, 'The Village Voice'. In 2009 this is delivered free to every household, funded by selling advertising. The village is also served by the free monthly Village Link magazine.

The Village Appraisal uncovered a number of other issues. For example some, particularly those living in Normanton and on Belvoir Road, were



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*Bottesford Girl Guides celebrating the National 'Poacher' Camp, 2000, photographed by Steve Etherington. JBA*

concerned about the number of Heavy Goods Vehicles using Bottesford as a short cut to Roseland Industrial Park or the A1. This was considerably reduced when, after lengthy negotiations, the three County Councils agreed to an integrated plan which banned through HGV traffic from many of the local roads, with effect from March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2006. Restrictions south of the A52 had been in effect since May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2005.

### ***The 'Victory Commemoration' Hall***

The Village Hall provides a venue for clubs and societies, theatrical evenings and social events. The original Victory Commemoration Hall, erected after the Second World War, played an important role in village life. People describe meeting their spouses at the weekly dances held at the hall. However, not all these dances were quiet affairs! There is an account of a rat causing chaos when it ran across the floor and also reports of police being called to restore order after fighting had broken out.

Accounts vary regarding its acquisition, one being that it had been a First World War 'billet' from Elton. Mrs R Norris, writing in the Belvoir Country News in 1986 recalled that in 1931/32, "... the W.I. had invested in their own hut which was built by Mr. H. Doubleday of Bottesford near the Manor Arms at Elton." She added that, "In 1946 the hut was sold to the V.C. Hall committee for £75." Mr. Doubleday had undertaken its move from Elton. There are other documents to

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show that the land on which it was placed was subsequently bought from the Marsh family in 1954 for £99.

In 1961, the Victory Commemoration Hall became a registered charity. Messrs Barnes, Palmer and Doncaster were the Holding Trustees until the Parish Council took over in 1976. In 1978, three small additional plots were bought for an extension or a larger hall, and for car parking. By the 1990s, the old building had become dilapidated and a target for vandalism, but the Trustees experienced problems in raising funds to either replace or restore it.

The Village Appraisal indicated strong support for a new hall and in 2001 the Trustees made a fifth application for Lottery funding which was successful, with a grant of £213,434 being awarded in April 2002. The estimated cost was £355,000, so the pressure was on to raise the remainder. The Committee had pledges (dependent on lottery money) from Leicestershire County Council, Bottesford Parish Council, and Melton Borough Council, plus £20,000 of their own, but they were still well short. Letters were sent to more than 100 grant-making trusts, local businesses and individuals; leaflets were distributed to every house.



*The original Bottesford Victory Commemoration Hall erected in 1946.*  
BLHS



*A 1950s theatrical production in the original Victory Commemoration Hall.*  
BES



*The new VC Hall, opened in 2003 by Councillor David Wright, Mayor of Melton, and Mr Ken Greasley, Chair of VC Hall Committee.*  
DMI

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A donations box in the local bakery brought in over £6,000 in a few weeks, a tremendous boost to the morale of the Committee who were struggling to raise the necessary money. In all, £38,000 was raised within the village itself towards the new building. Eventually there was just enough to start work.

The new building, with its laminated wooden frame, took eight months to complete and opened in August 2003, on time and to budget. In 2005 the Official Custodian for Charities became the Holding Trustee for the Victory Commemoration Hall Charity.

The hall is also a venue for public meetings, such as those called by action groups that campaign on specific issues. One such group is BLOT (Belvoir Locals Oppose Turbines) who campaigned against the proposed Thacksons Well windfarm. This proposal was rejected in the autumn of 2008. BLOT is now opposing a proposal for another windfarm, closer to the village. One of the differences between such campaigns and those of earlier generations is the role of the internet in contacting people and co-ordinating action, rather than relying on word of mouth and posters. Attracting local television and other media has also proved an important part in gaining the attention of decision makers.

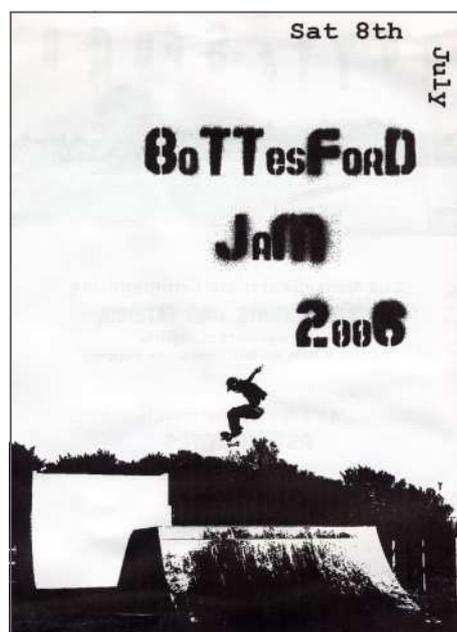
### ***Bottesford Skatepark***

In 2002 a group of young people approached Bottesford Parish Council asking for a Skatepark. After many discussions the council wrote to a number of parents asking them to form a group to raise funds and to manage the project. The committee formed in November 2003, and the council granted a long term lease on a piece of land on Grantham Rd playing fields. It was not until April 2005 that sufficient funds had been raised to begin work and build enough equipment to officially open the park. The majority of the money has been provided through Grant funding and the local

*Bottesford Jam poster, 2006. Reproduced courtesy of Bottesford Skatepark..*



*Bottesford & District Gardens Association Produce Show, 2007; new VC Hall. NFO*



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*Aerial acrobatics performed at Bottesford's Skatepark, 2008. Reproduced courtesy of Tim Goode.*

councils. However the project could not have got off the ground without the tremendous amount of local support it has received, from the construction of the asphalt base done at cost (Swallow Construction), to the donation of timber for fencing by the Duke and Duchess of Rutland and a local resident Norman Wilkinson, and the use of farm machinery by Peter Sheardown. Local support also includes those who gave their time to work on the park, run marathons, hold tabletop sales, and produce a village calendar.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2005 the first 'Bottesford Jam' was held by way of a celebration, with music and fun competitions at the park.

This proved so popular that it has now become an annual event. Since then equipment has been added to the site as and when money has allowed, all part of the original plan which was designed by local young people when the project began. The park continues to be maintained by a small group of parents, and continues to rely on local fundraising to pay for insurance, repairs and re-painting.



### ***Boxing Day and other events***

Each Boxing Day since 1984 the Vale of Belvoir Lions have organised a '**Duck Race**' down the Devon from Grantham Road to the finishing line by the



*Bottesford Scarecrow Festival, 2008. CBA Best Scarecrow Winners, 2008. NFO*

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Church (although it was postponed one year when the Devon was in spate). Crowds line the river banks to enjoy the event and the dancing of the Foresters Morris Team. The time taken for the yellow plastic ducks to complete the course varies with the state of the river: it can seem long when the river is low and the weather cold. The Vale of Belvoir Lions also hold the **Bottesford Mayday Gala**. The village **Scarecrow Festival** is run by the Primary School.

**Charity Motor-cyclists** - The Nottingham Triumph Owners Motor Cycle Club has organised twice-yearly sponsored bike rides since 1989. Before Christmas and again on Palm Sunday large numbers of bikers meet in Bottesford, many in fancy dress, and ride in convoy to present their gifts in Grantham. In 2008, more than 350 bikers are thought to have taken part.



Start of the 'Bunnie Run', 2007.

NFO

**FOCC** - The Friends of Chernobyl's Children is a small charity affiliated to a nationwide organisation that helps children from Belarus whose immune systems are weakened by continuing pollution from the Chernobyl Power Plant explosion thirty years ago. A dozen children are offered fresh air, a good diet and hospitality with a local family for one month each year over 5 years, starting at age 7 or 8. One host is quoted as saying: *When little Ivan goes home I am glad to see him a stone heavier and with roses in his cheeks.* FOCC organises events such as sponsored walks and concerts. It has now completed the second visit of its second group of children, demonstrating the strength of the charitable spirit and family values in the village.



FOCC concert in the Methodist Chapel, 2006.  
JSI

**Produce Show** - Each September the Bottesford & District Gardens Association holds its Produce Show in the VC Hall.

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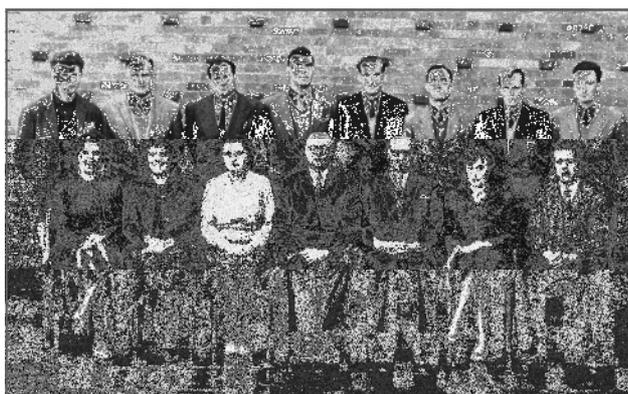
*The new Secondary School, 1960.*

*Copyright Ted Rayson.*

### ***Belvoir High School***

While the grammar school system was operating in Leicestershire, many village children who passed the 11+ travelled to King Edward VII Grammar School in Melton by train. This ceased to be possible when the line closed in 1962. By this time Bottesford Secondary School had opened, and was attended by children from the Vale villages who were brought to Bottesford by bus. The new school, on Barkestone Lane, was opened officially on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 1960, under its headmaster L.S. ("Laurie") Dewey. It was designed by County Architect T.A. Collins and built by the local firm of W.J. Roberts Ltd.

When Leicestershire reorganised its schools, following the raising of the school leaving age to 16 in 1972, it became Belvoir High



*Mr Laurie Dewey and his staff at the newly opened Bottesford Secondary School, 1960.*

*WCR*



*The new school extension building nearing completion, February 2009.*

*NFO*

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School, catering for 10 to 14 year olds. Older pupils were bussed to King Edward VII Upper School in Melton for the last two years of compulsory education, and for sixth-form studies. However, by 2001 about 30% of children of appropriate age attended secondary schools outside Leicestershire, dislike of the transfer to Melton at 14 being an important reason.

Alan Reed had been appointed Head Teacher of Belvoir High School in 1968. After construction of the Sports Hall in 1972, he applied successfully for the school to be granted 'Community College' status. Initially the school buildings were used, until the 1990s when Bottesford Community Centre acquired its own separate accommodation, where it has provided adult education up to the present day. The school also played host to a Playscheme for 5 to 14 year olds in the 1990s.

Belvoir High School survived closure threats in the 1980s. More recently, Leicestershire County Council decided that Belvoir High should take in pupils from 11 to 16, and in 2008 the school was working towards Foundation Trust and Specialist (in science) status. In September 2008, year-10 pupils stayed on at Belvoir High rather than transferring to Melton. The change in age range demands additional classroom space and a building program was initiated, for completion in 2009.

Bottesford Primary School remained in the old village school building on Grantham Road after the opening of Belvoir Secondary School, and it was not until 1977 that the new primary school was opened on Barkestone Lane. This will also expand, in response to the changes at the High School, as its pupils will now stay until they are 11.

The old school had long served as a community centre for local organisations, such as the Bottesford Brass Band, Oddfellows and Bottesford Friendly Society. It was also the home of the village library, started in 1870 by Bottesford Parish Council. The close association between this and local schools continued when the library moved to Belvoir High School in 1958, where it remained until moving back to the refurbished old school building in 1995. Since then the library has flourished. The initial five 2½-hour sessions a week had increased to seven 3-hour sessions by 2008. The range of facilities has also increased with free on-line catalogue and internet access being added.

### ***Transport issues***

Heavy road traffic congestion was relieved by construction of the Bottesford bypass, which started in 1987, following straightening of the Muston bends on the A52. The route chosen for the bypass had been the subject of intense debate among villagers, but the Inspector at the Public Enquiry in 1986 found in favour of a route to the south of Bottesford. The new road has been a great benefit, though its single, concrete-surfaced carriageway is noisy and its exposed junctions and lack of pedestrian crossings have drawn criticism from local users.

Public transport links from Bottesford periodically come under threat. During 2007 the village had direct, if sometimes infrequent, bus and train routes to Nottingham and Grantham, as well as direct bus services to both Newark and Melton Mowbray. The direct buses to both Nottingham and Newark have since been withdrawn, although a new direct service to Nottingham has started.

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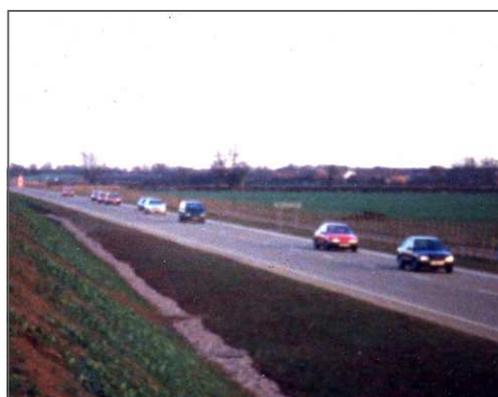
*Construction of Bottesford bypass, 1988.*  
PET



*The River Devon bypass culvert under construction, 1988.*  
MFO



*Reconstruction of the A52 by Orston Grange at the western end of the bypass.*  
PET



*The newly opened bypass in 1989.*  
MFO

In 2008, an ad-hoc group campaigned successfully against a proposal for a cut in the commuter rail service from Nottingham. This was against a background of rising passenger numbers using train services from Bottesford.

Many local people feel that part of the problem lies in Bottesford's location, at the northeastern tip of Leicestershire. Many journeys, especially those of commuters, are to Grantham or Nottingham, whereas the County Council only subsidises the bus route to Melton. Indeed, the 2001 Appraisal expressed the view that the edge of county location affected a variety of services, citing unacceptably long Fire, Ambulance and Police response times. Some improvements seem to have been made more recently. Also, the setting up of a local 'First Response' voluntary first-aider system has meant that help is usually available before the nearest ambulance can arrive.

### ***Floods***

While the flow of the River Devon is usually fairly small, heavy rain rapidly turns it into a torrent which frequently floods the old fords on Rectory Lane and

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*Floods in Orston Lane (now Bowbridge Lane), 1920s.*

*DBE*



*Towing a stranded car from the ford on Devon Lane, spring 2007.*

*NFO*

*Crossing the flooded ford at speed, not always the best way, March 2007.*

*NFO*

Devon Lane. Despite warning signs some drivers decide to risk driving through and get stuck in the water. Flooding is not unknown in Bottesford. There are pictures of flooding in Nottingham Road, possibly in the 1920s, and reports of flooding during the severe winters of the 1940s. The Devon overflowed its bank in the winter of 1998/9. In July 2001, exceptionally heavy rain caused the Devon to break its bank and there was significant flooding of houses in Easthorpe, Muston and Bottesford. The Environment Agency spokesman said this was a “Three hundred year event”, but this remains to be proven.

### ***Shopping***

The number of village shops has decreased greatly since the 1970s. Nevertheless, Bottesford still has a range of shops and other amenities. There are Taylor’s butchers, Sid’s greengrocers, the small Cooperative supermarket and the Malt

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*The Spar store and Bottesford Post-Office, June 2009.* NFO

House Deli. The Spar Store combines Post Office, news agent and supermarket. There are three pubs, two restaurants, a fish-and-chip shop and Chinese 'take-away'. The village also has a petrol station, three motor-servicing garages and a lawnmower supplier. There are two doctor's surgeries, a pharmacy and a vet's practice. Three new hairdressers opened during 2007-2008, making four in the village altogether. A different kind of shop is the Rutland Studio, selling a mixture of antiques and furniture, while the recently opened Joanna Jones Gallery sells original contemporary art on the corner of Queen Street, on

*Bottesford Co-op store, Queen Street, 2006.* NFO



*Sid's greengrocery shop, Queen Street, 2007.*

NFO

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the former site of Winn's shop. The situation continually changes. In 2008 the small village gym, which had opened as a physiotherapy and fitness centre in the former National Westminster Bank building in 1997, closed and was replaced by one of the new hair-dressers. The village Post Office provides limited banking facilities, there is an agency for the Melton Building Society and a cash-machine inside the Coop Store. There was also a cash machine on the outside wall of the Spar, but in December 2008 thieves stole it by pulling it bodily out of the wall! Thankfully, this was a rare crime in a generally peaceful village. Neighbourhood Watch makes good use of e-mail to keep people aware of burglaries and other offences that take place in the area.



*The new cafe, June 2009.*

NFO

Most recently, in February 2009, the Olde Rutland Cafe opened its doors on the High Street, in the premises of the previous Rutland Cafe that was owned by Mrs H. Standley from the twenties to the forties, and then by Mr Montegriffo in the fifties (as described in Bottesford Shops and Trades). Its most recent occupier, J&R Mowers, had moved to larger premises on the Longhedge Lane industrial estate. A more informal style of shopping provided by the 'jumbo' car-boot sale which is held on Sundays and bank holidays through the spring and summer on the fringe of the village. In addition, there are craft, produce and plant sales at various times in the year.



*Bottesford car boot sale, May 2009.*

NFO

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*Finish of the Duck Race at the ford on Rectory Lane, Boxing Day 2008.*

*PPO*



*The Foresters Morris Team dancing on Boxing Day, 2008.*

*NFO*