FEN & UPLAND

2,000 Years of History

IN

BOXWORTH, CHILDERLEY, CONINGTON, DRY DRAYTON, ELSWORTH, FEN DRAYTON, KNAPWELL, LOLWORTH, LONG STANTON, MADINGLEY, SWAVESEY, OVER & WILLINGHAM

THREE SHILLINGS AND SIXPENCE

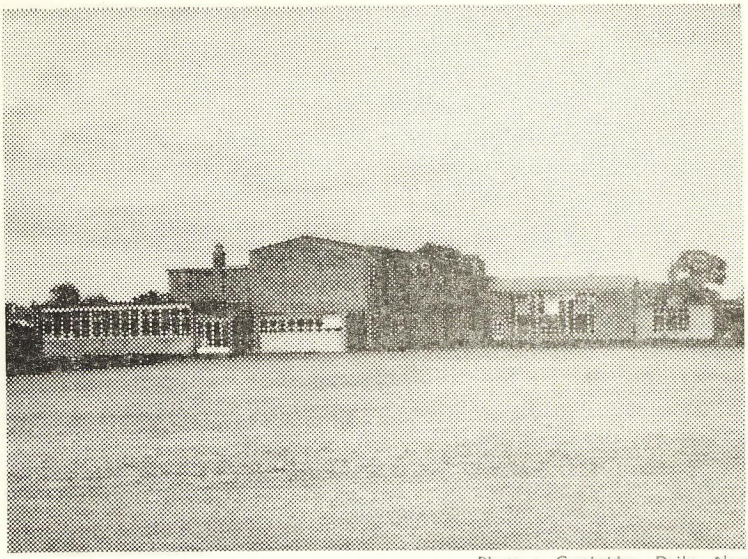


Photo. : Cambridge Daily News

SWAVESEY VILLAGE COLLEGE

1961

Christopher Taylor.

FEN & UPLAND

2,000 Years of History

PREFACE

In this booklet we have tried to put before the people, who live in the villages served by Swavesey Village College, an introduction to the history of their neighbourhood. We deal with the area of Cambridgeshire which lies between the Ouse river and the old road from Cambridge to St. Neots. To the west the area reaches as far as the parishes of Fen Drayton and Elsworth and to the east as far as Willingham, Long Stanton and Madingley. The area lies close to the 0° meridian, on which Swavesey station lies. Many of the villages in this area deserve a full history of their own ; this booklet is no substitute for such histories ; indeed, we hope that the work which has gone into producing it and the sale which we hope it will get in the area may stimulate the production of several separate village histories.

The authors of this historical study were students in a three year Tutorial Class in Local History, held in the Village College, Swavesey, between 1958 and 1961 under the auspices of the University of Cambridge Board of Extramural Studies. Mr. Lionel Munby, M.A., was Tutor to the class and has edited the material collected by the students. We should like to thank Dr. M. H. Clifford, Dr. Audrey Ozanne, Mr. Humphrey Bashford, and Dr. Esther De Waal ; without the stimulus which their teaching brought we should not have attempted even such an elementary study as this is. Many other people have helped us with information and advice ; it would be impossible to name them all. But we should like to thank, in particular, the clergy of the parishes we deal with, Miss Claire Cross, the County

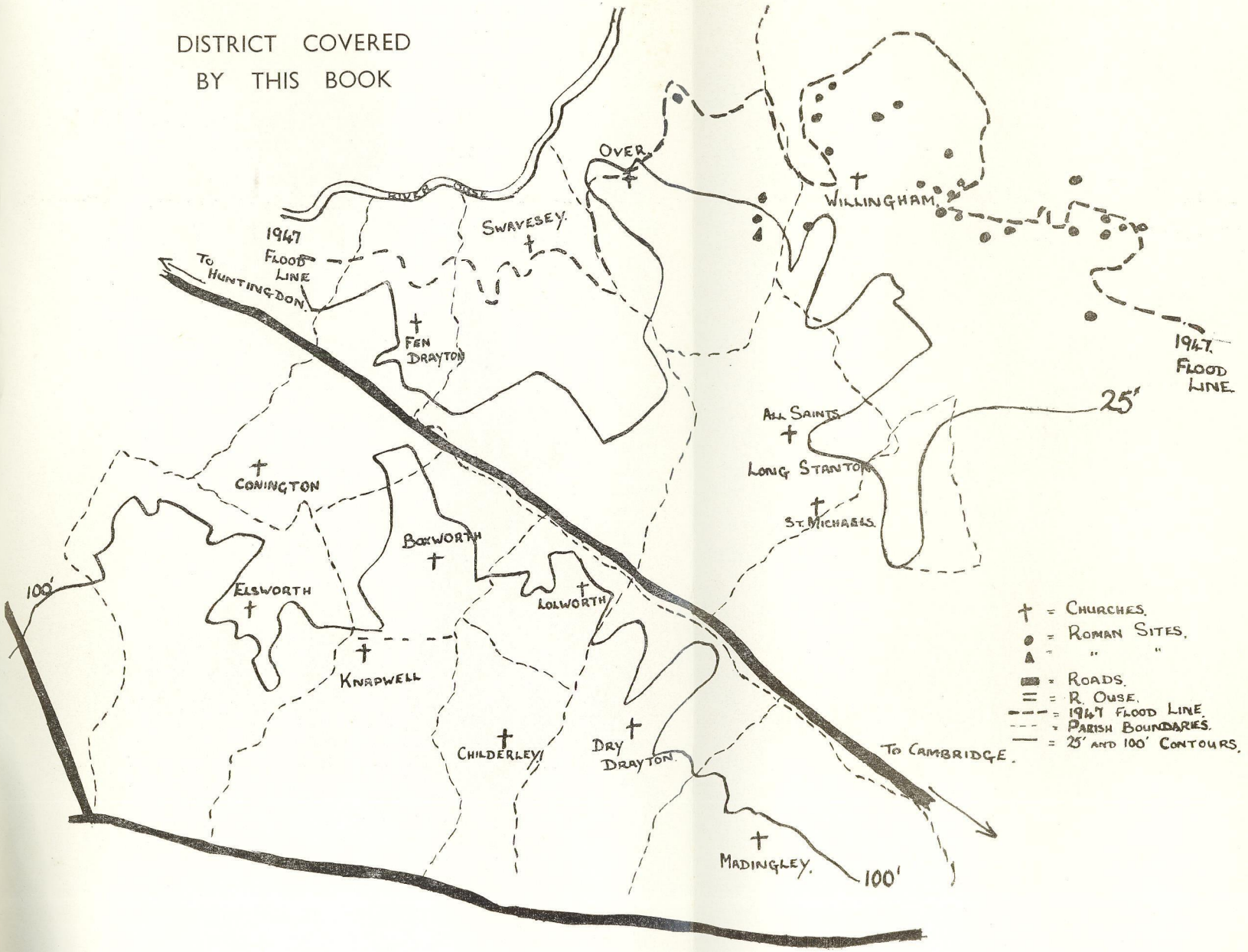
Archivist, and Miss H. Margaret Clark, to whose researches we owe the study of Long Stanton in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries on pp. 26-31. Some of the contents of this booklet are the product of research on original documents and into topographical and archaeological material. Much of our matter is culled from material already published, notably the Victoria County History, as will be obvious to those who already know something of our local history. But this work is not primarily intended for them. We hope in it to bring to many local people, who have not previously studied the history of their village, something of the interest we have gained during the last three years.

Our publication would have been impossible without the generosity and faith of many people, to whom, as to the County Education Committee and the Students Council of the Village College, we owe a debt for financial assistance. It is our hope that wide sales of our work will enable us rapidly to repay their loans.

NAMES OF CLASS MEMBERS

Mrs. Banks.
Mrs. B. Duff.
Mr. B. Duff.
Mrs. E. Ford.
Mr. M. Hopkins.
Mr. A. Hunter.
Mr. A. Houshan.
Miss Kennett.
Mrs. D. Matthews.
Mr. R. Palmer.
Mrs. R. Palmer.
Mr. E. Papworth.
The Rev. R. Pearson.
Mrs. R. Pearson.
Mr. R. Rule.
Mrs. J. Stroud.
Mr. D. Williams.

Tutor in charge : Mr. Lionel Munby, M.A., Magdalene.


DISTRICT COVERED
BY THIS BOOK
OVER
WILLINGHAM
SWAVESEY
1947
FLOOD
LINE
TO
HUNTINGDON
FEN
DRAYTON
1947
FLOOD
LINE
25'
ALL SAINTS
LONG STANTON
ST. MICHAELS
CONINGTON
BOXWORTH
ELSWORTH
LOLWORTH
100'
KNAPWELL
CHILDERLEY
DRY
DRAYTON
TO CAMBRIDGE
MADINGLEY
100'
= CHURCHES.
= ROMAN SITES.
= " "
= ROADS.
= R. OUSE.
= 1947 FLOOD LINE.
= PARISH BOUNDARIES.
= 25' AND 100' CONTOURS.

PART ONE

TO THE END OF THE MIDDLE AGES

THE AREA

Our area rises from the bed of the Great Ouse at Over, which is only sixteen feet above sea level, to land over the 200 foot contour in the south. The Roman road from Cambridge to Huntingdon divides the area in half at about the 50 foot contour level. It is the boundary between parishes throughout the area. Those parishes which lie to the north and east of the road are lowlying, fenland edge villages. Their lands are half in the fens. The floodline of 1947 (shown on the map inside back cover) revealed the older area covered by fen ; much of the land on this fen edge is gravel. Contrary to common expectation there is only a small area of Peat Fen soil south of the Ouse. The area once covered by Willingham Mere is alluvial and surrounded by gravel, which stretches south to the two villages of Over and Willingham, with a narrow band going to beyond Longstanton There is a narrow band of Ampthill clay widening out north of Papworth and forming the low ground north of Boxworth, round Longstanton, Over, and Willingham ; it is bounded on the east by the lower Kimmeridge clay of Knapwell, Oakington and Willingham. This Kimmeridge clay is often overlaid with alluvial deposits. Crystals of selenite (gypsum) are often found in the Kimmeridge and Ampthill clays. Both these clays have been used for brick making. The Kimmeridge clay is also used for embanking the rivers. Deposits of Boulder Clay occur in several places on the hill tops. Associated with the former are outcrops of Elsworth Rock, a hard limestone rich in fossils. The numerous small streams on the northern slopes of the plateau have exposed the greensand and it is interesting to note that the villages are sited at these points, approximately 120 feet above sea level. The 100 feet contour generally marks the lower edge of the Boulder clay cap and therefore the extremity of the forested area. At Knapwell, Lolworth, Boxworth and Elsworth gravel or greensand exposures border the edge of Boulder clay and no doubt formed the principal factor in the choice of these village sites. In the whole western plateau no trace of human occupation in the prehistoric periods has been recorded. This is in direct contrast to the chalk uplands which were comparatively densely populated in Neolithic and Bronze Age Times.

The upland villages to the south of the Roman road, provide a striking contrast to the villages along the Ouse bank. To the visitor from the north or west country most of Cambridgeshire may seem strikingly flat and low-lying, but there are in fact important differences of height within the area. It is over six miles, as the crow flies, from the Ouse at Earith to the Huntingdon road by Hill Farm cottages (Swavesey); the land rises 50 feet in this six miles. From Hill cottages to Ash plantation on the St. Neots road in Knapwell parish is less than four miles, but the ground rises more than 175 feet. In fact just to the south of Hill Farm cottages, as in other places in the upland villages, the ground rises 75 feet in six hundred yards. It has been suggested that there was in early times "a stretch of high forest land on the clay from Croydon to Dry Drayton, extending across the border into Huntingdonshire"; and that this upland "clayland was once well wooded"; *weald,* found as a place name in the area, here means 'high forest land'. This is the view of the Place Name experts, but natural scientists have argued that the clay area would not have been capable of bearing much forest until properly drained in more recent times.

EARLY SETTLERS

At any rate the uplands in the south of the area were, before man altered them, inhospitable and inaccessible. All the evidence is that the early settlers found movement easiest by water and that the earliest human settlements were near the river Ouse and its tributary streams. Little archaeological evidence has been discovered of pre-Roman peoples living in the area, but Roman settlement seems to have been very thick on the ground. Some pre-Roman pottery has been discovered at Fen Drayton. Years of work, by Mr. John Bromwich and Mr. Michael Hopkins in Willingham parish, has revealed Roman pottery distributed in many places along two significant lines. The lower, lies just above the 1947 floodline and the other further inland just below the 25 feet contour line. Air Photography and searches in Fen Drayton and Over have shown that these two lines of Roman settlements extend all along the course of the Ouse. Perhaps the most striking find of Roman origin was the discovery of a hoard of Votive Bronzes, now in the Archaeological Museum in Downing Street, Cambridge. They were found at an unrecorded site in Willingham Fen. The most recent find in Willingham

was a Lead Vat turned up by a plough in the same area in 1958. This has been repaired and is also in the Museum. The Museum also has some chains, possibly for hanging cooking pots over a fire, found at a depth of 5 feet in Over Fen. A Denarius of Faustina the elder and a great number of copper coins of the later empire (Constantine) have also been found in Over. Mr. Ernest Papworth has discovered and excavated what may prove to be a Roman pottery kiln at Coldharbour farm in Over. It is possible that an Iron Age site lies under the Roman one ; more excavation remains to be done. A Roman burial was discovered four years ago near the Post Office in Fen Drayton. Last year Mrs. Matthews discovered another at the Land Settlement Association Middleton Farm. A Roman domestic site has recently been excavated in Elney Fen by the Ministry of Works.

It is now well known that the Romans developed the fens as an important grain producing area and used improved waterways to transport grain to their garrisons in the midlands and north. It seems likely that there were a whole series of farms in the clays and gravels just above the flood line. Possibly the settlement and development of the area began first on the fen edge and then moved inland and uphill in later centuries. The settlements near the water may on the other hand have been places where barges were loaded and unloaded. The building of a Roman road straight through the inhospitable waste must have made upland penetration easier. A coin of Cunobelinus (5 B.C. to 40 A.D.) was found at Childerley Gates. Two Roman coin hoards were found at Knapwell in 1840 and 1877. They include silver coins up to Marcus Auerelius' reign and bronze coins up to Septimus Severus' reign.

THE COMING OF THE ENGLISH

Archaeological and historical evidence for the arrival of the Anglo-Saxons in the area is very small.

To interpret the arrival of the English we are driven to a study of the local place names, most of which are English in origin, and to another look at local geography. There were two ways into and through the area for new arrivals from overseas : by water and along the Roman road. Access by water was clearly the most favoured. It is no accident that the centres of Willingham, Over, Swavesey and Fen Drayton lie on or very near to tributaries of the Ouse. Swavesey gets its name from *Swaef's*

landing place, and Over actually means 'bank of the river'. Until comparatively recently Swavesey was a port and boats came into the middle of the village, to what is still called Market Street. There was a wharf and dock basin here with room to turn boats or barges so that they could make the passage back to the Ouse.

Over and Needingworth, across the Ouse, were connected by a ford. Willingham gets its name as 'the home of the people of Wifel'; the old form of the name suggests an early settlement. Fen Drayton has proved a more difficult name to explain. The Fen clearly means what it says, that the area was fenny or wet. It does not mean that the village is on peat or silt fenland soil. The Drayton comes from an old English word *draeg* from *dragan,* to draw or drag ; this name usually applies to places with steep slopes up which things had to be dragged, as at Dry Drayton, or to places where boats were dragged up from the water, sometimes for portage over a narrow neck of land between water. Neither of these senses seem obviously to apply to Fen Drayton, but in fact either of them might have done so. If Drayton was an early 'port', as the other villages along the Ouse, boats may well have been dragged out of the water to the village site, which was safely above water level. It is equally possible that goods coming down from the upland settlements at Conington, Elsworth and Knapwell, notably timber, may have been dragged down to Drayton for sale or distribution along the Ouse waterway. Honey Hill in Fen Drayton parish is a significant name in this connection ; it lies between two of the tributary streams which come down from the upland. The name is a tribute to our ancestors' sense of humour, for it is given to especially muddy and sticky places. There is a Honeyhill wood, with the same origin, in Boxworth parish. An alternative explanation has been put forward, deriving the Dray from the old English word 'dryge', meaning dry. Drayton would then be the village on the dry, flood free, land nearest to the Ouse.

When we look at the upland villages two things are noticeable about them. At all times they seem to have been smaller and more scattered settlements than the larger fenland edge villages. Most of them are connected with the lowland villages by tributary streams and old trackways. Elsworth, Boxworth and Lolworth all get their names as the enclosure, or clearing in the waste or woodland, settled by an Anglo-Saxon, Eli, Bucc and Lull or Loll. Conington means 'King or royal farm'; the

first part of the name represents a Scandinavianising of an old English word. It is one of the few pieces of evidence for Danish settlement in the area. Others are Bradewonge in Boxworth, a field named from *vangr,* the Scandinavian for a meadow or garden ; Crocdol in Long Stanton and le Croke in Swavesey, old field names from *krokr,* Scandinavian for a 'crook, a bend'; and Clinthauedene in Madingley. Danish words, which remain in common use, include Skiving = lazy or idle, Frawn = frozen, Dag = heavy, morning mist, Ding = a blow, Gob = mouth, Rag = teaze.

Knapwell seems to have got its name from 'Cnapa's spring'. It could be that Cnapa was not the name of the original settler, but simply meant 'boy'. In this connection Childerley, "the wood or clearing of the young men or children" is interesting. *"Cild"* came to be a title of honour for the sons of noble or royal families, as used in *"Childe Harold"*. Madingley in 1066 belonged to four sokeman; one of them was *"Aelfsi cild"*. 'Cnapa' also occurs as the name of a moneyer; it has been suggested that Knapwell gets the first part of its name from the 'Kap', 'Knop' or 'Knot', a large mound in a field near the church. The 'well' comes from the springs, underground and above ground, notably in the boundary brook. A medicinal spring, or well, containing iron, breaks out of the slope of the hill in Overhall Grove in Boxworth parish, to the east of Knapwell Church.

Madingley was "the wood or clearing of the people of Mada". Long Stanton was the long 'stone farm-enclosure". The "Long", however, is a late addition to the name. The general impression produced by the names of the villages inland from the Ouse is of isolated, remote settlements of farms and hamlets ; this is confirmed by the present day topography. There is an interesting suggestion in the names of noble or royal initiative in the colonization of this waste, upland.

A water-course runs from Knapwell, Elsworth and Conington to Fen Drayton and to the river in Swavesey parish. Childerley, Lolworth and Boxworth are on streams which join the Ouse along a channel which is the parish boundary between Swavesey and Over. Buckingway road in Swavesey is an old local name, explained as 'the track of the people of Boxworth' or 'Bucc's track'; in either case it suggests a drove or track connecting upland Boxworth with the port of Swavesey. There seems little doubt, that from early times the hamlets and farms in the uplands

were in communication by water and, where necessary, overland with the larger riverside settlements. It may seem strange to an age of motor cars and lorries, but it would not have seemed so to our English ancestors that movement by water should be easier than and preferred to movement along roads, even the surviving Roman roads in the area. It is most noticeable that between Cambridge and Fenstanton and between Cambridge and Eltisley no villages have grown up along the roads, though the roads are older than the villages.

DOMESDAY BOOK

In 1086 William the Conqueror took a great census of the people and the land he had conquered and of their wealth. With this Domesday Book we have for the first time documentary evidence for the history of our area. Some of the displaced Anglo-Saxons landowners are mentioned. Eddeva the Fair held land in Boxworth, Swavesey, Fen and Dry Drayton, which passed into the hands of Count Alan. Ulf, a thegn of King Edward the Confessor, held land in Fen Drayton and Swavesey ; tenants of his held land in Boxworth, Conington and Elsworth. All this land became the property of Gilbert of Gand. Other Saxons mentioned, who may have been resident landowners, were Balcuin of Madingley, Osulf and Gold of Willingham, Lefsi of Swavesey and Boxworth, Hugh at Long Stanton and Godwin at Over.

Of the forty-four tenants-in-chief, who held Cambridgeshire land from the King in 1086, sixteen held land in the area we are considering. The King, himself, only held land in Fen Drayton. The Bishop of Lincoln had land in Madingley and Childerley. The Abbey of Ely had seven hides in Willingham. The Abbey of Ramsey held land in Elsworth, Boxworth, Fen Drayton and Over, as well as the whole of Knapwell. Crowland Abbey had seven and a half hides in Dry Drayton, while the Nunnery of Chatteris held one hide in Over, worth 16s. The Church, in fact, was a substantial, perhaps the dominant, landowner in the district.

Perhaps the biggest lay landowner was Alan de Zouch, Count of Brittany. He held the main manor in Swavesey with a mill and a fishery rated at 3,750 eels annually. Monks of Swavesey Priory were the Count's tenants for lands in Dry Drayton. Count Alan also held land in Fen Drayton, Boxworth, Willingham, and Long Stanton. Harduin de Scalers and Picot, the Norman Sheriff of Cambridgeshire, both held large areas. Harduin had land in Elsworth, Over, Conington, Boxworth and Dry Drayton, Picot in Fen Drayton, Over, Willingham, Long Stanton and Childerley, as well as the whole of Lolworth. While Knapwell and Lolworth were single manor villages, with a single owner, most of the villages had several owners and several manors.

The change brought by the Conquest was not merely one in the personnel of the tenants-in-chief, the landowners. There

was a general decline in freedom. Before the Conquest there had been 144 sokemen in the area, free peasant farmers not subject to a lord ; by 1086 only 39 were left. It is no accident that, of the 105 who vanished, 102 were on the estates which became Harduin's and Picot's. These two Norman lords had an unenviable reputation for the destruction of a free peasantry in other parts of the country as well as in our area. They carved their manors out of free peasant lands. A foreigner is recorded as living in Elsworth in 1086.

From Domesday Book we learn that there were watermills at Swavesey and Lolworth, that at Lolworth was out of use and paying nothing. As well as Count Alan's fishery at Swavesey, Gilbert of Gand had a marsh, rated at 225 eels. There was a marsh in Long Stanton, rated at 3,200 eels, and one at Over worth 6s. 4d.; at Willingham there was a mere worth 6s. Wood for houses is recorded at Elsworth and wood for hedges at Knapwell, Lolworth, Childerley and Madingley.

With the passage of time the Church holding increased : the de Zouchs granted Swavesey and Dry Drayton land to the Priory they founded in Swavesey, as a branch of the Benedictine Abbey of Angers. Boxworth, Conington, Lolworth, Long Stanton and Madingley belonged to a succession of lay lords through the middle ages ; several families, e.g. de Boxworth of Boxworth, Elsworth of Conington, actually took their names from the villages. The de Zouchs of Swavesey alone among the lay lords of the manor were powerful locally and appropriately, had a castle in Swavesey. The rather puzzling earthworks at Castle Hill, west of the village street, seem to be the site of their Castle, but little can be learned of its nature from them. At some time during the middle ages Madingley became the shire manor ; it was held in trust for the county and farmed for £10 a year, which sum was used to pay the wages and expenses of the Knights of the Shire, the County's M.P.s. In 1543 an Act of Parliament confirmed this manor to John Hynde and his heirs in return for continuation of this payment, discharging the inhabitants of Cambridgeshire of all future responsibility for the fees and wages of their M.P.s.

THE PARISH CHURCHES

The Church was present as a landlord in many of our villages, but in all of them there existed a parish church, often the only stone building in the village and the centre of its life. It is impossible in a short space to do justice to the parish churches of our area. There were no churches recorded here in Domesday Book. At Over there is a later record of a Cross near the path leading to Mill Pits and possibly there was another at Stump Corner near Willingham. Crosses were erected for open air worship in Saxon times. The first churches were usually wooden and probably such buildings existed in many of the villages. There was an Anglo-Saxon burial ground in Over near Bridge Causeway (now Chain Road). The Bishop of Ely granted a licence to build a new Church in Over in 1254, the previous church having been burnt down. Long Stanton All Saints may have had a Saxon wooden church ; Elsworth church was mentioned in a grant to Ramsey Abbey of the tenth century. The only surviving evidence of Saxon stone work is in the fragments of Norman columns in Willingham church south porch, one of which is made from a Saxon grave cover, and possibly, in the open slit near the east end of Fen Drayton church.

Dating the surviving church buildings is difficult because of extensive nineteenth century restorations. Comparison of the present structures with the remarkable drawings and descriptions made by William Cole of Milton in the eighteenth century reveals that many apparently old features are really nineteenth century work. Boxworth church has Norman masonry in the south wall, however, but in most of the churches the earliest genuine work is of the early fourteenth century. Long Stanton St. Michaels is an exception, being a remarkable church of about 1230. Madingley church in the main dates from about 1300. Naturally the bigger villages had finer churches. Ely Abbey at Willingham were responsible for a magnificent church with a double hammerbeam roof ; the angels were added later, during nineteenth and twentieth century restorations. Swavesey and Over churches are outstanding. An interesting feature is the common style in certain churches which suggests a common builder. Thus Dry Drayton and Swavesey churches have similar tracery in the chancels, significant when we remember that Swavesey priory was a landowner in Dry Drayton. Lolworth church has a fragment of frieze with ball-flower ornament and

flowers along a tendril. An exactly similar frieze is in Over church's south aisle, dated between 1320 and 1330. Over church has a stone bench around the inside of the outer wall ; the purpose for which this was built reminds us of the proverb, 'the weakest go to the wall'. There is a fourteenth century Sanctus bell in the church.

The churches contain many tombs and monuments too numerous to mention individually, but several are the work of outstanding sculptors. Conington has work by Grindling Gibbons in marble. There is much interesting church furniture too, fine early Tudor Chancel stalls at Elsworth, a thirteenth century chest at Long Stanton St. Michaels for example.

Parishes were initially endowed by local landlords, who retained the right to present a successor to the living when the priest died or removed. This right, the advowson, passed through many hands. At Boxworth and Lolworth the advowson has always been in the hands of laymen, the successive lords of the manor. At Dry Drayton, Elsworth and Knapwell, the advowson was in the middle ages in the hands of an abbey ; Swavesey Priory in the first case, Ramsey in the other two ; after the dissolution of the monasteries it passed into lay hands. The Abbot and later the Bishop of Ely had the advowson of Willingham from the beginning ; he acquired that of Conington in 1282 by gift from the Elsworth who was lord of the manor. Swavesey passed from the local Priory to the Bishop at the Dissolution and later came to Jesus College, and Long Stanton All Saints came to Ely by Queen Elizabeth's gift ; it had been given by the lord of the manor to a Collegiate Church in Lincolnshire and passed to the Crown in Edward VI's reign. The advowson of Madingley also belongs to Ely. Four Cambridge Colleges today own the advowsons of Swavesey, Fen Drayton, Long Stanton St. Michael and Over. Fen Drayton was granted to a Breton abbey, and let by them to the Priory of Swavesey ; when the advowson came into the King's hands he granted it to Christ's College. Over belonged to Ramsey Abbey and after the Dissolution was granted by the Crown to Trinity College. Long Stanton St. Michael had a chequered career. There was a dispute about the advowson in the thirteenth century between the de Cheyney and de Colville families, a reflection of the barons' war (see page 17). Although the King had control for a time the advowson remained in lay hands until a purchaser, Edward Lucas of London, gave it to Trinity Hall.

The Master of Trinity Hall left it in his will to Magdalene College.

Clearly the quality of the local priest in each village depended in part on how the advowson was used and who by. When Trinity College obtained Over and the Bishop of Ely Long Stanton All Saints, they took the rector's land and tithes for their own use and installed a less well paid Vicar. At Long Stanton the owner of Bar Farm was at this time made responsible for the maintenance of the Chancel roof and for the payment of £20 a year to the Vicar. Fen Drayton was served by non-resident College Fellows, who only too often failed to arrive for the Service.

DAILY LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The church and the lord of the manor dominated the life of the medieval village. Naturally they left behind them plentiful documentary records, therefore much of the space in scholarly County histories is filled with manorial and church history. Less often printed and less well known are the historical records of the daily life (and death) of the ordinary peasant. To this we thought it worth while giving some attention. On Monday June 10, 1308 Roger de Kiltone of Conington, giving evidence confirming the coming of age of John the son and heir of Simon le Havekere, stated that on the day of St. Clement (23 Nov.) 1284 he held a feast in honour of the saint, when, all his neighbours sitting to dinner, his oven and kitchen were burned. On July 16, 1311 John de Conytone gave similar evidence of the coming of age of John, son and heir of William Heved of Hardwick ; he stated that he remembered the baptism of John, because on that day he lent his houses to a chaplain named William Stebrox, to hold his (the chaplain's) feast, because he celebrated his first mass on that day ; the same day the kitchen was burned.

These incidents help to bring home to us why we do not have left in our villages any medieval peasants' houses. They were simple small one-room huts made of wood, wattle and daub or clay bat and thatch. The 'kitchen' was a separate building ; even the oven might be detached. Hence the impressive 'houses'. Such structures caught fire easily and survived rarely. After all as late as 1913 Swavesey was swept by a devastating fire, in which twenty-eight old cottages perished and twenty-two families were rendered homeless. Significantly the Daily Mirror

commented : "Only the cottages of brick with slate roofs escaped".

Even manorial dwellings were usually built in perishable materials and less permanent than we tend to assume. In writing of the *Ancient Earthworks* of Cambridgeshire the Victoria County History notes ten in our area. Only two of these are in the fen edge villages — Belsar's Hill in Willingham and Castle Hill in Swavesey. There is an important castle mound in Rampton. But there are, significantly, many more in the uplands : 3 in Boxworth, 3 in Childerley, 1 in Knapwell and 1 in Lolworth. Many of these puzzled the author of the article, but the comment, quoted about Boxworth, would seem to be the explanation of most of them. "This village was accounted the seat of the Barony of the Hobridges, or Boxworths, men of great honour and reputation, in their time, who changed their names as they altered their dwellings, frequent in those times." The sites of two of Long Stanton's four medieval manors can be identified. Nicholas de Cheyney had a manor house at the Mound at the southern end of the village. A moat can still be seen in the wood below All Saints' Church which probably surrounded the manor house of Ralph de Toni.

Insecurity in one's home was probably balanced by the ease of building a new home in local materials. The general insecurity of life may have been taken for granted but it is none the less true that the threat of death was ever present, as compared with our times. Famine was not infrequent : 'the great dearth' of 1285-8 led to many deaths from hunger and cold, recorded at Swavesey and Elsworth ; significantly at Childerley thefts which occurred at this time were practically all overlooked. The famine of 1340 arose from a drought which destroyed the spring corn and peas in many parishes. The range of local crops is indicated in a table, printed in the Victoria County History, which summarizes the average acres in Dry Drayton sown annually in the C13 and C14 to various crops : wheat 40 ; oats : 30 ; peas : 13 ; barley : 8 ; maslin (mixed wheat and rye) : 6 ; rye : 3. Between 1348-50 plague, the Black Death, attacked the inhabitants ; while the records of Elsworth show no evidence of deaths due to plague, at Dry Drayton 20 of the 42 tenants died, and presumably many more wives, children and landless men. Willingham alone seems to have increased in population in the mid-14th century, in spite of the Black Death.

SUDDEN DEATH

Accidental death was frequent, although there were no motor cars or faulty electric wiring to kill people. At Boxworth the Court Roll records how Agnes Prat found Margery, the wife of Henry Rok, drowned by falling into a pond in her garden while cutting bushes. At Swavesey John, the ten year old son of John Walton, was getting water from a pond in John Hold's Wineyard close ; the pond was frozen and he went onto the ice with his yellow pot ; the ice broke, he fell in and was drowned. We are told that the pot was worth 1s. 6d.- This macabre detail was included in the contemporary record, because the pot, connected with the cause of death, became a deodand or gift to God ; later such items or their cash equivalent were forfeit to the Crown. Drowning was a frequent cause of death. At Swavesey Margery and Will Ede were found drowned in a ditch in Edward I's reign ; and in the same reign it is recorded at Swavesey that Geoffrey, the son of Gilbert, fell from a boat in the Fen and was drowned. The value of the boat was meticulously recorded at 1s. and of a horse at 16s. 4d ; was the boat being towed?

A domestic tragedy is recorded at Lolworth in 1353 : a boy of two, playing at home, fell backwards into a pan of fermenting ale and hurt himself so badly that he died in six days ; the price of the pan and the ale (October, that is strong ale) was 2d. At Boxworth in 1348 a girl was accidentally killed by a horse ; at Childerley in 1356, John Bond, riding an old horse, worth 3s. 4d., in the fields, fell off and broke his neck. In 1359 William the Clerk of Boxworth drove his cart with a load of dung into Boxworth field ; he wished to ride on the cart on the way back. In getting up his leg caught between the cart and the horse and he fell backwards ; the horse in the cart dragged him a long way over the field and for a long time ; all the while one of the horses was kicking William with his hindlegs, and so he died. The cart and horse with its harness was worth 13s. 4d. The fact that the medieval parson was also a peasant farmer is vividly brought home by this tragedy.

Sudden death was not only due to accident at work and in the home. Violence by human beings was equally common. At Swavesey in 1285 Peter de Gateway, a servant of Elene la Zouche, killed John le Parker with a knife thrust in the belly ; in 1299 Adam Baker killed William Andrew of Swavesey.

Both these murderers took sanctuary in the parish church and then abjured the realm, surrendering their possessions, said in each case to be worth 1s. In 1336 about Christmas time a man tried to take sanctuary in Swavesey church but was headed off ; he killed one of his pursuers in self defence. In cases of crime the community was held responsible, for raising a hue and cry and for the deodand if the object itself could not be found. This is revealed at Knapwell in 1342. Emma la Walshaw was led by unknown robbers into Knapwell field near St. Nedestrete, robbed of her clothes, and knocked on the head with a club, worth ½d.; her throat was then cut with a knife, worth 1½d. Since the club which smashed her head and the knife that cut her throat were missing, it is difficult to know how their value was calculated! The reason for recording such a fictitious and gruesome detail is brought out by the legal decision that, since the robbers had fled, the parish of Knapwell must either produce a club and knife of the appropriate kind or pay their price, ½d. and 1½d!

Fleeing murderers frequently sought sanctuary in village churches ; we have seen some Swavesey examples. Fen Drayton Church in 1260 gave sanctuary to Henry, the miller of Stanton, who, with Robert, the miller of Newsells, had killed the miller of Shepreth. Robert was caught and hanged, but Henry taking sanctuary, escaped with his life into exile. No doubt many of the peasants, to whom the village miller was anathema, as Chaucer's tale of the Miller of Trumpington reveals, commented to the effect : "When thieves fall out . . .". Henry incidentally forfeited 1s. for his goods ; the constant repetition of 1s. suggests that the forfeiture may have become a nominal fine rather than an actual confiscation of all the criminal's possessions. Fen Drayton gave sanctuary to two strangers in 1272 and to a male murderer and a female robber in 1280.

UNUSUAL EVENTS

All this may suggest that violence was the only extraordinary event to occur in the life of a medieval villager. Two documents about coming of age and relating to Conington, to which we have already referred, give a rounded picture of unusual local events. It is improbable that in either case they all occurred on a single day as the witnesses, asked long after how they remembered a particular day, stated, but it is probable that the

various events described had occurred in the village at about the time stated. In the first case Richard Golene (aged 60) recalls the baptism of John le Havekere because he had a son Robert of the same age baptized on the same day. John Kaym (50) remembers because he was godfather to John and gave him ½ mark (6s. 8d.) and a gold ring. William Quyntyn (54), who had married his wife Thephania a year earlier, buried her on 22nd Nov. and was almost mad with grief. Roger de Kiltone's evidence we have already described (see page 11). John Pollard of Fen Drayton (40) remembers that particular November 23rd because he was robbed and almost wounded to death by the robbers. William Jek (45), also of Fen Drayton, buried his father, James, in Conington churchyard on the day John Havekere was baptized. Wymund de la Grove (58) of Elsworth states that on the day in question he caused to be read before the parishioners of Conington the charters of a parcel of land which he bought there ; he took seisin on the same day and was ejected on the morrow. Robert de la Brok of Elsworth, William Fraunkeleyn of Boxworth, William Morel of Fen Drayton, John Pount and William de la Grove of Swavesey (all 50 or older), caused their staves and purses to be consecrated in Conington church on Nov. 24th 1284 and began a journey to St. Andrews in Scotland.

The second collection of evidence was made on 16 July 1311 to prove the coming of age of John Heved of Herdewyk. Geoffrey (46), John's godfather, stated that John was twenty-one on 21 March 1311 for he was born in Conington on that day in 1289 and baptized the next day ; John would actually seem to have been 22! William Hampt (50) remembers the baptism because his next door neighbour William Golene died and was buried at that time. William, the Clerk of Conington (60+), buried his father on 20 March 1289. Richard Golene (48+) made his homage on 21st March ; presumably he was taking over his father, William's holding of land in the manor. John Kaym (43+) married his sister, Elice, on this day, to John, brother of the rector of Conington ; Kaym, with another named Henry, led her to the church and back. William Quyntyn (now described as 52+ ; three years earlier in 1308 he was 54!) remembers his wife's sad death, but now states that it occurred on May 28, 1290; in 1308 he had stated that she was buried on 22 Nov. 1284. This is interesting confirmation that the events, so glibly described as all occurring on one day, were

probably in fact the local sensations of several years. Quyntyn goes on to add a further detail, that he was excommunicated by the rector in the church for selling an ox on St. Benet's day (21 March). Bartholomew de Glemesford (50+) remembers the baptism because his own son, John, was baptized on the same day in the same water. Wymund de la Grove (70+), on March 21st, married one Isabel and William Heved, John's father, was at his house at a feast and told him of the birth of John. William More (80) remembers the day because his son, Henry, on that day set out on a pilgrimage to Rome and never returned. Robert Stebrox (60+) remembers the day because it was the day his son William celebrated his first Mass in Conington and baptized John. William Habraham (44+) says that on this day his mother Margaret gave him an acre of land in Fen Drayton and on the next day (22 March) he caused the charter to be read. There was a celebration of a new Mass at Conington and after it he saw John Heved baptized. John de Conington (41+) then describes how he lost his kitchen due to lending it to the priest for the feast to celebrate his first Mass. These two surviving accounts give us, incidentally, a vivid picture of the kind of events which seemed memorable to local villagers in the late thirteenth century.

BATTLE

Battle, like murder and sudden death, disturbed the routine of medieval life. The isle of Ely was a refuge for rebels and for the defeated for many centuries. Danish invaders followed the Anglo-Saxon settlers. It is our private suspicion that Belsar's Hill in Willingham may prove, when excavated, to be a Danish military camp, rather than the Norman or Bronze Age site it is often believed to be. Its site in relation to the Ouse and its shape is reminiscent of Trelleborg in Denmark. The driftway is supposed to have been in use since Norman times ; it was the principal line of approach to Ely. On the 1836 ordnance survey map it is shown passing round the site on the east side ; so the camp site should be older. Hereward's resistance to the Norman conquest centred on Ely ; much of the fighting took place to the south and east of our area, but, if William's main attack around Alrehede was at Aldreth as one interpreation has it, clearly Willingham and probably many neighbouring villages must have seen much Norman coming and going. During Stephen's reign (1134-54) civil war again centred on the Isle of Ely.

The civil war, which raged between Henry III and the barons led by Simon de Montfort, left its mark in the neighbourhood. Simon himself seized Henry de Nafford's Long Stanton manor after his victory at Lewes. The incumbent of Long Stanton St. Michael, a nominee of one of Simon's followers, Phillip de Colville, followed his betters' example with an attack on William de Cheyney's manor. After the King's victory at Evesham his supporters retaliated : Alan la Zouch of Swavesey seized Thomas de Elsworth's lands in Swavesey and Conington. The disinherited members of the baronial party fled to Ely in 1266 and made the island once again a centre of resistance. They raided and plundered for food in the surrounding countryside, concentrating on the lands of the church and those of royal supporters ; Crowland abbey lands and buildings and the parish church at Willingham were attacked, as were the conventual buildings of Swavesey priory. No doubt an attack like this explains the grant of free corn obtained by Alan la Zouch in 1267, because his corn at Swavesey had been burned by the King's enemies. In the same year Simon of Swavesey needed a safe conduct to go to the King's Court.

TAXATION AND THE PEASANTS' REVOLT

Royal taxation on top of manorial dues can never have been popular. This was usually presented as taxation for war. In 1316, for example, Cambridgeshire villages had to raise money for the Scottish war. 19s. 4d. was raised from the village of Fen Drayton, an average of 8d. from each taxable person ; 6s. 8d. of this money was used to buy one aketon with bacinet. For the Lay Subsidy of 1327 £7.13s.9. was raised from 546 people of Over, £9.3s.2d. from 576 people of Swavesey, £5.6s.8d. from 258 people of Willingham, £1.10s. from 162 people of Fen Drayton, and £1.8s.7½d. from Knapwell. The highest sums paid in each village varied from 2s. 9d. in Knapwell to 12s. in Swavesey. The differences clearly represented differences of wealth among the taxpayers, but the tax may well have fallen unequally as between villages and individuals. In 1377 the 111 adults of Fen Drayton paid £1.17s. towards the Poll tax. There were four local collectors : John Boleyne and John Beton, the Constables, and William Maddy and William Abraham, additional sub-collectors.

In 1381 the peasantry over much of southern and eastern

England rose in revolt against the Poll Tax and various oppressions by their lords. In many places church landlords were particularly attacked. Dr. Palmer states that there were no attacks on the Ramsey manors in Elsworth, Over and elsewhere, but throughout the months after the revolt was put down the Abbey of Ramsey was issuing commands that its peasants should perform their traditional services, so there must have been some discontent. John Cook led a band of peasants north to attack Thomas de Elsworth's property at Elsworth, and John Scot of Milton came with a band to Lolworth to the house of John Sigar, threatening his wife Mabel that they would pull down her houses unless Sigar granted them freehold possession of lands in Girton and Madingley. William la Zouch of Swavesey headed the judicial commission which put down the revolt with a short reign of terror. William de Cheyne of Long Stanton sat on the Commission. Swavesey had had its own troubles, though it is not clear whether revolt in the village was spontaneous or due to John Cook's arrival. Fen Drayton rising was also attributed to John Cook, who was outlawed on June 15th 1381 and his land (50 acres) and goods worth £6.7s.6d. confiscated.

PROPERTY RIGHTS AND DUES

Everyday life ought obviously to bulk larger than the sensational if our account is to be true to life, but we are faced with the difficulty of either repeating what is common to every book on medieval peasant life or writing a history of each village, which is not our intention. There is only space for a few hints. Land in these agricultural communities was much subdivided and sublet, and so one finds a virgate (the typical 30/40 acre peasant holding) in Knapwell in 1255 in which many people have some right or other. The details are difficult to sort out. The virgate had descended to one William de Schelford who was hanged in London on 11 July for murdering his father. The King's claim, presumably because of the murder, was valued at 6s. 4d. saving the corn crop from ten acres already taken from the executors of John de Schelford who had been killed. The virgate was held of William Burred for a yearly payment of a pound of cummin and 1s. made to the heirs of Henry le Eveske, lord of the fee. But one Emma held three acres and a house belonging to the virgate, for which she paid 3s. to the heirs of Nicholas de Vavasour and to Silurius Lenveise ; the remainder to the virgate which was worth 15s. was described as held of the same heirs.

The Schelfords and Emma seem to have been the actual farming tenants.

The Prior at Swavesey owned property there and in Dry Drayton ; from quite a different aspect his property reveals equally clearly the complex obligations of ownership in the medieval village. In 1279 he held the Rectory of Swavesey in his own right and two virgates of Lady Eleanor la Zouch, paying her 8s. a year to hold his own manor court and to survey his tenants' gallon and bushel measures ; these had still to be presented twice yearly in Lady Eleanor's court. The Prior also had a fishery, a weir and a fishhouse in the Ouse. In 1285 he was in trouble for overstocking his Dry Drayton farm. He owned one hide in the parish and his stint of the pasturage was six oxen, two horses, six cows, eighty sheep and thirteen geese. He had in fact a flock of six hundred sheep and a herd of one hundred and twenty mixed cattle. There survives from the late fifteenth century a record of the Prior's annual expenses and payments.

"For the farm of the parsonage of Swavesey and for the rent of Dry Drayton, payable on Feb. 2 and Sep. 14 £ s. d. 37. 0. 0

Also in yearly distributions in the parish at the feast of St. Andrew as much bread as is made of a quarter of good wheat and a 'Mays' (a measure) of red herrings in alms to the poor.

Item he gives two acres of marshland to the farmer of Dry Drayton to the repair of the walls.

Item he payeth yearly to the Bishop of Ely	13. 4
Item he payeth to the Archdeacon	6. 8
Item to the prior of Ely	10. 0
Item to lord of Swavesey	8. 0
Item to the Collector of Brytonmesses (that is the Steward of Zouch of Brittany's manor) for Dry Drayton	2. 0
Item to the proctor of his fee for answering at the Visitations and Sene (synod)	3. 4
Item for the decay of a tenement at the Cross	3. 4".

This was the Benedictine priory founded by Alan de Zouch in William I's reign, which in 1393 was transferred to the Charterhouse at Coventry. The mixture of ecclesiastical obligations to superiors and inferiors with rental obligations to land-

lords and the equivalent of local taxes is typical of the obligations which went with property ownership in the middle ages. A layman would have had fewer ecclesiastical payments to make and a peasant altogether less to pay, but the same mixture would have been present.

The obligations of peasant tenants to their landlords varied. The Victoria County History suggests that "the conditions of villein tenure were considerably lighter on manors in lay hands than they were on those held by the Church." On Ely manors—and Ely had a manor in Willingham and land in Over—the villein (serf) tenants had to work on the church's demesne (home farm) land for "three days a week, before Whitsun from morning till nones, and after Whitsun until vespers, 'and note that no allowance shall be made for any festival in the year except the day of Christmas' ". While "On the Zouche manor of Swavesey in 1275 the custom was for 31 villeins to work one year and the other 32 next year, paying 8d. rent when working and 2s. 10d. when not." "When all the services of the villeins were not required on one manor they were sometimes sent to another ; thus at Dry Drayton in 1322, 104 'works' were received from Oakington and 169 from Cottenham, and in 1327 the Abbot of Ramsey's tenants at Knapwell did 38 of their works on his manor of Elsworth." Dry Drayton, Oakington and Cottenham were manors of the abbey of Crowland, and they shared one manorial court. In 1310 Giles de Hyngeston of Over, according to Mrs. Bold's history of the village, took works and rent from some of his tenants but only rent from others. While Henri Koe owed 10d. and 2 capons a year, John Reynold paid "3s. 2d. and 2 capons, and one man to work for two days (a week) and one man two days in August and one man to flail at Michaelmas one day". In addition "all the homages (owed) wast pennies and the service of each householder one man one day to make my hay".

The Church, as landlord, was stricter than the layman ; the peasant, who was personally free, was normally less burdened than the serf. But sometimes, and especially when the Church was his landlord, even the freeman had onerous obligations. Ely's free tenants had to send their men to work on the boonday. At Willingham "Thomas Something (Aliquid or Aucunchose!) who held a quarter knight's fee, 'shall himself ride with them to see that they work well' ". "More remarkable is the fact that on

many of the Ely manors (Willingham) free tenants paid heriot, leyrwite, and a fine (gersuman) for marrying their daughters, such renders being usually considered typical of villein status." The Church was not always stricter than the lay landlord. For at Dry Drayton, as on the other Crowland manors, "some provision for the aged and infirm was made, until the middle of the 14th century", while elsewhere "when a villein became incapable he had to give up his holding. Widows, however, retained their husband's holdings as 'free bench', and on the Ely manors (Willingham) it was the custom that when a villein died from whom a heriot of the best beast was due, his widow should have the use of the beast for 30 days 'to the support of her waynage' and should be excused her work-dues for that time."

AGRICULTURE

The village arable lands were unhedged and divided in allotment like strips, each tenant's strips being scattered. The rotation of crops was a communal matter. A similar system was operated in the early days of the Land Settlement at Fen Drayton ; a crop for example, potatoes, would be sown in one field, irrespective of the holding boundaries and each tenant was expected to do certain work on the crop at specified times. At Willingham and Madingley the village fields were divided into three blocks, following a rotation of spring crops, autumn crops, fallow. At Boxworth and Elsworth apparently a two-field division existed. The crops grown in Dry Drayton's fields have been described on page 12. In the fen edge villages there were many additional special crops : sedge was cut at four yearly intervals for thatching, kindling and litter. Teazles were grown at Over for dressing wool cloth. Woad was grown in Over and Swavesey from the 10th century mostly on the south and south-west side of Over town. It was marketed in Swavesey and taken across the river to Slepe (St. Ives) Market. From St. Ives this beautiful blue dye was exported to the Continent.

Animal husbandry played an important part in the village economy, not least because of the value of the manure. "At Long Stanton if a villein had sheep of his own or of his family he had to take them to the manor-house, with his own hurdles, from Michaelmas to Christmas". This was so that the lord could get the benefit of the manure on his land. Owing to the variations of soil in the area, the animal stock varied from parish

to parish. "Thus on the three Crowland manors, between 1258 and 1315, — only Dry Drayton, on the chalk, had sheep, numbering between 120 and 350 — for the demesne". In addition "the tenant of every hide (140 acres at Dry Drayton) had the right to graze on the commons 6 oxen, 2 horses, 6 cows, 80 sheep and 15 geese." We have seen how in 1285 the Prior of Swavesey, who was a tenant of one hide in Dry Drayton, had 120 cattle and 600 sheep on the commons. Others followed his example, so Dry Drayton must have had a large sheep population. The Ely demesne in Willingham in 1277 supported 16 cows (20 in a dry season), 2 bulls, 20 pigs, 1 boar, and 240 sheep. The fenland edge villages had a further local asset, their fisheries ; in 1277 there was on Willingham mere an open-water fishery for three boats, paying the Ely landlord 30s. each. The farming possibilities of the fen edge villages were well summed up in a survey of Over Manor, made in 1575 : "a reasonable good soile for corn and grass, yet very barron of wood and timber. And the pasture and meadow grounds being mares and fenns be for the most parte in the winter time surrounded with water. And wett partely by soak of the fens lying so near the great River and partly by rain and water." Of Housefen the Survey stated that it "hath ever been time out of minde the fen wherein the inhabitants of Over have been accustomed to get fodder for the keeping of their cattle in wintertime—after the first crop or so much thereof taken as the seasen of the year for wetness and drought will suffer which is many times uncertain the said inhabitants have accustomed to spare it till the feast of St. Peter (commonly called Lamas Day) (1 Aug.) or St. Michael th' archangel at the discretion of the Fen greeves and from thence is fed off with cattle of the inhabitants sans nombre, hoggs, geese and sheep only excepted till it be spared for hay next year".

Barefen, Langdridge and Skeggs "have time out of memory of man been Easter Common to the tenants of Over and Willingham for all manner of cattle sans nombre — in good dry years there was more grass than was needed". The assets of living near the fens was balanced by an extra duty, "the compulsion on a large proportion of the bishop's tenants to work on the causeway of Aldreth (which runs through Willingham parish), which formed the land approach to Ely, or to pay pontage in lieu of such work". The affairs of each manor were managed by a local reeve, "the executive officer, who supervised the actual

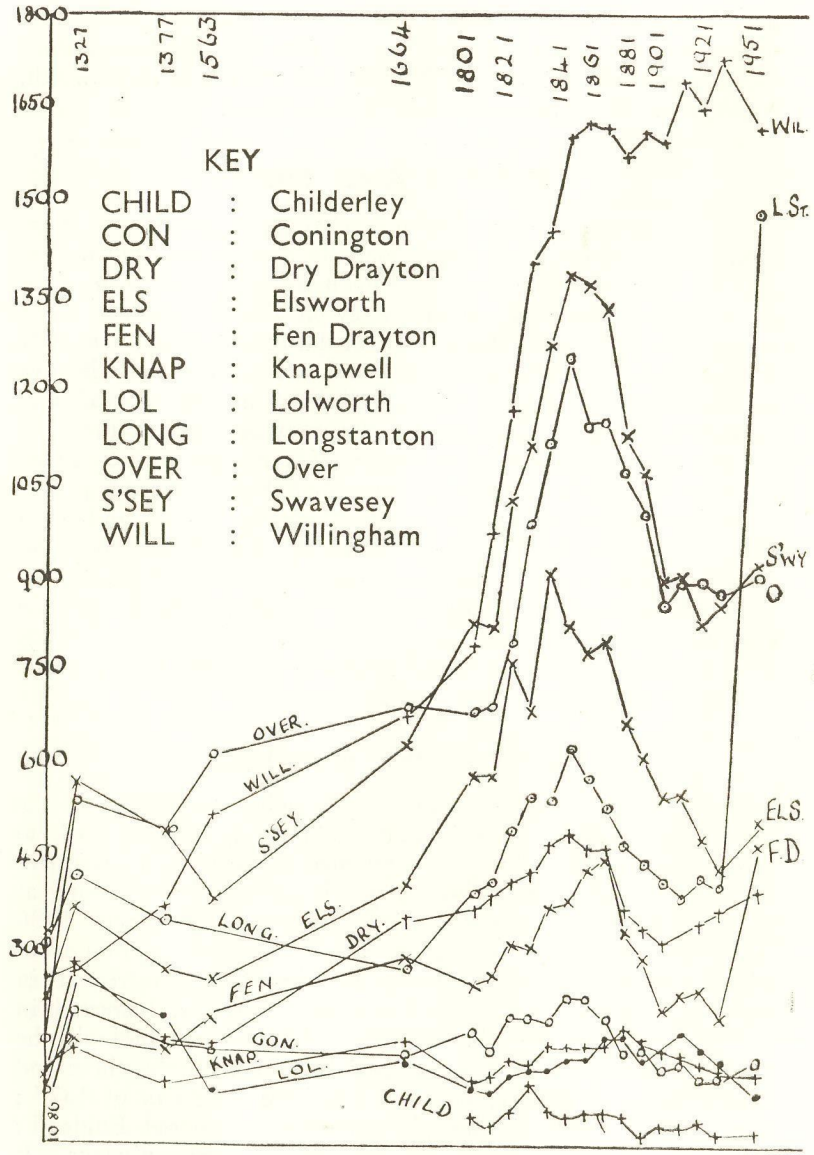
working of the farm and kept the accounts". The reeve might hold office for long periods : "at Dry Drayton the same reeve seems to have served for 30 years". The 1279 Hundred Rolls informs us that the Abbot of Ramsey had a Gallows in Elsworth, Knapwell and Graveley and held a court there.

MARKETS AND FAIRS

The medieval village had to exchange its goods and, therefore, an annual fair and weekly markets were prized rights. On July 26 1244 Alan la Zouche and his heirs were granted the right to hold a weekly market in Swavesey on Tuesdays, and a yearly fair on the vigil, feast and morrow of the Holy Trinity. In 1261 the Swavesey fair was altered to St. Michael's day and the five days following (29 Sep. to 4 Oct. inclusive); in 1505 the fair was moved to Trinity Sunday again. Swavesey acquired in the early middle ages something of the status of a market town. From the Hundred Rolls of 1279 we learn that there were several burgesses in the village, paying rents of between 2s. 6d. and 5s. a year. They included Henry the Smith, John the Barber and John Medic (the doctor), as well as several people with surnames. Over Market was in the rectangle by the Rectory and near the Guildhall ; there has been no market held within living memory. It is possible that Elsworth and Knapwell marketed their produce at Caxton which lies on the old north road.

POPULATION CHANGES

The graph on page 24 shows what happened to the population in each village in our area from Domesday Book to this century. The changes in population provide a summary reminder of the medieval history which we have been looking at and a foretaste of the following centuries. Between 1086 (Domesday Book) and 1327, the date of the Subsidy Roll from which our next figure is taken, all the villages increased in population. Over, and to a less extent Swavesey, increased in size far faster than the other villages, to become outstandingly the largest communities. Over increased its population by three and a half times. The next figure is from the Poll Tax of 1377 ; between 1327 and this date, bubonic plague entered England : the Black Death of 1348/9 was followed by lesser outbreaks. It is not surprising that every village bar one had fallen in population



VILLAGE POPULATIONS

between 1327 and 1377. Willingham was the great exception : its population had increased by nearly 50% when many of the villages had shrunk by between one third and one fifth. The next return is that made to the Bishop in 1563. There is no return available for Knapwell and Long Stanton. But the rest of the villages had differing experiences in the two hundred years from 1377 to 1563. Over, Willingham and Fen Drayton increased their population considerably ; Willingham became the second largest village in the area, not much smaller than Over. The upland villages did not share in this rise of population : Conington, Dry Drayton and Elsworth remained static in population, while Lolworth and Boxworth seem to have fallen. The surprising figure in the return is that for Swavesey, which suggests a population drop of nearly 30%. Since the next return available one hundred years later shows that Swavesey's population had increased over the 1563 figure at a faster rate than any other village, it is possible that in fact the return of 1563 for Swavesey is wrong. Perhaps the parson, making it, underestimated the size of his congregations.

The Hearth Tax return of 1664 shows a general tendency for population to increase ; Willingham has almost overtaken Over and Swavesey is not far behind ; Dry Drayton, Elsworth and Fen Drayton all had a big increase ; but Conington and Long Stanton dropped in population. When the first government Census was taken in 1801, Swavesey was the most populated village in the area, and Willingham close behind with nearly 800 inhabitants ; Over had only 700. Elsworth was the next largest with 580 people, much the most populous upland parish ; while Lolworth and Knapwell had the smallest populations, about 100 people each. The next fifty or sixty years saw a rapid population rise in every village, which was followed by an equally sharp fall until well into the twentieth century. These changes in population bring out very clearly the different history, in general of the upland and the fenland parishes. In 1911 Boxworth, Conington, Dry Drayton, Knapwell and Lolworth were not much more populated than they had been at the time of Domesday Book ; Elsworth alone had grown considerably ; its population was between two and three times that of Domesday Book. Of the fenland edge villages Long Stanton had grown least, by a quarter ; but Fen Drayton and Swavesey were about three times as big, Over nearly six times and Willingham about twenty times as populous as in Domesday Book.

PART TWO

LONGSTANTON: THE FIELDS FARMING, SOCIAL LIFE AND THE CHURCHES BETWEEN THE SIXTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES

We are able to give a more detailed picture of the life of the farming community in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in one village in our area, Long Stanton, thanks to Miss H. Margaret Clark, whose research essay is summarized and quoted from in what follows. Long Stanton consisted of two parishes and four manors, two large and two small, but it still formed one agricultural unit. Twelve field names are mentioned in documents from the years 1581 to 1613. These were all unhedged Open Fields, divided in a kaleidoscope of 'strips' farmed by different people. In reality there were four of these open fields in existence in the sixteenth century. They were Mare Field, the largest single field ; Dale Field, the far end of which was called Allhallow, Hollow or Farr Field ; Michelow with Littlemore at its north-east end ; and Stanwell Field, also called Great Mare Field or Haverill Field ; Possel Field adjoined Stanwell and in the rotation of cultivation they were one unit. The twelth named field was the Innholmes or Innams ; this included both open field strips and closes. The name suggests that this ground was added to the existing arable by cultivation of the waste early in the middle ages. For some reason it was not incorporated in the existing open fields. The sixteenth century four field system, Miss Clark suggests, may have developed out of an older two or three field system because of the division of the village into two parishes ; "the names Allhallows (Long Stanton All Saints) and Michelow (Long Stanton St. Michael), lying on each side of the parish boundary of the two parishes, are suggestive". Clearly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the field system of Long Stanton was undergoing changes. By the end of the eighteenth century "there are two parishes, and in each of them there are three fields, a fallow field, an autumn field and a spring field. Thus Michelow Field and Littlemore Field and Haverill Field—lie in St. Michaels, and Mare Field and Hill Field and Dale Field in All Saints."

The village fields were probably some 80% or more arable and there were 150 acres of waste and fen, Cow Fen in the north-west corner of All Saints Parish. Meadow land usually lay along the streams, and certain strips in the open fields, usually those too wet for arable, were cultivated leys. Miss Clark has been able to show from air photographs and documents that the balks, or ingress roads, which run mainly south-west and north-east, perhaps "as drove roads leading down to the fen for summer commoning", reveal the sixteenth century pattern of the roads of the village. Just as the open field pattern as a whole was changing so was that of the 'strips' held by each peasant. Consolidation was taking place and adjoining lands, once held separately, were being put together to make larger 'strips' in single ownership. Out of 152 strips identified, 31 were of an acre or more and nearly two-thirds of half an acre or more. "Blocks of strips in one ownership or tenure came to be called 'pieces' at Long Stanton, and at least ten of these existed by the middle of the seventeenth century. They were thought of as units in themselves, even if they were only temporary enclosures. One of these was Castle Piece in the occupation of Henry Edwards in 1626, which remained a distinct unit and was described in the eighteenth century as "containing 30 lands". This consolidation of plough lands into larger strips and of groups of strips into pieces logically led to enclosure and the break up of the open field system with its rights of inter-commoning. "The transition from open field 'lands' to 'pieces' to closes, which may have become permanent, may be seen on the land of Sir Fulke Greville". Further small scale enclosure to create improved pasture was taking place. While arable in the open fields was valued at 4s. an acre and the leys at just over 4s. the acre, enclosed pasture was valued at sums varying from 15s. to 25s. an acre. The motive behind this kind of enclosure is obvious, but it did not go very far ; the village remained basically an open field one, like most Cambridgeshire villages, until the Enclosure Award early in the nineteenth century. Indeed, Sir Fulke Greville's enclosure of the common of the manor held by him aroused local protest : "Sir Fulke hath all and kepes incloses where there should be comon for ye queenes Rectory and ye towne"; "it will be . . . to the utter undoing of most or all of us, and our prosperities for ever, with an endlesse curse to light upon th'offenders". The protest was in vain.

LONGSTANTON FARMING

How were the village lands farmed? There were "large tenant farmers of over 100 acres, like the Phypers and Edwardes, and freeholders like the Bostons". There were "cottagers with their acre of close and acre of arable". "Barley was the main crop. Wheat and rye were little grown in comparison with barley and, when they were grown, were grown together." An account of 1626 for the demesne of Colville's Manor gives the yields of different crops as barley 20 bushels, wheat and maslin 15 bushels, 'grey pease' 16 bushels, and 'white pease' 13½ bushels, all per acre. In 1794 Vancouver gave Long Stanton figures as barley 24 bushels, rye 24 bushels, wheat 18 bushels, peas and beans 16 bushels per acre. Although the arable was the most important part of the farms, stock was already significant. But the number of beasts kept varied a great deal. Nicholas Bonner left 56 sheep in his will of 1549 but William Edwardes only a ewe and lamb in 1591. William Fromant had 19 cows in 1547 but John Christmas only a single heifer in 1565. "The basic stock bequeathed to the children of a prosperous husbandman is like that which William Fromant left to each of his three daughters in 1547 : "10 ewea, 2 mylch kyen, 2 steeryes, a baye horse colt and a pyed meare colt".

"So the economy at Long Stanton was based on the growing of barley, peas and beans, and a little wheat, and on the raising of sheep, cows and pigs, products which were eked out by hens, ducks and geese in the yard, and the bees of the beekeepers."

SOCIAL CHANGE IN SIXTEENTH & SEVENTEENTH CENTURY LONGSTANTON

Miss Clark has studied the rise in Long Stanton's population in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the social changes that accompanied it. 39 people were taxed in 1542 ; there were 42 families in 1563 and 56 houses in 1662. The 38 taxpayers of 1524 can be divided into three groups : thirty paid £4 or less, seven between £4 and £10 and two paid far more, Christopher Burgoyne £26 and another £29. By the end of the sixteenth century "at least seven tenants held farms of.....about 100 acres, besides Buckleys farm, called 'the Greete farm', on Cheney's manor alone". Intensity of family feeling helped to consolidate farms and assisted the family's rise in the world. Robert Boston

in his will of 1593 "provided that no part of the premises be alienated 'soe longe as there be anie alive of my name or bloude' ". John Edwardes, who died in 1570, was a husbandman, but his son Henry, who died in 1626, was a yeoman, as were two grandsons. Other families declined in wealth and status. "The division between rich and poor, social group and social group, was not a rigid one. The marriages show that. Two Edwardes daughters married Wingfields, who were small husbandmen, in the seventeenth century. Nor were the terms 'yeoman', 'husbandman', and 'labourer' rigidly used. It was comparatively easy to slip from one group to the next". Incidentally 'labourer' in Long Stanton was not used for one supporting himself by wages, necessarily. William Wingfield of the Green Row had a free cottage, and also held lease from Hatton of £4 per annum, which his widow maintained".

The background to this social change is interesting. Leases were long, 21 years, and rents at least between 1590 and 1629 were static. About this time copyhold property became leasehold. Miss Clark has noted another change : doweries left in wills tended to be in kind early in the sixteenth century and to become cash payments by the end of the century. Even "labourers like William Persefalle in 1642.....left his daughter 40s., while William Wingfield of the Green Row left his three daughters £3 or £4 each". At the other end of the scale "John Phipers, 'yeoman', in 1608 left two of his daughters £40 each on marriage". "In so far as it is possible to generalize, a 'husbandman's' provision for his daughter tended to be £5 or over, in the first decades of the seventeenth century, and 'labourers' with leases on the side, like Wingfield of the Green Row, left somewhat less. Cottages with an acre or so might leave a few shillings".

HOUSES AND FURNITURE

Careful study of the wills has given Miss Clark a picture of the houses of the village and their contents. It seems that the rebuilding of houses, partitioning off into separate rooms and equipping with improved furniture began earlier in Long Stanton than in the west midlands. As early as 1516 there is a reference to "under the steyrys"; even if only a ladder is meant, this suggests an early beginning of the process of boarding over a house previously open to the ceiling, to create upper rooms. There are other references to several rooms in the house. "The extension

of houses was proceeding fast among the smaller husbandmen, it was not out of the ordinary for them to have one room upstairs, or a chamber, in the second half of the sixteenth century. Two or more rooms upstairs were probably common among the most prosperous villagers. At the other end of the scale, the better off labourers were subdividing their houses into two rooms". The will of John Hatch, labourer, made in 1662, refers to "the new house next John Bonds" and describes how this single-roomed house should be divided if his son marries : "he shall of his owne cost.....build and sett up a sufficient Chimney in the said new house for the use of my wife", i.e. divide the house into two rooms. The Hearth Tax Returns of 1662 show that only 21 out of 57 houses had single hearths, i.e. were houses of two or three rooms ; the remainder were still larger.

Furnishings, as well as houses, were getting better. In 1555 the Priest of All Saints had 'a grete turnede chaire'; in this he was not alone, but he was unique in possessing books. By the end of the sixteenth century "the most prosperous possessed joined beds and often had feather beds to go with them. Trundle beds came in in the the seventeenth century to go with them. No-one could rival Widow Hall in magnificence, however, for in 1613 she bequeathed a bed which she had bought from George Rilands, Gentleman, who had settled in the village. She left it "with the furniture, that is the bedsted a Canopie and Curtaynes a feather-bedd a flock-bedd twoe boulsters sixe pillowes a Coverlett and a paire of blanketts with a trundlebedd belonginge to the same".

Elene Brook, the widow of a substantial husbandman, died in 1553 leaving a chair, two 'Quysshens' and a great leather 'Quysshen' among other things. By 1576 'painted cloths' and hangings appear in Joan Butcher's house. "Elizabeth Fromant has a hanging by her bed in 1592, and Agnes Fromant had a bed with painted hangings round it, as well as three other hangings in 1599". "The odd half-dozen plain napkins were becoming common in the houses of husbandmen and yeomen". The different situation of rich and poor, but the rise in the standard of living of both, is brought out in two wills of 1628 and 1635. Joan Blose, widow of John, who held the smallest lease, £1 a year, from Cheney's Manor, left "a cupboard, two hutches, one bed and appurtenances, three pairs of sheets, two towels, two pillowbearers, eight yards of 'wolinge clothe', four yards of linen cloth, three aprons, two pewter platters, one chair, one stool, one

plank, one form, one brass pan, one gown, one wollinge wheel' and a new sheet." The furniture is meagre enough but it includes articles like the chair and the towels which would certainly not have been there a hundred years before.

The change at the upper end of the scale is shown in the goods of Katherine Stewkin, wife of the largest freeholder, who died in 1635, leaving....."one cup and six silver spoons.....my long tabell and my little Joyne tabell with a ioyned forme and a settle a press Cupboard and my Joine Bedstead one feather bed and two bolsters and straw bed with mattress and corde one paryre curtaynes and curtayne rods and the best Cheste and redd chest and my copper panne and a broad pann one Spitt and a paryre of pott rakes and my trundle bed with a redd blanket and a white one the best Coverlett and a mattris and ioyne chaire and strawbottum charyre and my wollen wheel and my linnen wheele".

OVER FENS

The two developments which were to affect our area most in the sixteenth, seventeenth and later centuries were of national as well as local importance. They were the draining of the fens and the Reformation which separated English Christians from the Roman church.

The Romans had made use of the fen area for arable cultivation. Neglect and destruction of Roman works by the English invaders and changes in the relative level of the land and the sea had turned the fen into a great mere and marsh from which countless fish and wild fowl were to be won to the benefit of the local inhabitants. At the same time land on the edge of the fen was regularly flooded and so provided good grazing for large numbers of cattle. We have seen the references made in the 1575 Survey of Over to "the fen wherein the inhabitants of Over have been accustomed to get fodder for the keeping of their cattle in winter time" and to "cattle — sans nombre". "In good dry years there was more grass than was needed" but the "cattle within wet years, when the fens be surrounded with water, were in danger to be starved for lack of Fodder." To meet this eventuality the Abbot of Ramsey, in the reign of Henry VII, had divided up the manorial demesne into 'Penny Lands', let out on copyhold tenure, 'to such as at that time would give most rent

and farme', to provide 'strawe and stover for their cattle within wet years'. This was possible because, as the Survey makes clear, "there was no Mansion House or Manor House or place". The jury making the Survey were most concerned about this : "at this present there is not any Capitall Mansion or Manner place or any mention thereof, other than one close of pasture containing by estimacon six acres called the Berry yard which some so report to be the place where the chief house was builded yet is there at this present neither mencon of house walls, ponds, motes, orchards, gardens or any such like whereby it may be gathered that the house stood there". Berry or Bury is certainly a name which suggests that there had been a manor house on the site, but an Abbey landlord would not require a manor house if it held the land directly. So it is not surprising that the Abbot was willing to sublet the demesne land. He did this in a way which was carefully designed to preserve a balanced local economy : "the aforesaid lands did he so dispersedly here an acre, and there an acre through all the fields of the Toune so as they could not make any enclosure or convert them to more commodious uses — for that they had no other Landes, meadows, pastures or feedinge severall."

The farm economy of Over clearly depended to a great degree on the feed for cattle, but "the Fishing of Willingham Meare, Darload and Cote Lake" was also important. Willingham Meare measured 324 acres. Darload lake lay "in the extreme part of the Lordship between Swalney and Shelfould and the other called Coat lake lying at the mouth of the said Meare." The management of the fenland was of great importance to the inhabitants. An "old fenn book of 1487" is referred to in the Survey ; rules and regulations went a long way back. In 1575 there were "divers Officers belonging to the same fens, for reforming of Injuries and maintainance of good order there":—

"THE FEN GREEVES or MARRISH GREEVES — 6 named fen greeves who be the chief officers and overseers of the fens and commons. Their office is to see the fens and marishes avoided of cattle at such days as are appointed. That the fens be kept in good order and not over charged or fed with such cattle as by their laws are forbidden and that the ditches, draynes, Bridges, banks of the fens be repaired and scoured and amended and that there be no encroachments or other disorders in the commons."

"THE HEYWARD — whose office is to see Dowels kept between the meadow, marish and fen grounds. To bury or cast into pitts the dead carcases of cattle. And to see the Chain of the Bridge opened and shut for such as pass in and out of the Fens."

"THE FEN CLARKE — (commonly the Clark of the Parish Church). His office is to keepe the booke whereby the Inhabitants make dividing of their fodder fens. And at such time as he is commanded to bring the booke to the fen greeves for the time being. And to go with them until they have divided the fens and laid every man his parte."

WILLINGHAM FENS

A General Survey of the Level, taken in 1635/6 by a Mr. Heyward, shows that Willingham too had much fenland. Some of it was shared with Rampton, just as some of Over fen was shared with Willingham. This 'intercommoning', as it was called, was a natural way of solving the problem of managing land lying between two parishes, over which it was difficult to draw and maintain an exact boundary. While much of Willingham fen was still 'common', some was already 'several', that is privately owned. The details of the fens, given by Heyward, are as follows :—

Rampton & Willingham.

Rampton and Willingham, another intercommon ffen more west, called IRAM : betweene Rampton grounds on the south, and west Cottenham bank east, and Hempfall north ; most of this is dry ground. The wet part lieth betwene Cottenham bank and Hempfall north and east, and the high grounds south and east. .....35. 0. 0.

Rampton, a ffen adioyning more north, called Rampton Hempfall : by Cottenham bank and Smithyfen east ; and other grounds called also Hempfall north. .....111. 0. 0.

Rampton and Willingham, another intercommon more north so called : by Smithifen east and north, and Aldrith Calcy west ; it is banked about on the east, north, and west ; and leaveth another outcast on the outside. It contains within bank. .....233. 0. 0.

The same townes, another intercommon adioyning more south so called, butting east upon Rampton Hempfall ; west as the former, with an outcast at that end. .....113. 0. 0.

The same townes, another ffen adjoining more south, called also Hempfall : by Rampton grounds south ; butting east upon Rampton Hempfall, and Rampton Iram, west as the former ; with an outcast also there. .....103. 0.0.

The same townes hold as intercommon the said outcast of these three former peeces : by Smithyfen north, and Aldrith Calcy west. .....32. 0.0.

Sir Miles Sandys certen inclosed grounds there more west, called the Stacks : by the Meargrounds called the Sholds, and the Pounds north : Aldrith Calcy east ; and the medowes called Long Stacks south. .....77. 0. 0. Willingham Jam. Pascall.

The towne of Willingham, a ffen called Babishyme more west : by the Meargrounds called the Sholds east ; extending north with a narrow spong to the river. .....74. 0. 0.

The same towne, a ffen called Milkinghill adioyning more south : by Middleffen south and west. .....76. 2. 0. Sir Miles

The same towne, a common ffen adioyning more south and west, called Middleffen: by Bathingbank north ; Willingham Lode west ; and the high grounds south. .....453. 0. 0.

The same towne, a ffen more north, called Nowditchffen, and Middlehill : betwene Bathinge Lode south, and the river north. .....196. 0 .0.

The same, a small ffen more west, called Eastland, by Bathing water south, and west, and east ; and the river north. .....34. 0. 0.

The same towne, a mowffen more west, called Great Shelfolds, betwene Bawditch east ; the Meare and Meargrounds south, Little Shelfolds west ; and the river north. .....139. 0. 0.

Heire of Sir Edrd. Hynd, an imbanked ffen adioyning more west, called Little Shelfolds : by Over groundes south and west ; and the river north. .....80. 0. 0.

4th Century Roman Funereal Pot found at Fen Drayton ; and silver coins found in Knapwell. Left : Titus Denarius ; Right : Hadrian Denarius

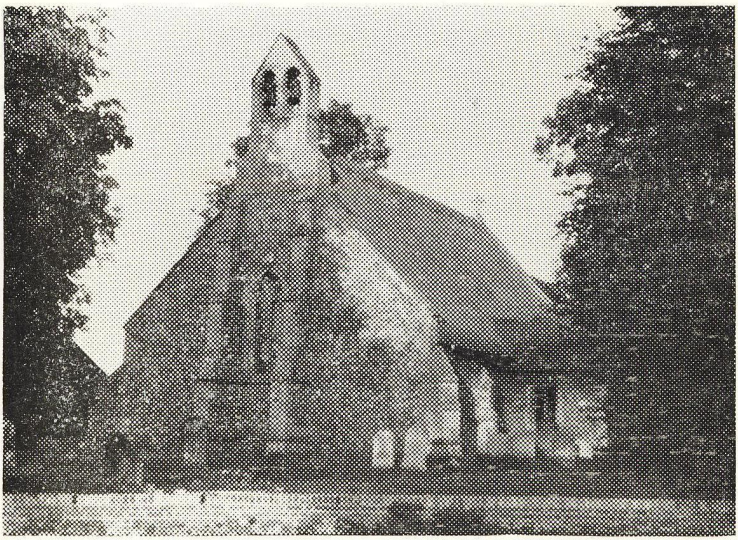


Photo. : David Southgate

The Thatched Church, Longstanton

sufficient way for 'a great herd of cattle in the same place where formerly the way hath been for the drift of cattle' and he was not to have any rights of feeding cattle on the remaining common pasture. So "the certain inclosed grounds' of the 1635/6 survey were created out of the common fen some thirty years earlier. Sir Miles in return "abandoned some of his claims over the copyholders ; and in 1611 remitted the hen rent, egg rent, days works and heriots, to which they had been liable."

The management of all this fen, so important for the livelihood of the villagers of Long Stanton, Swavesey, Over and Willingham, as we have seen in the case of Over, had led over the centuries to the construction of 'ditches, drains, bridges, banks'. Richard Atkyns in *Notes on the Fens of Cambridgeshire,* which he made in 1604, described how "from Over to Earith leadeth a bank dividing the fens ; the west parts by reason of this bank are longer drowned than them below towards Willingham be, and for that, as well as the overflowing of Ouse as also the waters from Longstanton and the parts adjoining, falling in between Over and Swasey, are thereby stayed and restrained at Earith, which in mine opinion is a cause that presseth in so vehemently at Earith Bridge to the West Waters." "A little above Earith Bridge on the south of Ouse beginneth a good bank which leadeth thence by the river to Over Cote westward, and thence turneth southerly towards Over Town ; this bank is the usual horse way from Earith Ferry to Cambridge." Over had the distinction of containing one of the earliest engines used to pump water in the fens. Richard Atkyns, in 1604, refers to "an engine or mill placed to cast water", in Over, "and not far from thence another mil for the towne, both serve to good purpose and empty the water into a ditch which falleth into Willingham Mere."

There is some evidence that the maintenance of the existing fens began to break down in the sixteenth century, whether because of natural causes or because of changes in land ownership brought about by the Dissolution of the Monasteries. The inhabitants of Over "in one moiste somer and an harde wynter followinge (they) loste more by death and drowning of cattell than they gayned by the fennes in three yeres." "Because that every poor person that had parte of the fens was not able presently at every brake and raze of water to disburst money toward the repaire of the Banks and Bridges, ditches and draines",

the inhabitants of Over agreed to establish a common fund and officers to repair the damage. This kind of action, to replace the departed powerful Church landlord, led to an increasing desire to solve the problems of the fens more radically than ever and so to renewed plans for fen drainage. It is no accident that the Sandys family who appeared as fen enclosers in Willingham in 1601-11 (see page 35) should appear as actively engaged with Francis Russell, 4th Earl of Bedford in his schemes for draining the Great Level.

REACTIONS TO VERMUYDEN'S WORK

It is not our purpose to retell the story of the draining of the fens by Vermuyden, the Earl of Bedford and the Adventurers, only to refer to some local incidents in the story. The Sandys family were deeply involved. In 1649 Sir Miles Sandys took the chair at meetings of the Adventurers when no Earl was present. On Friday 22nd June "Sir Miles Sandys and Sir Edward Partridge — brought in a Designe and estimate in writing of the works of drayninge thought fitt to be done this Summer". Sandys was deeply involved financially : in 1645 he wrote : "I could not pay £100 now if I had to go to prison. I have had to sell my land to pay my debts." On 18 August 1649 the principal defaultors in payments due to the Adventurers included Sir Miles Sandys for £1,153.15s.; he was the largest debtor. His son later wrote : "I owe divers sums, which my father borrowed at interest when he adventured large sums of money with the Earl of Bedford in the draining of the fens." The trouble was that the drainage project dragged on so long, begun in the reign of James I the work was still going on during the Commonwealth. What is more it aroused local opposition.

The St. Ives Court of Sewers in 1637 allotted to the Earl of Bedford, for his part in the drainage scheme, "out of the common fens of or belonging to Wivelingham — 183A. 1R." and "out of the several fen grounds of or belonging to Wivelingham — 40A. 3R.". This was typical of the way in which the Adventurers were rewarded for their investment in drainage ; the Earl was to get 95,000 acres of fenland altogether. It is hardly surprising that the Bishop, Dean and Chapter of Ely and

the inhabitants of Over and Willingham were among the chief petitioners against the allotment of so much land to the Earl. Protests continued to be made. The Fen Office Records for June 4th 1646 contain the minute: "the petitions from the following villages or groups of villages were read 1) Cottenham, Willingham and Rampton 2) Over ..... 3) Swavesey and Fen Drayton, ... Resolved that whoever shall desire a copie of the ordnance for drayning the fens shall have it.

"Resolved that on Wednesday next the ordnance shall be taken into consideration. And the chairman may receive such other petitions as shall be presented from the country." But petitioning did not stop the beginning of draining. When the drainage operation began, we find Sir Miles Sandys writing to his son of "the country rose up against — my Lord of Bedford"; if "order be not taken, it will turn out to be a general rebellion in all the Fen towns." By 1649 the financial difficulties of the Adventurers led to another kind of trouble: "for want of money to pay the workmen they fall into mutinies and seize upon the officers and threaten to carry them away and cutt them in pieces, in case they have not speedy payment." During the Civil War prisoners were used to supplement the workmen employed on the drainage scheme. An Order survives for 15 October 1651 "that Thomas Bunbury and Hugh Farnham or one of them do receive at Earith one hundred and sixtysix Scotch prisoners, from Corporal Foster, for the use and service of the Company of Adventurers for draining of the Great Level of the Fens." Quite early in the seventeenth century Protestant refugees from north-western Europe had settled in the fen area to help with drainage. Dutch prisoners taken in sea battles were added to these. An agreement for the restoration to their homes of 500 such Dutch prisoners was made in 1654. Drainage not only changed the economy of the fen villages but introduced new peoples and new ideas into the area.

The entries in Over Churchwarden's Account Book for 1690 and 1691 are more likely to be connected with recruiting for 'Dutch' William's war with James II than with continuing trouble in the fens, but they echo what might well have been entered in the 1640s and 1650s!

1690.	ITEM Pd. to the ten soldiers	£35		
	ITEM Pd. for a new lock for Johs Want's musquet		7s.	0d
	buy powder	1.	4s.	0d
	ITEM Pd. for 2 pikes		12s.	0d
	ITEM Pd. for 4 new swords	1.	16s.	0d
1691.	ITEM Pd. to 4 Dutchmen and their wives		1s.	0d
	ITEM gave to 4 maimed souldiers with a furloe		1s.	0d
	Spent the night before the soldiers went out		1s.	0d

THE RESULTS OF DRAINAGE

The draining of the seventeenth century was on the whole successful in its purpose of bringing new land under the plough. Sir William Dugdale observed in his diary of a tour in the fens in 1657 that not far from Willingham onions, peas and hemp were being grown in the fen. But the fens did not seem attractive places to visitors from outside. Pepys on a visit to relatives at Wisbech in 1663 wrote in his diary of the "sad Fenns — the sad life which the people of the place — do live, sometimes rowing from one spot to another and then wadeing". His relatives lived in "a heathen place — in a sad, poor thatched cottage, like a poor barn, or stable, peeling of hemp." He stayed at a "miserable inn" and went "to bed in a sad, cold, nasty Chamber, only the mayde was indifferent handsome, and so I had a kiss or two of her." Celia Fiennes visiting Ely in 1698 described the country she saw : "the Fens are full of water and mudd ; these also encompass their grounds". At Ely she had 'froggs and slowworms and snails in my roome — it must needs be very unhealthy, tho' the natives say much to the contrary which proceeds from custom and use, otherwise to persons born in up and dry countryes it must destroy like rotten sheep in consumptions and rhumes". The tragedy was that the success of the early drainers was leading to a new series of disasters, for the 'dry' ground was now sinking. Flooding began again ; as early as January 1670 we find 'a bill of emergency' in the Fen Office Records, which records payment to "Jacob Eversden and George Read and John Stizall for one day and one night watching and cradging Over bank in the flood the 3rd November 1669". A century later, in 1768, the banks at Over burst and the flood was serious.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE REFORMATION

The final dissolution of the monasteries meant the disappearance of many important landlords from our area and the parcelling out of large estates. New landlords appeared, like the Sandys and Russell families (see page 35 ff). Land which belonged to the Bishop, as opposed to the Abbey, of Ely remained his. But Long Stanton manor, for example, was taken over by Queen Elizabeth — she is said to have been entertained there by Bishop Cox in 1564 — and granted to Sir Christopher Hatton. Chantries, like the one founded by Agatha de Stanton at Dry Drayton, in 1349, and gilds, like the gild of Our Lady at Knapwell which paid 2d a year for a lamp in the church, were suppressed in Edward VI's reign. In 1554 there began a brief return to the old ways and Launcelot Ridley, the rector of Willingham, was one of the first parish priests to lose his living. With Queen Elizabeth's accession Ridley was given a new living outside our area. His successor at Willingham, Thomas Parkinson, had conformed to the Elizabethan settlement.

The Elizabethan bishops of Ely continued the medieval practice of making visitations to enquire into the local life of the church ; from these we learn that at St. Michael's Long Stanton the paintings on the walls (images) were not at first washed out, and at Fen Drayton "Divine service is not celebrated at proper times and hours nor are there any sermons or preaching of the word of God by any of the fellows of Christ's College who are rectors here." Perhaps it was not surprising that Fen Drayton also lacked the essential Protestant literature, the Paraphrases of Erasmus and the book of Homilies. How many of the churches in our area still have the sixteenth or seventeenth century Bible, which the law demanded? Knapwell has a black letter Bible dated 1617. The church buildings were themselves sometimes neglected : of Boxworth in 1552 it is reported that the church windows needed glass and that the place where the altar was had not been levelled. It should be remembered that the Puritans removed the altar from the east end and replaced it with a table in the body of the church. In 1561 the chancel windows of Boxworth church were decayed and the churchyard was unfenced. In the same year it was reported that Fen Drayton, while it still had no priest, at least now had a curate, John Pryest. We know about these defects because the diocesan authorities were enquiring into them and trying to remedy them.

VISITATIONS IN THE EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The process of enquiry and reformation continued in the early seventeenth century. "A great perambulation (was) made round the boundaries of Over on the Tuesday in Gange (Rogation) week, 1602. The dryness of the year gave occasion to the Perambulation". Ezra Purkins, the schoolmaster of Over, though not in Orders, was discovered in 1609 to be in the habit of conducting service in church, preaching twice on Sundays, burying, churching women and generally behaving like the Minister! It is hardly surprising, then, that Edward Tiffar, the minister of Swavesey, was required in 1610 to show that he was a sufficient preacher, that he served but one cure of souls, and that he was permitted to function as a schoolmaster. In 1624 Mr. William Power failed to read prayers at Fen Drayton on the 7th of March. In 1625 Mr. Leeds, the curate at Swavesey, was reported for saying no morning prayer on Rogation Sunday, and the Vicar, Mr. Wildblood, was ordered to rebuild the ruinous vicarage. An even odder state of affairs in Swavesey was revealed in 1626 : Thomas Christian and Elizabeth Rook were married by Walter Batter "who reads prayers one day at Swavesey and another day at Over and his father preacheth accordinglie and serves cure at Swavesey for one time as his sonne doth at another and neither of them licensed ; neither is the son in orders." At Madingley in 1627 Thomas Hooks, the curate who served the cure, also preached without licence. Lolworth church in 1625 needed leading and painting ; a bell was broken and the King's arms were much defaced. In 1637 it was reported that Madingley chancel needed thatch and the Vicarage had the timber of a chimney set up, but neither splinted nor daubed — interesting incidental information about building materials and methods of the period.

The parson, the church and the vicarage were not the only concern of the ecclesiastical authorities. They were watchful over the lay congregation too. Sunday observance and church going was strictly enforced, but at Swavesey in 1622 there was "bowling in the churchyard on the Sabaoth and no prayers on Bartholomew day". "Agnes, wife of Henry Smith vitailer upon Sunday 27th June 1624 did bake cakes and pyes in time of divine service"; this was at Over. In the same year Walter Rickard the miller of Conington was presented "for grinding

corn on Sunday and holy days" and at Elsworth the Sabbath was prophaned by "unlawful ringing". The Church authorities were particularly concerned with the moral behaviour of the laity; sexual lapses were publicly reported and condemned. Since there is no difference between the behaviour condemned by the Church in the early seventeenth century and that regularly reported in many modern Sunday newspapers, and since the language used in the presentations was often simple and blunt, it does not seem appropriate to give details in a work with no pretence to be fine literature.

The church's property was not always treated reverently. In 1622 at Swavesey "Joseph Papworth (was accused of) bringing a key to unlock the steeple door without any consent of churchwardens, by means of which there is lead lost to the church — which will cost at least 10s. to repair." At Fen Drayton in 1635 "Thomas Christian said that he pulled down some splint and tooke away a bottle of beere which was provided for procession." He was ordered "to repair the wall at his own cost. Mr. Bell said that he kept the bottle away and said that he would runne his knife in it"! The bottle presumably was a leathern one. Maintenance and improvement of the church was still a problem. Conington reported in 1635 that "their third bell was lost 10 or 12 years ago by the running away of the bellfounder, and they have done what they could to have gotten a rate, but Mr. Watson would not agree"; while John Blackman of Swavesey "appears and says that the floors (presumably of the church) are unpaved and thick of dust that he cannot keepe it clean". On 25 July 1635 Dr. Eden, Chancellor of the diocese of Ely, issued an order to place "the parishioners of Swavesey in seats within the church there according to their conditions and estates". The Minister, two churchwardens, Thomas Berrie, with "two such others as shall be chosen by the rest of the parishioners" were to settle the matter, and "if they shall not agree or the major part of them ..... then Dr. Whincop, parson of Elsworth, shall be authorised to arrange it."

PURITANISM BEGINS

Evidence for opposition to the Anglican church before the Civil War is surprisingly small. In 1621 James Papworth of Elsworth was presented "for going out of the church at the sacrament of baptism in a scoffing manner." At Over in 1624

"we present Elizabeth Maddye and Marie Maddye the daughter of Henry Maddie have not received the holie communion this last Easter. Mr. Livelie saith she is an heretical recusant seduced as he is informed by her excommunicate heretical mother, Marian Maddye." In 1638 Bishop Matthew Wren ordered a Visitation. The return for Fen Drayton will give some idea of the growing local opposition to Laudian control of the Anglican church ; it suggests what the Church was trying to do to set its house in order. The spelling has been modernized and the orders of the consistory court placed in brackets beneath the individual concerned.

"Mr. Thomas Dodson, curate.

(To certify who they were that were married without the communion).

Robert Cropwell, Henry Barton, churchwardens.

(The carpet to be one of purple cloth of 20s. per yard to cover the table to the ground before it and a fair thick fringe suitable and a new linen cloth for the same, a new bible, Bishop Jewel's works, a new poor box. Leets not to be warned. Accounts of churchwardens by Bill indented).

Francis Apethorpe for not keeping the chancel in sufficient repair, neither roof, windows, nor walls — did not appear (fruits ordered to be sequestrated).

(He that appeared admonished that it be repaired in the slant — sealed with wainscot to the ancient place, the rest sealed with lime and mortar, and to certify. The new Churchwardens to specify the particular decay of the walls and windows.)

Francis Apethorpe senior for refusing to pay the rate towards the repairer of the church.

(Upon hearing both sides, viz. the churchwardens and both Apethorpes, it was ordered for the future that for all rates hereafter, that they shall both together be rated for their stock after the half of the value thereof, the rest — to be exempted in respect of the Parsonage for the rates part of it referred to the suit depending)

Francis Apethorpe junior for the same.

Thomas Ratford servant of Edward Algood refusing to come to catechism.

John Charleton and Jane Chambers for the same.

Frances Apethorpe senior, Joan his wife and Francis Apethorpe junior for continually coming late to church, for not kneeling for prayers, irreverently sitting .....
Jane Chambers for absenting herself from her parish church..... and afterwards saying the churchwardens were scurvy conditioned people.

(To be suspended).

William Goodgame for not kneeling when prayer and collects were read.
Dorothy Cropley for sitting at time of prayer.
Joan Apethorpe and Francis Apethorpe for disturbing the minister in his function in uncivil and rude speeches in the church.

(That the women be not placed in the chancel, but removed into convenient seats in the church).

Francis Apethorpe junior for a fame of incontinency with Emma Cole, alias Ellis.
Walter Mace for a fame of incontinency with Joan Peete."

From the subsidy roll of 1640-1 it is clear that the Apethorpes were the wealthiest inhabitants of Fen Drayton. The subsidy raised £24.18s.; £6.8s. of this in small amounts. The highest payment was by Francis Apethorpe senior, £4.10s., for goods ; the next highest was £3 by Francis Apethorpe junior, also for goods. Among others mentioned in the Visitation, Henry Barton the churchwarden was one of the three assessors for the tax and paid £1 for goods ; the other two assessors were William Barton, who paid £1.10s. for goods, and Edward Algood who paid £1 for goods ; it was his servant who had refused catechism. Robert Cropwell, the other churchwarden in 1638, headed the list of taxpayers, taxed on their lands, and paid £1.10s. The accounts of the receiver for the Scotch loan in 1645 are headed by Francis Apethorpe senior, paying £3 ; the next largest payment was by Henry Barton, of £2.13s.4d. A Mr. Robert Vallance paid £2.4s., William Raspellar £1.16s.8d., Robert Cropwell and Edward Allgood £1 each, and John Martin 10s.

From the same Visitation record we learn of offences committed in Swavesey : Richard Day laughing in service time, Robert Robinson living from his wife, Thomas Viall, John Tuck and William Linsey drinking and fighting on the Sunday before Christmas, and John Clifton drinking all day during the Christmas holiday!

CIVIL WAR

Opposition to the Anglican church and opposition to Charles I's policies merged. Knapwell, Boxworth, Oakington, Long Stanton and Rampton were among the 22 Cambridgeshire parishes which resisted the payment of Ship Money. When civil war began, some of the university plate was smuggled to the King at Oxford. Oliver Cromwell, M.P. for Cambridgeshire, tried to intercept it at a point called Lower Hedges on the Cambridge - Huntingdon road, but failed. Barnabas Oley, master of Clare and vicar of Gransden, evaded him by taking the byways. On March 12th, 1643, the villages around Cambridge received an appeal to contribute towards the cost of fortifying the town of Cambridge. The warrant delivered by Constable Norris to the Churchwardens of Fen Drayton is still in existence. "To all and every the inhabitants of Fen Drayton in the Hundred of Papworth.

"Whereas we have been enforced, by apparent grounds of approaching danger, to begin to fortify the town of Cambridge, for preventing the Enemy's inroad, and the better to maintain the peace of this county : Having in part seen your good affections to the cause, and now standing in need of your further assistance to the perfecting of the said Fortifications, which will cost at least Two-thousand pounds. We are encouraged as well as necessitated to desire a Freewill offering of a Liberal Contribution from you, for the better enabling of us to attain our desired ends, — viz, the Preservation of our county ; — knowing that every honest and well affected man, considering the vast expenses we have already been at, and our willingness to do according to our ability, will be ready to contribute his best assistance to a work of so high concernment and so good an end.

We do therefore desire that what shall be by you freely given and collected may with all convenient speed be sent to the Commissioners at Cambridge, to be employed to the use aforesaid. And so you shall further engage us to be

Yours ready to serve,

OLIVER CROMWELL.

THOMAS MARTIN.

(' and six others)

Cambridge the 8th March, 1642/3."

Fifteen people in Fen Drayton, between them, subscribed £1.19s.2d., duly paid over to William Welbore, one of the signatories of the appeal.

Support for the parliamentary cause was stiffened by the growth in local Puritanism. In 1642 Thomas Cromwell of Madingley was accused of 'neglecting to come to church upon divers Sabaoth days', but this was the last of such local cases for some years. When Parliament introduced the Solemn League and Covenant in 1643 in support of Presbyterian church organization, no less than 158 people of Over signed it. This must have been almost every householder, for the 1664 Hearth Tax shows that there were only 139 houses in Over. Robert Finch and Henry Chapman, churchwardens, and Thomas Barnes, constable, of Willingham recorded on Mar. 16th 1643: "we destroyed 40 superstitious pictures, a crucifix, 2 superstitious inscriptions, 1 'pray for the soul of' etc., 2 pictures of the Holy Ghost, and one of the Virgin Mary in brass". Cromwell's brother-in-law, John Desborough (Disbrowe) of Eltisley, released Henry Denne, the Baptist, who had been imprisoned in 1644 for preaching in the area. Over Baptists certainly attended the Fen Stanton congregation which had come into existence by 1645.

The Civil War led to many changes in the local clergy. Edward Martin, Master of Queens' College, was ejected from the living of Conington in 1643 for political reasons ; he returned at the Restoration. Thomas Whincop had to resign the living of Lolworth in 1644 because he also held that of Elsworth ; the Puritans were attacking pluralism. John Stanton was removed from the rectory at Knapwell in 1646 "because he is incumbent of Longstow, which hath cure of souls, and liveth wholly non-resident in his church of Knapwell which he supplied by a curate". The vicar of Swavesey was sequestered in favour of William Sampson in 1648, and John Goche or Gothe was displaced at Long Stanton All Saints in 1650 in favour of Henry Gray. A Parliamentary Commission in this year proposed the Union of the two Long Stanton parishes.

After the Parliamentary victory in the Civil War Charles I became a prisoner of the New Model Army. On June 5th 1647 he was brought to Childerley Hall, then the home of Sir John Cutts, a member of the county committee which supported the Eastern Counties Associations. Charles I spent three days at

Childerley, during which time Fairfax, Cromwell and Ireton dined with him.

In the days of the Commonwealth many changes were made in Church practices. Amongst others Civil marriages were introduced. Fen Drayton Church Registers record nine such. The banns were called in the Church and a year usually elapsed before the marriage before a J.P. The Registrar of Fen Drayton in these years was a cobbler, an indication of the social upheaval which marked the times.

THE RESTORATION AND DISSENT

The real division between the English Protestant churches dates from the Commonwealth and the Restoration. The new Act of Uniformity passed in 1662 restored the Anglican church on a basis which many Puritans could not accept ; organized Dissenting Churches were born, to suffer persecution of varying degree until the Act of Toleration of 1689. Robert Wilson, an occasional preacher at Over, lost his position at the Restoration, but he was a good musician and supported himself by instructing Cambridge scholars and young gentlemen in all the country round in his art. Calamy described him as 'eminently pious and charitable and an Arch Beggar' for Nonconformity. Others, especially the Quakers, suffered imprisonment as well as re-privation of office.

Meanwhile the restored Anglican church tried to put its own house in order : poorer livings like that of Long Stanton All Saints were augmented by Bishop Gunning of Ely. Diocesan presentments and visitations recommenced and from these we learn that, in 1662, three men of Long Stanton All Saints did commonly absent themselves from church, and that the parish had a sufficient parish clerk, but neither schoolmaster nor physician. The yearly revenue of the church was £4.10s. At St. Michael's it was noted that the Rector Henry Gray "doth constantly observe the order of Holy Church. We have all necessaries provided and yearly income of £3.5s. 1 man doth commonly absent himself from Church. We have a sufficient parish clerk, but neither schoolmaster, physician, chirurgeon or midwife". At the Archdeacon's visitation of 1665 All Saints reported : "We have a silver chalice and pewter flagon and paten and a new chest with 3 locks. Our Vicar is Henry Gray :

he doth preach every Sunday in his surplice and hood. He is Rector of the other parish and serves the cure himself. He is canonical in his habit and peaceable in his conversation. He doth acknowledge and maintain the King's authority". At St. Michael's the report dealt with repairs needed to the church and churchyard fence. The comments on Henry Gray in these Visitation Reports are especially interesting when we remember that he was given the living under the Commonwealth, in 1650, one year after Charles I's execution.

Reports from other parishes show a less happy picture. In 1676, Mr. Dickings, the Rector of Elsworth, failed to read divine service on Wednesdays and Fridays in Ember week, while John Papworth, the Churchwarden, lacked a surplice. In 1679 Widow Boyden of Conington was reported not coming to church and in 1682 June Ripchier of Lolworth. In the latter year Edward Grimsby and Elizabeth his wife, of Knapwell, were accused of "absenting themselves from divine service and sermon for 3 whole weeks". It is clear from later reports that some of this neglect was due to dissent, and some of it due to growing indifference. In 1686-7 Lolworth produced a whole crop of reports : John Hare 'a common swearer, a prophane mocker' had scoffed at the ordinance of preaching and after 'gone away'; but Jane Ripsheire, who had done the same, was excommunicated. The accusation that Elizabeth Kidman was a railer against the Minister was dismissed. Robert Wolfe was described as 'a common swearer' and Jane Johnson had wholly deserted the church. On the other side Bishop Patrick of Ely's Visitation of 1692 reported Mr. Bird as the Rector of Knapwell ; this Mr. Bird, inducted into the Rectory in 1679, tried to bring some order into the Church records at least. He "gave this book (a paper book recording marriages) to the town of Knapwell in 1683. Faithfully collecting the Burials in Woollen, out of a paper book and transcribing them faithfully at the other end of this book. Also transcribing the Christenings out of a parchment book from the year 1680 to this present year 1683 wherein he began to be the Registrar himself." The Church Registers of the late seventeenth century can produce some strange stories. The following must be one of the oddest of marriages : "John Pearson aged above three score years was married to Ann Heard aged 16 years who was his grand-daughter, ye daughter of his wives own daughter, whom

I thought to have been his wives daughter-in-law only. This remarkable marriage was solemnized in Over Church ye 3rd by virtue of LIE 3rd May 1687.

The earliest records of the local Dissenting Churches, we have hardly investigated, but a George Nash of Over, Quaker, is mentioned in 1667. The Quakers seem to have had their own burial ground in Over from this date. The Anglican Church Register records 'Sarah the wife of Joseph Stevens was buried in George Nash his orchard September the 8th, 1667'. Many entries like this follow. The site is next to Mr. Dodson's old house, where Quaker tombstones can still be seen in the end of the house and the old red-brick wall at the back. Presumably some building in the near neighbourhood was used as a Quaker Meeting House from about this date. In 1727 Mark Clarke of Swavesey and Samuel Webb of Knapwell conveyed to Thomas Wright Travell Fuller and others a Messuage and Premises "Upon this special trust and confidence for a place of Public Worship for the people called Quakers and for no other use interest or purpose whatsoever." In 1870 it was recorded that the meetinghouse on the above estate, which had not been regularly used, had been burnt down by accident fifty years earlier "and being insured for £100 that has been invested." An allotment in Over Field of 2A. 1R. 11P., let to Edward Few of Willingham, belonged with the Quaker property ; this was sold in 1949. There was also a Quaker Meeting House, in Swavesey, fronting the High Street, to which six acres of land in the parish were attached. When this Quaker community appeared and when they acquired the property we do not know. Their estate "was purchased by the Society of Friends of Robert Hanscombe of Swavesey" and conveyed to trustees in Swavesey, Dry Drayton, Over, Willingham, Cottenham and Cambridge, "in trust for ever hereafter to permit and suffer the People called Quakers to assemble and keep a Meetinghouse according to their usage and customs". The meeting house site in Swavesey was sold in 1937 and the remaining six acres in June 1949 to C. W. H. Cole of Swavesey, at the same time as the Over sale. The foundation trustees at Swavesey included, as we have seen, many local people, a carpenter and three yeomen from Swavesey itself,

a grocer of Willingham and another from Cambridge, a yeoman from Over and another from Dry Drayton, and two websters from Cottenham. By the later nineteenth century the trustees are maltsters, millers, farmers and, regularly recurring, Alexander Peckover of Wisbech, banker — Lord Peckover by 1912.

WILLINGHAM AND OVER BAPTISTS

The Baptist congregation at Willingham has as ancient a history and a more continuous one than the Quakers. In 1662, according to notes written inside the Church's own book, Nathaniel Bradshaw was ejected from Willingham Rectory. He continued, however, to preach locally in his own house and in neighbouring villages ; now and then he visited Childerley. For five years he was unmolested and then he left for London. The Rev. Joseph Odely, ejected from Meldreth and imprisoned for five years thereafter, came to Willingham and Cottenham, where he often preached in the fields, although frequently imprisoned. Various local preachers followed him. In 1689 on the passing of the Toleration Act, Bradshaw returned to the area, living at St. Ives but coming to Willingham every Sunday ; he died in 1690, aged 71. A Rev. Henry Oasland was the local pastor between 1694 and 1711; he was buried at Oakington. The Church was now completely established and a regular succession of pastors followed ; Cottenham congregation soon separated off. Willingham church records begin in 1728. It is difficult to know exactly when a regularly used local chapel was first in existence. A meeting house was built by subscribers in 1714 ; this was repaired with a new thatch and redecorated at a cost of £140 in 1808. Over Strict Baptist Congregation dates from 1736, when a few people met for worship. On October 5th 1737 they gathered themselves together into a Church. Mr. Fisher, the first Minister, stayed from Oct. 1737 to 1761. The history of the Church from 1740-61 can best be told in an extract from the minute book. "From that time, death — those who turned back — persecution — contempt — and discord caused great trial, but the Lord learned us more of our own hearts —, and began to open the mouth of Brother Maulden, who was dismissed at a minister to Burwell." 'Dismissed' was a technical term ; it was in no sense derogatory! In 1810 the first meeting house was pulled down. During rebuilding the congregation met in Mr. Nathaniel Gifford's barn.

THE ANGLICAN CHURCH IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In the eighteenth century English society benefited from the spreading effects of religious toleration, but the Churches—Anglican and Dissent alike—suffered from growing indifference on one hand and sterile, over-rationalist theological arguments on the other hand. Gunning in his *Reminiscences of Cambridge* remarks that most of the Parish churches within ten miles of Cambridge were served by Fellows of Colleges who "hastened back to dine in hall ; there were others who undertook two or three services." "If the Sunday proved wet, Dr. Drop did the duty" — there was no service. The resident curate of earlier years became less and less common. All the more credit to the conscientious Dr. Farmer of Emmanuel, curate of Swavesey for many years, of whom Gunning writes :

"He made a point of attending in all weathers. He began the service punctually at the appointed time, and gave a plain practical sermon, strongly enforcing some moral duty. After service he chatted most affably with his congregation, and never failed to send some small present to such of his poor parishioners as had been kept from church through illness. After morning service he repaired to the public-house where a mutton-chop and potatoes were soon set before him : these were quickly despatched, and immediately after the removal of the cloth, Mr. Dobson (his Churchwarden), and one or two of the principal farmers, made their appearance, to whom he invariably said, "I am going to read prayers, but shall be back by the time you have made the punch." Occasionally another farmer accompanied him from church, when pipes and tobacco were in requisition until six o'clock. Taffy was then led to the door, and he conveyed his master to his rooms by half-past seven."

The text, or notes, of an actual sermon preached in Over Church in 1762 and again in 1769 is reproduced here.

There were local parsons of other kinds, William Wimple, B.A., curate of Willingham from 1741-3 was "accused, with others of Caius College, of being an atheist and compelled by the Bishop to write a book in vindication of his faith". His successor at Willingham, Thomas Ibbott, M.A., Cole described as "somewhat disordered in his head, and was made worse by the perverse humour of the people of the parish, who for the

most part are a factious set of persons, fanatically inclined, and consequently censorious of all those of another mode of worship." John Bowle, B.A., of Trinity College, who was curate in 1747, was very much the same as Ibbott, says Cole! In 1753 it was stated of Willingham that "this village is noted for the great number of dissenters there inhabiting." Cole's accounts introduce us to other mid-eighteenth century parsons. Elsworth was lucky : in 1745 "the Rev. Dr. Lunne, Archdeacon of Huntingdon and Prebendary of Lincoln is its worthy Rector and has been so for these 50 years. Is acting J.P. for this County and does not a little good in this capacity and is now in his 80th year and has three sons. One a surgeon in good practice in Cambridge and is married to a descendant of Maj. Gen. Desbrow (one of Gromwell's generals) ..... The second son is an apothecary and his third a clergyman and now curate of Conington in the next parish and who has promise of the Rectory after death of his father". In 1774 the abuse of presentations to livings for family purposes led to a Fellow of Brazenose College, Oxford, being inducted to hold the living of Conington for a minor.

KNAPWELL CHURCH HISTORY

The outline story of the Church in Knapwell from the eighteenth to the twentieth century will illustrate just how a village community could suffer from neglect and misfortune, as well as showing how much a conscientious local parson could do. John Bird, the Rector of Knapwell from 1679 died a poor man in 1709 ; in 1713-14 a Grace passed the University Senate to give £10 from the University Chest to his widow Anne, who had been left in distress. Henry Perne was Rector from 1709-31; he was buried at Knapwell. John Perne succeeded him and rebuilt the Rectory, living in it for fourteen years. He was the last Rector of Knapwell to live in the parish. In 1745 he resigned the living on appointment elsewhere. Dr. Pulter Forrester, who succeeded, had other livings. When Knapwell Chancel fell down in 1753, he got the Bishop's consent to contract "the great rambling old chancel to one of a smaller and more useful size ..... The end of the chancel is built of brick ; the inside ceiled and new paved and neatly painted." The way in which livings were bandied about in the eighteenth century is well illustrated by Cole's comment on Knapwell. "The

living — has been left by will for Mr. Professor Chappelow to have the next turn. I suppose he will transfer it to his nephew Mr. Musgrave — Vicar of Thriplow". In 1770 the Rev. Edward Musgrave succeeded to Dr. Forrester. In 1773 Rev. James Barton became Rector ; he was Rector "for 13 years but he did not live in the Parish." In 1785 the body of the church fell and services were held in a barn in the village until the church was rebuilt in red brick in 1865/6. In 1786 a Rev. Gunnis was both Patron and Rector ; he held the living until 1833. In that year the Rev. Martin Mayson of Hilton became Rector and took his own Sunday duty in Knapwell ; he was buried at Knapwell.

In 1857 the last tragic-comic episode in Knapwell's church history opened : the Rev. David Craig was instituted Rector on his own petition, having obtained the patronage. He took the duty for two or three Sundays and then disappeared. Local legend says he was found at the crossroads by the Black Windmill in his nightshirt ; he was out of his mind and was taken to a lunatic asylum. The family solicitors sent John Campbell to take charge of the living and the glebe farm of 146A. 2R. 14P. Campbell was never licensed as a curate and probably never ordained. "He lived in a vulgar manner in the tumbledown Rectory and was addicted to card playing and heavy drinking." The Rev. Kemmis in 1911 wrote of him as "that horrible fellow Campbell". In 1860 things took a turn for the better. Campbell disappeared when the Rev. G. R. Peters, Fellow of Jesus College, was sent to supersede him. In 1861 Rev. Henry Brown was ordained and licensed as Curate. He walked out every Sunday from Cambridge, arriving in time for the 11.0 a.m. Service, had dinner in the village, took Evensong and walked back to Cambridge. Rev. H. Brown raised £700 in the parish and from his friends to rebuild the church ; it was re-opened on May 1st 1865. There was then a regular succession of curates until Michaelmas 1879 when the tenant of the Rectory Farm went bankrupt. The farm had been so mismanaged that Craig's solicitors were not able to relet it, so there was no money to pay a Curate. Between Christmas 1879 and Midsummer 1881 only six services were held in Knapwell Church. In 1882 the Rectory farm was sold and the living disendowed. On the death of David Craig in 1900 the living lapsed to the Crown and Rev. M. Steinman Kemmis was appointed Rector. A general repair and improvement of the Church and Churchyard was then undertaken.

In 1902 Knapwell and Conington livings were united. The achievements of Henry Brown in 1861-5 and of Steinman Kemmis in the early twentieth century stand in shining contrast to the rest of Knapwell's church history. In spite of the long neglect Knapwell church has retained not only its Black Letter Bible of 1617, but Church Plate — a silver chalice of 1569 and a pewter flagon of 1676 — and a fine linen Communion Cloth of the eighteenth century, made in Lille, with a picture of the shelling of a city.

NINETEENTH CENTURY ANGLICANISM IN OVER AND SWAVESEY

It must not be thought that the story of Knapwell was typical of villages in our area ; few places suffered quite as much from so many mischances. C. T. Gardner's 'Notes of Over' of 1894 give the outline of a different story : "The Church was restored in 1864 at a cost of £600, defrayed by the Churchwardens out of the third received by them from the Over Town Land Charity. In 1882 a new Clock with chimes was placed in the Tower at a cost of £120. The Organ was also repaired at a cost of £105. The Spire was repaired at a cost of £220, it having been injured by the electric fluid. Duplex lamps were placed in the Church at a cost of £69. There are 300 sittings. ..... In 1892 the Rev. Galloway, M.A., was appointed the Vicar, by whose exertion and influence the Electric Telegraph, and also the midday despatch and delivery of mails were first brought into the parish, which was a very great boon to the inhabitants" —facts and figures, but they imply a good deal of worthwhile human effort.

Similar things were happening in Swavesey at the end of the nineteenth century. The Rev. T. G. L. Lushington became Vicar in 1885 and resigned in 1895. He launched a Parish Magazine at the beginning of 1886 and from its columns we can see the Church at the centre of village life. The first number, for Jan. 1886, reported the previous month's Sunday School Treat for the Sunday school children, their parents, the choir, the bell ringers, and others connected with the Church, and Night and Sunday Schools. In February there was a report of an entertainment given by the choir. An annual missionary tea had been held in January in the National School building, raising £3.9s.

for the S.P.G. Education continued to be a concern of the Church. In March the Parish Magazine reported that Mr. Buckmaster from the Kensington Science and Art Department had given two lectures on Science and Farming. There was no charge for admission but unfortunately they were very poorly attended. "The want of a Reading Room has long been felt, and it is therefore with pleasure that we hear that it is proposed to start a good Reading Room in Swavesey before long. Under the auspices of the Primrose League, a house — has been taken for the purpose and it is hoped it will be ready on March 25th." In May "the Diocesan Inspector came to examine our schools in Religious Knowledge ..... and gave we are glad to say a most favourable report. Both the mixed school and the infants school were reported excellent". On Tuesday June 8th a very successful choral festival was held ; in spite of many extra benches and chairs every seat was crammed and many had to leave unable to find a seat. In November it was noted that "the Night School has been reopened ..... we would like to take this opportunity of strongly advising young men and boys to make use of this opportunity of keeping up and increasing their knowledge. ..... it is wonderful how much knowledge has been acquired during well spent evenings by many who have had to work hard with their hands during the day." Seventy-five years later all the facilities of the Village College are offered to the present generation ; will they make such good use of them as their grandparents did of the Night School?

Education was not the sole concern of the Parish Magazine. In August it was noted that "the polling day was the 6th of July, and we were very glad to see how quietly and orderly it passed off. There is no reason why this should not always be so." This was only the second general election in which agricultural labourers had the vote. The Parish Magazine reported local efforts to install street lighting. A committee was formed at a public meeting ; £90 was collected — "almost every household in the parish, from the poorest to the richest, contributed something" — and lamps were bought. The Parish agreed to levy a rate to maintain them and Inspectors were appointed to whom the Committee handed over their outstanding funds. In this same year, 1886, a School Penny Bank was launched 'to bring our little ones in habits of prudence and thrift', and a Blanket Club was formed under which any poor person could hire a

blanket from November to May on deposit of 1s.; 6d. was returned "if the blanket is brought back to the Vicarage in good condition on May 1st, the other 6d. will be kept to pay for washing the blanket." There was already a Church Clothing Club in existence, which held its annual meeting on October 22nd.

All this amounts to an impressive total for one year's work. In the same period the Magazine recounts the events of the Church year, the celebration of Lent, Easter, the Harvest Festival and Advent. Although the Church in many villages in the nineteenth century was clearly active and Knapwell's experiences were, perhaps, exceptional, Dissent continued to flourish, as the examples of Willingham and Swavesey will show.

NONCONFORMITY IN NINETEENTH CENTURY WILLINGHAM

On Jan. 13th 1830 Willingham Baptists decided to build a new Meeting House. Their old thatched building was taken down and, while the new one was building on the same site, they worshipped in a barn. The congregation flourished in their new Chapel until 1860 when a gigantic quarrel broke out within the Church, which was celebrated in verse and prose. This led to the secession of a large group of members who built the Tabernacle almost opposite the Old Baptist Chapel of 1830. This was a 'Free Church', affiliated to the Baptist Union ; the foundation stone was laid in 1874 and the chapel opened in 1875. The first minister, Rev. William Jackson, was Spurgeon's brother-in-law : Spurgeon preached at the consecration service and returned for anniversary sermons. The total cost of the building operation was £4022.2s.2d.

	£	s.	d.
Site	461	1	2
Manse	430	14	6
Tabernacle chapel	2925	6	6
Value of labour given (estimate)	200	0	0
	4022	2	2

The new chapel had an American organ until 1909 when a new organ was installed at a cost of £560. The Old Baptist Chapel congregation were not to be outdone ; in 1874 they built

a Manse for their minister at a cost of £222. 4s. Their chapel could seat about 1000 and at the peak in the late nineteenth century there seem to have been about 1200 members shared between the two Baptist congregations.

A Primitive Methodist Chapel had been built in Over in 1848. In Willingham a Methodist Society class of five women met in a barn of the White Hart inn and then in Whittlesey's barn in Church street. This continued for some years before the present Methodist chapel was built in 1851. The original seating in this chapel was in box pews with straight backs along each side of the chapel and under the gallery which was added about 1876. The pews had seats all round, so some of the congregation sat with their backs to the preacher. Under the pulpit was the Table Pew, a box pew in which was the Lord's Table, and here there sat a man who pitched the tunes with a pitch pipe. About 1900 the roof of the chapel was found to be slipping and the front beams were pulled back by pulleys and the roof braced without a slate being removed.

NONCONFORMITY IN SWAVESEY

The Baptists of Swavesey had, perhaps, an even more vigorous and turbulent life than those of Willingham. The Old Meeting Place was a wooden building by the old cemetery at Boxworth End. The congregation can be traced back at least to 1789 when a meeting of Protestant Dissenters was licensed in Swavesey. On July 16, 1820 the Church, of 96 members, dissolved itself and on July 23 reformed itself "on the belief in the Trinity of persons". This suggests that some of the original congregation had, like many eighteenth century Dissenters, become Unitarian. Certainly there were Unitarians in Swavesey (see below). In 1834 the Congregation of the Old Meeting Place agreed to accept into communion the members of a Particular Baptist congregation which had just closed down. In 1837 they agreed not to admit new members without baptism. In 1839 there was a split in the congregation and some members left to form the Bethel Baptist congregation. In 1869 the wooden Old Meeting Place was closed and a new building in the centre of the village was opened ; it became known as the Strict Baptist Chapel. The move in 1869 may have been partly connected with the fact that when four members of the congregation died in 1863 there was no room left in the cemetery to bury them.

The seats and floor of the old chapel were taken out and burials began inside the chapel. In 1946 the Strict Baptist Chapel was closed, but it was re-opened in 1950.

The dissolution and refoundation of 1820 seems to have left behind in Swavesey an unattached group of Unitarians. From 1831-60 a building on School (Carter's) Lane was known as the Church of the Unitarians and when it was taken over by a Baptist Congregation in 1860 an agreement was reached that the new congregation must retain the existing Unitarian preacher while he was of good moral character. The Baptists who left the Old Meeting Place congregation in 1839 worshipped for several months in the house of Stephen Hayes. On 20 May 1840 a church was founded by Rev. Roff of Cambridge and Mr. Wright of Huntingdon ; a wooden chapel to seat 100 people was opened on 30 July 1840 on land given by William Carter. The Bethel Chapel schoolroom now stands on this site. In 1851 the congregation consisted of 75 people ; in 1853 the chapel was enlarged owing to the increased congregation. In 1860 a group left the Bethel Congregation — these were the people who took over the Unitarian Chapel, although they called themselves Baptists still. In 1875 this 'break-away' congregation had 45 members ; in 1884 they disappeared, their chapel was sold to the Primitive Methodists. To return to the Bethel Congregation — in 1868 a new chapel was built at a cost of £850 on the forecourt of the old wood chapel. In 1907 there was considerable restoration work (£110.15s.6d.), but in 1913 the Chapel was reported as in a dangerous condition. £900 was spent before the chapel was reopened on 9th October ; £500 of this had been raised by the opening.

When the Primitive Methodist Congregation in Swavesey was formed we do not know, but in 1884 they purchased the Carter's Lane chapel, once Unitarian and later Baptist. Their services were well attended until 1914 when the Sunday School ceased and attendance dropped. Every July a Camp Meeting Sunday was celebrated and local preachers walked twelve miles to attend. At 2.0 p.m. the congregation assembled at the Swan pond for a service ; they moved to Market Street for another and to the Recreation Ground for a third service. Between 5.30 and 8.0, the services were repeated ; all the time a band was playing. The Primitive Methodist chapel closed in 1932 and since 1934 the site has been occupied by a private bungalow.

PART THREE

THE LAST TWO CENTURIES

THE POPULATION

In telling something of the history of the Church in our area we have reached recent times. It is necessary to say rather more about some of the changes in the last century and a half and worth recalling some of the events of this period. The skeleton of the history of the period is revealed by the population changes which took place. The population of every parish rose steadily from 1801, to reach a peak near the middle of the century. Then began a catastrophic fall which affected every parish except Willingham. In Elsworth it began between 1841 and 1851 ; in most parishes between 1851 and 1861, but in Conington only after 1861 and in Fen Drayton after 1871. Between 1901 and 1931 the population of most villages was at or below the 1801 figure ; in many cases this meant a fall of 30% to 50% from the mid-century population peak. The parliamentary enclosure movement, which ended the strip system of farming in most Cambridgeshire parishes in the first half of the nineteenth century, may have brought prosperity to agriculture until the agricultural slump which followed 1874, but to the labourers it brought economic distress. They fled from the villages and many emigrated. The 1841 Census return noted that "upwards of 100 persons have emigrated to the United States since 1831" from Willingham alone, and Willingham was the one parish whose population increased through the century ! From 1871 to 1951 the Census returns show an extraordinary alternation of a rise and a fall in Willingham population every decade, but each rise was higher than the fall in the previous decade, so that in 1911 Willingham had 1695 inhabitants as compared with 1604 in 1851 and 795 in 1801. The population of Swavesey began to rise again between 1921 and 1931 and almost every village had a larger population in 1951 than in 1931. Long Stanton and Fen Drayton increased extraordinarily in population : the population of Long Stanton more than trebled, rising from 416 to 1481, due to the arrival of R.A.F. personnel with the building of an airfield ; the population of Fen Drayton more than doubled, rising from 204 to 483, due to the development of the Land Settlement. Apart from these two changes, brought about by external influences, the rise, fall

and recent rise in the population of most villages epitomizes their agricultural and social history.

THE POOR LAW

The records of the poor introduce us to life at the bottom of the social scale. In the seventeenth century Swavesey still had a guildhouse with a resident master which served both as poorhouse and workhouse in the literal meaning of the latter word. In the early eighteenth century relief of the poor in kind was more common. The overseer of Swavesey spent, in a half-year in 1737, £44. 12s. 6d. on the following goods :—

	£	s.	d.
To ye weekly bill ye lst Qtr	9	5	0
Do. 2nd Qtr	12	6	3
To ffewell	8	17	0
First By Bill	1	18	9
Second by Bill	1	18	2½
To Mr. Cutcheys Bill	1	5	6½
To ye repairs of ye Town House		11	6
To ye Rents	6	10	9
To Abatements		19	6
To Carrying Mary Bensted to Landbeach per Order and Expenses	1	0	0
	£44	12	6

The 'by' bills included payments during sickness, clothing expenses, shoe repairs, and the purchase of spinning wheels and reels.

Some Returns made to the House of Commons in 1803 give us a picture of the quantity of unemployment and poverty in the area at that time and suggest that this had greatly increased at the end of the eighteenth century. The Poor, that is the unemployed and unemployable, aged, sick and orphaned children, were maintained out of the Parish Rates, which also paid for road maintenance, church repairs and many other local government functions. But the Poor Rate was the largest item, by far, as education is in the County Rate today — perhaps a measure of our social advance in a century and a half. In 1803 the expenditure on the Poor amounted to more than two-thirds of the total Rates in every parish except Long Stanton All Saints and Fen Drayton; in these two cases it was more than half the

total. But in the larger parishes, Swavesey, Over, Willingham, and in Lolworth the expenditure on the poor was much higher : in Swavesey it was over five-sixths and in all the others over seven-eighths of the total Rates. Now this was something new, for a quarter of a century earlier the Rate burden had been much lower. Between 1776 and 1803 the sum collected in Rates increased in Fen Drayton by about two and a half times, and in Madingley by more than fourteen times ; it is suggestive that in 1803 Fen Drayton spent, relatively, such a small percentage of its rates on the poor. The lowest increases, by three to four times, were in Boxworth, Dry Drayton, Over and Long Stanton All Saints ; in all the other parishes the sum collected in Rates increased by six, seven or eight times, in Lolworth by twelve. Childerley, which had only 47 inhabitants in 1801, actually increased the sum collected in Rates from £2. 19s. 6d. in 1776 to £66. 10s. in 1803, but the parish was exceptional. The Lyson's account of Childerley in *Magna Brittannia,* published in 1808, was that "there is now only one cottage besides the old mansion" and this, earlier "the seat of the Cutts family, is occupied as two tenements by farmers who rent the estate". The rate in the £ levied in 1803, incidentally, ranged from 1s. 9d. in Conington and 2s. in Childerley to 6s. 2d. in Knapwell, 6s. 7½d. in Willingham and 7s. 4d. in Long Stanton St. Michaels.

UNEMPLOYMENT

It seems evident from these figures that at the beginning of the nineteenth century the area contained a substantial section of the population who were unable to keep themselves alive unaided. Whether such a situation was the consequence or the cause of a rapid rise in population has been much debated. In 1785 Dry Drayton spent £7. 16s. 1d. "in setting the poor to work". In 1803 Long Stanton St. Michaels spent 18s. but with no return, while Over made £76. 14s. 8d. out of the work of the poor, apparently spending nothing in the process. The numbers of parish paupers were alarming. From 1921 to the late 1930s between 10% and 20% of the population of Britain were unemployed and these years have come to be thought of as the worst our country has known in this respect; some areas naturally had far more than a fifth of the population unemployed at this time. In 1803 6.37% of the adult population of the fourteen villages in our area were permanently relieved from the Poor Rate and another 6.77% were occasionally relieved ; a further

5.34% on permanent relief were children of fourteen or under. The situation must have been comparable to that of the country as a whole in the 1920s and 1930s. Villages were unequally affected. In Boxworth, Childerley, Conington, Dry Drayton, Elsworth, Knapwell, Long Stanton All Saints, Madingley, Over and Swavesey, less than 20% of the population were relieved from the Rates. In Fen Drayton, Willingham, Lolworth and Long Stanton St. Michaels the figure was between 21% and 39%. These averages conceal the fact that the situation was, in general, worse in the larger villages near the Ouse than in the smaller, upland villages. 21.5% of the 2971 people who lived in Fen Drayton, Swavesey, Over, Willingham and the two Long Stantons in 1801 received relief in 1803 ; but only 12.9% of the 1798 inhabitants of the eight upland villages. The difference must have been connected with the site not the size of the villages, for the two large upland villages, Dry Drayton and Elsworth with 964 inhabitants between them had only 11.1% of their population on poor relief. Some of the individual village figures are appalling : Willingham had 78 adults on permanent relief and 77 on occasional relief, and 94 pauper children in addition ; while Lolworth with only 98 inhabitants in 1801 had 14 on permanent and 3 on occasional relief with 21 children as well !

The situation had not greatly improved by the 1830s. The answers which Frederick Robinson, Overseer of Over for four years, gave to the Poor Law Commissioners in 1834 are revealing. He had spent 17s. 1d. per head on the poor in 1831 ! No regularly employed labourers were receiving additional relief from the parish, but the overseer was 'compelled to employ' able-bodied men applying for work, and this he resented. In answer to a question about the industry of labourers in the neighbourhood, Robinson replied : "Certainly decreasing, and must, I think, continue to do so, while able-bodied men are allowed to apply to a parish for work, and the overseer is compelled to employ them. Where the parish has 40 or 50 employed, it is quite impossible they can all be attended to. They receive their money without any adequate equivalent in the shape of labour. Hence habits of idleness are formed, and we find that they do not want to leave the parish, except in the busy seasons of the year, when large wages are given." Furthermore "money from a parish was formerly considered a degradation ;

but now, in the busy seasons of the year, if a labourer can go into an adjoining parish, and earn 1s. a week more, he will leave his old master, well knowing the magistrates will compel the parish to maintain him when he returns."

ENCLOSURE

Robinson clearly believed that the Poor Law itself was responsible for the distress, but there were more fundamental reasons. Can we learn something from the differences between the upland and fenland edge parishes? There are two factors to be considered. At the end of the eighteenth century the drained Fens were in a deplorable condition and the consequent economic distress may have affected those villages lying next to the Fens, along the Ouse, more than the remoter villages. The other factor was Enclosure. Most of the villages in our area were still largely cultivated in Open Fields. The growing distress suggests that the Open Field System in the area was not capable of adjustment to the fluctuations in the fortunes of the nation's agriculture, which began in the late eighteenth century and have continued to our own day. We have already seen that some of the land in Long Stanton, Willingham and Over had been enclosed in the seventeenth century, but not much. According to Lysons 'in the reign of King Charles I Sir John Cutts depopulated the whole parish (of Childerley), for the purpose of improving his park".

Charles Vancouver, in his study of the Cambridgeshire agriculture of 1794, pointed to the different yields in bushels per acre obtained in enclosed Childerley and unenclosed Hardwick, although both parishes had "a perfectly similar soil':

	Childerley	Hardwick
Wheat	24	16
Barley	36	18
Oats	36	18
Peas and Beans	20	8

Knapwell had been enclosed in 1775 and Elsworth was enclosed by an Act of Parliament of 1800. Madingley belonged in entirety to the Cotton family and, it seems from a map dated 1811, that they enclosed the parish at this date, creating distinct farms. The Long Stantons were enclosed by Acts of Parliament of 1811 and 1813. All Saints was enclosed in 1816; the Hatton family owned most of the parish. Six open fields and

Cow Common were enclosed, the Hattons acquiring 1700 acres, but the remaining 200 odd acres were given in small lots to those villagers who had previously held some land or rights.

THE LATER ENCLOSURE OF THE FENLAND EDGE

The fenland edge parishes were enclosed much later. Over had had small enclosures in 1629 and 1801 but 3,683 acres were enclosed under the Act of 1837. The enclosure took two or three years to complete and it left the ownership of land still scattered. In 1840 the Enclosure Commissioners awarded the Green to the inhabitants and in 1896 the Charity Commissioners allowed the ownership to be vested in the Parish Council. Swavesey was enclosed under an Act of 1837. Willingham's Act was passed in 1846. On November 9, 1844, the Cambridge Chronicle and Journal contained a notice from Pemberton and Thrower, Solicitors "that Application is intended to be made to Parliament in the next session for leave to bring in a Bill or Bills for Dividing, Allotting, and Inclosing the Commons, commonable Lands, Common Fields, Meadows, Pastures, Moors, Wastes, and Wastes Grounds in the parish of Willingham in the county of Cambridge; and for extinguishing all Rights of Common, and other rights and privileges, upon and over the said lands, and for conferring other rights and privileges; and also for Draining, Improving, Warping, and Embanking certain of the Low Fen or Marsh Grounds, in the said parish of Willingham; and also for the purposes last aforesaid, to make and maintain New Cuts, Drains and Tunnels, and other Works, and to alter, extend, improve, and maintain existing Cuts, Drains, Tunnels, and other Works, in the said parish of Willingham.

"And it is also further intended to insert in the said Bill or Bills power from time to time to raise money for the purpose of defraying the expence of the said Bill or Bills, and for other the purposes aforesaid, by levying a rate or rates upon the owners or occupiers of the said Lands intended to be divided, allotted, inclosed, drained, improved, warped, and embanked as aforesaid, or by some other means to be in the said Bill or Bills provided."

On January 25, 1845, the Cambridge Independent Press contained the following notice :— "A meeting was held in the School-house, according to previous announcement on Thursday last, to take into consideration the inclosure of the parish, Dr.

Graham, the rector, presided. After a good deal of discussion, it was agreed not to apply for a Bill in the next session of Parliament ; but instructions were given to Messrs. Pemberton and Thrower, solicitors, who attended the meeting, to propose a Bill for the Session of 1846, previous to which, it will be laid before the several proprietors for approval. So far the inclosure is settled, and before two more years have passed over our heads, we shall see the extensive commons and fields of Willingham divided into convenient allotments, which we cannot help thinking will be of palpable benefit to all classes in the parish".

This was the decade in which the Repeal of the duties on Corn was being debated and the agricultural community formed a Protection Society. On January 4th, 1845, the Cambridge Independent Press contained a dry comment from Willingham on its efforts— "The Cambridgeshire Agricultural Protection Society have sent, through the secretary, Mr. Twiss, a quantity of pro-corn law publications to Mr. George Poynter's, George Inn, in this village, for him to distribute among the labouring population. It is feared they will do very little towards forwarding the cause intended ; for, be it known, that there is scarcely one of fifty amongst that class of individuals in the parish that can either read or write their own name ! and yet we live within nine miles of a University town."

The 1851 History, Gazetteer and Directory of Cambridge commented that "pursuant to an act passed in May 1846, commons to the extent of 3,169 acres 3 roods 10 poles were enclosed, and the extent of the old enclosure was 1,492 acres, 3 roods, 10 poles. The soil is rich and fertile, and an engine of eight horse power has been erected for the drainage of the fen".

FARMING IN THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY

We have not studied the process of Enclosure in the area in detail. Such a study would tell us much more about the effects of Enclosure on the productivity and economic prosperity of farming and make clearer the social consequences which followed from the change. The general picture is suggested in two works, respectively of 1847 and 1851. In the first, Samuel Jonas, commented on the consequences of enclosure that "few counties, if any, have improved more in cultivation than Cambridgeshire has lately done"; but he noted that the "western

side of the county" was not as well managed as the similar clay lands in the east, "particularly as relates to drainage". On the other hand the improvement in fenland farming, from new drainage measures and the new process of claying the surface peat, was "truly wonderful". James Caird, writing in 1851, revealed the other side of the picture : "incendiary fires are said to be of almost nightly occurrence in this and the adjoining part of Huntingdonshire. Many of the farmers live in constant apprehension of them. — In any district of England in which we have yet been, we have not heard the farmers speak in a tone of greater discouragement than here. Their wheat crop, last year, was of inferior quality, the price unusually low, and, to add to this, their live stock and crop are continually exposed to the match of the prowling incendiary." The incendiarism "argues discontent among the labouring class, for which the low rate of wages may in some degree account, 7s. to 8s. a week being the current rate. Cottage rents are from £2 to as much, in some parishes, as £4 or £5, so that a labourer on 7s. a week has little to spare for the necessaries of life after paying his landlord 1s. 6d. or 2s. out of it. Labourers are fairly employed." This discontent was not new. In 1834 Frederick Robinson of Over had answered the Poor Law Commissioners' enquiry as to the cause of the agricultural riots of 1830-1 : "I consider it arose from the feeling of hatred on the part of the poor man, brought on by the present poor laws. The poor look upon the farmer as their oppressor, and the magistrate as their benefactor." By 1851 the Poor Law had been radically changed and the able-bodied poor were being driven to get work by a Workhouse Test. The poor were worse off than ever and emigration increased, even though farming was improved. In 1874 just before the slump the Hattons of Long Stanton sold 1000 acres, including Home farm to William Phypers ; there was a mortgage of £40,000 on the 1000 acres so the land was probably worth about £60 an acre. In 1896 the mortgagees foreclosed and brought a High Court action to prevent Phypers' widow selling the hay and straw. They claimed that, due to the depression, "the present value of the land is much less than the amount due to the plaintiffs on their mortgages". When Home farm (400 acres) was finally sold, in 1905, to John Longwill it brought in only £16 an acre ; the rent was then 17s. 6d. an acre, 5½%. Land *mortgaged* at £40 an acre in 1874 was sold at £16 an acre in 1905 ! Incidentally

the depression was not over in 1905, for in 1938 the farm was sold again and only brought in £11 an acre.

This depression produced important changes in farming methods and in local crops. As the Victoria County History records of an area to the north of Cambridge, which includes Long Stanton, Willingham and Over : "since the middle of the 19th century a strong concentration of fruit growing (especially apples, plums, gooseberries, and strawberries) has here developed. There is also a very substantial output of market-garden produce (asparagus, cauliflowers, broccoli, brussel sprouts, dwarf beans, and peas), while in recent years the introduction of cutting flowers (pyrethrums, scabious, iris, gladioli, asters, marguerites, gypsophila, etc.) and of nursery stock has been of considerable importance. Small holdings, of 20 acres or less, producing these intensive crops are numerous in the district, while there are a large number of part-time holdings of an acre or so in the occupation of agricultural labourers and other wage-earners. Poultry and pigs are kept largely to utilize by-products and to make manure."

The war years brought changes. The government decreed that flower growing must be reduced to 10% of the 1939 acreage. So Willingham turned over to tomatoes. In 1942 there were 280 acres of outdoor tomatoes under cultivation as against 2 or 3 acres in 1939 and perhaps 10 today. Flowers came back after the war. Willingham's main glass house crop today is chrysanthemums, with lettuces and tomatoes as catch crops, in the open flowers and fruit. Over has developed the cultivation of statice and other flowers ; white varieties are often dyed in various colours, and this has produced the local pun : "we dye, to live".

THE LAND SETTLEMENT ASSOCIATION

It is appropriate that it is in this neighbourhood, at Fen Drayton, that one of the Land Settlements developed in the 1930s. The Land Settlement Association was formed in 1934 to settle unemployed industrial workers on the land. At Fen Drayton today only two of the original settlers still have a holding. Since the 1939-45 war new settlers are only accepted if they have had some agricultural or horticultural experience. But the Settlement has led to a much more intensive use of the land. Mr. Evison's corn and fruit farm of some 300 acres employed

not more than 16 to 18 people. The Land Settlement Association bought this farm in 1935 and today there are 50 tenants on the estate and 32 full time staff employed by the Association, with some 30 further casual workers employed between April and December.

When the Association was established, the first tenants lived in Fen Drayton House (the 'Big House'), which had been Mr. Evison's home, while roadmaking and preparing the estate. They moved into the holdings as they became available. These consist of 3 to 5 acres, a dwelling house, and a 60 ft. by 25 ft. heated glasshouse, usually of the Dutch light type. Most of the tenants have further glasshouses of their own. While the area under glass in the country as a whole has been decreasing, that in Fen Drayton is growing.

In the early days a strip cropping system was used (see p. 21). Today an estate machinery pool carries out all the tillage and a propagating department raises approximately 130,000 tomato plants a year for the tenants. The Settlement is co-operative, the estate packing station grades, packs and despatches the crops and the estate office keeps the accounts. The production has risen, as has the labour employed. Of the 200 acres let to smallholders, about 50 acres are under grass for pigs and poultry. The remaining 150 acres produce crops with annual sales of about £140,000, over £900 p.a. per acre.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Just as the farming and life of the villages has changed in the last century, so has local government. The 1851 Cambridgeshire Directory described Willingham at length and its description brings home how much of local government that is now undertaken by full time experts was then the responsibility of local people in their spare time :— "Here is an association for the prosecution of felons, comprising nearly all the farmers of the district, and of which Mr. H. W. Wilson is secretary. ..... The Charity School was founded in 1593 when £158. 8s. was raised by subscription for its support ..... Twenty-four children are taught free. Almshouses, for 4 poor widows, were endowed in 1616." The village had recently been affected by transport improvements : "letters are received through the St. Ives Post Office". "The village ..... stands ..... 2 miles north from the Long Stanton station of the Cambridge and St. Ives

railway. Before the present turnpike road was made, the only carriage road from Cambridge to Ely passed through the village. Large quantities of cheese used to be made here, though it took its name from the neighbouring parish of Cottenham".

In 1835 control of the Poor Law had passed from the Parish Officials to the Board of Guardians elected for a Union of several parishes. In 1833 and 1856 the powers of the old Manor Courts were restricted. In 1872 parishes ceased to have to appoint parish constables. In 1859 the *Cambridge Independent Press and Chronicle* had reported : "The British School at Willingham which was opened in November, 1856, is now entirely free of debt. On the 1st instant the Rev. C. H. Spurgeon preached two sermons on behalf of the school and the collections raised the handsome sum of £33. Not a farthing of Government money has been accepted for the building of the schoolroom which is the sole property of the inhabitants of Willingham. The school now numbers upwards of 200 on the books with about 140 in regular attendance." But in 1870 the government assumed direct responsibility for providing education and School Boards were elected to fill the gaps left by voluntary provision. Finally in 1894 Parish and District Councils were established by Act of Parliament, the day of the Vestry and the Magistrate was over. On Dec. 4, 1894, the first election for the Parish Council took place in Willingham : "There were twenty-seven candidates. The following fifteen were elected : with the number of votes polled :— George Lack, 125 ; Edmund Smith, 109 ; Charles Smith, 102 ; H. G. Few, 101 ; J. Watkins, 100 ; J. M. Smith, 99 ; W. T. Barker, 93 ; Alfred Denson, 92 ; Cornelius Raven, 91 ; E. S. Thoday, 91 ; R. Osborn, 90 ; P. L. Poulter, 90 ; G. Hopkins, 90 ; J. Bullard, 83 ; I. F. Thoday, 99. The first meeting of the Parish Council was held on December 31st, 1894, and the Rev. J. Carvath was the first chairman.

The Rural District Councils were created at the same time ; for a period there was an R.D.C. centred on Swavesey. It became part of the Chesterton R.D.C.

SWAVESEY'S FIRE

Swavesey had its own active local government life in the nineteenth century, some of which we have described on p. 68. We might add to this the story of Swavesey's fire and fire engine. This was bought in 1827 from Merryweathers of

London. Their records contain the entry : "1827 Sep. 19. Per order of Mr. Thos. Mortlock and Mr. James Garner. A powerful second-hand (patent) fire engine (British) with copper branch pipe, brass nose pipe, 3 new lengths of leather pipe, 40 feet each, with brass screws, copper strainer, and two hose winches. Inscription 'Swavesey Subscription Engine 1827' in yellow letters shadowed .... (per agreement) £105". The fire engine was still in use in 1913, when Swavesey experienced a disastrous fire. Since the engine was second-hand in 1827 it was probably at least a century old in 1913 ; the firm which supplied it stated that it had originally been made for the British Fire Office. The old engine came under criticism after the fire but Swavesey's P.C. Plowman stated : "We were beaten altogether by the fierceness and the suddenness of it all. ..... I timed it all, and I'll swear that twenty houses were blazing all within five and twenty minutes". In about two hours all the 28 houses affected were destroyed. It was natural, however, that the *Weekly News and Express* should comment editorially : "The remedy, it seems to us, lies in the hand of the county authorities. There are two alternatives. Several up-to-date manuals might be purchased and placed in centres that would serve convenient groups of villages, or a modern motor fire engine should be stationed at some centre whence it could be despatched to any part of the county."

The fire must have turned public opinion in Cambridgeshire against thatch roofs, for the Press reports constantly emphasized that "all the twenty-eight buildings had thatched roofs, and owing to a very high wind blowing they all caught fire within an hour, a spark from a chimney, it is believed, starting the outbreak on a thatched cottage roof. Only the cottages of brick with slate roofs escaped." It is due to many such fires, of which Swavesey's was the worst, that our villages have so few old buildings left. A Press report of a 'conflagration at Willingham', for example, stated that "sixteen farms with dwelling houses and the usual agricultural stock, implements and furniture, with the produce of a large number of acres of land, were, comparatively speaking, speedily destroyed. — The damage is estimated at upwards of £10,000." Photographs of the village streets from the nineteenth century look very different to the scene today. Although 63 people, twenty-two families, living at Church End, near the railway station, were rendered

homeless in the Swavesey fire, by some miracle no one was killed. But the misery was intense, for most of the families were labourers and they lost everything. There was a big appeal which raised a fund of several hundred pounds. Swavesey's fire, in a most dramatic way, presaged the end of an old order : the world of thatch cottages and horsedrawn manual pumps was giving way to slate and bricks and motors. In the next year the world was engulfed in war. The isolation of Britain came to an end ; the isolation of Cambridgeshire villages, their self-sufficient and vigorous life was ending too.

THE HERITAGE OF THE PAST

The villages in our area may not have such a wealth of surviving picturesque buildings as other parts of the country ; a few of those that do survive we have chosen as illustrations (see pp. I-IV). But our area is rich in other survivals, which local inhabitants would do well to preserve and record. There are several agricultural implements still in use, or recently so, which are peculiar to the area. Willingham uses a round tined fork for digging — a modification of a manure fork. The hoe used in the area is known as an Ely hoe. The names used for implements are local ones : a mattock is a *twybill* — a tool with two blades or bills — and a gimlet is a *twinet*. *Lallygags* are the strings round the knees for holding in trousers. In Over the old flail (*thrail*) for thrashing corn was made of an alder handle, a whitethorn *swingle,* bound with ordinary leather and jointed with dried eel skin. The piece that turned round was called a cap and made of boiled ash. Over has preserved a wealth of dialect words, only a few of which we have space to give. *Buds or Burlings* were young cattle with horns just appearing. *Bro* is a small bridge, a plank bridge. *Slub* means muddied, *Chimble* crumble. Over people had innumerable picturesque nicknames : Charlie Conquest was *Bigenough* because at the annual hiring fair he answered a farmer, who had turned down another labourer as too small, 'I'm big enough'. Joseph Chapman, who made toffee, was *Smasher Joe*. The last miller was Jack Parish.

Bells ruled Over's life in the old days. Bells tolled for funerals, three for men, two for women, and lighter bells were used for children. Benjamin Wilkin baked bread in Silk's shop; his daughter rang a bell to let the villagers know the oven

was hot. People took their own dough along to bake it. The women going gleaning did not cross the gateway into the field until a bell was rung to give all a fair chance. The bell ringers held their annual supper on New Year's Eve in the Swan ; they had roast beef and *Hot Pot* from a *Long Tot* or *Long Tom* mixed by the publican. The Hot Pot was made of beer, spirits, eggs, sugar, nutmeg and sometimes milk ! The Long Tot was a cow horn, from which beer was drunk until surprisingly recent times. Plough Monday was celebrated on the second Monday in the year ; any old iron plough was used. *Molly* (Morris) dancers accompanied the plough, and young men collected money. Shoemaker Cook played the fiddle and cornet, Ben Sutton the piccolo, Warren Adams the flute, J. Webster played the fife. Faces were blackened and whips were cracked. A schoolmaster, Wheeler, introduced a drum and fife band. Fromenty was made on Feast Sunday of wheat, soaked the night before, in a milk pan ; it was eaten like porridge. *Fleckalina* cake was a special sweet made by Mrs. Anne Webb for the Methodist tea-party.

Betsy Farmer (whose real name was Thoday) made toffee, singing "O ! Happy Day — Wash my sins away" and spitting on her hands as she made it. Jersey (Tom) Norman made sweets and toffee taking them around local feasts ; when first married, Jersey had only 4d., with which sugar was bought and sweets made ; 1 lb. of brown sugar cost him 1½d. Mrs. Webb, whose brother-in-law was known as Whistler Webb, was another toffee maker. If Jersey ate his own sweets he would have been unpopular with modern educationalists and dentists, for he had all his own teeth at 90.

There were some odd local remedies for diseases. Ringworm was treated with oil mixed with wheat heated on a shovel by the blacksmith, Isaac Robinson, who was known as a healer. A skinned fried barn mouse was used to cure whooping cough. Alma Thoday's house in Station Road was

'The funniest house in Over O
Thatched a 'top and tiled below'.

A *duff-house* was a low thatched, round house (a dove house).

Every village in the area must have similar things to record. Our story will have proved worth telling, if reading it encourages you, the reader, to record the life of your village, in much more detail and more accurately than has been possible for us, for our children and grandchildren to read.

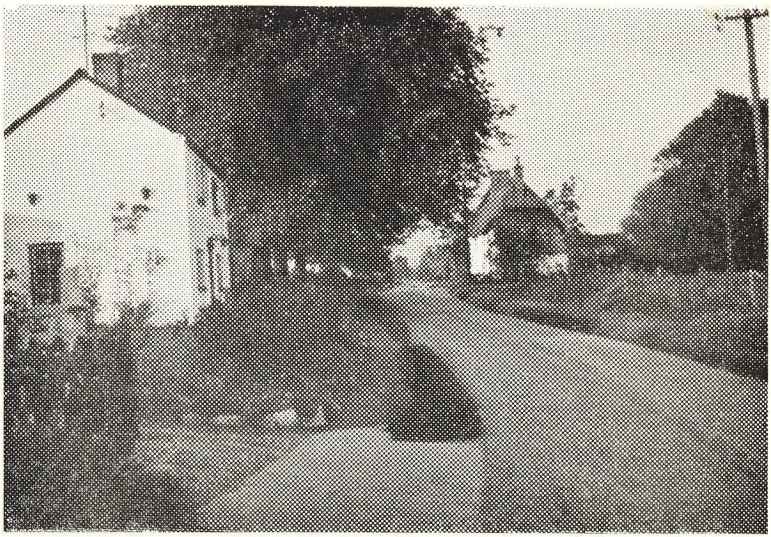


Photo. : M. Hopkins

The Main Street, Knapwell

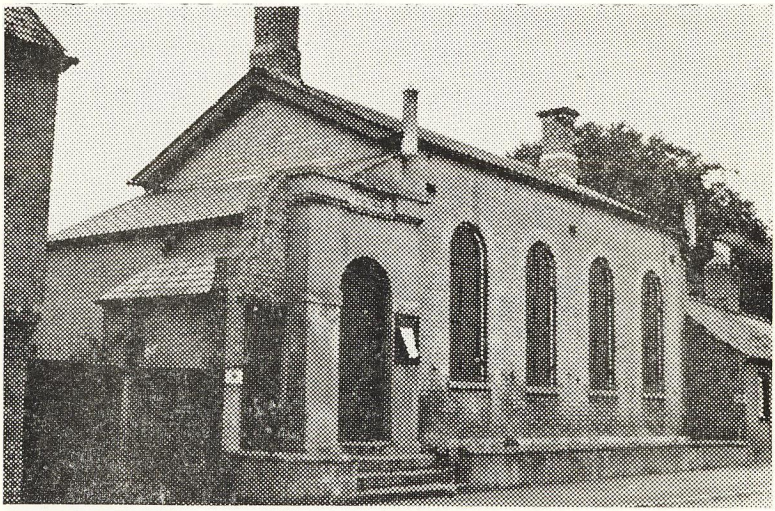
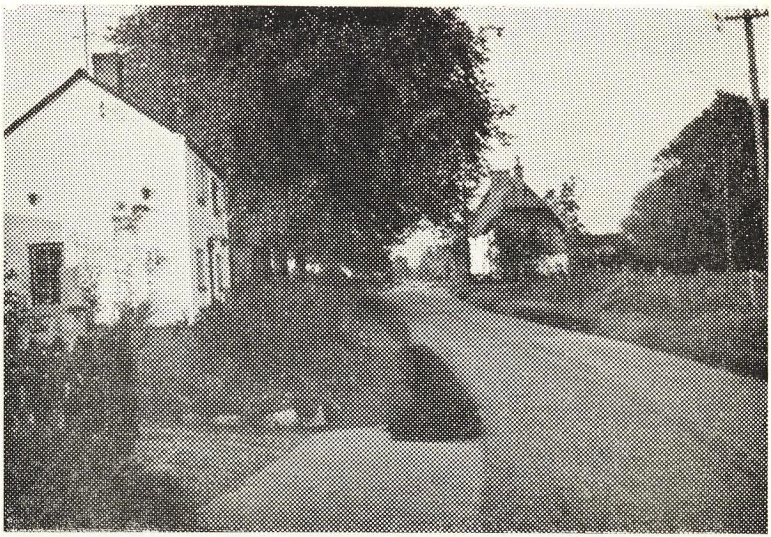


Photo. : Cambridge Daily News

The Town Hall, Over



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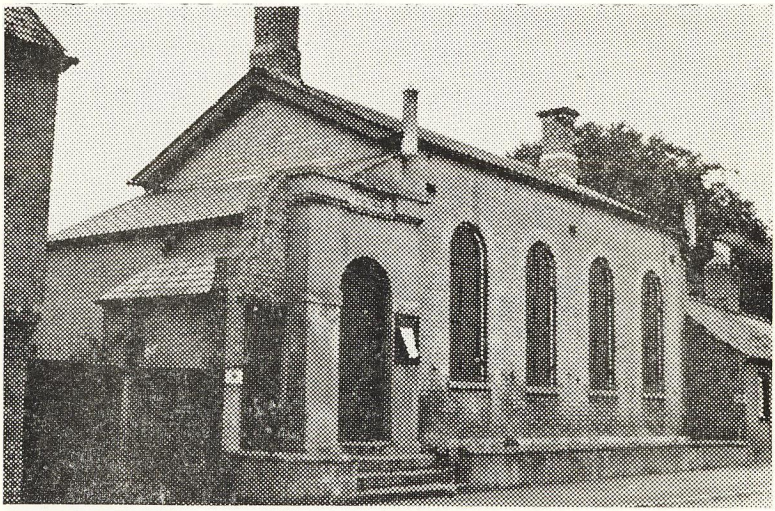
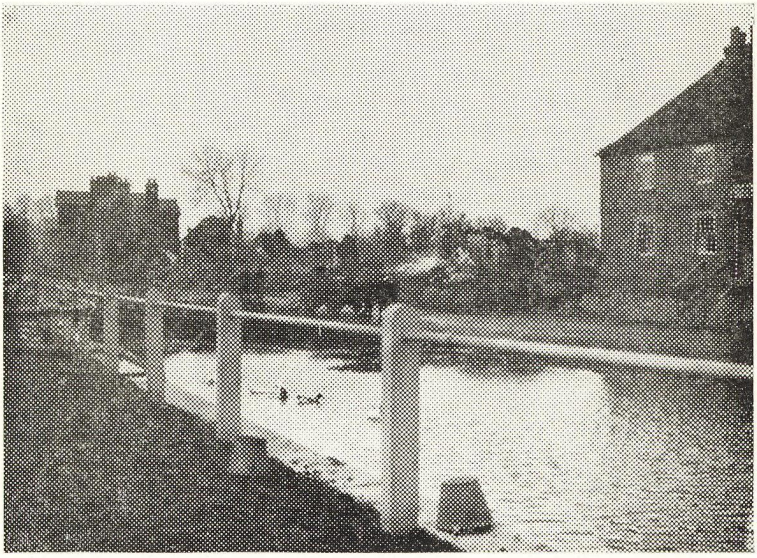


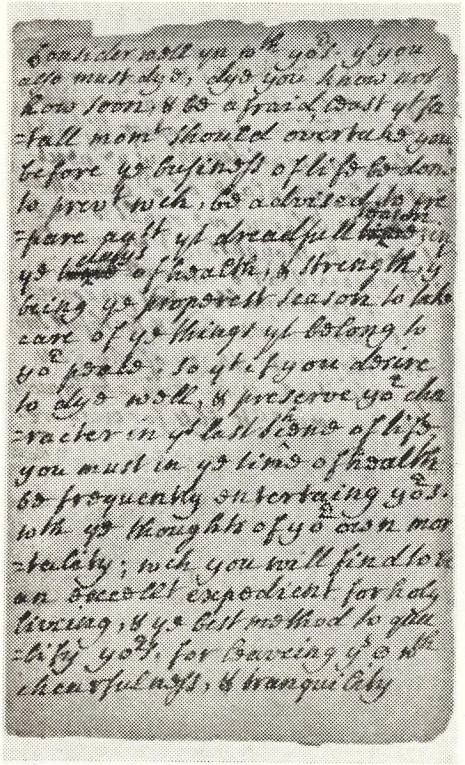
Photo. : Cambridge Daily News

The Town Hall, Over

Swavesey before the Great Fire, 1913



The Great Fire at Swavesey



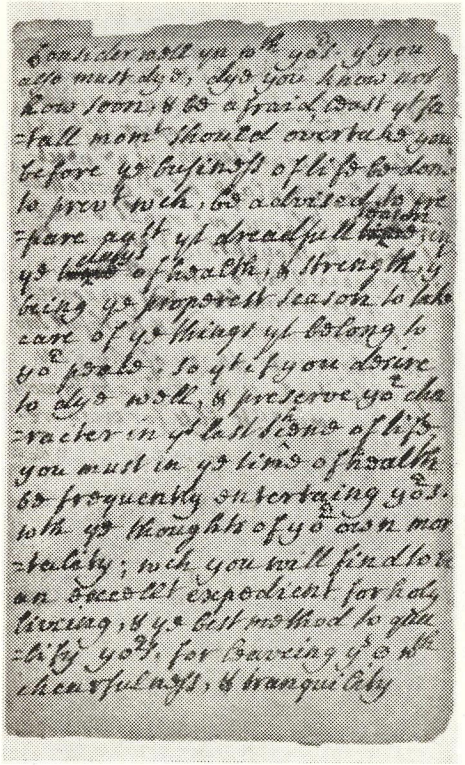
Left :

Copy original manuscript of sermon preached in Over Parish Church. 8/Aug., 1762

Right :

Marble Monument in Conington Church, by Edward Marshall, sculptor to Charles II Court

Photo. : J. Scutt



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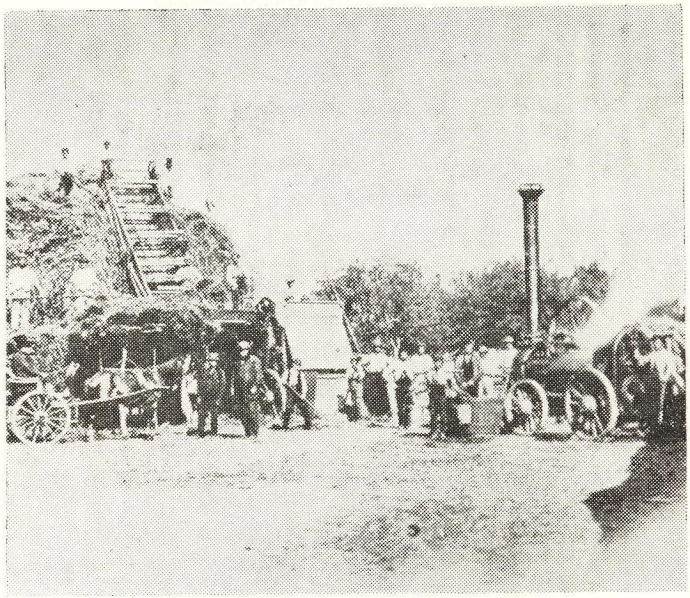
Wealdon Type House, High Street, Willingham

Passive Resistance Group at Willingham

(Early Prints photographed by D. O. Jeeps)

Bee Skips manufactured at Willingham by the Seamark Bros.



Earliest Type of Threshing Tackle used in this area; belonged to A. Gleaves

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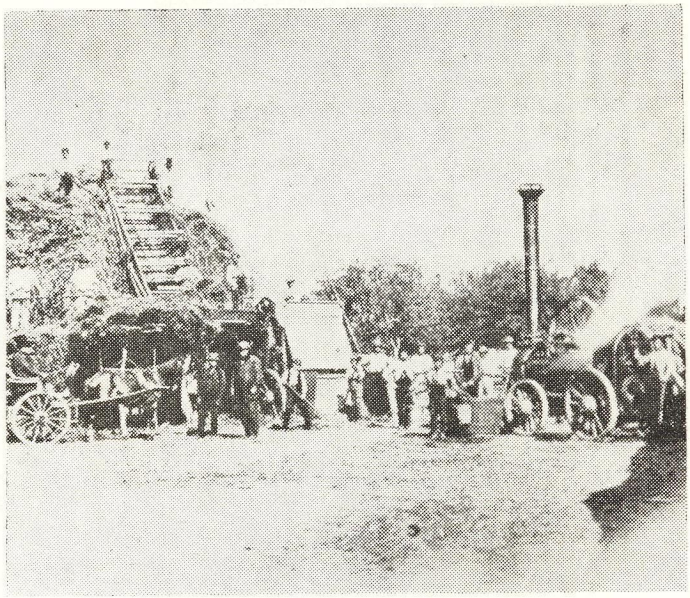

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Photo. : M. Hopkins

Dears Farm, Elsworth

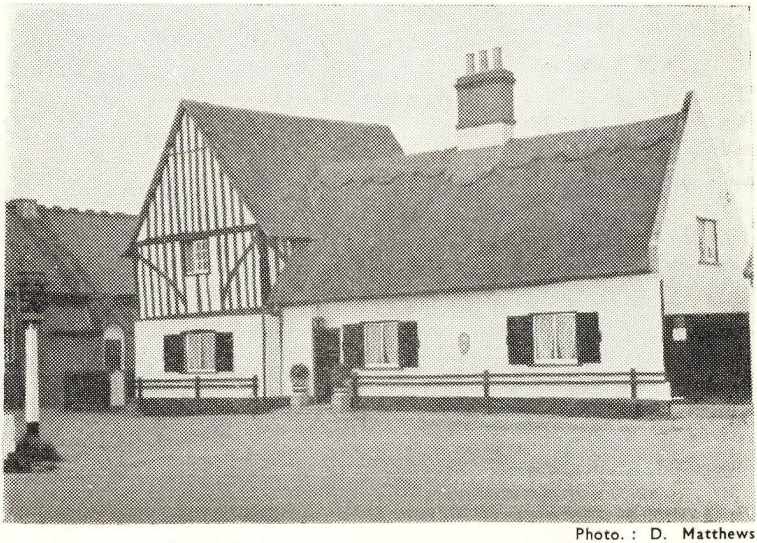

Photo. : D. Matthews

The Three Tuns, Fen Drayton

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