

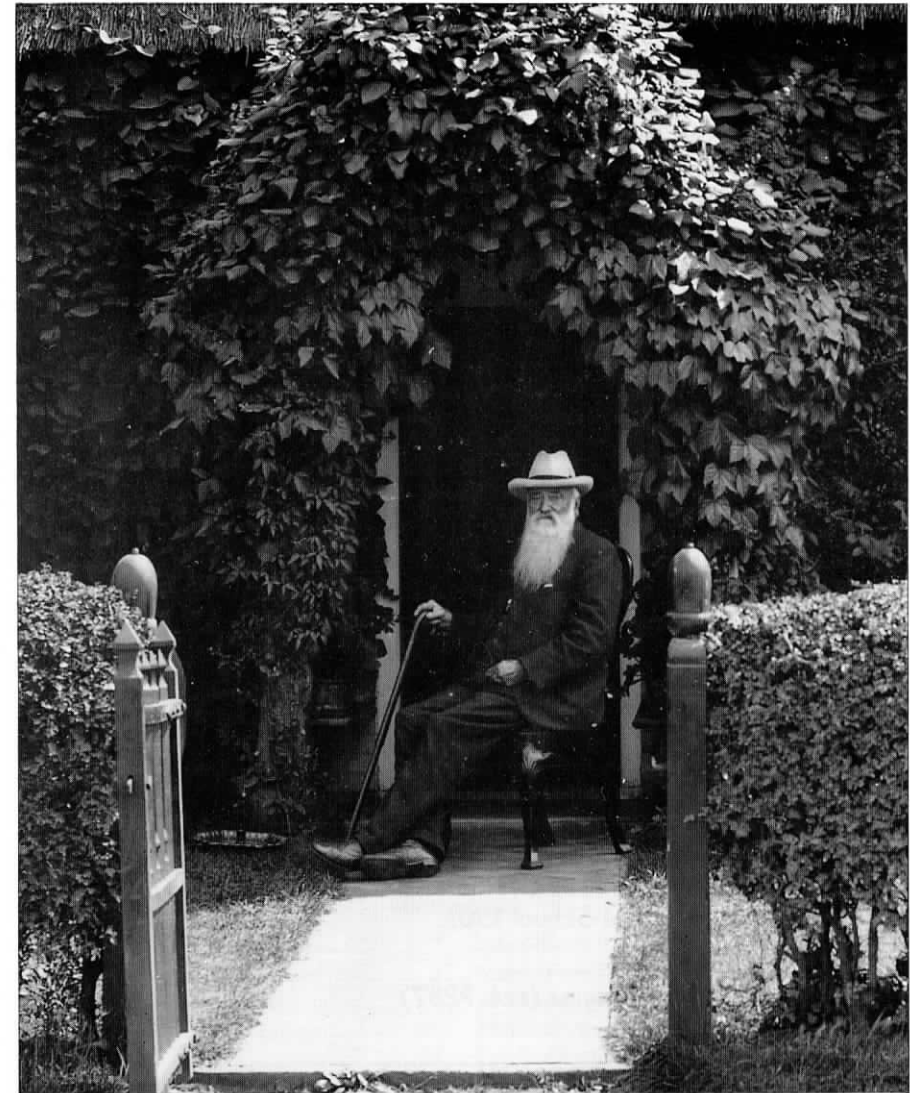
Elmswell



A Marker for The Millennium

... being a brief introduction
to the history of the village of
Elmswell, Suffolk, from the
years of earliest known settlement
towards
the Millennium

The front cover illustration shows the boy King, Henry VI, kneeling before the Shrine of St Edmund on his arrival at the Abbey in 1433. It is one of two portraits of the King featured in, 'The Life Of St Edmund,' by the monk and poet John Lydgate, a, 'magnificent manuscript with illuminated pages and 120 carefully executed pictures.' Abbot Curteys commissioned the work in honour of the King's successful and happy stay at Bury (and Elmswell) from Christmas 1433 to Easter 1434.



Nathan Warren, blacksmith, seen here outside his cottage in Blacksmith's Lane in about 1900. He was trading in 1864 from his workshop adjacent to the house. By 1912, Frank Nunn had acquired the business, listed at that time as, '*Warren & Sons, engineers, manufacturers of general agricultural implements; horse shoes a speciality; wagon & cart builders, Ironmongers &c. Blackbourne iron works*'. The enterprise has expanded over the years to become Thurlow Nunn Standen. Blacksmith's Lane now forms part of Footpath 9 and will lead you from Ashfield Road, between the works and the Blackbourne estate.

Acknowledgements

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The line illustrations and facsimile maps were drawn by Reg Barker of Needham Market.

The photographs are reproduced by kind permission as follows:-

Bury St Edmunds Past & Present Society

Page 1. Nathan Warren outside his cottage.
Spanton Jarman Photographic Collection. SRO Bury K505/2324.
Page 58. St Edmundsbury Co-operative Bacon Factory.
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Mr A Rice

Page 27. Elmswell Post Office.
Page 50. St Johns School 1901.

Woolpit Museum

Page 55. Steam Engine (ref. P287)

Bury Free Press

Back Cover. (ref. 158966/4)

All other photographs come from Paul Peachey's comprehensive collection of postcards of the village.

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Introduction

This is not a book that claims to tell the complete history of Elmswell. Such an ambitious project would be well beyond our 60 pages.

There is, for example, no detail on the development of our three churches. There is little that touches on the many industrial enterprises which have shaped so many lives and almost nothing about the 20th century.

What there is, we hope, is an interesting and well-researched introduction to the many strands which have, over two thousand years, come together to become the village we now know.

There could be similar books, each exploring in more satisfying depth an area of interest. Wartime and the airfield, Elmswell Football Club over its 100 years of existence or the living memories of our older parishioners. It could be a long and rewarding list.

Our original brief includes the possibility of establishing an electronic information bank, a CD-ROM. This could hold the many pages of facts and source material from which we gleaned our final selection and which could not find a place here. It would be constantly enlarged and available through the schools, the library and the home computer. This, and further investigations, deserves a broader community input. It involves painstaking and often laborious research enlivened by only occasional discoveries and insights. It is undeniably worthwhile.

If our book works, it will pose more questions than it answers and, we hope, encourage more people to join in the fascinating search for those answers.

Maureen Dow

(Co-ordinator, Elmswell Millennium History Group)

April 2000

1. The Romans

In 1964 a mechanical trench cutter on a building site in Elmswell pulled up some significant fragments of pottery that proved to be the most definite evidence to date of Roman activity in our village. It revealed the site of a pottery kiln dated at about 200-300AD¹. Since then, various scattered finds, including 2 bronze brooches and several coins, have indicated a Roman presence spanning some 300 years from as early as the 1st century. Piecing together this evidence, it seems likely that our predecessors on the site we know as Elmswell were, seventeen hundred years ago making pots from the plentiful clay which any local gardener will tell you is common in our parish. It did not lend itself to the manufacture of high status pots and tableware, but was well suited to the more utilitarian, grey kitchenware, as can be seen at Moyse's Hall Museum in Bury where reconstructed examples include a bowl and a shallow dish. More exciting was the discovery of part of a 'face urn', probably standing some 16 inches high and 11 inches across and decorated with moulded features applied before firing. Such vessels, also called 'incinerary urns', were used as containers for gifts to the Gods in religious rituals or for the containment of cremated remains. A

replica was produced at Wattisfield Pottery, but no trace of it remains today.



The two smaller pots are reconstructions to be seen at Moyse's Hall in Bury

Until recently the experts' opinion was that the remains indicated itinerant potters in the area, travelling from site to site creating household goods for a local market. However, as recently as 1999, new evidence has turned up suggesting a small settlement, possibly a single, low status farmstead; a timber framed house with wattle-and-daub walls and a clay floor covered with rush matting.

Our Roman story so far, then has a Romano-British local farmer with a kiln in which he made pots for his own household and which allowed him to supplement his income by making pots for his neighbours from the readily accessible raw materials in his back garden - clay, water and timber for the kiln. It is a story that is, undoubtedly, to be continued.

From Roman to Saxon

The Roman occupation of Britain lasted from 43 - 410 AD. From 401 troops were being recalled from Britain to defend Rome against the invading Barbarian tribes from Germany. In 410, Emperor Honorarius told the Britons, under invasion threat from the Irish, the Picts, the Scots and the Saxons, 'Defend Yourself'. Within 10 years the Saxons, from Northern Germany, had begun to settle in eastern Britain.

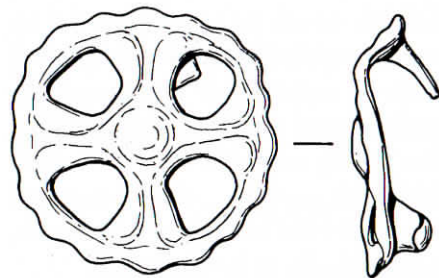
We have, so far, no archaeological evidence of a settlement in Elmswell from the period between the departure of the Romans and the 10th century, from which time is dated the late Saxon bronze brooch illustrated below. From the same century comes definite evidence by written record of the existence of Elmswell - King Eadwig's Gift.

2. The Saxons

Eadwig's Gift

In 956, just a year after having come to the throne at the ripe old age of 14, King Eadwig gave away large parcels of his kingdom in a vain attempt to buy friends and their support. One such gift was 'the important estates of Elmswell and Beccles,' which became the property of the monastery at Bury St Edmunds.² Such royal largesse was common in the political manoeuvrings of that time, more so in times of crisis. The young king had brought on such a

crisis through bad management, and, in particular, by preferring 'the caresses of loose women' to affairs of State. Hence the gift of Elmswell to the Saint - he was buying allegiance. To little avail, it can now be said. The kingdom was, just one year later, split into two halves north and south of the Thames, and was only re-united when the young king, having 'deserted the just judgements of God, breathed his last by a miserable death,' in 959.³



Saxon Brooch

Archaeological drawing of a late Saxon bronze brooch and catch measuring 26mm in diameter found in Elmswell in 1999.

The Elmswell of Eadwig's Gift

One of the most important aspects of the gift of 956 is that, for the first time, we see our village as a defined area of land with a name.

THE NAME; the most common explanation for the name of a settlement is topographical, that is to say that the name describes the physical setting. In the case of Elmswell, 'the spring of the elm tree'.⁴ There were several springs in Elmswell. A significant one emerged as a point that stood midway between the Church and Elmswell Hall. The map on the centre page shows the position of the spring before it was diverted underground into the nearby brook.

Wet, heavy clay soils such as we have in Elmswell provide ideal conditions for elm trees, but it would be a mistake to imagine the area overrun with them. The noted authority, Oliver Rackham poses the question, 'are places named after common trees, or after trees which are sufficiently uncommon to be notable?'⁵ This and other scholarly researches suggest that the name could refer to the lack of elm trees within our boundaries.

THE BOUNDARIES; Parish Boundaries were drawn up to define the area served by a Parish church, but consideration was also given to ensuring that there was sufficient land

to allow the production of the staples of life to a rural community. This would include ploughland for crops, meadows for fodder, pastures for grazing livestock together with sources of fuel and building materials. In the case of Elmswell, the boundaries included a share in the extensive common known as Button Haugh Green.

Wherever possible, such boundaries were set to follow natural features or significant landmarks, sometimes ancient and man-made.

The Domesday Book records an area '1 league long and 10 furlongs broad,' about 2,000 acres in all, and with reference to a map of the parish dated 1814 (see map on centre page) we see that Elmswell is bounded;

- to the South West by the River Blackbourne beyond which lay Tostock,
- to the South, separating us from Woolpit, by the road known as Earthfield Lane - 'The Common Waye called Berry Waye leding to Ipswyche' (see map on centre page), of which just Kiln Lane remains and which possibly formed part of a prehistoric route,⁶ (the modern boundary runs along the old A45 and A14).
- to the East by the 'memory' of a Roman road, evident from maps but

largely no longer traceable on the ground, which divides us from Wetherden, and formed part of the ancient division between Blackbourne Hundred and Stow Hundred, later to become the County Boundary between East and West Suffolk.

- to the North and West, adjoining Norton and Great Ashfield at Button Haugh Green by a short stretch of road and certain field boundaries.

The grant of lands to the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds transferred the benefits of rents and services that ensued from the estate to the Abbot. Thus we have a name, a specified size and the beginning of a village map. But who was paying the rents and tithes? Who worked the land and where did they live? We have to leap forward over 100 years before we can begin to form a more definite picture of settlement in Elmswell.



The above extract from 'An Historical Atlas of Suffolk' shows the parish boundaries as they existed in the 19th century.

3. Elmswell in the Middle Ages

1086 The Domesday Book

The estates of St Edmunds were providers of income and wealth to the monastery and its community. Detail as to what was owned and its extent is found in the Domesday Book. This was a record of taxation compiled on the orders of Duke William of Normandy 20 years after his conquest simply to find out how much his new

acquisitions were worth.

The new rulers did, of course, take lands and property away from many of the existing Saxon Thanes to reward their own people. The Abbey at Bury, however, was lead at this time by Abbot Baldwin (1065-97) who was himself Norman. This seems to have reprieved the estates from seizure.

Elmswell, as recorded in the Domesday book of 1086

St. Edmund's [held] Elmswell before 1066 as a manor; 2 carucates of land.

Always 16 villagers; 14 smallholders.

Then and now 2 ploughs in lordship; always 4 men's ploughs.

Then 4 slaves, now 5; meadow, 8 acres; woodland, 80 pigs.

Now 3 cobs, 5 cattle, 15 pigs, 18 sheep, 48 goats.

5 Freemen with 40 acres of land. Always 2 ploughs.

Meadow, 1 acre.

These (Freemen) belong entirely to St. (Edmund's); they could not grant or sell without the Abbot's permission.

A Church with 20 acres of free land in alms.

Value of this manor then £5; now [£] 6.

It has 1 league in length and 10 furlongs in width; 11¼d in tax.

Others hold there.⁷

Reading between the lines of the Domesday entry we can suggest...

...The manor of Elmswell in 1086 belongs to St Edmund's monastery as it did in 1066 the time of Edward the

Confessor. The Lord of the manor is Abbot Baldwin who has, within this manor, 240 acres of arable land

distributed throughout 'ridge & furrow' open fields.

The Abbot owns 2 plough teams each comprising 8 oxen.

There are 16 villagers and 14 smallholders each farming an unspecified area of land, although it was customary for holdings to be of either 24, 12 or 6 acres.

Their ploughlands, which consist of strips of land approximately 1 furlong (200 metres) long and 1 perch (5 metres) wide, are scattered across the open fields. These tenants pay rent to the Abbot and must also undertake to do regular agricultural work on the abbey lands.

The 30 tenants have 4 plough teams, i.e. 32 oxen, between them. In 1066 there had been 4 slaves or serfs which individuals are actually themselves the property of the lord of the manor. Now, in 1086, there are 5 such, each of which will have a small croft of their own to work in addition to working the Abbey land.

There are 8 acres of Abbey meadowland suitable for mowing and haymaking.

There is woodland that is defined in size as sufficient to support 80 pigs, (in fact there are only 15 pigs recorded). We cannot calculate from this an exact area, but we do know that some two hundred years later, in 1302, there were 160 acres of

woodland.

The abbey keeps 3 farm horses, 5 cattle, 15 pigs, 18 sheep and 48 goats in Elmswell. The goats, because of their liking for a diet of undergrowth and scrub plants, are an indication that land was being cleared for productive use. There are also 5 free men living in Elmswell. They pay rent to the Abbey but are not required to labour on its land. Freemen tend to be craftsmen, for example the blacksmith, the tanners or the potter.

The free men have 40 acres between them together with 2 plough teams (16 oxen) and 1 acre of meadow for hay.

Permission would be required of the Abbot for the disposal by any of the free men of their land.

20 acres of land were gifted for the use of the local church. In return for the income thus available, prayers and Masses would be offered for the Abbot.

In Saxon times, the revenue from Elmswell has been worth £5.00. It is now, under the Normans, worth £6.00.

Elmswell measures approximately 1 mile in length and a little less in width, on which the Abbot pays tax of 11½d (5p).

There are other people who hold small amounts of land in Elmswell who are not included here.

We can make an informed guess at the population in 1086 by multiplying the number of households, 40, by the average number of inhabitants per household, 5. Thus, some 200 people

lived here. We cannot say with any certainty where. Archaeological evidence points us, in the 11th century, towards the western edge of Button Haugh Green.

The Technology of Farming at Domesday

Ploughing at or about the turn of the first millennium was a cumbersome business. Having abandoned the growing of crops in small square fields as favoured by their Celtic predecessors, the Saxons farmed in strips a furlong (about 200 metres) in length.



On heavy land a team of up to ten oxen might be needed to draw the largely wooden implement which was a direct descendent of the digging stick of more primitive times. Several men and women might have to follow to break up clods with mattocks and a boy was an essential member of the team, goading the beasts into continuous and strenuous effort. The team and the plough itself were often owned by the community. This technology was little improved for over six hundred years.⁸

Abbot Samson (1182 - 1211)

Early in the 12th century, the manors assigned to Bury Abbey were divided so that the abbot gained personal control of certain areas. Elmswell was one of the manors given to the abbot. By the late 12th century one of the monks of the abbey, Jocelin de Brakeland, observes that both the abbey's and the abbot's manors had been mismanaged and were run down,

'Manor houses and domestic buildings ... were so old that kestrels and crows flew in and out of them'.⁹

In 1182 a new abbot, Samson, was elected, and he, realising the unsatisfactory state of affairs, set about surveying his properties with a view to undertaking extensive renovations and rebuilding. This sometimes ruthlessly efficient churchman erected

many different buildings throughout his estates, including new chapels and domestic apartments. He set out several parks stocked with game, providing sport for important guests. In addition he took many areas of 'waste' land under profitable cultivation.

The Manor House in Elmswell, which was to become one of the abbot's main

country residences, was, almost certainly, a beneficiary of the Abbot's efforts.

Elmswell Hall farm, which appears as a moated site on later maps, is the most likely location for Samson's Manor House. The map on page 21 shows the layout as it may well have appeared in the Middle Ages.

Survey of 1302 - Elmswell Described

More information about the Manor House of Elmswell and the Abbot's personal property is revealed in a survey of 1302,¹⁰ carried out during a vacancy in the abbacy at Bury. It is

more detailed than the Domesday listing and may give some clues as to the improvements carried out by Abbot Samson. The survey begins...

Survey of the Abbot's own lands 1302

... There is a messuage with 2 curtilages and a wood adjacent which are valued as 4s. p.a.

And there is a dovecote valued at 18d. p.a. but it is insufficient to supply the houses.

There are 2 windmills valued at 26s. 8d.

There are 147 acres of better land valued at 49s. at 4d. per acre.

There are 177 acres of poor land valued at 29s. 6d. at 2d. per acre.

There are 7 acres of broom-land of which 1 acre per year can be sold, valued at 18d. per acre.

There are 8 acres of meadow suitable for mowing valued at 12s. at 18d. per acre.

There are 9 acres of (hard) pasture valued at 4s. 6d. per annum at 6d. per acre.

There are 160 acres in two woods of which 10 acres a year may be sold valued at 2s. per acre and the grass in the same woods is valued at 4s. per acre.

The list is fairly self explanatory, but, with the benefit of later source material we can add further features to the early map of Elmswell.

We are told that there is a dwelling house with 2 courtyards and a woodland nearby (the 1843 Tithe Map lists a number of field names which include the name Waits Wood just north of Elmswell Hall).

A dovecote has been added since 1086 (again, its position is confirmed by a field name on the Tithe Map).

Of two windmills there is no other evidence, although the Tithe Map lists 'Mill Field' at the top of Church Hill. More arable land is under cultivation, categorised as 'better' or 'poor' and valued accordingly. The 'poor' land is mostly to the south of the parish where there is an area of light stony soil.

The broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) is obviously highly valued as a crop, although we can only guess at the use to which it was put.

Pasture for grazing which was not included in the Domesday survey is listed. Furthermore, there is a recognisable measure of woodland area. Whether this includes the woodland adjacent to the hall is unclear, but East Wood would have been taken into this account. The earliest reference to 'Estwude' (see centre page map) appears in a charter

granted between 1157-1180. Grass in amongst the woodland suggests some areas of wood pasture, not so densely wooded and suitable for grazing.

The rest of the survey goes on to list details of the abbot's tenants, their lands and duties.

The 5 free men from 1086 have increased to 40 and are said to live in 3 'vills', that is 3 areas of settlement, within the manor.

The rest of the villagers farm 147 acres between them, for which they pay rent at £5 3s (£5.15p) per annum along with various quantities of cereals, 200 cockerels at Christmas and 485 eggs at Easter.

They also have to perform customary agricultural duties for the Abbot. These include threshing, hoeing, harvesting, ploughing and carting manure. When taking up a new tenancy they had to pay 'heriot', a compulsory payment to the lord of the manor in the form of their best beast.

An example of rents and services expected of the tenants is recorded in a 'rental' dated 1357 and runs as follows:

Robert Rose, who farms 12 acres, pays rent of 8½d (4p), 1 quarter 4 bushels (measures by volume) of oats, 2 hens and 10 eggs per annum. His customary works and services included threshing, carting, and haymaking. In addition, from Whitsun until August, he had to

work every Monday and Friday on the lord's lands, and the same from August to Michaelmas (September 29th) to help with the lord's harvest. On these occasions Robert would receive lunch which consisted of a ½d loaf, 3 herrings and cheese. Beer, the usual accompaniment with food rations, was not included.¹¹

The Warren

Rabbits are so good at breeding that they have earned something of a reputation for it. However, when they were first introduced in the thirteenth century from the Mediterranean region into Medieval England this was not the case. They had to be encouraged to multiply and colonise by the provision of purpose-built environments – special raised banks or pillow mounds drained by perimeter ditches so that they could comfortably establish their colonies in our cold, damp climate.

The Normans had acquired the taste for rabbit. They introduced their 'coney' into their newly conquered lands for their meat and skins, much prized and beyond the means of all but the nobility and grander churchmen. The farming of rabbits on dry, sandy and otherwise unproductive land could be more profitable than general agriculture, despite the potential for damage to other crops

Having completed his duties Robert Rose would then be free to work on his own lands.

This somewhat limited interpretation gleaned from the written records of the Middle Ages allows no more than a glimpse of the life and workings of Medieval Elmswell. Much more research needs to be done.

which, even then, was beginning to be realised. So it was in Elmswell. At the end of the fourteenth century, we are told that, '*the Abbot of St Edmunds had a warren created at his country retreat in Elmswell*'.¹² Some 95 acres were established bounded by what is now, unsurprisingly, called Warren Lane. There is a record of Abbot John de Brinkley (1361-1378) and his retinue consuming the whole of the warren's entire harvest – 446 coneys (full grown) and 244 rabetti (young rabbits) during the 1377-78 season.¹³ The Abbot died that year, at his manor house in Elmswell. Too much rabbit?

One tradition has always held true as far as rabbits are concerned, that of the poacher. Rabbit poaching has declined in modern times – a good specimen today will fetch 50p – worth about 6 minutes of an agricultural labourer's time. A century after its introduction into East Anglia a poached rabbit would fetch the

equivalent of two days wages. Result, poaching was a very worthwhile occupation. Warrens were, therefore, enclosed with hedges or walls to keep the rabbits in and had wooden watchtowers, in some places two-storey stone lodges where the warrener lived, to keep the poachers out. The remains of a fine example of such a warreners' lodge can be seen at Thetford Warren, complete with arrow slits and a hole through which the warrener could drop heavy, hot or generally unwelcoming things on to unwanted intruders at his front door. For good reason, therefore, the warrener was a skilled and well paid man.

The destructive aspect for which rabbits are notorious was observed in 1378, when 16% of the Abbot's arable crops were destroyed by rabbit damage.

Record of our warren is noted in 1542 when, following the dissolution of the monasteries (1536), the Manor of Elmswell was leased to Sir Thomas

Darcy complete with a 'warren of coneys.' The most recent mention comes in the map on page 19 from the early 17th Century when the crop was still valued. Reyce's Breviary of Suffolk, dated 1618, observes, '*no host could be deemed a good housekeeper that hath not plenty of these (coneys) at all times to furnish his table*'.¹⁴

To bring the picture up to date, we go back to the beginning. Rabbits are good at breeding. Once we had persuaded this somewhat exotic animal to accept our climate it bred and expanded its population widely and very rapidly. The 19th century saw agricultural improvements which encouraged the rabbit population ever upwards, reaching epidemic proportions and wreaking havoc in the countryside until the introduction from South America in the 1950s of myxomatosis checked the rise dramatically. Within 5 years of the first case in 1953, 96% of all the rabbits in the British Isles were dead.¹⁵ However, they are back – ask a farmer.

What are the signs of myxomatosis?

The very first signs we can see are puffy, fluid swellings around the head and face. 'Sleepy eyes' are a classic sign along with swollen lips, tiny swellings on the inside of the ear and puffy swellings around the anus and genitalia. Within a day or so, these swellings can become so severe as to cause blindness and there may be some distortion around the face, mouth, ears and nose. Some animals may survive for weeks or months after infection but, in general, if an infection is severe in a susceptible rabbit, death will occur within 12 days.

This map, 'The Plotte of Elmswell Heathe', dates from about 1600. It shows the Warren, more properly entitled, the 'Lords Warren in Ellmeswell' towards the bottom right hand corner with a two storey Warrener's Lodge within its bounds. It is bordered to the north by, 'A Certen Waye', now the footpath known as Sandy Lane. There are still oak trees in the vicinity of, 'Our Lady's Oake', possibly descendants of what must have been an ancient tree in 1600. The Franchise Bank which defines the eastern edge of the warren, was on 'old ditch', an ancient boundary possibly following the route of a Roman road. To the south, the old A45 linked in with Kiln Lane as a main route, 'of old tyme used', between Bury and Ipswich. This is labelled as, 'The Common Waye' called 'Berry Waye'. Kiln Lane later became by-passed by what we knew as the A45 which allowed the main thoroughfare to pass through 'Wolpett', after that village acquired a market charter in the 13th century.

This road has, in turn, been superseded by the A14. 'Stonyhyll', to the bottom of what we now call Warren Lane, was so named because of the sandy, stony nature of the land, still evident in the area today and confirmed by the presence of the, 'great gravell pytt', known to generations of local children as, 'Big Blue'. 'Cresmedew Way', which fell into disuse in later times, is remembered in the recently named housing development. Owners and tenants of individual 'closes' or strips of arable land are recorded here by name. To the east of the Elmswell/Wetherden boundary a path leads to a windmill on Woolpit Heath. Along this path, still used as a footpath today, we follow in the footsteps of generations of smallholders who carted sacks of grain to the mill to be ground into flour whilst the Abbot's carefully cosseted rabbits looked on.

A dish of rabbit fit for a King

Take connynges or kidde and smite hem on peecys rawe, and fry hem in white grece.

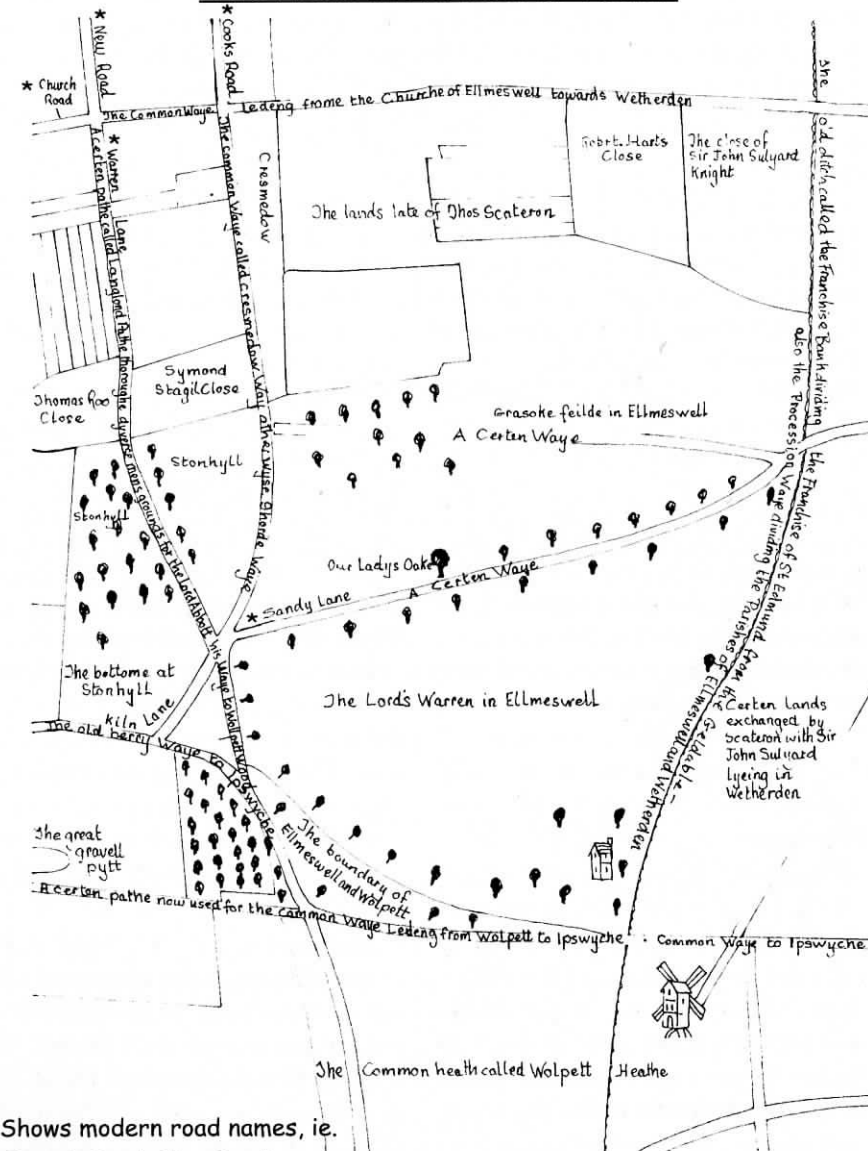
Take raysouns of courance and fry hem.

Take onynoun, perboile hem and hew hem small and fry hem.

Take rede wine and a lytel vynegur, sugar, with powdour of peper, of gynger, of canel (cinnamon), salt; and cast therto, and lat it seeth with a gode quantite of white grece; and serve it forth. Serves six

Recipe for Sweet and Sour Spiced Rabbit (14th / 15th century)¹⁶

'The Plotte of Ellmeswell Heath'¹⁷



* Shows modern road names, ie. Church Road, New Road, Cooks Road, Warren Lane and Sandy Lane

Henry VI

On All Saints Day in 1433, the King, Henry VI, decided that he and his retinue would spend Christmas at St Edmund's Abbey. It was quite usual for the Court, in its Royal ramblings about the Kingdom, to use the monasteries as first-class hotels – and to use them free of charge. The expenditure on the part of the unasked hosts was colossal, and there were understandable resentments, but the King was the King and none had visited Bury for over a century. The Abbot, William Curteys, (1429–1446), rushed back from his country retreat at Elmswell to make ready.¹⁷ Preparations included the employment of eight stonemasons on improvements to the Abbot's palace. A hundred extra servants were taken on to serve the guests in the manner to which they were accustomed. The King was just twelve years old. He was met on Newmarket Heath on Christmas Eve 1433 by the scarlet-clad citizens, Aldermen and worthies of the town. Some 500 of them, all mounted on horseback, escorted him into the town where, at the Abbey door, he was blessed by the Abbot accompanied by the Bishop of Norwich who sprinkled the Royal Personage with holy water. The whole awesome company, which must have appeared almost supernatural to the watching peasantry, then made its way

to the shrine of St Edmund where they offered prayers before dispersing, in the case of the young King, to his expensively prepared lodgings. Here he passed the time until, on January 23rd, he moved with the whole court and retinue to the Abbot's country retreat at Elmswell where they all 'fell to fishing and hawking'. His stay lasted until Lent, and he left Bury on Easter the Tuesday of 1434.¹⁸

The length of the Royal stay was remarkable. The Abbey took it to be a mark of favour and esteem, and it did, indeed, see the beginning of a very close relationship between Abbot Curteys and his King who would seek the older man's advice, his counsel and, inevitably, his money. The Abbot commissioned the monk and poet John Lydgate to write a life of St Edmund in verse in celebration of the visit. The ensuing manuscript, one of the treasures of the British Library, is a magnificent volume of illuminated script and beautiful illustrations.¹⁹ (see cover.) Another reason for the King's extended stay may be found in the recorded fact that the summer of 1433 saw the outbreak of an epidemic of plague so serious in London that Parliament was adjourned. The disease remained in the capital into the winter. Perhaps it wasn't Suffolk hospitality that kept the young King so long away from home?

Elmswell Hall

Although lacking the fulsome prose of a Country Cottage Brochure to guide him, King Henry VI chose well when he opted to spend a winter break at Elmswell Hall. Today's glossy literature might tempt him with, *a well appointed timber framed manor house with own chapel, extensive grounds, moats, open views & with hunting, hawking and*

fishing available. Excellent service and cuisine.

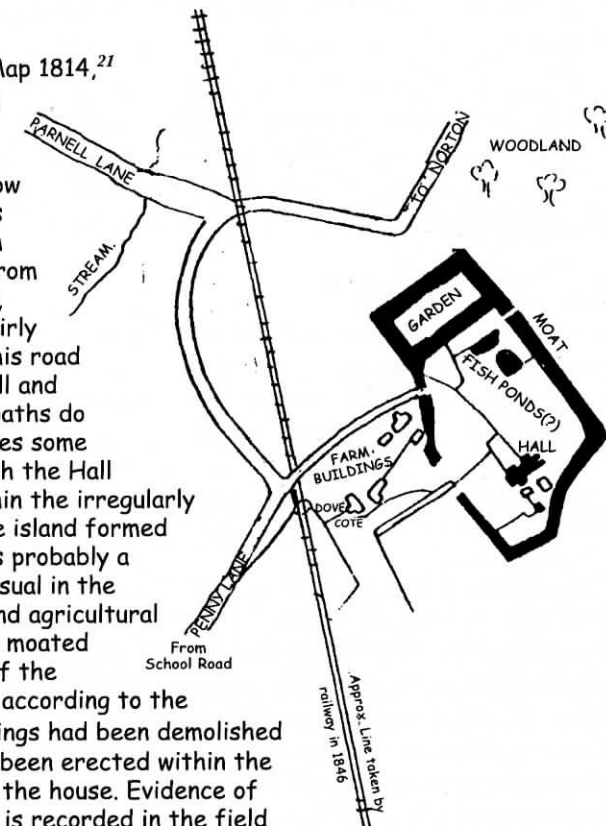
Even in 1433 it was an older property. It was, almost certainly, a beneficiary of Abbot Samson's restoring zeal. With its large moated areas, clearly seen in the illustration, it was obviously now a high status manorial building.

The smaller of the two moats probably

HALL PLAN from the 1814 map

Elmswell Hall

Drawn from the Parish Map 1814,²¹ this plan gives some idea of the layout of the abbot's 'messuage'. It is obvious that the road, now known as Penny Lane, has been diverted away from the house, and judging from the position of the moat, this must have been a fairly early diversion. (Could this road have linked both Elmswell and Norton Hall as the footpaths do today?) The moat encloses some 2 acres of courtyard with the Hall situated off-centre within the irregularly shaped moated area. The island formed by a subsidiary moat was probably a private garden. As was usual in the Middle Ages, all barns and agricultural buildings lay outside the moated courtyards to one side of the approach road. By 1843, according to the Tithe map²³, these buildings had been demolished and new out-houses had been erected within the moated site adjacent to the house. Evidence of the Dove House of 1302 is recorded in the field name 'Dove House Pightle', again on the Tithe Map.



enclosed a private garden accessed by bridges. Our map also shows other water features, which may have been fishponds for supplying the kitchen. The idea of a moat as a defensive feature is not appropriate in the country house context such as we see at Elmswell. It was, however, a notable medieval status symbol.

An imposing sight, then, 250 years later, for a Royal visit. The entourage would have travelled from Bury along 'The Lord Abbot's Chariot Way', shown as Parnell Lane on the map. This very ancient cart way would have approached Elmswell through the Abbot's estate lands of arable strips and water meadows. After Norton Wood, up a slight incline, the church would

have come into view, a smaller building then, without the present tower. Circling south into Penny Lane, where the road has obviously been diverted away from the house, the party would have climbed the slope to the natural plateau on which the moated house and courtyards stood. With the woods at Woolpit accessible down Warren Lane, we can agree that, for the privileged guest, ... 'Elmswell was situated in a pleasant place, furnished with fishponds and dykes and surrounded by woods. ... The King, then, whilst his courtiers hunted in the fields for hares and foxes, 'decided to stay there for a time, and there he took great pleasure in catching fish and birds, whose power in the air is brought low by sudden swoops of cruel birds of prey.'

4. The Green

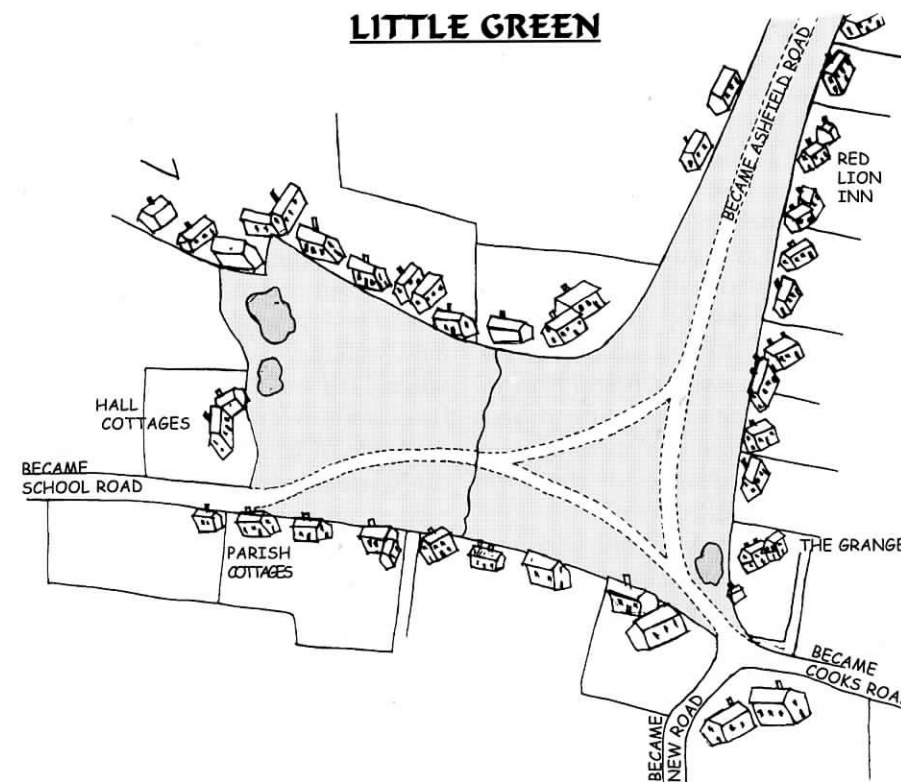
The village of picture postcard and country calendar has an idyllic village green. Cricket, maypole dancing - the ancient but thriving heart of the community.

Elmswell seems to lack such a feature, and hence, it has been said, a natural focus or centre.

To understand why this is so we must look into the historic reality. Until Enclosure in 1814,²⁴ Elmswell's inhabitants lived, in the main, around the edges of some 20 acres of common land called Little Green, and the rest, give or take a couple of isolated homesteads, lived on either side of a

much larger common of 195 acres which we now call Button Haugh Green. The common land of which the village green is often but a small remnant, was an integral part of the farming economy of the English Manor. Manorial tenants had rights to graze their livestock on common or 'waste' land. These rights did not imply ownership - rather like the right to use a footpath on someone else's land - but they were vital to the ability of poorer folk to survive.

In 1814 the Act of Enclosure divided commons into privately owned holdings. This was part of the attempt



This map of Little Green is adapted from an early 19th century map showing: 'Elmswell Parish and Glebe Lands in Suffolk. The Advowson and Rectory belonging to the Heirs of the late Robert Onebye Esq.'²⁵

Robert Onebye died 1720 and Mary his widow died 1757.

The full map identifies the glebe lands together with the occupants one of whom was Rev Francis Hodgkin, rector of Elmswell 1766-1809.

Little Green is recorded as measuring a little under 20 acres and had three large ponds within its bounds, one of which still exists in the front garden of The Grange situated at the corner of The Street and Cooks Road. There also appears to be a small stream dissecting the green from north to south. The buildings around the perimeter are roughly sketched but give some idea of the density and layout of this part of the settlement.

Hawk Green (hence Hawk End Lane) seems to have abutted Little Green according to a document dated 1781²⁶ but there is no reference to it on this map.

to reduce inefficient farming methods, a factor in the agricultural revolution which was to change agriculture for ever. Unfortunately, the result favoured the larger landowners and denied many poorer folk their most valuable resource in their constant and grinding battle against real poverty.

Greens occupied marginal land of low value. In the case of Button Haugh this meant heavy clay, often waterlogged in winter, baked hard in summer. Cultivation was difficult and unrewarding until the technologies and scientific advances of the 18th century allowed improvement. The scene would have been one of rough grasses and scrubland, with tree and shrub growth restricted by grazing. A wide, 'green ditch,' would have defined the perimeter, and it is this enclosing feature which suggests an origin for the name, as in 'haugh' (from the old

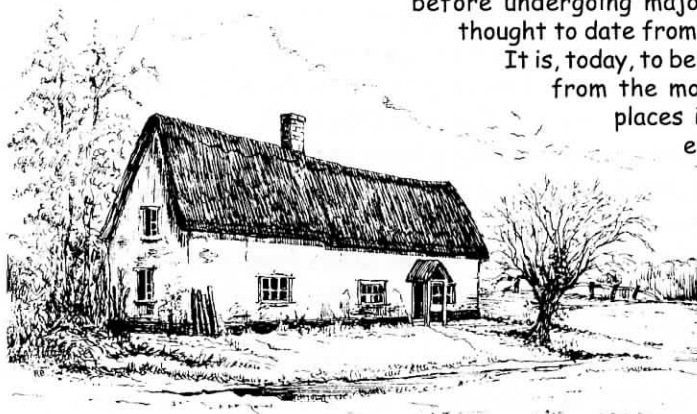
English 'haga' meaning enclosure). Remnants of the ditch remain on the western edge of the Green boundary and in front of White House Farm. The roads across the Green would have been gated, and stray or trespassing animals would have been detained in the 'pound', which stood at the south end to the rear of what is now The Fox public house. A limited field walking exercise in the 1980's, when 11th and 12th century pottery fragments were found, revealed evidence of late Saxon settlement at the Western edge of the Green. The earliest surviving building, again on the western edge, is Oak Farm thought to date from the 13th century. Other medieval evidence of the Green includes:

A Charter of Abbot Hugh (1156-1180) granting to Elias the butler; 'sixty acres of land next to the woodland

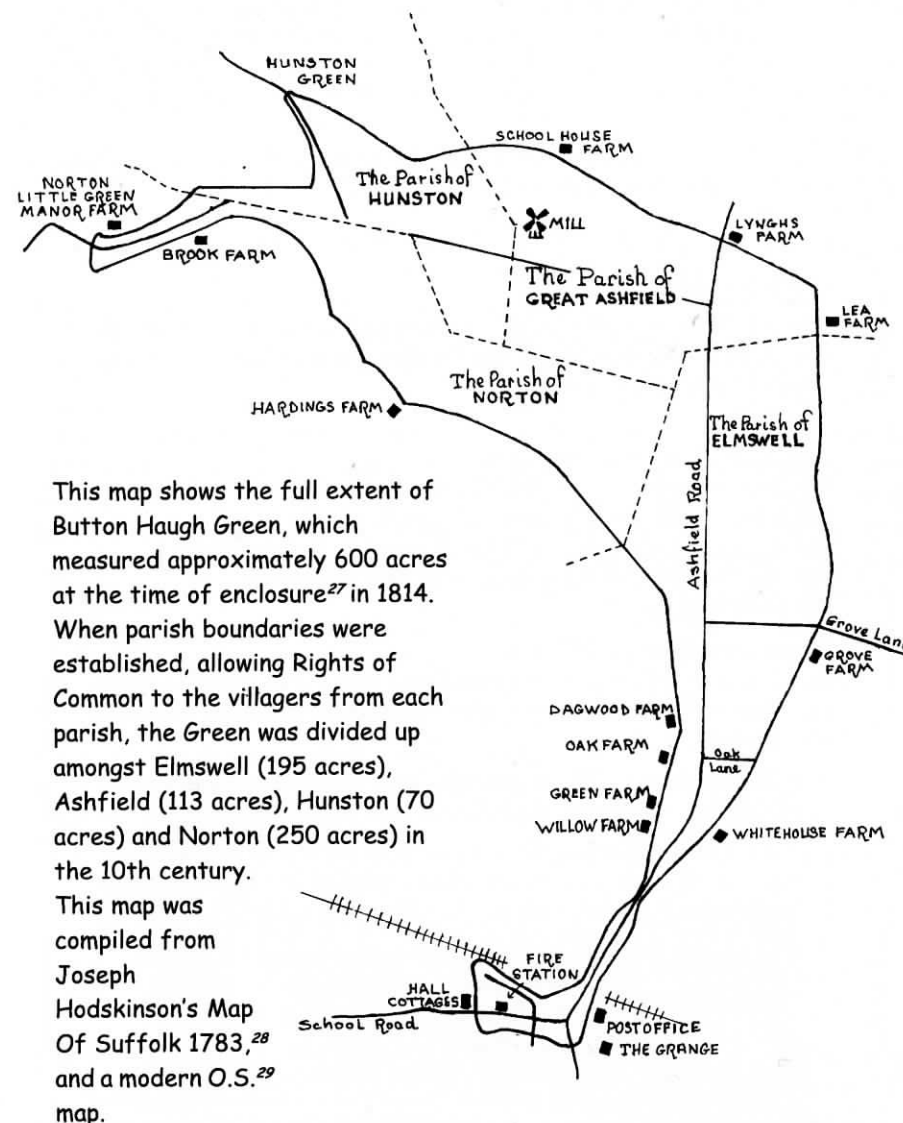
House on the Green

Oak Farm, Ashfield Road, illustrated here before undergoing major renovations, is thought to date from the 13th century.

It is, today, to be seen well set back from the modern road, which places it on the western edge of the original Button Haugh Green with evidence of the former 'green ditch' that enclosed the green, just a few yards from its front door.



BUTTON HAUGH GREEN



5. Development Around the Green...

The Grange and Certain Rectors of Elmswell

In the South East corner of Little Green, the map (p23) shows a substantial house fronted by a pond. Both are still there, now known as The Grange but at one time as The Parsonage.

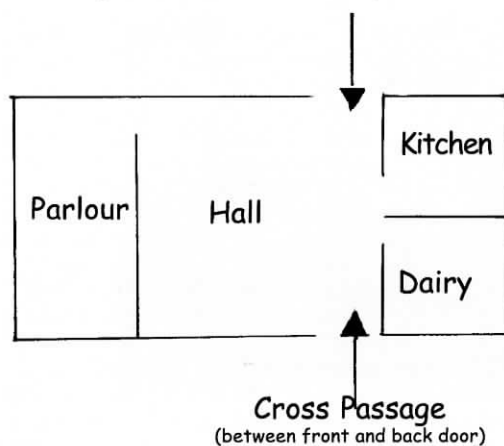
Bury Records Office has 'Glebe Terriers' for Elmswell, detailed accounts of the church's property. Between 1613 and 1834 the house is noted.

However, its origins may reach back further. On 6th June 1352 the jurors at a specially convened court at Stowe

(Stowmarket) allowed Gilbert de Elmswelle to make a grant of property to John de Rishangles, parson of the church at Elmswell. It comprised, 'a messuage (dwelling house and adjacent lands), 20 acres of land and 1 acre of meadow, and 3s. (15p.) rent. In return, 'John de Rishangles and his successors shall say special collects every day at Mass before the High altar, for the good estate of our dear brother, William, Abbot of Bury St Edmunds while he lives, and for his anniversary for ever after his departure.'³⁵

Medieval House Plan

This plan shows the basic layout of a three-celled open-hall house such as John de Rishangles would have occupied in the 14th century. It was the custom at this time for the hearth to be situated in the middle of the main room - the hall - and for the smoke to escape through the thatched roof. This restricted the 'upstairs' to a single chamber above the parlour reached by a simple ladder staircase.



However, in the mid 16th century, with the introduction of chimneys and, therefore, 'fire places', the hearth was moved to the parlour end of the hall. This allowed for the creation of a complete second floor. The whole house could be 'ceiled' over creating further 'upper-chambers'. These would be reached via a newel, or spiral, staircase inserted to one side of the chimney.³⁶

The map overpage shows....

Some 2,000 acres of land which was the Elmswell of Payne's map of the Parish drawn in 1814. Certain modern landmarks are included to help the modern reader see what became what.

The boundaries, some natural, some man-made, are fully described on page 9 detailing the gift of the Estate by King Eadwig to the Abbey at Bury in 956. The earliest known written references to Button Haugh Green (Buttehal), East Wood (Estwde), and Elmswell Hall (aule de Elmeswell) appear in a charter at the time of abbot Hugh (1156-1180) that makes a grant of land in Elmswell.

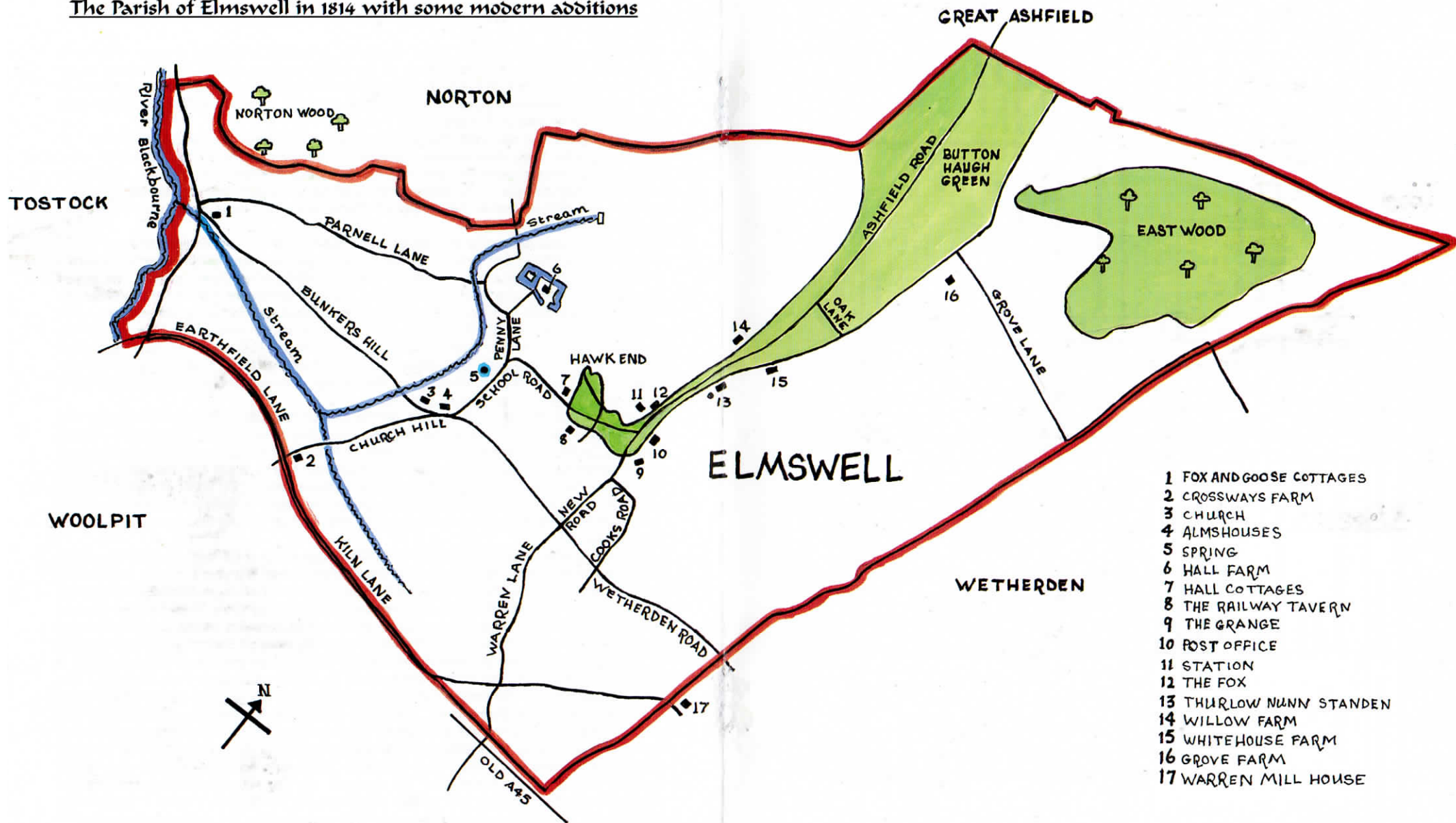
It is clear from the map that the 'greens', the common land, were very significant. At some 195 acres, they represented a sizeable proportion of the whole. The main area, Button Haugh Green, extended over the Parish boundaries into the adjacent villages, as seen on the map on page... The majority of dwellings were built on the edge of the green, and the key demonstrates how many of these early buildings remain as significant landmarks today.

Some of the roads and paths are discussed in the section on The Warren on page 18. Of the others, we know that Grove Lane has been known by many names over the years - Drove Lane in 1627 and Lawton's Lane in the late 1800's after John Lawtion, the son of the former Rector, who held Grove Farm. It once extended across into Wetherden where it linked with another drove road. Cooks Road was formerly Cok Street. The earliest known reference is in 1457 when John Scateron bequeathed 6s 8d to 'the emendation of the way at Cokkystrete,' approximately £200 worth of road repairs at today's value. It was possibly changed to Cooks Road in the 19th century after a local philanthropist H. Cook Esq., who lived at the Grange. A newspaper clipping telling of some of his good works can be seen on page 48.

The original 'Cok Street,' is possibly a contraction of Woodcock Street. Woodcocks had a preference for marshy wetlands, and the recording of a Clay-pit field in the vicinity seems to confirm the presence of this type of habitat in the area. In the Middle Ages it was commonly thought that woodcocks migrated to the moon for the winter. This explanation for the birds' annual disappearance stems from their habit of flying at night when they could often be seen silhouetted against the moon. Bunkers Hill, not an uncommon name, commemorates a pyrrhic victory for the British during the American War of Independence.

East Wood is described in the survey of 1302 on page 15. It is formerly ancient woodland, mentioned in Domesday, and has been gradually felled over the years, mostly in the 20th century. What remains today is no more than a few acres of regenerated woodland but is an important link with the past and there is an interesting story in its history. Jocelin de Brakelond, Abbot Samson's biographer, writes of an occasion, in the late 12th century, when Samson tricked the bishop of Ely out of acquiring some of Samson's best oak timbers to build, 'large buildings at Glemsford.' When Samson was staying at Long Melford, a messenger came from the Bishop asking that he might take wood from Elmswell. But Elmswell was a slip of the tongue for Elmset, the name of the wood at Melford that stood in the next parish to Glemsford. The abbot knew that Elmswell could not supply the quality of timber required but was loth to donate some of his best timbers from Elmset to the bishop. Taking the messenger literally, he answered that the bishop was welcome to take what timber he wished from Elmswell. Meanwhile he instructed his men to fell the best timbers from Elmset for his own use. By the time the bishop realised the mistake it was too late. He had to look elsewhere for his timber. 'When I heard this,' says Jocelin, 'I laughed and said to myself, "This is an example of a trick being trumped."³⁷

The Parish of Elmswell in 1814 with some modern additions



THE 1851 CENSUS

No of Schedule	Road, Street and No or Name of House	Name and Surname of each person	Relation to Head of Family	Condition in Marriage	Age		Profession or Occupation	Where Born	Deaf, dumb, lunatic etc
					M	F			
13	Elmswell	Joseph Tho ^s Lawton	Head	Widower	77		Rector of Elmswell	Essex Walthamstow	
		Edward C "	Son	u	51	45	Curate of "	Suffolk Claydon	
		Eliza Harsant	Daughter	Wid	49		Rector of Chigwell Essex	" "	
		Joseph Tho ^s Lawton	Son	u	43		Farmer of 316 acres employing 15 men, 4 boys all outdoors	" Brentleigh	
		John	"	u				" Elmswell	
		Francis Grace Do	Daughter	u		30		Essex Leyton	
5	Do	Catherine Hibbert	Niece Visitor	u		35		Suffolk Rattlesden	
		Mary A Carter	Servant	u		28		Do Walsham	
		Maria Gosleton	"	u		35		Do Herring	
		Sarah Redhall	"	u		24			
5	Do	Jesse Elmer	Head	Mar	37	40	Footman in Clergymans House	Suffolk Haughley	
		Mary "	Wife					" Badwell	
		Tho ^s Gartham	Father in Law	Widower	76		Labourer Receiving Parish Relief	" "	
11	Do	Isaac Rice	Head	Mar	33	32	Clergymans Coachman	Suffolk Elmswell	
		Fanny "	Wife			14		" Haughley	
		Susannah "	Daughter			8		" Elmswell	
		Henry "	Son			7		" "	
		Ann "	Daughter			2		" "	
		Louisa "	"			9m		" "	
		Alice "	"			9m		" "	
		Catherine "	"				(twins)	" "	
98	Do	Robert Osborne	Servt	u	20	22	Footman in Clergymans House	Suffolk Finborough	
		Eliza Salmon	"	u			Domestic Servant	" Elmswell	

From 1352, then, we leap forward to 1613 and the Glebe Terrier which describes the parsonage as being 'a dwelling house with hall, parlour, kitchen, dairy and three upper chambers, with one barn, one stable, one hay house and a gate house.'³⁸

We have no way of knowing for certain that this is the same house as that made over in Gilbert de Elmswelle's grant, but the description conforms well to the standard three unit plan of a medieval timber framed single storey hall house. (see plan p28.) The three 'upper chambers,' would have been a later addition made possible by the building of a chimney stack between the parlour and the hall with a staircase to one side of it. Prior to the innovation of fireplaces with chimneys, the smoke from an open hearth was allowed to find its way out past the blackened rafters and through the hatch.

By 1736, the house had been extended with the addition of an extra wing, and in 1820 the records speak of a new house, 'lately rebuilt with brick and stone covered with tiles.'³⁹ This gives us something very like the building which we now see and gave the Rev. Lawton, the Rector at the time, a house designed to reflect a more modern age.

Just 45 years after its 'makeover', the house ceased to be used by the church

when, in 1864, a new Rectory, in the fashionable Victorian Gothic style, was built near the church. This served for almost exactly 100 years until the present Rectory was built almost adjacent offering a dwelling more convenient for 20th century living.

The name, 'Grange,' was popular in Victorian times, particularly when ones neighbours had already called their dwellings 'Hall', or 'Manor House'. Our Grange, then, stands on a site which has been in continuous occupation for at least 600 years, and probably for much longer. For more than 500 of those years our Rector would have walked or ridden out across the green and followed the lane to his church to minister to his flock. The men of the cloth who made that journey are listed in St John's. However, although the parsonage was granted to John de Rishangles in 1352, the Rector listed as being in office for the 55 years between 1349 and 1404 is John Thebaud. We must speculate as to why this might be:-

1349 is the year that the Black Death swept East Anglia. One third of the population perished. Crops rotted in the fields and cattle strayed abroad with no one to tend them. Amongst the clergy mortality was even higher, for they had a duty to visit the plague-ridden sick and minister to the diseased and dying. So depleted were

their numbers that the usual age qualification for ordination was dropped, by the Bishop of Norwich, from 24 to 21. Thus was the young Thebaud appointed. It is possible, therefore, to suggest that, given these desperate times, the gift to the church of property, 'a proper Rectory', by Gilbert de Elmeswelle was an attempt to attract a 'proper' Rector. John de Rishangles came forward but reasons for his absence from the records in the church is yet to be discovered.

Although we have little evidence dealing with the first occupants of the Rectory at the time that our map was drawn up we can be sure of its place on the edge of Little Green and of its comprising a timber framed building. Furthermore, from 1598, all parishes were required to keep bound registers of, 'baptysings, buryalls and marriages'. Elmswell's records survive from 1658 to provide a fascinating picture of certain aspects of life in our village over centuries. Thus we can add some colour to the last three rectors resident at what became The Grange.

We are made aware, for example, of the distressingly high rate of infant mortality prior to the development of modern medicine and sanitary practices and that the ensuing tragedies were not confined to the poor and needy. The Rev Hodgkin (1767-1809) and his wife Jane lost 5 of their 7

children within a year of their birth. Their family tree tells a sorry tale. The Parish Registers reveal that Harriet, their first child, was born on 2nd February 1770 and died that same year on 12th April to be buried in the chancel of St John's and commemorated by a small slab inscribed, 'HH: 1770'. Just four years later Anna Maria Hodgkin was born in July 1774 to die in that same month and to be similarly remembered.⁴⁰ Both memorials can be seen in the vestry, to where they were relocated during the 19th century.

There followed Rev. Lawton whose ministry lasted from 1809 until 1863. A man of some substance, he fathered 11 children, all of whom lived beyond 30 years of age. In this case we can constructively turn to Census records (see page 32) for our background information. Since 1801, and at ten yearly intervals, all households have been detailed, with ever increasing accuracy. The figures are not made public for 100 years. Our illustration shows extracts from the 1851 document and details those who had something to do with the Rector in one way or another. We see three live-in servants and a further three living elsewhere - one of whom was the coachman, obviously making good use of a new 'chaise house' built as part of the 1820 improvements and where a

carriage, sufficient to transport a large and well-to-do family about their business, was kept.

The last Rector to live in the original Rectory was Rev. Luke, and he for just one year. William Henry Colbeck Luke was the only son of William Luke of the East Indies Army in Calcutta. Born in 1831, he graduated from Oriel College Oxford in 1853 to become, ten years on, the energetic and dynamic Rector who, literally, changed the face of Elmswell with his new rectory, new school,

refurbishment of the church and the building of a Village Club and Refreshment Rooms, now the Vets' surgery. The Bury and Norwich Press article of 12th August 1865 has him as 'a young clergyman ... has had the living but three years (their sums are at fault here?) and yet in that time he has restored the chancel of the old church, built a fine new rectory, and now nearly finished the National School. This is a good instance of the young and growing vitality now so observable in the established church.'



The Grange, originally The Rectory, in the early 20th Century

LOT 23.

An Exceedingly Desirable and Valuable Property, at Elmswell

AFORESaid, CONSISTING OF A FREE PUBLIC-HOUSE, CALLED "THE LION,"

WITH SMALL BREWERY ATTACHED,

Advantageously situate near the Railway Station, comprising an excellent Dwelling House, almost entirely new built, and refitted; Brick-built Brew-house with Store-room, Stables, spacious Barn, Cow-house, a range of buildings used as a covered Ten-pin Ground, or adapted for entertaining a large party, with other erections, Garden, Orchard, and Paddock; also a COTTAGE, abutting on the public road: the whole, including the site of the buildings, containing 2A. 0R. 24P., in the occupation of Mr. Wm. SMITH, and Mr. WALTER LORD, as yearly tenants, at apportioned Annual Rents amounting to £27.

Of this Lot, the Buildings and 2a. 0r. 11p. of land are Copyhold of the Manor of Elmswell, subject to Fine Arbitrary on Death or Alienation.

The remainder is Freehold Allotment.

Annual Outgoings:

	£.	s.	d.
Apportioned Land Tax	1	10	0
" Quit Rent	0	18	4
	2	8	4

And an apportioned Tithe Rent Charge of 10s. 0d.

The Purchaser of this Lot will not have possession of the Barn until Old Lady Day, 1850; and on receiving possession thereof, is to put by the Doorway from such Barn into the Yard of Lot 1, and make good the Wall in a workman-like manner.

The Red Lion

Another significant property marked on the map at the edge of The Green is an inn, The Red Lion.

In 1771, an inventory taken by one William Marsh listed the 'movable goods' belonging to John Gower, Innholder.⁴¹ The inventory does not name the property, but the records show work carried out for a Mrs Gower of the Red Lion in 1776.

We can, therefore, assume that Mr & Mrs Gower ran the Red Lion which was, at that time, owned by the Lord of the Manor. The inventory followed William Marsh as he passes from room to room assessing the value of his fellow parishioner's goods. First to the brewhouse, a separate building, and then to the various rooms where, to the modern eye, there wasn't much to see.

In the Parlour, for example, where the customers would sit to eat and drink, there was:

a Boefat (buffet) and Furniture	£4.4.0	(£4.20p)
2 Tables	8.0	(40p)
13 Chairs	12.0	(60p)
1 waiter & pictures	2.0	(10p)
In the closet: these goods	4.0	(20p)
1 Grate & Fender	8.00	(40p)
one Spade and Rake and Coal Hod	3.0	(15p)

Those same customers could have partaken of the following 'liquid assets'.

7 Barrels of Ales at 25/6	£8.8.6	(£8.42p)
1 Gallon of Foreign Brandy at 12/-	12.0	(60p)
4 Gallons of Rum at 9/-	£1.16.0	(£1.80p)
1 Gallon of British Brandy at 6/6	6.6	(32p)
1 Gallon of British Ginn at 5/6	5.6	(27p)
1 Gallon of Cinnamon Water at 8/6	8.6	(42p)

The Red Lion came up for auction in 1848 when it is described (see Lot 23 opposite) as 'almost entirely new built and refitted'. Formerly *The Swan*, the name was shortened to *The Lion* in

the late 19th century. By the 1920's it had become the village garage and more recently has become a private residence, *The Beeches*.

The Marsh Family

The same William Marsh who took the inventory of the Red Lion in 1771 was a member of an ancient yeomanry family which had lived in Elmswell for many years and which, on at least one side of the family, owned a house and lands bordering Button Haugh Green.

In a *Notes & Queries* feature in the East Anglian in the early 1900's, Charles Partridge Jnr of Stowmarket posed the following question:

*In Elmswell Churchyard, Suffolk, just east of the chancel, lies a flat slab inscribed: 'Here lieth the Body of William Marsh, last Heir male of that ancient Family; who have been Inhabitants & Freeholders in this Parish nearly 600 years. He died May 3rd 1802. Aged 67 Years. Also Mary his Wife who died Feby 17th 1822 Aged 84 years. Also Peter Bridges who died July 25th 1827 Aged 59 years.'*⁴²

Can any reader quote evidence, documentary or otherwise in support of the '600 years'.

The readers could not. We can try! Lists which detail taxpayers in 1283 and 1327 give us no lead to this family of such apparently remarkable long standing. The first reference so far discovered is in 1524, when the tax lists include William Marsh. There are ten surviving wills drawn up by members of the family dated between 1545 and 1698. One of the more

interesting was written up in 1645 by John Marsh, Yeoman, in which he left a third of his house to his wife, Sibill. The rest of the house and the major part of his estate went to his eldest son, John and his wife, Martha, with bequests to his three other sons, William, Edward and Thomas, who was away, 'in wars amongst the Parliamentary Armies'.⁴³ William, the second son, inherited, 'Palmer's', a 'tenement', which he was later to pass on to his son in turn, also called William, in 1683, as; 'One messuage or Tenement called Palmers wherein I now dwell'.⁴⁴ Palmers, later Green Farm and, very recently, Mulberry Farm, is seen on a map dated 1627⁴⁵ to be a house on the edge of the Green. The Palmers, after which family the house in question is, obviously, named, are listed in 1327. So far we have no evidence linking them to the Marsh family.

An indication of the status of this home can be gained by the Hearth Tax list of 1674 which details the number of hearths in each house as a basis for taxing the owners at 2s. per hearth (10p) with exceptions for the poorest. Matthew Marsh lives in a house with seven hearths, the third largest number in the village. (Mrs Webb, of Elmswell Hall, enjoyed 14 hearths, and an unspecified house owned by Mrs Kettlebrowe had 8.)

Two other Marsh family members are also listed, William and Edmund, whose dwellings have 3 hearths each.⁴⁶ It is worth noting that the number of hearths does not necessarily equate with the number of rooms, many of which were unheated.



Memento Mori
Here lieth the Body of
Mr Matthew
Marsh Who
dyed the 18 of
Aprill 1695
(Aged 52)

6. Sir Robert Gardener

As we have noted, the Hearth Tax of 1674 lists Elmswell Hall as the residence with the most hearths and, it is fair to assume, the highest status. This was due in large part to the major works carried out there by one of Elmswell's most illustrious residents, Robert Gardener.

His chronology reads thus;

1539 Robert Gardener born at Hartest. He was to marry three times, to Anne Cordall, by whom he had a son who died aged 24 and is buried at

'600 years', then, remains unproven so far. However, the Marsh family were obviously significant members of the parish. The tombstone which inspired the query is still in place, no longer legible. Another stone stands next to it, inscribed:

Ixworth, to Thomasine Barker and to Anne Spring, widow of John Spring of Pakenham.

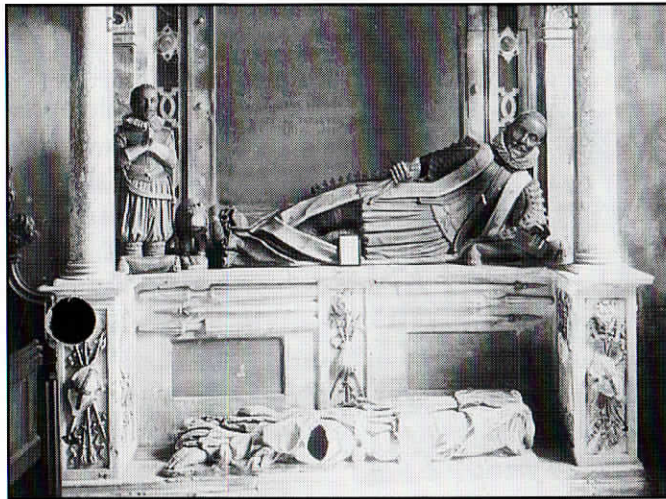
1590 Gardener bought Elmswell Manor and Hall from the Darcy family who had owned it from 1536. It is likely that he rebuilt the Manor House which can be dated to this period.

Gardener is described as a lawyer who was, 'for his good understanding in the common lawes in the dayes of Queen Elizabeth made Chiefe Justice of Irelande, where hee

The Gardner Monument

Directions for the erection of Robert Gardener's tomb states that:⁴⁷

'... Sir Robert Gardynar, (is) to be put in flesheley colors, as if he were livinge, and as near as may be to be like to his complection, havor, and similie.'



The great man is seen reclining, his son kneeling at his feet, surrounded by the attributes which signify his status - the judges robes, his crest and his suit of armour

... 'SirRobert is wearing his judge's cappe colored blacke, and his roabe of honor in shewe of scarlett ...'

On the top of the monument is his,

... 'chiefe coate of armes, with mantle, helme, sheild, and creast, with deathes heade on toppe of all, with a crowne signifinge his happye immortalitie.'

Also featured is his,

... 'whole suit of armor ... holbarts, helme, chape, pomell or helve of swordes'.

Finally, and rather bizarrely, a further element of his family crest stands at his feet - a rhinoceros. The tomb can be seen in all its glory at the east end of the south aisle in St John's Church as Sir Robert himself requested in his will.

governed sundry yeares with good commendation.'

He served his country in this capacity for 18 years and as Viceroy of Guernsey and Jersey from 1597 until 1599.

1602 Appears as one of Suffolk's 50 Justices of the Peace.

1614 Set up almshouses at Pakenham, his wife's residence, and at Elmswell.

1619 Died at Breccles Hall in Norfolk, another of his residences. Buried at Elmswell, remembered thus in Beccles Parish Register.

'Sr, Robert Gardiner, Kt., the Phavorite of his family, the Oracle of his acquaintance, the Glory of his friends, the staye of his Countrie, died at Breccles Hall on the twelfth day of February 1619, and was buried at Elmswell in Suffolk, the 19th of the same month.'

The sumptuous monument to his memory stands at the east end of the south aisle in a little chapel in St Johns parish church, as he himself requested -

'to be buried in the parishe church of Elmswell in the little aisle there, And in memory of my death and buriall I will be bestowed in the said church, or Chancell, or Isle, so much as shall make some devout and convenient monument there as well in memory of my life, as of my late some nowe deceased named William Gardener nowe buried in the Chauncell of Ixworth'⁴⁸

Gardener's nephew, Gardener Webb,

inherited Elmswell Hall, 'with all the lands and appurtenances thereunto belonging.' He died in 1674.

Gardiner left many bequests; to the poor in Elmswell, East Wretham, Pakenham, Thurston, Breccles and Shropsham and; 'ten pounds in amending the highwaie leadinge betwist Norton and Elmswell Churches.' But his most abiding memorial must be the Almshouses next to St John's church. These were built to house: 6 poore women, 3 from Elmswell, 3 from Woolpit to be chosen by the trustees.'

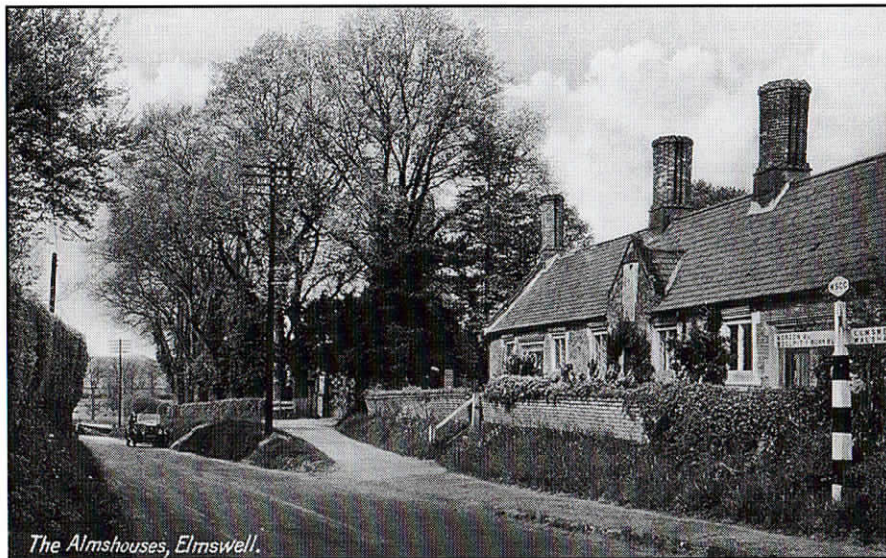
Applicants were to be over 60 and reputed to have lived, soberly, chastly, honestly and religiously.'

Further; 'None of the women shall be a common scolder, drunkard, brawler, incontinent of life, a harberour of rouges, theves or idle persons and such like, or usuall hedge-breaker, or to entertain or lodge any person or persons whomsoever in their chamber in the night season, or to marrie, or contract marriage with any.'

Again, each woman was to, 'repair on the sabbath-days to the church, and there to remaine and continue orderly and decently during the time of preaching and divine service there to be used, ... and twice the week to repaire to the said church, and there continue the time of preaching and ordinary prayer.'

Any, 'poore woman who did not observe and perform all and singular the aforesaid rules and ordinances,' could be put out.

For their part, the Trustees promised to give each of the inhabitants, annually, 'one gown, ready made, of coarse stuff, value about £5, enough wood for a year's firing and 1s. 4d. per month (about 12p).'⁴⁹



The Almshouses, Elmswell.

The inscription under the central sundial on the Almshouses reads;

SIR ROBERT GARDENER, KT., SOME TIME LORD OF THESE MANORS OF ELMSWELL AND WOOLPIT FOUNDED THIS ALMSHOUSE IN YE TIME OF HIS LIFE AO., 1614, AND GAVE IT SUFFICIENT MAINTENANCE FOR SIX POORE WOMEN WIDOWS. TO CONTINUE FOR EVER.

On 24th February 1967 The Bishop of St Edmundsbury & Ipswich opened the renovated almshouses which had been restored from near dereliction at a cost of £5,600. Adapted with modern conveniences for just three inhabitants these much photographed historic reminders of the generosity of Robert Gardener stand in trust for future generations.

7. The Workhouse

The poor, it is said, have always been with us. History bears this out in distressing detail.

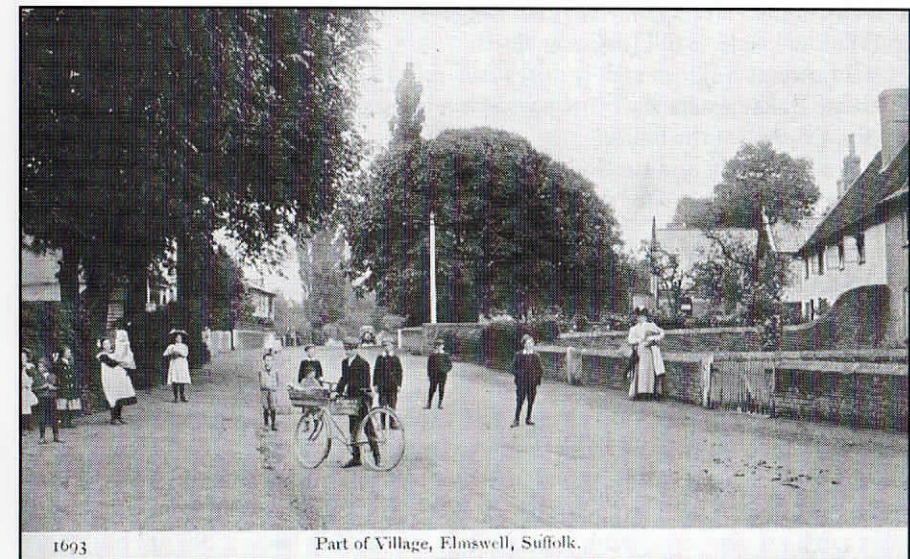
Until the Middle Ages, the needy relied on voluntary aid often provided by religious orders.

In 1536, Henry VIII effectively put an end to poor relief when, with the dissolution of the monasteries, he closed down the religious houses and institutions which had provided it.

The enormous problems thus caused were addressed by the Government of Elizabeth I, who had introduced, by 1601, a system based on the

compulsory payment of rates to provide charitable relief and the appointment of local officials, 'overseers,' (see extracts from Overseer's Accounts on pages 40/41) to organise spending for the benefit of the poor in their parish. By 1597 the law allowed the authorities to provide 'working houses for the poor,' a facility that was immediately provided in Bury St Edmunds.⁵⁰

Over the next hundred years a system developed whereby premises were set up to house the poor and work was found for them wherever possible



1693

Part of Village, Elmswell, Suffolk.

Parish Cottages - seen on the right of the picture in the early 1900's. This view looks down School Road towards the Stores - not the Post Office.

Extracts from the Elmswell Overseer's Accounts ⁵¹

An Overseer was an officer elected by the great and the good of the Parish annually to administer the Poor Law. Empowered to raise rates in order to meet demands for poor relief, he received no payment for his work and would normally only serve for one year.

1797 Outgoings:

Mr Hovell for drawing up the Agreement for the Workhouse	2s 6d
Mr Hunter's bill for bed and bedding for Workhouse	£2 11s 9d
Fetching brick and sand to the Workhouse	2s 6d
Balam's wife for child's shroud	1s 6d
James Bouley for Towling Bell	1s 6d
Pair of stockings for Sarah Markall	1s 5d
Bushel of Coles for Abraham Clarke	1s 4d
Boy Clarke's coat	10s

1798 Outgoings:

for Boy Markall's breeches	4s
Mr Leget for larning William Sare to Fiddle	10s 6d
Mr Simpson for 2 stone of Bush Faggots	6s
Widow Leeder's bill for hemp clorth	13s 9d
G Everetts bill for making shirts and shifts	10s 9d
Jesse Baker's wife the other part of her lying money	12s
for a Brom for the house	1s 4d
for a Saucepan and tin Boiler for the House	4s 3d
for 2 Chamberpots for the House	6d

In 1799 an entry for John Edgar's burial goes as follows:-

to John Cuthbert for Cofen	10s 6d
Parson and Clark	3s 6d
for the Barrows	2s
the woman (for laying out)	4s
for shroud	6d
John Jacob for shaving John Edgar	1s

Further outgoings in 1799:

For George Baker's Shrowd maken	6d
Mary Baker for doing Goymer's child	2s 10d
Mr Cutherbert for Boy Goymers Cofen	7s
Wood for the poor and faggots	2s 3d
William Sayer's wife for churching	1s

1799 Income:

Allowance from the Workhouse garden	10s 6d
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1800 Outgoings:

one spinen wheel	2s 6d
Pork for the Workhouse	3s
26½ pound of cheese for the Workhouse at 3½d per pound	7s 9d
Mr Stutter for milk	1s 6d
Martha Marcall for mending for Workhouse	3s

1801:

4 yards of Linsey for Elizabeth Baker	5s
a pair of shoes for Mary Leeders gal	5s

1802 Outgoings:

G Wrights Bill for 200 of bricks for the Town House	9s 6d
-----------------------------------------------------	-------

1819 Outgoings:

for sweeping the workhouse Chimneys	2s
for sweeping the Townhouse Chimney	1s 6d
for repairing the Townhouse	£1
William Mulley Bricklayers bill for Workhouse	£3 5s 2½d
Samual Baker for repairing spinning wheels	4s 6d

1820 Outgoings:

Mr Turner for 4 load Brush	£1 8s
for two new Skeps	3s 4d

The Overseer's accounts not only refer to the workhouse and its residents but to other members of the community who are in receipt of welfare. This could be the result of loss of earnings through illness or old age, been widowed or orphaned.

Reading through the accounts we get the impression that in William Marsh (Overseer 1798) at least, we have a sympathetic administrator. William Sare's violin lessons would not be paid for under today's welfare system. It is understandable then, that, in 1835, the poor of the Parish felt as if their burden increased rather than lessened under the new beurocracy.

(A Town house - see 1802 - is a property owned by the parish in which poor families were merely housed. They were usually bequeathed by charitable individuals - see Suff. Atlas p120 and p209.)

through the agency of the overseer and the local church wardens. Such premises became, 'The Workhouse', and, Elmswell had one.

Evidence

In 1791, the Elmswell Burial Register records several deaths resulting from an outbreak of smallpox "from the workhouse."⁵² Further records show a Mr Hovell being paid 2s 6d (12 pence) in 1799 for drawing up the Agreement for the workhouse. (see Accounts p44.) Little else has so far been found to identify the building or its location, but we can assume from contemporary records that it was not the much feared and forbidding red brick institution of Dickensian text and Victorian legend. It would have been built on a domestic scale, timber framed and thatched in the manner of the locality at that time.

Clues to the location are many and complex. The minutes of the newly-formed Parish Council record that, on 16th April 1895, *there was an attempt to establish the status of the 'eight Parish Houses,' which were 'in times past reserved for the indigent and aged poor, now for some years tenanted by others not answering to that description.'* Councillors wanted to restore them to their original purpose, *'providing a shelter in old age for the deserving poor of the parish.'*⁵³

Prior to this, in 1855, the Churchwardens and Overseers of the parish proposed to sell 'a messuage (property with land), formerly the workhouse, in four tenements with gardens,' together with, 'a cottage in two tenements with pump and garden occupied by William Hart and James Goymer', and, again, 'a cottage in two tenements with a garden occupied by William Rice and James Moyse.'

Going back further, the Tithe Map of 1843, which details all of the properties in Elmswell with a number and details of ownership, has properties, 'under the jurisdiction of the Poor Trustees.' There are references to 'No. 433 ... back from Ashfield Road near Willow Farm', 'No. 557' situated where Pightle Close now emerges on to School Road, and at Tudor Cottages, 'No. 573', on School Road. It is fair to suggest that this latter location, Tudor Cottages, which was, and is, a block of four dwellings as detailed in the 1855 sale particulars, is the original site of our own workhouse.

In 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act divided England and Wales into groups of 'Unions' of parishes, each with a board of Guardians to administer poor relief. This gave social reformers the chance to return to the spirit of the Elizabethan ideal of poor provision linked to gainful

employment. All able bodied persons seeking poor relief were to be given help through the medium of the workhouse, where conditions were to be 'less eligible,' that is to say, more miserable, than the alternatives. The theory was that, by offering a less than attractive situation, only the truly destitute would wish to become a drain on community resources.

For the unfortunates of Elmswell, the Stow Union became the responsible body.

The Directors were charged with providing buildings 'in a plain and durable manner'. They bought the House of Industry at Onehouse which had served as a centre of local poor relief since 1780. This building was improved and enlarged to provide, within the guidelines established for such enterprises;

*'For the reception, maintenance and employment of such persons as were able to work, and, a separate building to serve as an infirmary for the reception of the sick, and a separate place for lunatics.'*⁵⁴

In addition, the Directors, as the 'Guardians of Stow Union', decided which deserving cases within their area should receive 'out relief', or help from funds by way of grants of money or, more often, as flour to be collected from the distribution point at Woolpit. Relieving Officers were directed to bring forward paupers from Elmswell

on Friday 27th November 1835 to make their applications for such 'out relief'. Applicants included widows from the almshouses, abandoned children, orphans, and the disabled. One interesting case was that of Joseph Baker who, as a shoemaker, had provided for the parish poor of Elmswell in December 1801, "6 pairs of shoes to the value of £1s. 3s. 6d. (£1.22p)". By 1835 he states that his situation is:

Joseph Baker, 64, Wife 61, shoemaker and Parish Clerk, disabled, 1 child not dependent, present relief 2s. (10p).

The family was awarded 1 stone (7 kilos) of flour.⁵⁵

As the century developed, responsibility for workhouses devolved to the emerging structures of local government, District and County Councils. Many became orphanages and hospitals, especially, as in the case of Stow Union, for the aged and infirm. The building, now an old people's home, still stands in Onehouse Road, Stowmarket.

Meanwhile, back in Elmswell, the workhouse apparently remained under the jurisdiction of the 'vestry', the body which was made up of the Minister, Churchwardens and leading parishioners and which assumed many of the responsibilities of the old Manor Courts - appointing constables, repair of the highway and, of course, the

poor.

The newly formed Parish Council took responsibility in 1894 and reference thereafter is to the 'parish cottages'. In 1956 negotiations were begun with a view to passing the properties on to Thedwastre Rural

District Council and a sale was completed in 1960.⁵⁶ The proceeds went to build the bus shelter in Wetherden Road. Local Government Reorganisations in 1974 passed the properties to Mid Suffolk District Council, the current owners.

ELMSWELL.

TREAT TO THE UNION CHILDREN.—On Tuesday last the children at the Stow Union, numbering between 50 and 60, were entertained by H. Cook, Esq., of the Grange, Elmswell, who kindly provided vans to convey them to and from his residence. On their arrival at Elmswell an excellent repast awaited them in a large building prettily decorated for the occasion. Among those who were present and assisted at the tables were Mrs. Luke, wife of the Rector, Mrs. Bunbury, Mrs. Rednall, Miss S. Corner, Miss How, &c. After ample justice had been done to the good things the children adjourned to the adjacent grounds, where a number of rural sports were entered into with much spirit. During the afternoon most of the principal inhabitants attended on the kind invitation of Mr. Cook, and every one present took a lively interest in the amusement of the children. The Rev. W. H. C. Luke and W. Baker, Esq., were actively engaged in superintending the racing and jumping matches, &c. At the conclusion of the sports, a quantity of amusing and useful toys were distributed among the children by Mr. Cook, after which many rounds of cheers were given by them for their kind benefactor. The vans were then got ready, and at dusk the children were conveyed back to Stow Union, under the care of Mr. and Mrs. Wiggins, the master and matron. As the cheers of the juveniles died away in the distance, the invited guests partook of refreshments and did not fail to give expression to the great pleasure they had in being present. Much regret was felt at the absence of Mrs. Cook, through indisposition.

Bury & Norwich Post (lately the Bury Free Press) - 24th September 1872

8. Education

Formal education, what we know as 'going to school,' has not been around for long. Its development has been rather hit and miss. In Elmswell we can trace this development date by date;

1844

Rev. Lawton supports a school for the instruction of the poor. This would have been a 'Dame School', and was run by the only teacher Miss Rebecca Matthews.

1851

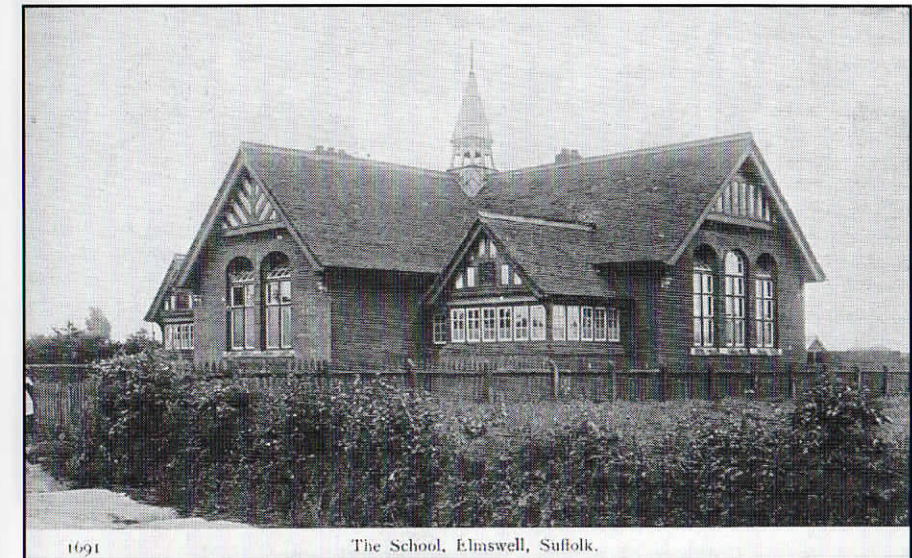
The census shows two teachers - Hannah Mulley aged 18, the daughter

of John Mulley, cordwainer and Ebenezer Cole aged 62, 'Schoolmaster'.

1863

Rev. Luke becomes Rector of Elmswell, with a population of 759, and within two months begins correspondence with the Government Education Board towards funding for a new school building.⁵⁷ As a keen social reformer, what he saw did not impress him. The school was;

'...held in a cottage under an amicable but quite inefficient mistress' and catered for between 40 and 60 children, 'entirely



The School, Elmswell, Suffolk.

Elmswell Board School, built in 1890

supported by myself with the help of the school pence. The cottage is kindly lent for the use of the existing school but is quite inadequate for the purpose, very small and ill ventilated and is likely to be sold within a couple of months.'

The good reverend, observing that 'there are no resident gentry in the parish ... and the tenant farmers are not wealthy enough to afford very substantial support,' sought to fund a new teacher on £50 per annum - (the average labouring wage was 8 or 9 shillings : 40, 45p weekly), about £22 a year. The

cheapest of his proposed fees was one and one halfpence per week (about ½p) out of the average labourer's 100d (about 45p) weekly wage. The 'children of larger farmers, &c.' were to be charged 7 shillings and six pence per quarter (about £1.50 per year).

March 1864

Rev. Luke's proposal, signed by 8 farmers and tradesmen of the parish, promises an income of £74 per annum. A fund of some £186 was already subscribed locally to the project.



Children at School - Elmswell Board School 1901.
Front row right Frank Manning. Second row right Albert Manning.
The brothers were both killed in the First World War.

May 1864

The Assistant Secretary to the Committee of Council on Education writes from the Privy Council Office in Downing Street turn down the application for government money towards our new school. Their logic went;

1. Were a school to be established with the help of a Parliamentary Grant it must be run under the guidance of the National Society, the body which was set up in 1811 to oversee Government-granted aided education.
2. the managers of any such school have the power to effectively exclude children from 'dissenting' families, i.e. those who were not Church of England.

3. almost a quarter of Elmswell families were dissenters - if they were all excluded, Elmswell would need a separate school for them.

4. Elmswell could not afford two schools, so the proposal would not satisfy the educational needs of the parish.

July 1864

Rev. Luke appeals, expressing, 'sincere regret that their Lordships should have seen fit to commit an act of arbitrary injustice against the promoters of the school.'

October 1864

Our MP J G Hubbard Esq, writes to the Government, 'The Churchmen of Elmswell pay their taxes. They contribute to the education fund, and when they ask for what is practically their own money ...'

to 'provide a school for the Church children who are many enough to fill it ... it is refused.'

November 1864

The Right Honourable Earl Granville replies for the Government to say that the decision against funding for Elmswell was right and that Rev. Luke seems to be adopting the 'perfectly legitimate alternative ...' of 'establishing a school without State assistance.'

May 1865

Rev. Luke laid the foundation stone of the new National Schools on land given by Admiral Sir George Seymour Bart in what is now, understandably, School Road. The red brick buildings were designed and built by Mr A Andrews of Bury and comprised a schoolroom, a classroom and various offices. The total cost of some £600 was to be raised by public subscription, as was the further £200 required for the Master's house.⁵⁸

August 1865

A Fancy Fair was held in the Rectory Grounds opposite the church to raise money for the new school, now nearly finished. The first day, to which the Nobles and Worthies of the area were invited, netted £110 on the second day, 'the admission free, a good number of the poorer parishioners attended, whose purchases, however, did not tell much in the total.'⁵⁹

1886

The Elmswell School Board was set up to seek to provide education for

all, regardless of religion. The Rector, Rev. MacFarlane, refused to allow the existing National school buildings to be used for a Board School.⁶⁰

1887

Elmswell ratepayers approached the Charity Commissioners to have the school buildings made available to all, but to no effect.

February 1888

The Chairman of the new School Board agreed to rent land adjacent to the existing school, a quarter of an acre, at £2 per year for a new school.

July 1888

A new school, prefabricated by Dicks & Co from London, and erected by Mulley Builders, was opened with fees of 2d. for the first child in a family and 1d. for their younger brothers and sisters.

May 1889

The new school caused friction. Rev. MacFarlane accused the School Board of *'endeavouring to force parents of children at Church School to withdraw them and send them to the Board School by threatening the parents with loss of employment and exclusion from the Parish charities.'*

April 1890

Another quarter acre site was purchased next to the existing schools and, once again, Mulleys built a school, cost £665 and capable of holding 170 children. (see photo P49.) The

prefabricated iron building was subsequently sold in 1891 for £80 to a Mr H A Oakes. Also in this year Government grant aid of £10 per year per child made schooling, effectively, free. The average attendance at Elmswell at this time was 72 children. From here on in things became less local. The school leaving age rose from 11, in 1893, to 16 in 1965. In 1902 Local Education Authorities became responsible for providing 'elementary, secondary and technical education,' and Board Schools became Council Schools. Between 1916 and 1922 the old Church School had closed. The building was used as a Church hall and, briefly, as a school for evacuees during the second War. With the opening of Beyton School in 1953, Elmswell reverted to a Primary School and, again, adjusted to accommodate the Middle School system later on. A new school was built on the old village playing fields at Oxer Close in 1986. In December 1989, following a long battle by the Amenities Association and the community to save the site, planning permission was granted for a 26 home development - what is now Old Schools Court. Three words behind which stand 125 years of social history, of village endeavour and of personal memories.

9. The Railway

The coming of the railway to Elmswell was heralded by the building of The Railway Tavern, White Elm Road, in Woolpit.

This seems less than logical, but is easily explained in the context of 19th century railway building which was based on fierce competition.

The Eastern Union Railway Company had spent 9 years building a line from London to Ipswich. An extension to Norwich was proposed which would include a branch line from Stowmarket to Bury. The Eastern Union proposal was to bring the line through Elmswell, that of their

competitor, The Diss & Colchester Company, preferred a route through Woolpit. Woolpit was considered to be the likely favourite, possibly because of its brickworks, which would have become an important freight customer. The speculators moved in for a share of the new-found prosperity that the railway promised. The pub was built. The bids were made. The decision went to Elmswell and the future for both communities was dramatically altered.

Having already surveyed the route in 1844 the line was constructed in just 6 months without a JCB in sight.



Elmswell Railway Station in its heyday, showing all the accoutrements which were gradually sacrificed to progress - signal box, wooden gates, buildings ... and staff.

Elmswell was effectively sliced in half. Parts of Little Green and Hawk End Lane were destroyed. Eight properties had to go.

The construction process was dramatic in many ways. A vast army of workmen, many of them unskilled agricultural labourers attracted by higher pay, worked in 'butty gangs', amongst whom vice and violence were rampant. They were paid by the wagonload for earth excavated with pick and shovel. This earth was then moved to where an embankment was needed and off-loaded, again by hand. This argues against the local myth that St John's Church stands on a rise because the surrounding earth was taken for the railway.

The work continued day and night, but never on a Sunday. Without the benefit of 'health & safety', and with no medical attention on site, casualty figures were horribly high. Typically, the records show one casualty as a Tostock man whose head was crushed between the buffers of two wagons. The workers lived, largely, in rough shanties beside the line. In January 1846 one such building, a temporary stable built of faggots and thatch, burned down near Norton. The owner, a sub-contractor named Robert Sallis, managed to rescue his wife and children from the adjoining hut but all their possessions were lost

- including five horses and a week's supply of food for the men. Sallis and his family were destitute, their loss estimated at £125. However, a rescue fund appeal collected £117 from local people, many from Elmswell.

The stations, all designed by Frederick Barnes, were built by local contractors. Those at Elmswell, Thurston and Haughley were not ready when the first trial run from Ipswich to Bury was made on 26th November 1846. The journey took just two hours, but, by the formal opening on December 7th of that year, the trip took just one hour and 45 minutes. The first public timetabled train left Ipswich on 24th December at 9.10am and the service began with four trains each way on weekdays, two on Sundays, calling at all stations with an average journey time of ninety minutes.⁶¹

The railway changed the face of Victorian England. It shrank distance and made the fast efficient transfer of goods around the country - and in effect around the world - cheap and convenient. Elmswell would never be the same. Freight was largely agricultural produce and coal imported from the Midlands, but it was not long before local businesses began to realise the potential.

The brickworks at Woolpit

'Woolpit Brick & Tile Co.' were constantly at odds with the authorities over the state of the road leading to the railway station which suffered under the pounding from the Company's wagons. In March 1898 the Parish of Elmswell sought a contribution of £100 from them towards the damage to the road in the previous year, and legal action to curb the abuses of the various 'Locomotive Acts', governing road transport was raised as a possibility.⁶²

Eventually the Company built a narrow gauge tramway to carry its heavy output to the goods yard at Elmswell and hence to the world. In 1900 this rather primitive system was upgraded and re-routed as a narrow gauge railway. The 1904 Ordnance Survey map clearly shows the line emerging from the station sidings and over School Road down Rose Lane (where the rails can still be seen buried in the roadway) over Church Road, down Spong Lane and over Kiln Lane

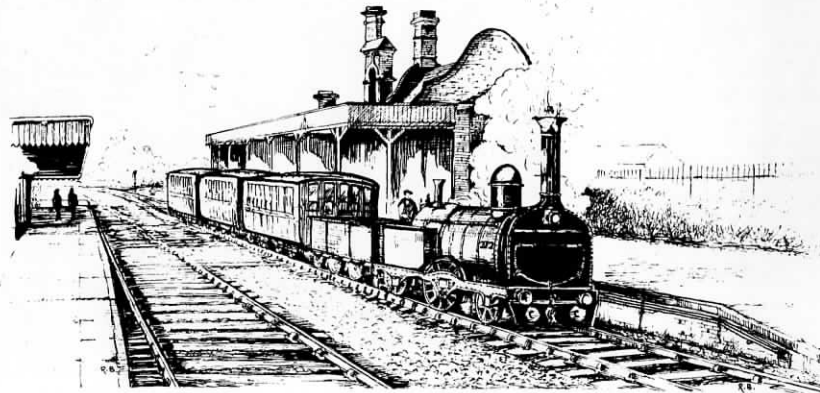


Brickyard Train - The Woolpit Brick & Tile Co. bought this Sharp Stewart 2-4-0 tank engine, *Haro Haro* to add to the 0-6-0 saddle tank engine which they already ran on the standard gauge line into the sidings at Elmswell. *Haro Haro* had previously seen service both on Jersey Railway and on the construction of the Manchester Ship Canal.

to the brickworks – a distance of one mile. Evidence suggests that the line was not in use for long before steam lorries took on direct deliveries to the customers' premises.

The change that the railway brought is very evident in the census returns. In 1851, the first census after the line was built, 5 men are employed on the railway and 3 more in the coal business that the railway brought with it. In the last available census of 1891 14 men worked on the railway with 11 more in related occupations – coal and general merchants, porters and clerks. A snapshot of more recent times, in 1967 shows Frank Thompson as the last Station Master in the year that Elmswell became an unmanned halt. A railwayman for 51 years, 8 of them

in Elmswell, he was able to recall a staff of 2 porters, 3 signalmen and a clerk. About 50 trains would pass through daily in either direction and the freight traffic served both the Bacon Factory with its own sidings and Moyse's coal yard. The station won many awards. In spare moments the staff ensured that it was impeccably kept with rambling roses along the platforms, everything clean and sparkling with brass shining like gold – all to the order of Mr Thomson who also took a pride in the service he and his staff offered to the public. On one occasion a local girl rang the station from London from where she was to continue a journey overseas. She had forgotten her passport. Was there any chance that he could arrange to have



This artist's impression shows Eastern Counties Railway Loco. No. 272 spotted at Elmswell within the first few days of the station's completion. The 2-2-2 tender engine, No. 13 on the Eastern Union Railway stock list, was built by R & W Hawthorne of Newcastle and delivered in 1846 at a cost of £1750 plus £375 for the tender.

it collected and put on the next train to the capital? There was, and he did.⁶³ In 1974, ten years after the last goods traffic used the sidings, the main buildings on the down line, with their distinctive Dutch gable ends, were demolished. In 1986 the village was taken unawares when the signal box and old wooden gates were whisked away without notice. Too late for the many protests that followed, but a real spur for the campaign to save the rest of the station buildings, then sadly and very thoroughly, derelict. The Parish

10. The Bacon Factory

Some things change little. The 21st Century farmer would have considerable sympathy with the lot of his counterpart 100 years ago. Poor and fluctuating prices were often dictated by middle-men far removed from the harsh rigours of raising stock. As ever, the pig farmer suffered more than most. In 1911 our disgruntled local farmers, led by Mr T E Robinson of Woolpit, decided to do something about it in a dramatic and ground-breaking initiative which changed the face of our village and, it is argued, the face of agriculture across the country.

A 'large assembly of people' gathered with the Marchioness of Bristol at Elmswell on Tuesday 30th June 1911 to lay the foundation stone of the St

Council argued for a unique reprieve. Grant aid was sought and, in 1990 the local MP declared open the refurbished buildings and their first, and current, tenant, 'Travel Stop'.

The refurbishment enjoyed a second phase, a local business goes from strength to strength. More trains are stopping, more people are using them. The days of Integrated Transport Policies are with us and, once again, our rail link is an important and valuable asset.

Edmundsbury Co-operative Bacon Factory on five and a half acres of land, 'situate quite close to the Great Eastern Railway line.'

This unique venture was designed along the lines of successful enterprises in Denmark. The building included a sausage manufactory, offal room, lard room and a salting cistern 'for the heads'. It was to cost no more than £10,000 – including the land. King George V wrote to agree to accept the first samples of bacon produced by the venture. It was opened by the MP, F Goldsmith Esq. on 25th March 1912 with 396 farmers subscribing, all hoping that, by pooling skills, resources and marketing power, they might enjoy better and more stable prices for their meat. In 1912 230 pigs were

processed each week, arriving by rail, horse-drawn cart or on foot.⁶⁴

The enterprise, and the members, prospered until after the Second War when rationing was abandoned and the Danes made their presence felt once again – this time with clever advertising and skilful marketing which hit British bacon hard. The original spirit was, however, still strong in Elmswell, and an innovative range of 'St Edmund's' branded products was devised, produced and sold by van salesman direct from the factory. Scientific measuring and testing of

carcasses was introduced so that the farmers could be guided towards consistent, top grade, production. It worked.

Further battles lay ahead; supermarkets gradually acquired their powerful dominance, the European market had to be accommodated, a constant stream of new regulations demanded intelligent, hard-headed flexibility.

The co-operative ideal survived when Eastern Counties Farmers bought the factory in 1974 but has since been lost in the drive to find more and more capital in order to remain viable.



The Bacon Factory, newly built

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Abbreviations:

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|--------|------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PRO | Public Record Office. | SRO(I) | Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich) |
| PSIA | Proceedings of the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology. | Suff. Atlas | 'An Historical Atlas of Suffolk' (eds D. Dymond & E. Martin. 3rd edition (1999)) |
| SRO(B) | Suffolk Record Office (Bury) | | |

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King Henry VI makes a guest appearance at the unveiling of the new village sign in 1995



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