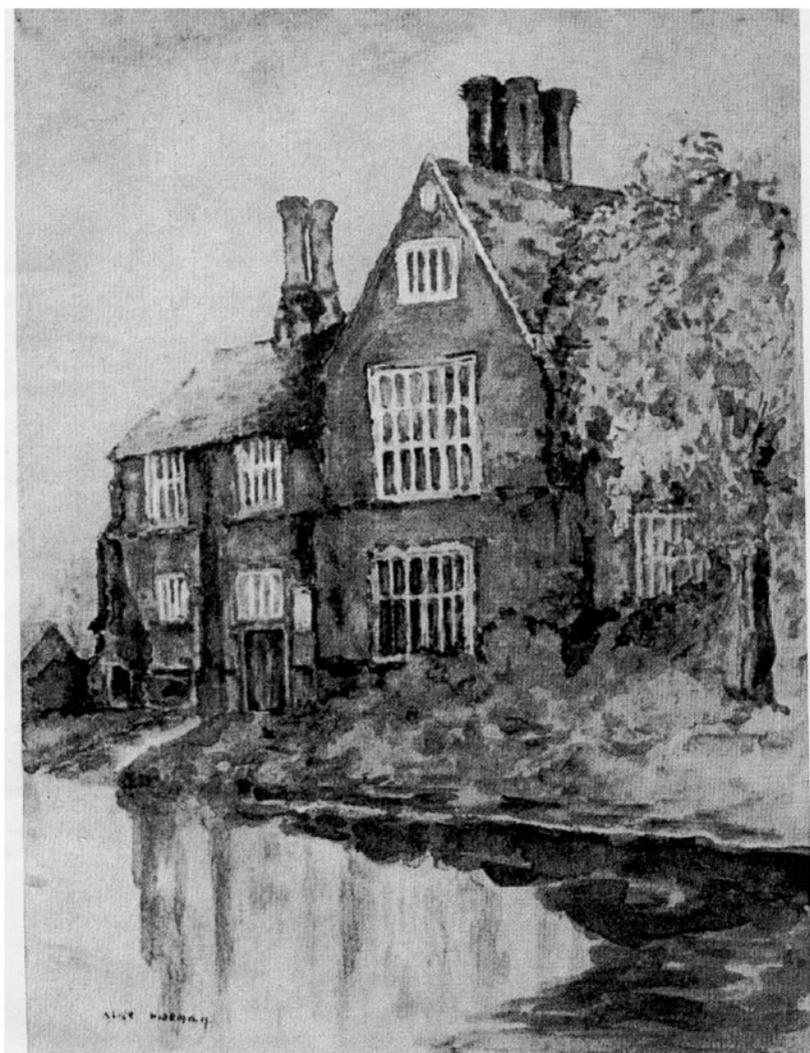


WIMBISH THROUGH THE CENTURIES

ISABEL BY WISEMAN





Broadoaks (from the north)

*WIMBISH THROUGH THE
CENTURIES*

ISABEL WISEMAN

1954

INTRODUCTION

TODAY we have grown so used to thinking of progress as emanating from the large centres of population – our cities and towns – that we are apt to forget that until comparatively recent times Britain was mainly a country of villages, always excepting on, Cobbett's "great wen"

It was in the villages, in the country seats dominating them, plans (political and otherwise) were often evolved. Perhaps reason why we are apt to overlook these facts is the absence village records. A town, with its own local government organisation, usually possesses a nucleus of Minute Books, Account Books other archives, from which it is fairly easy for the historian to trace its development. But the first task of the village historian is discover and bring together scattered records, which are often disjointed and lacking continuity.

In her book on Wimbish Through the Centuries Miss Wiseman has been fortunate in her discovery of such records, the reward of much able and painstaking work. A general historical background, sufficient for the purpose, provides continuity, and to this background are fitted illustrative Wimbish records. Broadoaks, Tiptofts, Pinkneys, Hodges, Thunderley, Little Stonards – the very names have a fascination, and all in turn contribute stories.

Perhaps the most fascinating account in the book comes from Broadoaks, which under the Wisemans in Elizabeth's reign became headquarters of the Jesuit priest, Father John Gerard, whose biography is quoted, giving a detailed description of his ventures and concealment in the Broadoaks hiding during a four-days search for him. Anyone interested in the devotion and scorn of danger to their lives shown by many of the Jesuits would amply repaid for acquiring a copy of Wimbish through the Centuries. Some hundred and fifty years after Father Gerard's Broadoaks became a Moravian School for thirty boys and girls, but the local people were convinced that it was a Jacobite headquarters. "A rumour was spread of a plot to burn down Thaxted and an angry mob laid siege to the place."

Well, if you want to know what further happened, read the book.

C. BRIGHTWEN ROWNTREE.

To the memory of my father who loved Wimbish

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THIS book could not have been compiled but for the kindness of Mr. H. Clifford Stacey, the Town Clerk of Saffron Walden, Mr. C. Brightwen Rowntree, who placed piles of documents the Saffron Walden Borough Archives at my disposal; the assistance of Mr. F. C. Emmison and the staff of the Essex County Record Office; the kind help of the Rev. L. C. Davies who gave access to the Parish Registers; and of Miss Wakeford, Librarian of the Saffron Walden Literary and Scientific Institution, or the books of reference made available to me. I must also record deeply I am indebted to those historians from whose works quoted.

I have also to thank the members of my family for their encouragement and help, and my friends Betty Cooper and Frances Grant for their gifts of helpful books and much advice. Special thanks are due to my mother for her drawings and watercolours; to Mr. C. Drane for his sketch of Wimbish parish church, and to Mr. John Bunting of Wicken for the hours he has given to taking and preparing photographs. The map was made by the late Mr. Charles Boulton.

Old-photographs were kindly loaned by Mr. S. Lanham, Mr. Taylor, Mr. S. and Mr. L. Coe, Dr. and Mrs. Hughes and Mrs. John Wright. John Grant designed the Title page. Mr. Rowntree kindly undertook the task of reading the manuscript, Mr. Arnold Brereton the work of correcting the proof.

Wimbish, 1954.

I.W.

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SIR JOHN DE WANTONE
AND ELLEN, HIS WIFE,
1347

CHAPTER 1.

BEFORE THE NORMAN CONQUEST

Long ago this island was known as the Isle of Honey, the Country of the Green Hills, Bryt, or Brytdein.

From before the days of Abraham the great Mesopotamian sheik, Britain was inhabited by various tribes who entered the country and settled there. It was in the Middle East between about 6000 and 5000 B.C. that crops were first grown deliberately and animals bred in captivity. From this area these discoveries spread by herdsmen and cultivators wandering in search of suitable soils and gradually spreading their ideas.

About 2500 B.C. Neolithic tribesmen reached Britain by crossing the narrow seas from the coasts of the Continent and bringing their breeding stock and seed corn with them. In Eastern England, as in other parts, they found small hunting and fishing groups of nomadic primitive peoples. They chose the easiest worked soils or cultivation, particularly chalk and sandy districts. When the soil was exhausted they moved on and their temporary fields reverted to waste.

These tribes fought each other, hunted wild animals, kept large quantities of cattle, grew barley and wheat, and in the part of England we call Cornwall, mined tin. They had fine jewellery and made good pottery and bartered goods with people of other countries.

Mr. Cyril Fox in his *Archaeology of the Cambridge Area* has tipped a minor Neolithic finds in Wimbish, in fields near Wimbish Green, and the trail continues through Sampford to Finchingfield.

From about 700 B.C. successive waves of Celtish tribes from the Continent spread over south-eastern England. These people brought with them the Mediterranean plough, which, although it only scratched the surface of the soil, was a great advance on earlier methods. It was just a crooked piece of timber drawn through the soil by a pair of oxen. As there was no way in which the earth could be turned over it was necessary to cross-plough, and that resulted in little square terraced fields. The outlines of such fields can be clearly seen from an aeroplane on the Downs of southern England.

About 70 B.C. people called Belgae, of mixed Celtish-Germanic blood, crossed over from the Continent. A settlement of these people belonging

to a tribe called the Trinovantes existed in the hollow where Saffron Walden now stands. They hunted the wild animals in the surrounding forest and must often have been in this small part of Britain, which a few hundred years later became a Saxon settlement and is now called Wimbish.

The Belgae exported slaves. Tall, fair young Britons from Eastern England were in high favour in Rome, and were sent to market on slave chains, a number of which still exist. One found at Barton, a village near Cambridge, is twelve feet long and has six collars. In return for slaves they received oil and wine and a variety of manufactured articles. Hides were also exported in large quantity.

The Belgae introduced a heavier plough into the country. This was provided with a wheel and coulter and needed four oxen to draw it. Cross-ploughing was no longer necessary and the fields became long and narrow and heavier soil could be cultivated.

The tribal warfare of these people weakened them and so paved the way for the Roman invasion.

ROMANS

In 55 B.C. Julius Caesar and his soldiers came on the scene, but it was many years before they got the Britons under control and made Britain a Roman province.

They made roads, built towns, made good laws, kept the peace, and through some of the soldiers Christianity first came to England. They built luxurious houses, centrally heated and with adequate sanitation and water supply. They had baths indoors and outdoors. They taught the Britons to mine lead and iron, as well as the tin they already mined in Cornwall.

For some three hundred and fifty years Britain was ruled by Rome, but trouble was breaking out at home so eventually the garrisons of soldiers were withdrawn and the Britons left to look after themselves.

We know that two of the great military roads made by the Romans passed near what is now Saffron Walden. Local villages towns such as Great Chesterford, Littlebury, Dunmow and Thaxted have the remains

of villas and temples, but in Wimbish a few Roman potsherds have been found near the site of Hall.

The Britons had become used to a quiet and civilised life tiring the centuries of Roman occupation and had lost their war-like nature. They were an easy prey for the savage Picts and Scots, who came from Ireland and the North of Britain. The Britons sent to Rome for help. Roman soldiers came over and repulsed the raiders, but they soon had to return to their own country to attend to troubles there, and the Britons were again left to fend for themselves.

SAXONS

Three more groups of invaders arrived from the district of the River Elbe in what is now called Germany. They raided the coast and harried the Britons. They destroyed churches and other buildings and brought belief in their pagan gods with them so that Christianity almost disappeared.

The Jutes formed the Kingdom of Kent; the Saxons founded Sussex, Wessex, Essex and Middlesex, while the Angles formed Anglia, Mercia and Northumbria. Many Britons were slain, and the land took another name, Angland or England, land of the Angles. England was now a pagan country but Pope Gregory the Great sent a mission to England early in 597. This group of about forty missionaries was led by Augustine and they landed in Thanet where they were met by Ethelbert, King of Kent. He gave them a dwelling-place in Canterbury, supplied them with food and allowed them to preach their religion. The first stage of their mission ended when Ethelbert accepted their doctrines. From him they received an appropriate seat in the city and the income of an endowment in land. Augustine began to restore ancient Romano-British churches and build new ones. Before the end of the year he went to Gaul and received consecration as the first bishop of the English.

The headquarters of the old Romano-British or Celtic Church, which still survived in Ireland and Wales and remote spots, became the island of Lindisfarne in Northumbria where the monk Aidan from Iona had re-established Christianity in 634. There was much disagreement between the two streams of church life, the one deriving from the Roman with its headquarters at Canterbury, and the other from the Celtic Church.

It was from the Celtic Church at Lindisfarne that Cedd was sent as an evangelist first to the Celtic Church at Lindisfarne that Cedd was sent as an evangelist first to Mercia and then to the heathen East Saxons of Essex. It was with his aid that at a conference at Whitby the two Churches were united to form the Church of England, and Theodore of Tarsus in 669 became the first Archbishop to be recognised by the whole English Church.

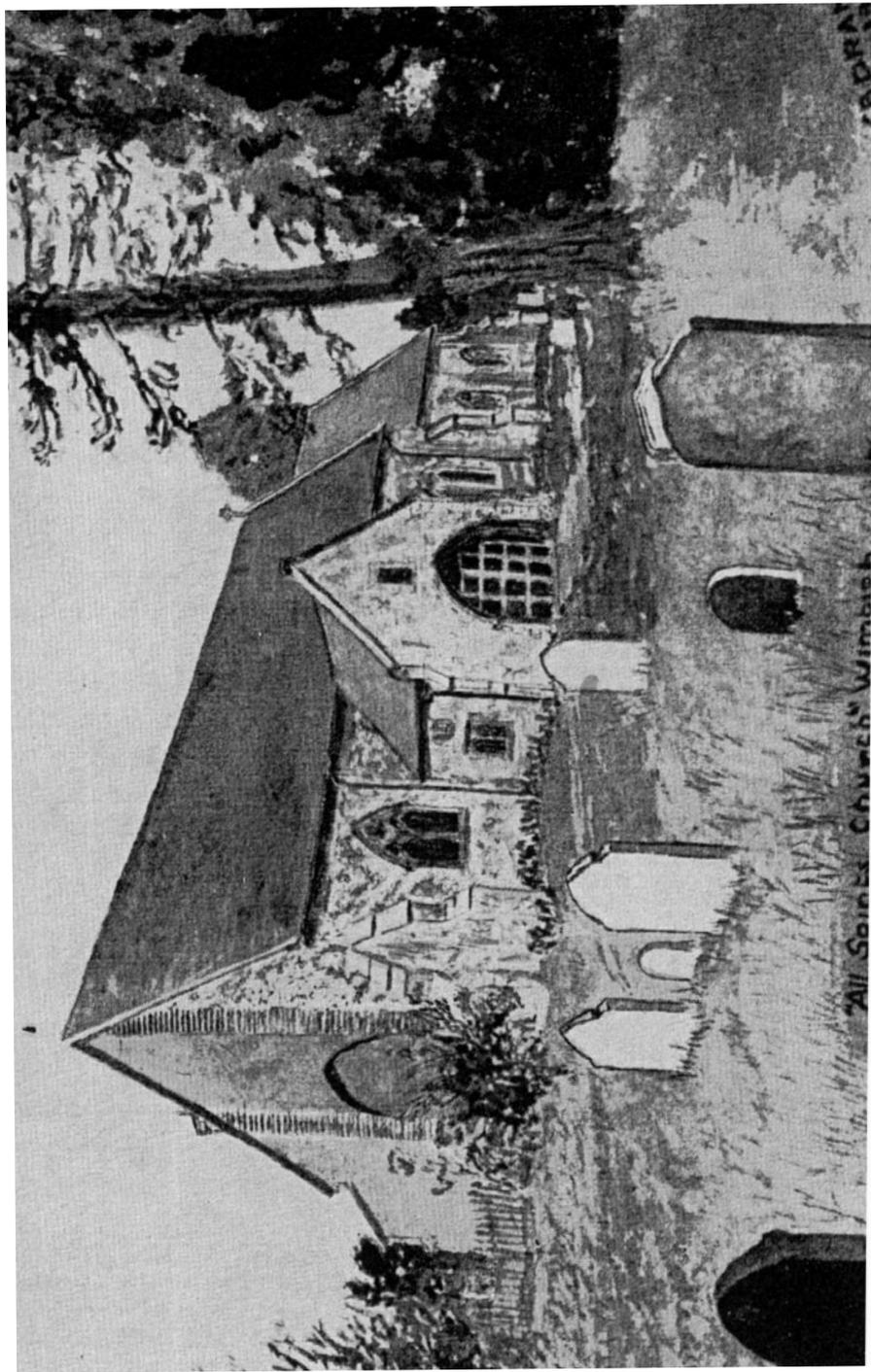
The attitude of each local king determined the date at which a superficial Christianity gradually reached his people. There is no doubt that by 664 Christianity was the dominant religion throughout England, but it is equally certain that the older heathen beliefs of the English people, though driven underground, were still alive.

DANES

Another invasion now threatened from the north. These were savage fighters who, when they landed, began to form settlements. The first Danish raiders who are known to have visited England reached Sheppey in 835. During the next thirty years there is evidence of more than twelve separate Danish descents on different parts of the country. Twice at least, during this period, in 850 and 854, a Danish army took winter-quarters in England. But in the autumn of 865 a great army landed in East Anglia, prepared to spend many consecutive years in deliberate exploitation of all the opportunities for profit which England offered. Under Alfred, King of Wessex, a peace was made whereby the Danes were to live in certain parts of the country and the Saxons in another. But Danes continued to raid the country and finally the Danish King Canute conquered all England in 1016.

There were Danes and Danes in England at this time. Those resident were a good and progressive element of the population. With them rested the cultivation of almost all foreign trade and enterprise, and they did not interfere with Saxon customs. But the raiding Danes were a formidable nuisance and hindrance.

Although Essex came under the Danelaw, the Danes did not settle in the county in any large number as they did in Suffolk. According to a Tribal Record the East Saxons, from whom Essex takes its name, comprised seven thousand families well dispersed over an area



Wimbish Church



Interior of Wimbish Church

considerably larger than the present county, probably from the latter half of the fifth century.

It was during these times that Wimbish first appears in written records as an inhabited place. Clearings were made in the forest, the Anglo-Saxon lords built their rough dwellings and began to till the soil. The Hall, as the lords dwelling was called, was not lordly when one thinks of the beautiful villas in which many of the Britons had lived during the Roman occupation. Therein which many of the Britons had lived during the Roman occupation. There were candles for light. The windows had wooden shutters instead of glass. Floors were strewn with rushes as they continued to be for hundreds of years, and the lord and his family slept at one end of the hall, while the servants huddled together at the other. Round this Hall clustered the huts of wood and wattle where lived the rest of the community.

The slave trade was still very important and the prices given Continent were far higher than those offered in England. Slaves might be prisoners taken in battle, debtors or criminals. Parents who were poverty-stricken sold their children into slavery. Many slaves were used just to breed children like cattle, who were then sold by their masters. The price of a male slave was £1, but this was many times the value of our modern money. A good horse cost 30/-, an ox 6/-, a cow 5/-, swine 1/-, and a goat 2d.

The Anglo-Saxons milked goats and sheep as well as cows. There were mills for grinding corn and sometimes women slaves his work. Everyone who could kept bees; honey was the only of sweetening.

In the village was a building known as a Moot Hall, where law was administered. For the purposes of local government the land was divided into shires, each of which had its court of justice which all men of any position in the shires were bound to go. The shires were divided into smaller units, called Hundreds in the and west, and Wapentakes in parts where the Danes had settled. There was also a boundary in the village known as the Mark, and when travellers arrived, unless they blew a horn to warn of their coming, they were most likely to be seized and murdered.

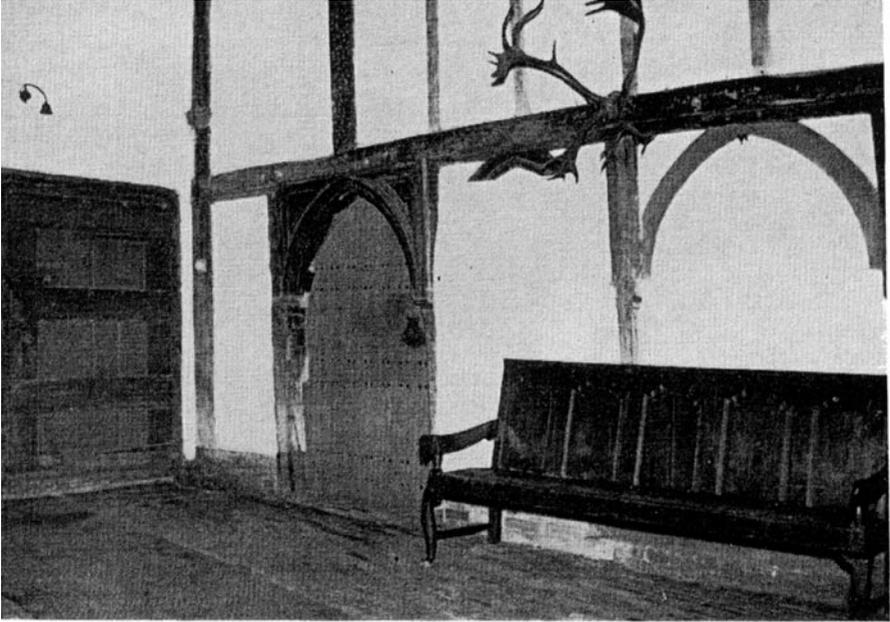
Huge banquets were held and vast quantities of food and consumed. On one occasion in the early days of the Saxons in England, they gave

a great feast in the south-west at which three hundred guests were murdered. These were British chieftains especially invited for the occasion. Hunting and falconry were favourite sports of the chiefs. The rich sent their sons for education to the monasteries; but the poor were quite illiterate. Writing was done by hand on vellum, often beautifully illuminated by the monks.

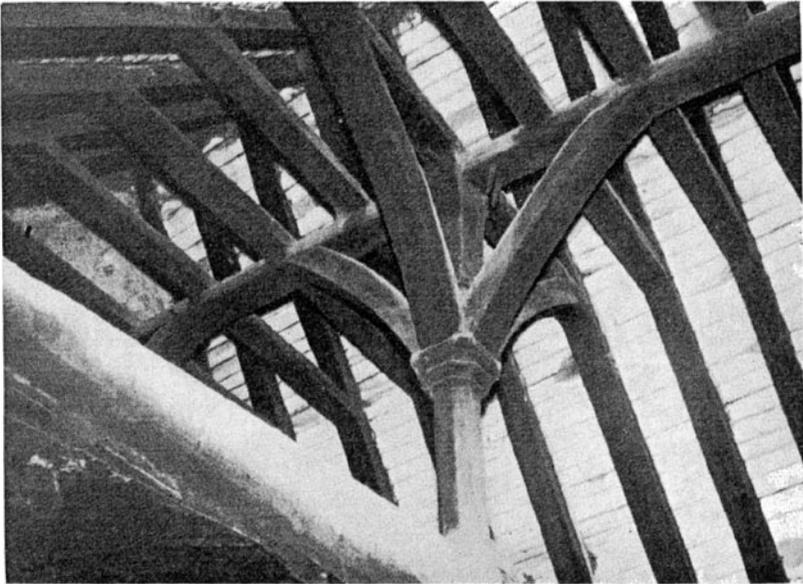
Churches were built of wood but as time went on, many beautiful minsters and churches of stone were built with magnificently furnished interiors. Wayside crosses were set up. These were not only for prayers, but sometimes marked a ford over a river or where roads met. We know little of Wimbish in these times. William Harrison, who was Rector of Radwinter, and Vicar of Wimbish from 1571 to 1581, writes in his "Description of Britaine" that its name was Gwimbach in Saxon times. He says: "There is a pretie water that beginneth neare unto Gwimbach or Winbeche church in Essex, a towne of old, and yet belonging to the Fitzwalters, taking name of Gwin, which is beautiful or faire and bache, that signifieth a wood: and not without cause, sith not onlie the hills on each side of the said rillet, but all the whole paroch hath sometime abounded in woods. This said brooke runneth directlie from thence unto Radwinter. By the waie also it is increased with sundrie pretie spring, of which Pantwelle is the cheefe (whereof some thinke the whole brooke to be named Pant). Certes by the report of common fame it hath beene a pretie water, and of such quantite, that botes have come in time past from Bilie Abbeie beside Maldon unto the moores in Radwinter for corn. I have heard also that an Anchor was found there neere to a red Willow when the water courses by act of Parliament were surveyed and reformed throughout England." The Rector describes the course of this stream through the meadows of Radwinter Hall, on to Sampford, Finchingfield, etc., "until it come to Maldon, where it falleth into the salt arme of the sea that beateth upon the town."

About one hundred years before the Norman Conquest in 1066, we know that the lordship of Wimbish belonged to Thurstan. He gave it to Christ Church in Canterbury. This church did not keep it for long and it was conveyed to Ailid. At this time it is spelled in the records as Winebisc.

A thousand years had now passed since the Birth of Christ and the



Tiptofts (corner of 14th century hall)



Tiptofts (corner of hall roof)

occupation of Britain by the Romans, and all but three or four hundred years of this period passed in fighting and destruction. Now the time had come for another invasion, to be known as The Norman Conquest.

Footnote - A Life of William Harrison is shortly to be published in the U.S.A. by Mr. Georges Edelen of Harvard University.

CHAPTER 2

EARLY MIDDLE AGES

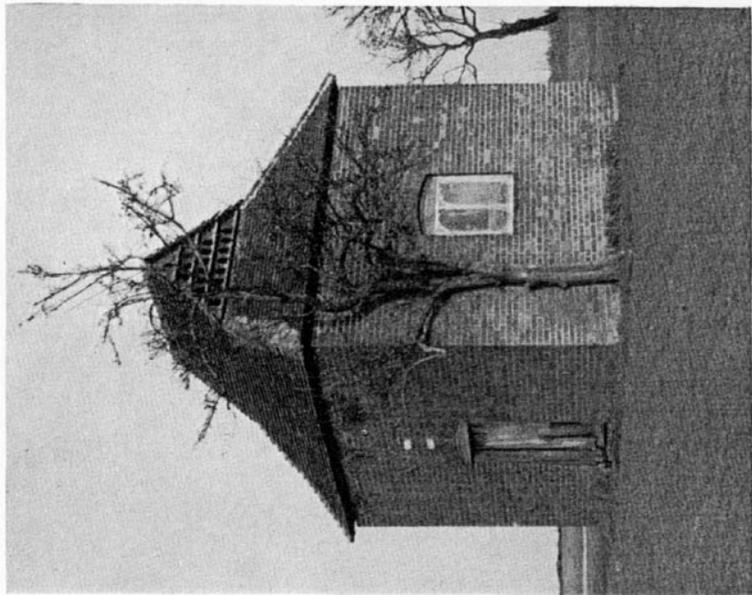
Now began a very terrible time for England. William, Duke of Normandy, landed on the Sussex coast and defeated Harold, Earl of the West Saxons, who had been crowned king only a few months previously. Harold was killed and England once more came under the heel of the oppressor.

After Duke William had subdued the Anglo-Saxon rebels in the north, more than 100,000 people died of famine; men ate dogs and their fellow human beings. The whole population of the country was probably not more than one and a half million.

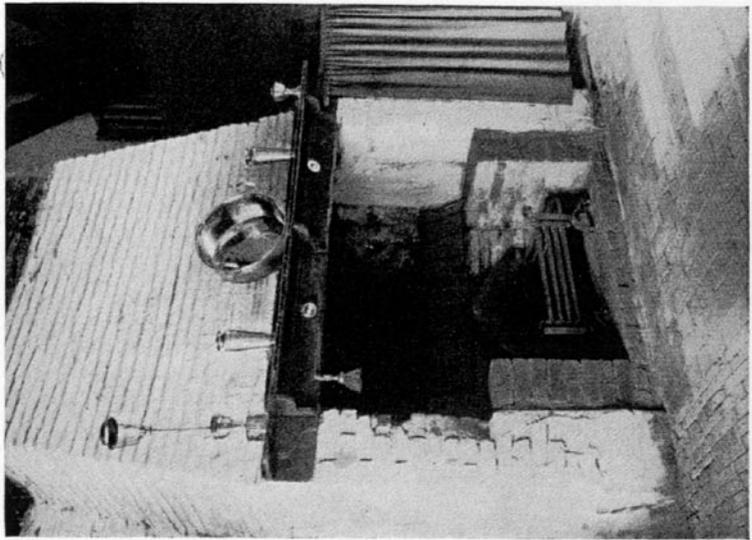
William took away the land from the English lords and gave to his Norman helpers. He gave the lordship of Wimbish to a Norman named Ralph Bayard who was also rewarded with twenty-five other lordships in Essex alone. The unfortunate owner, Ailid, probably died fighting against the Norman usurper or was reduced to serfdom, the fate of a large number of the Saxon chiefs. No county bears so strongly as Essex the imprint of the Norman Conquest. Many of the feudal and manorial names which preserve the memory of former land-holders or under-tenants are definitely Norman, some dating actually from the Conquest.

It is not difficult to picture Wimbish at the time of the Conquest. At this time Wimbish and Thunderley were two separate parishes and did not become one until 1425 when Dr. Kemp, Bishop of London, united the Vicarage of Thunderley to that of Wimbish for "the use of the Vicar of Wimbish for ever." We can build up our picture with the help of that remarkable survey which William caused to be taken of his new land in 1086.

It is recorded in an old writing of this period how in the Christmas council of 1085 the king "had very deep speech with his wise men about this land, how it was peopled and by what of men. Then he sent his men into every shire all over England and caused it to be found out how many hundred hides were in the shire and what land the king had, and what stock on the land, and what dues he ought to have each year from the shire. Also he caused it to be written how much land his archbishops,



Tiptofts (17th century dovecot)



Tiptofts (16th century fireplace in hall)

bishops, abbots and earls had, and, though I may be somewhat tedious in my account, what and how much each landholder in England had in land or in stock, and how much money it might be worth. So minutely did he cause it to be searched out that there was not one hide or yard of land, nor even (it is shameful to write of it, but he thought it not shameful to do it) an ox, or a cow, or a swine that was not set down in his writ, And all the writings were brought to him afterwards."

This enquiry roused deep feelings of resentment, and the Saxons, comparing it to the Last Great Day of Judgment, derisively called the book in which the results of the enquiry were recorded, Domesday Book. Two books contain the results of the Norman clerks labours. The returns for Essex, Norfolk and Suffolk make up the Little Domesday Book. In the Greater Domesday Book are the returns for the rest of England covered by the enquiry.

In these records the clerks record the acreage, livestock and number of serfs, etc., existing in the years prior to the Conquest in the reign of Edward the Confessor, then they list what they found at the time of the survey.

*

From the Wimbish record we can suppose that the Hall of Ailid, was probably on the land surrounded by the moat near the church. Where the present church stands would have been a smaller wooden one. A settlement was usually placed as near as possible to a stream or river so that there was water for the animals and power to drive the mill. It was called a "vill", and it is from this Saxon word that our word "village" is derived. A "vill" was really a tribal unit with a chief chosen by the people, and as time went on these chiefs obtained power and hereditary rights. A "vill" was little more than a farm whose inhabitants did all the necessary farm work and were craftsmen in addition, although they enjoyed no rights of ownership. But the poorest and lowest serf had the right to bring charges against his lord and master at the Hall court and to receive a hearing by an unprejudiced jury. Every "vill" or group of "vills" held regular courts, and it is from them that the whole Law of England is derived.

The "vill" comprised a number of one-roomed huts set side by side at a small distance from the "Hall" of the chief, with a small wooden

church, a tannery, a smithy, little workshops belonging to other craftsmen and an ale-house. In 712 A.D. King Ina passed a law inflicting a penalty on those who broke the peace in ale-houses.

About one thousand acres seem to have gone with the lordship of Wimbish. There was enough forest to feed five hundred swine. These fed mainly on acorns and were lean and hungry animals.

This is what Domesday Book has to say about Wimbish, which is entered under Dunmow Hundred: -

“Wimbeis is held by Radulfus in demesne; it was held by Ailid at the time of King Edward for a manor and 8 hides. Always 3 teams in the demesne. Then 21 teams of the homagers, now 15. Always 26 villeins and 1 priest. Then 29 bordars now 55. Then 6 serfs now none. Then wood for 500 swine, now for 400; 40 acres of meadow. Then 2 horses, four beasts, 60 swine, 120 sheep, 4 hives of bees; now 2 horses, 4 beasts, 28 swine, 80 sheep, 4 hives of bees. Then it was worth 12 pounds, now 20.”

*

It is almost impossible to attempt to compare the value of the money of these times with those of our own prior to the 1939-45 war, but roughly we can regard it as from fifteen to twenty times as valuable as the money of the early 20th century.

A hide is thought to have consisted of about 120 acres.

A villein was a man who held land under the Lord of the Manor, but was forced to render services to him, such as ploughing, reaping and sowing.

A bordar was a man inferior to a villein, but superior to a serf.

Serfs were generally the thralls of Saxon times (though many men of higher rank were forced into serfdom by the tyranny of the Normans). They were absolutely subject to their masters.

The Saxon “vill” became the Norman manor. The word manor was introduced into England by the Norman clerks of William the Conqueror. When they noted the existence of a manor in a village, as they wrote up Domesday Book, they meant to imply that a man of some importance lived there. By about 1150 the word had come to mean an estate which

was an economic unit, in which all the tenants were bound to the lord and his demesne or home farm, his free tenants paying him rent for their land and helping him at busy seasons; his unfree tenants doing weekly labour service; and all of them regularly attending his court of justice, his Hall Moot, for the; and all of them regularly attending his court of justice, his Hall Moot, for the settlement of their quarrels and for the regulation of manor affairs.

When a 'team' is referred to in Domesday Book, this means a plough team of eight oxen. During this period the arable land of an ordinary village was cultivated in two, or, more rarely, three great open fields, each of them stretching over scores or even hundreds of acres. These fields were sometimes surrounded by removable wooden hurdles, but there were no hedges as we know them.

The farmers ploughed so that the land was turned inwards to make a central ridge down the middle of the strip, which was the unit of land measurement. The team went up one side and down another, turning in headlands left unploughed at the strip ends. When the strip had become so wide that the plough-team would have to go too far in turning, the breadth of a furrow was left unploughed. This was called a balk. Then a fresh strip was begun. The breadth of the strip approximated to the modern perch of $16\frac{1}{2}$ feet — a measure which most probably goes back to the primitive ox-goad.

This method of ploughing meant that the soil, turned inwards towards the central line, made the strips stand up in curving ridges, dipping on either hand to a furrow; hence the phrase "ridge and furrow ploughing". The furrow acted as a drain, and in heavy clay the ridge tended to be very high. The strips of old open fields, long ago laid down to grass, can still be traced to-day in many parts of England. Instead of the straight lines of modern ploughing the old ploughlands lie curving across the fields like an inverted, elongated letter 'S' reproduced again and again. Even today, the pattern of an immemorial stretch of open field is often revealed to the eye in winter when snow has melted from the strip ridges but still lies in the furrows on either side. The pattern of ancient arable thus made clear on land which for centuries has been turned to grass, corresponds in all particulars with that of the open

fields still used for arable in the Nottinghamshire villages of Eakring and Laxton.

The open fields were divided for convenience of ploughing into blocks of these strips called "furlongs". A furlong or furrow-long was the distance an ox-team could plough without a rest. Thus each strip was about an acre, which was reckoned the amount of land ploughable by oxen in a single day. A map of an old open field looks something like a patchwork quilt, for irregularities of contour, problems of drainage and the like made it impossible to plot out the fields neatly. Some groups of strips lie in one way, -some another, with here and there unploughable patches. Here and there, too, were odd-shaped bits of land called gores, in which the strips grew shorter and shorter to fit into an angle of the field.

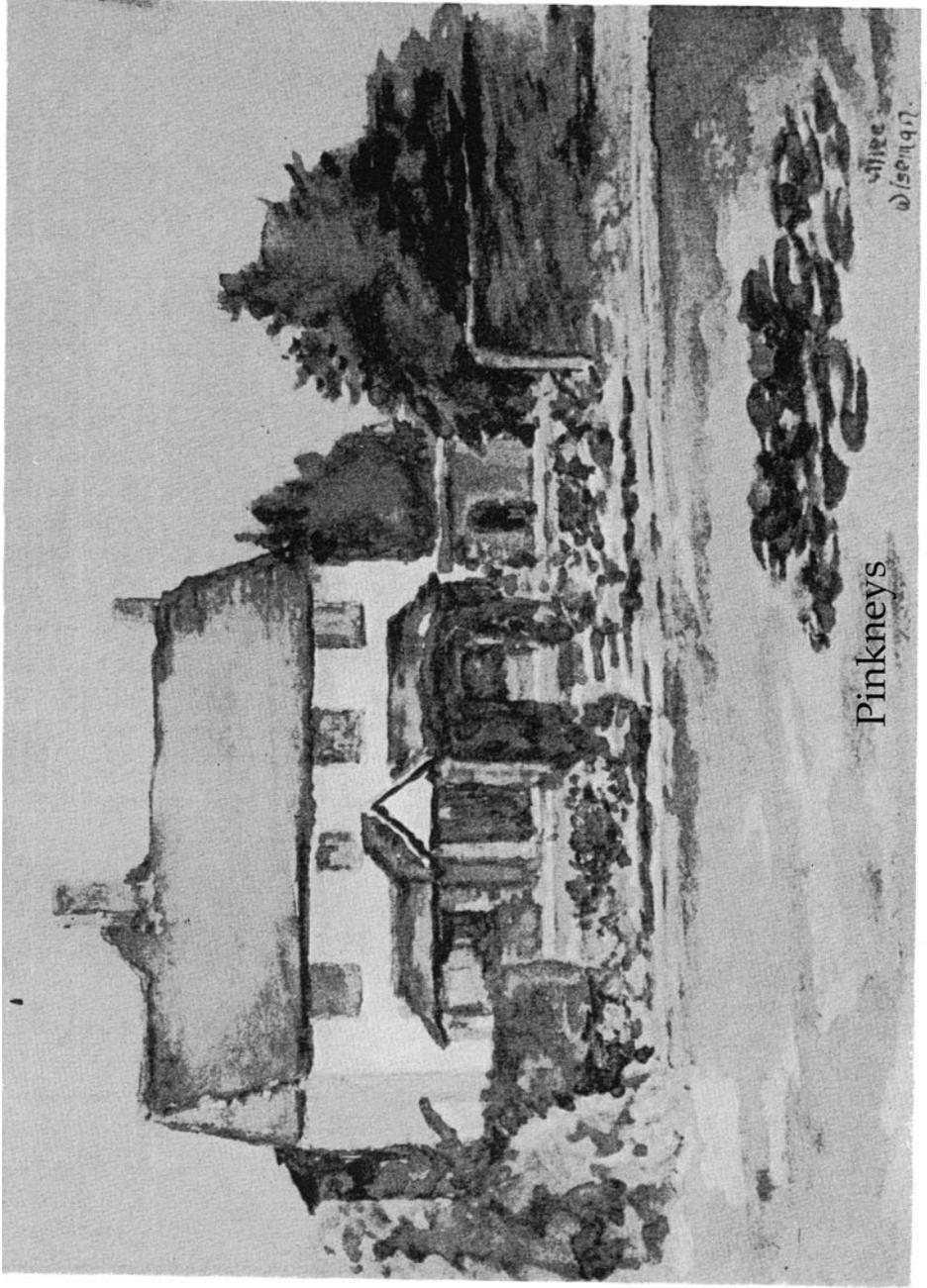
The holdings of each farmer lay scattered in strips about the open fields, and within the different furlongs individual farmers held their strips vaguely in the same order. The lord of an open village had his share in the common fields. His demesne, messuage, or home farm, lay scattered among the lands of his men. But whereas they counted their land in strips, his lay in compact furlongs.

Life was harder for the poor under William the Conqueror than it had been before the Conquest, when at least they worked for men of their own kind. One good thing that William did was to stop the export of slaves to the Continent, but still the people were enslaved to the foreign Norman.

It was but rarely that a serf was sold away from his village, and it has not been possible to find any Deed of Sale for Wimbish. However, one such from Suffolk, circa. 1200, may be of interest.

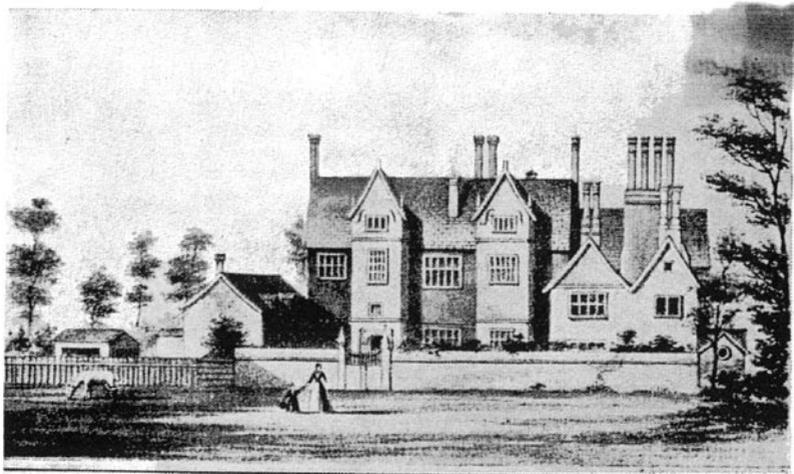
A Deed of Geoffrey Scallarius, (later Scales) concerning John, son of Robert, his native born serf, bought from him at Corneye.

"Know all men by these presents, that I, Geoffrey Scallarius, son of Hugo, have given, granted, released, and by this deed confirmed to God and to the Church of the Holy Trinity of London, and to Richard the Prior there, John, son of Robert de Wydehalle, my native born serf, with all his progeny now living, or which may be born to him, for ever, with all their chattels which they have, or may have: that is to say, every right which



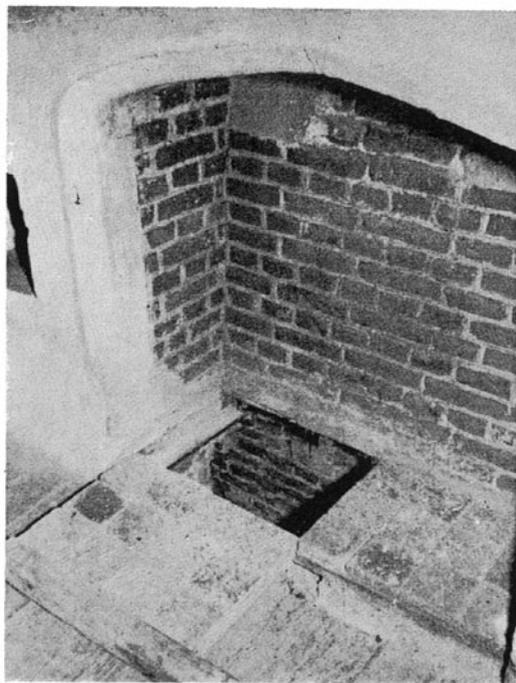
Pinkneys

11/15/1917



BROADOAKS IN ABOUT 1700.
(By courtesy of the Moravian Church, Fetter Lane, London.)

Broadoaks (from an old print, about 1700)



Broadoaks
hearth showing
entrance to hide
for priests)

I have or may have without reserve over the said John, his progeny and his chattels, to have and to hold to the said Prior in perpetuity; and for the said grant, deed, and confirmation by this charter, the said Prior has given me six marks in money."

The poor people spoke Anglo-Saxon but the new conquering race of nobles and clergy used Norman-French, and Latin was the language of officials. Towards the end of the 12th century the dividing line between Norman and Saxon had worn thin through inter-marriage. By the end of the 14th century the blending together of the Norman and Saxon words had produced the English language although for centuries to come distinct dialects were spoken in practically every county.

The two or three hundred years after the Conquest saw the clearing of more forest; more and more land was enclosed for arable, and manor houses were built. Portions of some of these houses, such as Tiptofts, still stand today.

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The majority of parish churches were built by laymen, and the layman who built a church regarded it as his own property. Every man of position desired to have his own church and to appoint his own parson. In the 12th century during the uneasy reign of Stephen there was tremendous enthusiasm for church building among the manorial lords. The lord often built a church as an expiation for his sins, the parson being bound to pray for him. The heavy manual work was carried out by the manorial serfs and they had to do it whether they wanted to build to the glory of God or not.

The church was sometimes owned by more than one lord, as in the case of Thunderley, which was shared by Geoffrey de Tunderle and Alexander Rivollam. These men at different times each gave their share of the church to Hatfield Priory. In the early years of this period a religious house which had received the gift of a church was free to dispose of its income, making what provision seemed suitable to the head of the house and was acceptable to the parson. The income of a church in this period consisted, of the greater tithe, that is the tithe of crops and stock; the lesser tithe, that is the tithe of hens and such things; the fees coming from baptisms, marriages, and burials, and the offerings to the altar. Early in the 12th century the bishops were making it a part

of their duty to see that the owner of a church made proper provision for the priest.

In a society always on the edge of war, the sanctuary of the parish church and churchyard gave a steadying sense of security. The churchyard was a refuge to which in bad times men took their few poor household goods and drove their stock. Many churchyards were consecrated by the bishops as places of refuge.

It was at this time that the lord of the manor of Wimbish, a Fitzwalter, built the church at Wimbish.

CHURCH

“The Parish Church of All Saints stands near the North-East order of the parish in a lovely setting of trees.” So Arthur Mee began his description of Wimbish in his book, *Essex*, and a large number of visitors to the church have echoed that opinion.

The walls, where original, are of coarse pebbles with dressings of grey limestone and clunch; the roofs are tiled, except that of the North aisle.

The nave was built in the first half of the 12th century and was lengthened probably at the end of the 13th century, when the North Aisle was added. The North Chapel was added in about 1340. This Chapel is known as the Thunderley Chapel and the North Aisle as the Thunderley Aisle, and it is thought that some of the materials from Thunderley Church were incorporated in them somewhat later. The Tudor roof of the aisle has a fine rose in one spandrel, balanced by the arabic figures 1534.

In the 15th century the chancel was rebuilt and the South Porch added, whose upper room is reached by a stairway in the thickness of the wall.

A former tower was destroyed by lightning in 1740. A Brief for rebuilding it passed the Great Seal in 1745. It was pulled down in 1883. The whole church was restored in the 19th century and the chancel and west wall were rebuilt.

The south doorway and wall-arcading are good examples of 12th-century work, and the late 14th-century oak screens and 14th-century heraldic glass deserve special notice. This glass shows the shields of the Fitzwalter, Badlesmere, Tiptoft and Aspall families.

In the north aisle at the east end is a brass of Sir John de Wantone, 1347, and his wife Ellen, he looking much as a warrior at the Battle of Crecy must have looked, and his lady very gracefully dressed. The portraits are set in the head of a cross, the only impress of a brass cross in the county, and below is the impress of an elephant, the badge of the Beaumont family. the impress of an elephant, the badge of the Beaumont family.

A palimpsest fragment of the brass of Joanna Strangman, circa. 1570, formerly in this church, is now in the British Museum. A rubbing of the whole brass can be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum. In the chancel on the north wall is a painted board with an inscription to Mary, wife of John Wiseman of Broadoaks, 1654- the whole thing in extremely poor taste.

The following exist, at present hidden by the organ and other furniture in the North Chapell:

1. A stone in the ground to Aurelius Piercy Wiseman of Broadoaks, killed in a duel in London, Dec. 11, 1684, aged 29.

Concerning this visit to London the following comment occurs in the Parish Register. "Aurelius Piercy Wiseman unhappily slaine at London 1684, by Mr. John Bramston of Ashdon, in a sudden quarrel. by Mr. John Bramston of Ashdon, in a sudden quarrel."

2. A stone to Lawrence Boswell, vicar 1625.

3. A stone to Joseph Glanville, 1680.

4. A stone to Elizabeth Glanville, wife of Thomas Bernard, rector, 1684.

In the nave over the South doorway, there is a painted board with the Commandments, texts from the New Testament, date and initials 1580. R.G. XC.

MANORS

Immediately after 1066 the King had more land at his disposal than at any other time in English history. It was easy for him to give a manor in return for some service, and by the time of Domesday Book in nearly every county a number of men called servants of the king were holding land in return for some personal service to him. William cannot have known at all accurately the value of the land he gave away so readily in early days. As the 12th century wore on such grants became fewer and soon almost ceased.

There were three manors in Wimbish: Wimbish Hall, Tiptofts with Pinkneys, and Broadoaks, which seem to have been carved out of the manor of Wimbish in the early part of the 14th century.

In June, 1327, at York, Edward III granted a pardon to John de Wanton, for having acquired for life from Robert Fitzwalter, the manor of Wymbissh, excepting the advowson of the church of that manor, and for entering thereon without licence. In addition to the pardon a licence was granted to him to retain the manor for life.

WIMBISH HALL

This manor was originally part of the barony of William, the son of Ralph Bayard who supplanted Ailid the Saxon. This William Bayard forfeited the manor to the Crown because he joined in an unsuccessful rebellion against Henry I, 1100-1135, who afterwards gave it to Richard Fitz-Gilbert, the ancestor of the Earls of Clare. The immediate descendants of Richard were the Fitz-Walters, lords of Woodham Walter, and by an heiress of that family it was conveyed by marriage to Thomas Ratcliffe, whose grandson Robert Ratcliffe, Lord Fitz-Walter, was created Viscount Fitz-Walter and Earl of Sussex. The estate continued in the possession of this family until Robert, the last Earl of Sussex of the Ratcliffe line, who died in 1629, sold it to Allan Currants, a citizen and merchant-tailor of London.

In the 17th century men began to feel that it gave them added prestige to own an estate in the country, and we find Government officials, judges, and wealthy city merchants buying up land and estates. At this time many of the small squires and the old noble families were finding it hard to make ends meet, and were glad to sell out. Thus, Allan Currants, a wealthy London tailor bought the manor of Wimbish Hall from the

great house of Ratcliffe. Allan Currants probably built the house which was burned down in 1953. Not far from where this house stood is a moat, surrounding a piece of ground which is supposed to have been the site of the original manor-house.

At the death of Allan Currants, the Hall was bought by another city magnate, Matthew Wymondsel of Wanstead. In 1775 his son sold the property and other estates in the neighbourhood to Allen Taylor, who left it to his wife Elizabeth. On her death in 1783 it passed to her brother Thomas Walford of Birdbrook, and since that time has had several owners.

TIPTOFTS WITH PINKNEYS MANOR

In 1331 John de Wanton was Sheriff of Essex and Hertford-shire and lord of this manor at his death in 1347. His daughter, Margaret, inherited the estate and left it to her son, Ivo de Harleston. He held this manor under Edward, Duke of York. His grandson John, passed the estate on to his daughters, Alice and Margaret. Alice conveyed it to her husband, Richard Fitz-Lewis. They left one daughter, their heiress, Elizabeth, who married John Mordaunt. He, by a will in 1571, left this manor to Kings Hall and Brasenose College, Oxford, for the maintenance of three scholars, to be nominated by his executors and afterwards by his heirs for ever. Some of the farms comprising this manor continue in the possession of Brasenose College, while others have passed into private ownership

It is said that Tiptofts was a meeting place for the conspirators who planned the Gunpowder Plot. This idea probably arose because the Mordaunts of Tiptofts and Thunderley were a branch of the same family as Henry, Lord Mordaunt. He was an ardent Roman Catholic, and was deeply implicated in the Plot. He was examined in connection with it and imprisoned.

Fremland, Essex, the house of Sir Ken Sulyard, was a place of meeting for the conspirators, after their chief meeting place, White Webbs, became suspect. Also, Father Garnet, the Jesuit, was in Essex during the summer of 1605, preceding the arrest of the conspirators in the November. Certainly, the Wimbish branch of the Mordaunt family seems to have lost all importance and gradually faded out soon after this

time, but there is no record to show that it was in any way connected with the Plot. The first Mordaunt of any importance was Sir John Mordaunt, Knight, who was a Sergeant-at-Law in the time of Henry VI.

Tiptofts Manor-house, surrounded by a well-kept moat, stands near Swards End about two miles north-west of the church of Wimbish, and derives its name from the family of Tiptotes or Tiptofts, some of whom became barons of the realm and earls of Worcester, and at one time lived here.

The original house was built probably about 1330, and was half-H-shaped with the hall in the middle and the wings projecting towards the west. The hall was divided and the central chimney-stack inserted probably in the 16th century. At a later date, possibly before 1700, the north or solar wing was thrown out to correspond with it, destroying the east aisle of the hall. In the 19th century almost the whole of the building was refaced with brick.

The house is a remarkable survival of a timber-framed building with an aisled hall of the 14th century, and some fine original details remain. The 19th century brickwork suffered in the earthquake of 1884, but the 14th-century oak hall escaped injury. A dove-cot in good condition, dating from the 17th century stands near the house. This took the place of an earlier one of clay.

PINKNEYS MANOR HOUSE

The house stands one and a quarter miles south-west of the church. It derives its name from the family of Northamptonshire landowners who took their name from their lands of Weedon Pinkeneye. At the time of the Norman Conquest one of the company of adventurer barons drawn from Flanders, Picardy, and other parts of northern France, who followed Duke William to England, was Ghilo of Picquigny near Boulogne, and this land in Northamptonshire to which he left the name of his old home, was given to him by the Conqueror for his reward.

Robert of Pinkeneye held tenure of part of the manor of Tiptofts in the 14th century and probably built the first dwelling on the site of the present house known as Pinkneys. He and his wife Elizabeth, who

held land in Thunderley as well, were twice defendants in lawsuits concerning this land before the King at Westminster, and lost the case on both occasions.

The older part of Pinkneys is of late 16th century date. Alterations were carried out to the front of the house in 1901 and the projecting porch has a re-used late 16th century gable-head, with a certain amount of moulding and carving. A wing was added on the north side in 1920, all the timber used being oak from trees grown in the village on the Elms Farm.

The earliest document now existing relating to Tiptofts with Pinkneys Manor is dated 1500.

BROADOAKS MANOR

The account of the possessors of this manor cannot be traced back farther than the reign of Henry VIII, 1509-1547, although John Brodhok from whom the manor apparently took its name, a citizen of London and a Poulterer in Cornhill, was prominent in parish affairs in the 14th century. The name has no connection with oak trees and according to the late Professor Weekley, was probably, when first used, a nickname indicating some physical characteristic.

In the reign of Henry VIII the manor was in the possession of the Mordaunt family, and was obtained from Edmund Mordaunt by John Wiseman of Felsted, Auditor to Henry VIII, and grandson of a Northamptonshire knight who had settled at Great Waltham. Many staunch Catholics who refused to acknowledge the King as Head of the Church, were fined heavily, and relieved of their estates. This task fell upon the Kings Auditors, who often became possessed of good properties in this manner or were thus rewarded by the King. The grandchildren of these two men intermarried so there cannot have been lasting enmity between the families.

Broadoaks continued in the Wiseman family during the next two hundred years, and towards the end of the 17th century was owned by another John whose heir, Aurelius Piercy, was killed in London in 1684.

Aurelius Piercy was enrolled at Lincoln's Inn, not with any idea of making a profession of the Law, but because the Inns of Court were regarded rather in the light of finishing schools. They provided means whereby young country gentlemen were able to meet others of their own kind and acquire social polish.

No doubt Aurelius Piercy was only too delighted to leave Broadoaks. His aunts and uncles were nuns and priests, and according to a contemporary, the married women members of the family spent their time in making poultices for the poor. He had no brothers and one of his two sisters was a nun. His great friend was John Bramston of Ashdon Hall, a Barrister of the Middle Temple. When Aurelius was twenty-nine, a quarrel broke out between them, swords were drawn and Aurelius was killed. His body was brought home to Wimbish and buried in the church with that of his mother who had died at his birth. Just at this time great tolerance was being shown towards Roman.

John Bramston, who was twenty-eight years old at the time of the quarrel, never returned to the district and when he inherited Ashdon Hall from his father in 1693, he sold it to Thomas Richers of Saffron Walden. He was tried at the Old Bailey on the 16th and 17th of January, 1684, and the following is a transcript of a contemporary printed report now in the custody of the Corporation of London Records Office.

"Proceedings of the Kings Commissions of the Peace, Oyer and Terminer, and Gaol-Delivery of Newgate Held for the City of London and County of Middlesex at Justice-Hall in the Old Bayly the 16th and 17th January 1684 and in the 36th year of His Majesties Reign.

"Mr. John Bramston Indicted at Common Law, upon the Statute of Stabbing, and the Coroners Inquisition for Killing Aurelius Perce Wiseman at the Golden Lyon Tavern in Fetter Lane on the 11th of December last, and upon his Arraignment pleading not Guilty; he made a general exception in case that any of the Jurors should happen to be related to the deceased, which being allowed and twelve men Sworn, Mr. Upton Cuncelor at Law opened the case upon the Indictments being a Second time read, and then proceeded to call the Witness for the King, and first Richard Clifford, Drawer in the Tavern before mentioned; the substance of whose evidence was that Mr. Tavern before mentioned; the substance of whose evidence was that Mr. Bramston and Mr. Wiseman

came into the house together in a most loving and friendly manner, going into the company of divers other gentlemen, a Club being usually held there, and after several Bottels drinking the company leaving them, Mr. Bramston at the instigation of Mr. Wiseman was induced to stay the drinking of another Bottle, with which the Witness coming up found them looking upon the ground for a piece of Mony that was dropped; who bidding him begon he withdrew, but the Bell ringing, he soon re-entered, and observing them standing, and facing each other, mistrusting some Ruff words might have passed between them, upon their ordering him a second time to retire, he hearkened at the door and heard Mr. Bramston (as he verily supposed, and as the circumstances made it apparant) say good Piercey do not do these things etc., why will you do these things; at which time hearing a stamp and some bustle he hastily entered, and found Mr. Bramston putting up his Sword, as likewise Mr. Wiseman as he verily believed, although the light of the fire and candle, between which he stood, would not give him alight of the fire and candle, between which he stood, would not give him a perfect sight, and upon the first appearance of Mr. Wisemans being wounded, Mr. Bramston ran to him, opening his Bosom and desiring Mr. Molins might be speedily sent for, and because they were slow therein he went for a Chirurgion himself, expressing an extraordinary sorrow for the unhappy accident. This being deposed, Mr. Smart was Sworn, and gave evidence that being gone to bed, upon notice of what had happened he rose and came thither, and found a Chirurgion had let him Blood, but that he Bled not above a spoonful or two, and that he was sitting in a chair speechless when another Chirurgion coming up and being desired to give his assistance, upon view of the Wound declared him to be a dead man.

“Mr. Bradford, the Chirurgion deposed that being acquainted with the unhappy accident, and entering the room, found Mr. Wiseman in the room with a candle burning by him, and that he soon perceived it was not possible to save his life, the Wound being on the right side of the Breast, a considerable depth, and that his conjecture failed him not, for of that Wound he died.

“To this Mr. Bramston Pleaded that the deceased was his intimate friend whom he had entirely loved, and with whom he had been all that day, and that they came from the Playhouse to the Tavern, when the

company leaving them, he desired him to take the other Bottle, and in the end they were to even and odd for a Bottle, in which Mr. Wiseman lost, whereat he seemed displeas'd and would not yield it but gave him many rough words, whereat to avoid further dispute he rung the Bell, at which time the Drawer coming up, Mr. Wiseman bid him be gone, who was not sooner departed the room, but he drew his Sword and came at him, so that in defence of his life he was oblig'd to stand upon his guard, and Mr. Wiseman still pressing forward rushed on the point of his Sword, when finding himself Wounded he cried, Jack you have touch'd me, but I will have the other Push for it, but finding himself faint he retreated saying, he had given him his death's Wound, to which Mr. Bramston reply'd God forbid Piercey, and thereupon opening his Bosom and finding his Sword had enter'd, to prevent his Bleeding inwards, he suck'd the Wound, and begg'd that a Chirurgion might be sent for with all speed and because none came he went himself, but missing of one, he voluntarily return'd and surrender'd himself to the Constables that upon notice of what had happen'd was enter'd the house, expressing great sorrow for the misfortune, desiring that all manner of means might be used for saving the life of his friend.

“Mr. Gardner, being call'd, gave evidence that the same morning he met Mr. Bramston and Mr. Wiseman upon the Change, and that much friendship appear'd between them, they telling him they were going, to Dinner, and invit'd him to participate with them.

“Mr. Stiles being call'd declar'd that he met them at Garroways Coffee house, where there appear'd the greatest friendship imaginable, and that they went to Pontas in Abb-ChurchLane, where they dined and stay'd till 3 of the Clock, and then went friendly away.

“Mr. Middleton another Gentleman declar'd as much as to their friendly Mr. Middleton another Gentleman declar'd as much as to their friendly accord, he having met them in Fleet-street and Mr. Darbyshire who had been at the Tavern with them, declar'd he left them good friends, they telling him they came from the Play together, Colonel Turner and Mr. Bullock gave testimony much to the same purpose.

“The Evidence on either side being thus far examin'd, Mr. Bramston call'd Sir Edward Turner, Sir John Bramston, Sir Thomas Dike, Sir Richard Brown, Mr. Middleton, Colonel Turner, Mr. Sparrow, and Mr.

Lacy to prove his peaceable inclination, who unanimously declared they never heard he was given to quarrel, but on the contrary, of a mild and courteous behaviour, being always inclinable rather to prevent than to promote quarrels, and that they had ever observed much love and friendship between him and the deceased, so that in the end the Evidence being summed up, and no manner of former malice appearing the Jury found it only man-slaughter."

In the Sessions Book 1684-5, it is noted that John Bramston appeared and pleaded the King's Pardon of 25th November, 1685.

When John Wiseman, the father of Aurelius Piercy died, the manor of Broadoaks went to a Protestant branch of the family, and through his marriage with Elizabeth Wiseman, passed to Richard Claggett of London, and from him to his son, Samuel Wiseman-Claggett. When Samuel died in 1741, his widow lent the manor-house to the Moravian Brethren for use as a school.

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In June 1742, some thirty boys and girls from a temporary Moravian School at Lincolns Inn, London, were transferred by farm waggons to Broadoaks, which was re-christened Lambs Inn by Count Zinzendorf, a leader of the sect, and a good friend to John Wesley.

Ever since its rise in Bohemia and Moravia in the 15th century, the Moravian Church had had its own schools, and when Moravian preachers came as helpers in the evangelical revival in England, they brought their school ideals with them to this country. The preachers of the movement were always on the move from place to place, and a special type of home or boarding school was founded for their children in London in 1741, which soon moved. to Broadoaks under the charge of Richard Vinery. This man wrote a long account of his methods of running the school which he entitled, "Account of the Brethren's Oeconomy for Children at Broadoaks, Essex, in a Letter from Richard Vinery, the Master of the Oeconomy to James Hutton, Secretary of the Children's Guardians in London."

The letter sets out at length the aims and ideals of the school:

"It is not a trade or business begun and carried on for the sake of getting a Living. Not a School to teach children what is called Politeness

and good breeding, as Dancing etc., not a teaching them under the notion of behaving well, to tell genteel Untruths and Complimental Lies; not exercising their bodies in Posture Master Tricks, by making them sit, walk, turn, move, or bend in this or that particular form and manner."

When the children were handed over to the school, the school demanded "entire charge":

"We then would desire the Parents rightly to weigh and consider whether they can agree to what we further desire of them, and give their children wholly over to our care that we may not be hindered in our principal aim in taking them. 1st. We expect that they will give them so over to us that we may do in all things that which we are convinced is best for them, and as we must answer for it to our Saviour, both as to their Bodys and Souls; their rising, going to bed, eating, drinking, working, playing, or bodily exercise, learning etc., 2nd. That they will not think with themselves, to have their children Home sometimes for a day or two. No. Not for an hour, for we allow of no Breaking up, nor going home to their Parents at Holiday times nor at any time to be out of sight of those who have the care of them, because we are not ignorant how ready the enemy is to take all Advantages; for they being so narrowly watched over here, he would rejoyce if he could get them a quarter of an hour from under our eye; for tho' Parents may not teach their children evil things, yet by their not knowing the state of mind which the child is in at that time, and if they know, yet their thoughts being taken up with admiring what they think good in them, they forget to watch so over them as is necessary and the child by this means may get more hurt in one hour, than can be made good in many days or weeks, and 3rd for the same reasons we expect that they will not run every day to see their children, and when they do come to see them, that they will be content to see and speak with them at such times, and so long or short a time, and in the presence of such as shall be thought convenient by those who have the care of the children.

"That they will not send or give their children into their own hands, or to others for them in their presence, cloaths, money, cakes, fruits, sweetmeats etc., nor any things that may be a means to stir up the

children's desire after, and teach them to take pleasure in things which have no real worth and value.

For Breakfast, which is from 7 till 9 O'clock according to their age and time of rising, all the house drink Herb Tea, and eat bread and butter, excepting the little ones in the Nursery, who have Milk or Milk Pottages. For Dinner which is at 12, the children have 3 and sometimes 4 times a week fresh flesh, as Mutton, Lamb, Veal or Beef; of the last but seldom, we thinking it too hard and strong for them. Twice a week rice, once boiled in milk and once baked as pudding; and once boiled flour pudding. In the afternoon all under 9 have bread and butter or something of that kind. For supper between 6 and 7 the same. Their common drink is small Beer. The little ones in the Nursery are not kept to the Order of others, but have other things as are suitable to their age.

"Combing their head we find necessary to be done every day the same of washing their Hands and Face every morning, and as often beside as there is need, each wiping with their own Towel. Feet washing, Nails paring etc., is likewise taken care. Clean linnen, as shirts, shifts, stocks, towels, frocks, handkerchiefs, and such like Bodily wear, they have clean once a week. To this article belongs likewise the taking care of their cloaths. Mending, this is likewise remembered, the linnen and stockings being mended by the bigger girls, and those who have the care of them, and their other cloaths are either sent to their Parents to have mended or if they desire it we employ Tradespeople, whose business it is to do it, setting the charge to their account."

As for the children's natural desire for activity, by the damping of it their healths can be much impaired. But Apish tricks and foolish plays are considered harmful, and therefore the children are kept busy from morning to night.

"All the time not employed in things mentioned under the other heads is employed in doing something to fit them for Labour, or in walking, moderate running, or the like for the health of their bodies; of the first, the boys at present (who are big enough) spin or knit and the lesser ones of boys and girls pick bits of Silk, Linnen or Woollen to pieces (and by the way are so content and intent about it as if they were to get their livings by it) the girls who are fit, mend their own and the other children's linnen, mark, stitch and do all sorts of common needlework;

the bigger ones of these are exercised likewise (as their age admits) in little Housewifery things in their own room. For the second, viz, the walking, running and the like, they have particular times appointed; such whose age and strength agree, are had out in the garden or fields if the weather permitts, two hours at least every day, when cold or rain will not admit it they use the same exercise in large rooms in the house, always observing this, that the boys and girls are separate, and that the persons who have the particular care of them are with them to take care that they may not be slothful or light minded."

The smaller children went to bed between seven and eight, and the bigger ones at nine or soon after, and they rose at halfpast-five in the summer and at six in the winter; the smaller ones rose at six in the summer and half an hour later in the winter.

Small treats were given in the way of something special to eat or drink on the occasion of a birthday, or when a new child came, or a new teacher joined the school.

Unusual understanding of children, for the times, is shown by Richard Vinery in the following sentence:

"We hold that a child should be punished for doing nothing that does not proceed from self will, disobedience, or, light mindedness, and to correct a child because he cannot learn his lesson, or pronounce a word plain, or write because he cannot learn his lesson, or pronounce a word plain, or write fair, or do his sum, for falling and daubing itself, tearing his cloathes, or breaking anything thro' misfortune, we think it a great sin."

For irreligion and having "no mind to read, nor hear anything that's good", a child is also not to be punished but invited and persuaded.

"Thus my brother (the letter ends) I have given a short account of our receiving and care for children, short I say because I have been some years learning, and find that I have to learn every day how to go on with children, but this may be sufficient for any one to see in general our thoughts and ways at present."

Vinery adds a postscript of "Things to be Provided by Ye Parents who send their Children":

1. A small bedstead 4 or 5 foot long and 2 broad.

2. A bed, pillow, Blankets, Coverlid or quilt, 2 pairs of sheets, and 2 pillow beirs, fit for the sized bedstead as above.
3. A great and small tooth'd comb, each child being combed with their own.
4. Three or four small towels.
5. A clear print Bible, Hymn Book, and Dyches Spelling Book, if they can read.
6. Woollen and Linnen cloathes as they think proper, but enough to change, and when they want more to provide for them as need requires.
7. They are to pay the charges of their coming down.
8. And when there, to pay ten pounds a year for their board.
9. If they learn to write, to pay for Papers, Pens, Ink, Slates, and what is to that part of learning necessary, but not for the learning itself.

N.B. We generally have the Bedsteads made here, by one who knows how, and who always makes them for us, they cost 7s. 6d. ea.

At the time when this letter was written there were thirty-nine children in the school. There was little or no illness at first, but two sick-rooms were available with a special person in charge. As to discipline in illness, it was recognised that harshness as well as over-fondness can stir up self-will. "We therefore shun both, and deal as tender, loving, but reasonable as possible."

This good beginning was not to last. Between 1742 and 1745, fifteen young children and three adults died. The Vicar makes no comments in the Register of Burials beyond writing "Broadoaks" after the names. The records of the Moravian Church were destroyed in the air-raids of 1941, but the present officials are convinced that Broadoaks was very far from being a Dotheboys Hall.

It was decided that the premises were not suitable for a school and in 1745 the boys were moved to Wiltshire, and in 1753 to Fulneck, between Leeds and Bradford. In 1746 the girls were moved from Broadoaks to Mile End and in 1755 to Fulneck. At Fulneck the schools were opened to pupils of other denominations, the curriculum was widened, and in

spite of its sad beginning at Broadoaks this school is still doing useful work.

The year 1745, when the boys left Broadoaks, saw the second Jacobite rising, when the whole country was agitated by anti-Catholic feeling. The local people became convinced that Broad-oaks was a Jacobite headquarters; a rumour was spread of a plot to burn down Thaxted and an angry mob laid siege to the place. The house had to be barricaded but we have no details of what happened. Probably Richard Vinery was able to explain to the mob the difference between Brethren and Roman Catholics, and no doubt after some argument and discussion the people withdrew.

In the meantime Mrs. Wiseman-Claggett had died in London where she had been living, and had been brought to Wimbish for burial. After the girls left the house, the manor passed into Chancery for two years, and in 1748 was bought by Charles, Lord Maynard.

The Wisemans held the lordship of the manor of Rivenhall, a village near Witham, and in 1615, Thomas Wiseman gave a rent large producing £3 4s. Od. per annum, out of Broadoaks, to the poor of Rivenhall. This charity is still paid annually to Rivenhall by the owner of Broadoaks. Because hops were once grown at Broadoaks, a Hop Tax has also to be paid annually.

The manor-house stands about two miles south of the church. It was built about 1560 and was of half-H or E-shaped plan facing east; the part now standing formed the north wing. The house is an interesting example of mid-16th century domestic work. It contains some fine oak doors and panelling, also interesting fireplaces. Over the opening of the main stairway a heavy trapdoor can be fastened down, thus shutting off the ground floor from the upper part of the house. The original massive oak trapdoor was sold long ago. There is a large venison safe, a reminder of the deer park which once surrounded the house.

The hiding-place built for priests, which is so well described by Father John Gerard in his famous autobiography, has made the house well-known. John Gerard in his famous autobiography, has made the house well-known. It is supposed that the hide was sealed up when the place became a school. The present owner, Mr. Oscar Bugg, with the assistance of Mr. Granville Squiers, located and uncovered the hide in



Hodges



Thunderley Hall

1931.

Some time in the last century the greater part of the building was pulled down and the north side of the old south wing was refaced and is the present- day front. Successive tenants removed much of the old woodwork, destroyed many of the fireplaces and carried out drastic alterations. But through all the changes of more than three hundred years, the story of the hiding-place was handed down in the village, although Father Gerard's description of Broadoaks could have been known to very few, since it was not published until 130 years after the hide had been sealed up.

CHAPTER 3.

THUNDERLEY

Thunderley is considered to have been a very early Saxon settlement. The worship of Thunor, the thunder-god, has left many traces in place-names, and that of Thunderley is derived from this cult. The second element in the name comes from the Saxon *leak* which means a wood or a clearing in a wood.

At the time of the Norman invasion, the land of Thunderley was held by Ailmar the Saxon, but was taken from him by William the Conqueror and presented to Alberic de Vere, whose under-tenant Ralf or Radulfus, took the surname of de Tunderle from the place. Alberic or Aubrey de Vere, Count of Guines, and Norman overlord of the manor of Thunderley, fought at Hastings with the Conqueror. In addition to many manors, including Thunderley, William bestowed upon him the lands of Hedingham, and it was his son, who in 1130, built the castle of Hedingham. He also founded the Priory of Hatfield Broadoak which was connected with Thunderley, and later Wimbish, until the Reformation. The de Vere family occupied the castle from 1130 to 1703, and their history has been spoken of as the history of England.

In Domesday Book it is recorded that "Tunreslea is held of Alberic by Radulfus. It was held by Ailmar, a free man, in the time of King Edward for a manor and for 5 hides. Then and afterwards 2 teams in the demesne, now 3. Always 3 teams of the homagers, and 1 priest, wild 11 villeins, and 5 bordars. Then and afterwards wood for 100 swine, 60 goats, 8 beasts, 3 horses, 5 hives of bees, now 140 sheep, 60 swine. The rest is the same as above stated. Then and afterwards it was worth 6 pounds now 7."

CHURCH

The place where Thunderley Church stood is now part of a field and only a depression marks the site. It stood about 300 yards south of Thunderley Hall. The building was apparently without aisles, with a west tower and south porch, and about 60 feet long. In the 16th century, the Vicar of Wimbish in an arrangement with the lord of the manor, Mr. Mordaunt, exchanged the churchyard for a more convenient and useful

piece of land 4 acres in size by the highway. Recently in the west of the country, vandalism has succeeded in destroying our most ancient burial mounds. So too in the present year, this old churchyard in our own village has been desecrated by the plough and no longer exists.

MANORS

There were three manors in the parish of Thunderley: Thunderley Hall, Dales or Caldicotes, and Abbots Manor.

THUNDERLEY HALL

In the time of Henry II, 1154-1189, this manor appears to have been in the joint possession of Geoffrey de Tunderle and Alexander Rivollam. It is on record that possession of half of the church was given to Hatfield Priory by Geoffrey de Tunderle and that later the remaining half was given to the same monastery by Alexander Rivollam for the remission of all his sins, and those of his dear wife, and all his friends. This last grant was in 1143. It is therefore concluded that the church was at that time attached to this manor. After the amalgamation of Thunderley with Wimbish in 1425, the Prior of Hatfield retained the right to take his turn in presenting vicars to Wimbish, until the Dissolution of the Monasteries.

In 1485 a part of the manor belonged to John Brett, in right of his wife Maud, and from that period till 1624, when the manor belonged to Robert Wiseman of Broadoaks, there appears to be no record. It passed from Robert to his son, Richard of Torrells Hall, Little Thurrock, and since that time has had various owners.

The house stands about two miles east of Wimbish Church. Two bays of the west wing are of late 15th century date, but the rest of the building was altered early in the 17th century to an L-shaped plan. A low addition, probably of the 18th century, makes the existing house T-shaped.

DALES OR CALDICOTES MANOR

This lost manor was held for some time under the Earls of Oxford by the family of Thunderley, until it passed to that of Att-Dale in 1346 by



Stonards



Little Stonards

the marriage of the daughter of Andrew of Thunderley to William Att-Dale. In 1445 it was in the possession of Nicholas Caldecot or Calcot, and of James Caldecot in 1485. He died in 1502. The next recorded owner is Muriel. Caldecot, the second wife of Robert Mordaunt, to whom she brought this property. In 1652, John Mordaunt, sold it to Dr. Bromfield, who gave it to the poor of St. Andrews, , Holborn, London. In the Table of Benefactions belonging to the Parish of St. Andrews the Manor was said to be worth £70 a year, which money was used to apprentice annually to various trades seven poor boys out of the city liberty and freemen's sons."

ABBOTS MANOR

This manor belonged to Walden Abbey. In a fine levied in 1265, it is described as "one messuage, 2½ caracutes of arable, and 15 acres of wood in. Thunderley. After the suppression of the Abbey in 1537, Henry VIII granted the manor in 1538 to Thomas, Lord Audley, whose grandson, Lord Howard de Walden, sold it to Richard Martin and John Hail and his heirs. At this time, it consisted of 4 messuages, cottages, 4 tofts, 3 barns, 1 dovehouse, 3 gardens, 200 acres of arable, 60 of meadow, 160 acres of pasture, 60 of wood, 20 of heath and furze, 20s. rent, free-warren, fishery, view of frankpledge and common for all manner of cattle."

The next possessor upon record was Sir Robert Quarles from whose son it descended to William Holgate of Walden, who died in 1672, and his daughter Anne conveyed it to her husband, James Monteith of Greenwich. He died in 1681 and the estate was sold to Richard Darbyshire, of the Six Clerks Office in Chancery. He it was who witnessed to the peaceful disposition of John Bramston at the trial of the latter for stabbing Aurelius Wiseman. And so we come to the farther-owners of the present century, and now only about 30 acres are left of this once important manor.

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Following is an explanation of certain terms found in Domesday Book which refer to the manor of Thunderley but do not occur in the survey of Wimbish.

CARACUTE

This is a Danish word meaning the same as the Saxon hide-thought to be the amount of land cultivated by a team of oxen including the part which would lie fallow for the year.

RIGHTS OF FREE-WARREN

For the purpose of protecting the deer and wild boar in his forests, the King assumed the right of allowing certain of his subjects the privilege of hunting other wild animals regarded as harmful to the beasts of the chase. The animals which were the subject of such grants, were the fox, hare and cat; sometimes the badger and squirrel. The wolf was often included too. The earliest grants of hunting rights of this nature do not specify the animals but merely state that the King is granting rights of warren.

In the early Middle Ages almost all Essex lay within the Kings forest and came under a special forest law. Although the King was generous in his creation of warrens he was not often willing to allow a subject to have a private forest. However, grants were made by successive Kings, placing considerable stretches of country under great lords as private forests, generally called chases.

VIEW OF FRANKPLEDGE

The law demanded that all unfree men must be associated in groups of ten men responsible for each others good behaviour. These groups were called tithings in some parts and frankpledges in others. All unfree men above the age of twelve were bound to be in frankpledge. Twice a year the Sheriff visited the court of each Hundred to view the frankpledges, that is, to see that no one was living in the village outside a frankpledge. Many men were found to be outside frankpledge when the enquiries were held, and many such would be villeins who had run away from their own parts. The King often granted to individual lords the right to hold the view of frankpledge within their lands, for it was a profitable process as a fine was levied on the village when men were found there to be outside frankpledges. Most lords to whom it had not

been granted usurped the right.whom it had not been granted usurped the right.

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It was in 1425 that Thunderley and Wimbish were joined together, making a large parish about sixteen miles in circumference. From now on Thunderley ceased to exist other than as a hamlet.

CHAPTER 4.

LATE MIDDLE AGES

The most important change in village life during the 15th century was the break-up of the feudal manor and the changing of the village from a community of serfs to a society in which all were at least legally free.

This was mainly brought about by the dreadful plague known as the Black Death. It first appeared in August, 1348, near Weymouth, having been brought by flea-infested black rats in ships from the East. It spread rapidly with terrible results. Whole villages were left without a living soul. No doubt it was this plague which contributed to the decay of Thunderley. The land was left unfilled; the price of food doubled. A third or possibly half of the inhabitants of the Kingdom died in less than two years.

The lord of the manor could no longer cultivate his home farm with the reduced number of serfs, while many of the strip-holdings in the open fields were thrown back on his hands because the families that farmed them had died of plague.

This was the peasant's opportunity. The number of strips in the open-field held by a single villein was increased by the combining of derelict holdings, and the cultivators of these larger units became middle-class yeomen employing hired labour. Naturally they rebelled more and more against their own servile status and against the demands of the lord's bailiff that they should still perform their number of "workdays" in person on the lord's demesne. Meanwhile free labourers who had no land were able to demand higher wages, whether from the lord's demesne or from the farmers of the open-field.

Many villeins ran away from their own village to better themselves, labour being so short that high wages were given to immigrants and no awkward questions asked. Such "flights" left on the lord's hands the strip in the fields that the fugitive had deserted, and often there was no one willing to take it except for a low money rent. More and more, the lords abandoned the attempt to cultivate their lands by the old method, and consented to pay cash for field services. Since there was more coin

per head of the reduced population, it was easier for the serf to save or borrow enough to buy his freedom and to pay money rent for his land.

Many of the peasants kept sheep, and by the sale of the wool they obtained money to buy their freedom. Many landlords ceased to cultivate their land themselves, because the price of labour was so high, and let it on lease to a new class of yeoman farmer.

In a number of ways, new classes of yeomen came into existence. Some of them farmed the lord's demesne, others new land lately enclosed from waste, others took strips in the old open fields. The increase in their numbers and prosperity set the tone of the new England for centuries to come. The villein serf became extinct. He became a yeoman farmer or else a landless labourer, with enmity growing between the two, resulting quite soon in the laws known as the "Statute of Labourers". These laws were made to keep down wages, and were passed at the dictation of the new agricultural middle class rather than by the great landlords, although these supported their tenants because high wages endangered the payment of rents. But this quarrel lay between two classes of peasant, the small farmer and the landless labourer he hired. Their fathers probably worked their strips side by side in the village field and laboured together as serfs on the lord's demesne, but now the interests of the sons were opposed.

This struggle went on and strikes, riots and the formation of local unions were met by imprisonment. A Poll Tax levied by Richard II on every person in the country over the age of fifteen was the last straw, and all over the kingdom, although the south-eastern half of England was the chief area of the revolt, labourers rose in their thousands under the leadership of Wat Tyler of Colchester. This was in 1381, and the spirit that prompted the rising was one of the reasons why serfdom died out in England, as it did not die out in the rest of Europe.

Personal freedom became universal but many of the serfs won this freedom at the price of separation from the soil, and the increasing wealth of the country was accompanied by greater inequalities of income. The old feudal manor under its lord had been a community of serfs, all poor, but nearly all with rights of their own in the lands to which they were bound. Under the manorial system there was no unemployment and no one could starve. The village now in the process of developing under

the squire, was composed of farmers, village craftsmen, and free but landless labourers constantly drifting off to the towns.

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At this time the farms and cottages were built of logs and planks, or of uprights and beams supporting rubble and clay. The floors were usually of bare earth and the roof of thatch.

Living conditions in the villages varied from year to year. Many of the peasants acquired considerable wealth by feeding sheep and the sale of wool. Their bread and ale depended upon the harvest, and in bad seasons there was shortage or famine. Most of them had a plot of land with their cottage, where they grew peas, beans and primitive kinds of cabbage. Sometimes they kept a cow or pig and most kept poultry. The potato was not brought into England until Tudor times and then took a considerable time to become popular.

The farmers of the open field each had his oxen on the village stubble and pasture. These were half the size of our modern cattle and lean with hunger and tough from years at the plough, but some were killed every Martinmas to be salted for winter food or were killed fresh for Christmas feasting.

Bacon was common on the cottage table, but the number of pigs in the village herd depended on the extent and character of the 'waste'. On some manors the heaths and woods had shrunk because of land being enclosed for agriculture. The rights of the tenants differed from manor to manor but often they had the privilege of cutting wood for building and carpentry, and of taking sticks for fuel by "hook or crook", that is, pulling branches from standing trees. But the comfort and wealth of the villager grew less as more land was enclosed and the cornfields encroached on the 'waste land'.

The deer and lesser game in the Kings forests and in the warrens and chases of lords and gentry were guarded by severe laws, but poaching was done by all classes: gentry, clerks of Holy Church, farmers and workmen. In 1389, the Commons complained in Parliament that "artificiers and labourers and servants and grooms keep greyhounds and other dogs, and on the holy days, when good Christian people be at Church, hearing divine service, they go hunting in parks, warrens

and coneyries of lords and others, to the very great destruction of the same."

Small birds like larks and thrushes were limed and netted in great numbers. Also it gave great pleasure to the farmer to kill or his own pot one of the legion of privileged pigeons from the dovecot of the manor-house, that grew plump on the peasants corn till they were fit for the lords table. These birds were almost the only source of fresh meat in the winter and were a valuable possession. Numerous laws were laid down as to who might keep pigeons and who might neither keep them nor kill them. Some old dovehouses still exist but the memory of them is kept alive on most manor farms by a still exist but the memory of them is kept alive on most manor farms by a "Dovehouse Field" which is usually quite near the house.

On Sundays the parish priest said Mass attended by the greater part of the village. Sometimes he spent most of his time as farmer, cultivating his own glebe land (normally forty to sixty acres of the open field) and even sometimes hiring other lands. In 1335 master Roger Stonhard, the parish priest, and his brother William, were farming the land in Wimbish to which they have left their name.

Teaching and preaching often amounted to very little, but this lack was supplied by the preaching friar, by the travelling Pardoner with his wallet "bretful of pardons come from Rome all hot", by Wycliffe's missionaries, and by John Ball's agitators of Christian Democracy.

These people played a great part in the religious and intellectual life of the people. They carried the latest thoughts, teaching and news to remote farms and villages whose inhabitants never left the neighbourhood and could neither read nor write. These religious rounds were always on the move along the muddy lanes and roads.

There was no Bible in English and if there had been the peasant could not have read it, and the service in church was said in Latin, which he could not follow. But on the church walls were painted scenes from the Scriptures and the lives of saints, and over the rood loft there was usually a lively picture of the Last Judgment. Unhappily in later years most of these pictures were whitewashed over. From the friars the peasant learned some of the sayings of Jesus Christ and incidents from his life, besides some of the well-known Old Testament stories.

The most far-reaching event of these times was the introduction into England of the printing press in the 15th century, which paved the way for the English Bible and Prayer Book.

It would be wrong to think of Wimbish in the Middle Ages as an isolated and stagnant village. It seems to have been well populated, full of activity and much coming and going. When the land-owning members of the community were not hunting and hawking or fighting in the wars with France, they seem to have been continually indulging in squabbles concerning the tenure of fields, and these squabbles usually terminated in lawsuits which meant an exciting trip to Westminster.

Young men from the village went as followers of knights to the French Wars, and this necessitated travelling protection being granted to them by the King—the equivalent of our modern passport. For instance in 1459, when Henry VI was king we have, “Nov. 13. Protection to Roger Aylward of Wymbysshe, Essex, in the retinue of Gervase Clyfton, Knight.” Over one hundred years earlier, in the reign of Edward III in 1323, protection was also granted to the parson of Wymbissh, Master John de Harleston, a relative of the owners of Tiptofts, who took a year off to visit Gascony in the King's service in the company of Ralph Basuet of Drayton, seneschal to the Duchy of Aquitaine.

Others found time to go on organised poaching expeditions; some stole sheep, while others robbed on the King's Highway. Henry VI granted a pardon to “John Grygge of Wymbysshe, husbandman, of his outlawry in Middlesex, for not appearing before the King to answer touching certain trespasses he having surrendered to the Marshalsea prison.”

A more serious event took place in Wimbish in 1404, when John Hardy, a butcher, and John Parleben, a carpenter, both of Thaxted, had a violent quarrel when visiting Wimbish, resulting in John Hardy killing John Parleben with a “pycheforke”. As there had probably been great provocation John Hardy was granted the King's Pardon.

An idea can be gained of the power of the lord of the manor and the brigandly tactics of some lords by the indictment in 1353 of William Baltrip, steward of John Fitzwalter, lord of the manor of Wimbish, before the King at Chelmsford. “He entered by force the close of John Martyn of Wymbisch and carried away 5 quarters of wheat and the

verture of 8 acres of wheat, worth £4 The King for certain causes having compassion on the said William Baltrip, has pardoned him for these and any consequent outlawries." His other crimes would fill several pages and included the theft of tattle, entering upon the land of others, terrorising people and so on, but all these misdeeds were apparently by order of the lord of the manor.

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Three types of cultivation were carried on. There were the manors with their self-contained busy life. Then there was a large number of small parcels of land, a few acres in extent, farmed by free men. Each had its dwelling-place and many were surrounded by small moats. Traces of these can still be seen round many an old cottage. It is probable that these free men were the descendants of Danish raiders. The Danes were always free men and remained free when they settled in England and became farmers. The Saman family farmed here for generations in the early Middle Ages and according to the English Place-Name Society was certainly of Danish origin. Busy Wylbystrete from Highams at the Thaxted end to Jenkinhogs at the Radwinter end, was lined with the dwellings of such men.

Then there were the cultivators of the "open fields." These "open fields" are now the greater part of what is now known as the Elms Farm, but was then known as Harvies, the name of the owners of the land. The largest of these fields was Wylbyfelde which extended from the Thaxted road to the present house of the Elms Farm. Other "open fields" were "Brokfeld" and "Langelongfeld," now part of the Lower House and Maple farms. The land lying between the Wimbish lane leading to the Elms Farm and almost to Lower House was common pasturage.

In the 15th century twenty or more men were leasing strips in Wylbyfelde. For many years at this period ten men from Walden were renting strips in this particular field, including John Taylor, but long before this in 1388 a John Taylor gave his name to Taillourscroft, now Taylors Field. These Walden men are all named together on their leases and they probably shared a team of oxen between them and helped one another.

At the top of Wylebyfelde near the present dwelling of the Elms Farm was an Almshouse. This was the property of the Guild of the

Holy Trinity in Walden, until during the reign of Henry VIII the Guild was abolished. This seems to have been the end of the Almshouse in Wimbish.

The Guild of Our Lady of Pity in Walden was also of benefit to Wimbish as once a year the Keepers of the Guild visited all bed-ridden people within a radius of five miles of Walden and distributed alms to them.

The full history of these Guilds can be found in Charles Brightwen Rowntree's book *Saffron Walden, Then and Now*.

Here is a list of the names of the roads and lanes of Wimbish in the Middle Ages: Mellestrete (Mill Road), Daweslane, ffigslane, Northstrete, Holstrete, Croukeslane (Thomas Crouke 1382), Ledbeterslane, Colwellstrete (Richard Colwell 1386), Wylbyestretelhende, Webbestrethende (John Webbe 1388), Alfrythslane (Alfryth the Saxon), Cherchelane, Couperslane, Deepstrete, 1388), Lelongestrete, Netherstrete, Lodderslane (Lodder-beggar), Tufftestrete, Lelongestrete, Hayestrete, Botulpheslane, Leystrete, Derestrete, Nubredgelane, Hyllderstet (Elder Street), Personeslane (Parsonage Lane).

The first windmill in Wimbish would have been built on very much the same site as that of the present dill (now converted into a dwelling) and gave the name Mellestrete, now Mill Road, to the stretch of road between Rowney Corner and Tye Green. In the year 1251 in the reign of Henry II the owners of the mill, John the Fleming, and his wife Sara, were involved in a lawsuit before the King concerning land tenure, and in the report of the case are these words: "whereof II acres lie in that field where John's windmill is situate."

The great majority of our farm-names are derived from the holder either of a remote or a comparatively recent period, the name sometimes becoming fixed, sometimes changing with each tenant. For instance, the farm at the end of Church Lane, called Barkers in the 16th century, is now known as Aldridges, having taken this name from a Mr. Aldridge who was living there in the beginning of the 19th century. The family of Adcock gave their name to a smallholding near Crowney Wood in the 18th century. This holding has since disappeared, but a lane which led to the house still bears their name. John Hoy who died in 1732 left his

name to the land which he had farmed, and John Nottage left his name to land on Wimbish Green.

In the Middle Ages the dwelling of the yeoman or villein was a very simple affair, the important thing was the land which he farmed; it was this that gave him his status in the village, and the obvious way to distinguish the holding was to label it with the holders name.

According to the English Place-Name Society, Wimbish farms and greens with names going back to the Middle Ages can be associated with the following men. The date indicates the year when the name concerned first occurs in documents:

Broadoaks	Thomas Brodhok	1341
	(This family ran a Poulterer's business in Cornhill, London.)	
Cole End	John Colle	1327
Constables	John Constable	1381
Ellis Green	Elys family	before 1300
Freemans	John Freeman	1382
Frogs Green	Roger Frog	1380
Gunters	Roger and Ralph le Gaunter	
	(glove-makers in Walden.)	1387
Hawes	Roger Hawes	1380
Howlett End	Robert Hulot	1270
Pepples	John Pypple	1434
Pinkneys	Robert Pynkeneye	1341
Rayments	Richard Raymund	1327
Stonhards	Stonhard family	1335
Tiptofts	John Tippetoft	1346
Little Gowers was	le Gorys	in 1404
Tye Green was	Tyehach (and was a	
	piece of common land)	in 1381

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Following are a few examples of legal documents of the late Middle Ages. The first is one of the earliest translated Deeds connected with the village.

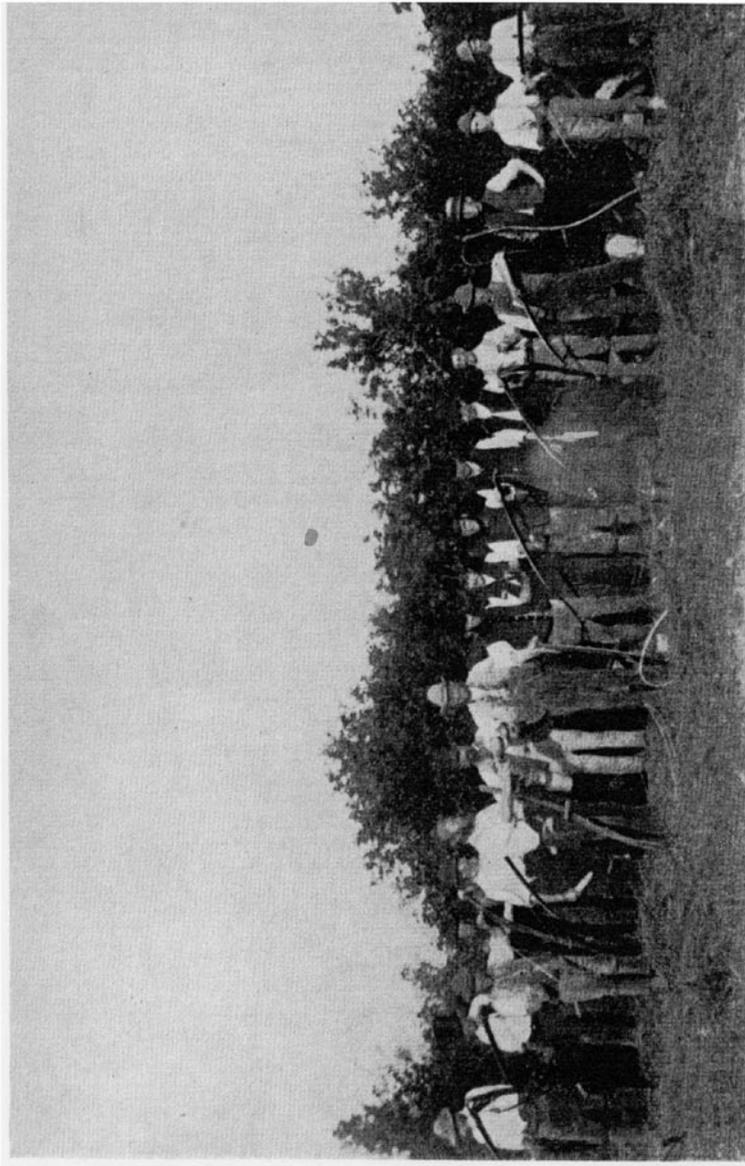
31 Edward I, 1302.



Windmill (about 1880)



Rowneys



Reaping at Pinkneys (about 1870)

“Know present and future that I William son of Henry the Goldsmith and I Madelinia wife of the same of Sampford Kemesek by our unanimous mutual agreement have granted conceded and by our present deed confirmed to Amabel formerly wife of Heruic Cook of Wymbisc for her homage and service and for four marks in money which she has paid us, a meadow which is called Bernildesmeade lying in the parish of Wymbisc between the highway which leads from Tunderle towards Taxstede and land formerly of the said Heruic, one head of which abutts upon a meadow of the said Heruic and the other head abutts upon a meadow which William de Risle and his wife hold.

“To have and to hold the said meadow with ditches, hedges and plants, trees and other appurtenances in full whatsoever we possessed there, of us and our heirs or assigns to the said Amabel and her heirs or assigns or to any of them, to grant, sell, or she may wish to bequeathe in the final days of her life, religious houses and Jewry excepted.

“Freely, quietly to inherit, well and in peace. Witnesses-Laurence de Mildenthal, John de Paneteria, John son of Robert, William. de Risle, Hugo de Royinges, Peter de la Hyde in Wymbisc, Michael de Gerdele (Yardleys), Thomas Saful, Richard le Sxathere in Taxstede, Alexander de Tunderle, Robert son of Simon, Robert Cristom, Thomas Hamel, John le Holund in Badbursham, and others.”

A Deed dated 1316 in the reign of Edward II.

“Know present and future that I Thomas de Bamefeld of Wyndebyss have conceded granted and by this my present deed confirmed to John Mordaunt and Emma his wife of the same town for a certain sum of money which they have given into my hands one piece of my arable land with hedges and ditches and all other appurtenances lying in the same town of Wyndebyss in a field called Dernemadwefeld between land of master Bartholomew Enesend on one side and land of the said master Bartholomew and of Stephen de Colwelle on the other side and it abutts at one head upon land of Robert Pynkeneye and at the other head upon my land. Witnesses-John de Tunderle, Walter Levenoth, Peter de Heyham, Stephen de Colwelle, Robert Pynkeneye, Richard Arneway, Michael Roncyn, Reginald the clerk, and others.”

A Deed dated 1368.

“Thursday next between the feast of the Apostles Simon and Judas 42 Edward III 26 October 1368.

“Know present and future that we John Freman of Wymbissch in the County of Essex and Agnes my wife have conceded, granted and by this our present deed confirmed to John Serle the younger of the same, one toft with appurtenances in the town of Tunderle, lying between a toft (small grove of trees) of the aforesaid John Serle on the one side and a croft called Cherchecroft on the other side, and it stretched at one head upon a field called Schaftesfeld (Shafts Farm stood where the main aerodrome buildings now stand) and the other upon the High Road called Eluer Street. In exchange for a toft lying in the town of Wymbisch between the tenements of John Fremena toft lying in the town of Wymbisch between the tenements of John Fremena aforesaid on either side. Witnesses-William Colewelle, William Serle, John Pernel, Robert Sandolf, Thomas Kokkesheued and others.Pernel, Robert Sandolf, Thomas Kokkesheued and others.”

Extracts from a Will dated May 15 1488.

“In the name of God Amen on the fifteenth day of the month of May in the year of our Lord one thousand four hundred and eighty eight I William Turtell of Wymbysch in the county of Essex, sound of mind make my Testament and last will in this manner. Firstly I commend my soul to God, the blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints of heaven and my Body to be buried in the graveyard of the pIrish church of Wymbysch aforesaid and I leave to the high altar there 2s. I leave to the repair of the church aforesaid 2s. I leave to the Guild of the Holy Trinity for the rebuilding of a house for the Guild aforesaid in Wymbysch 5s. 8d. I leave for finding the light before the Image of the holy Cross in the aforesaid church one cow. And I leave for the celebration of a trental of masses in the aforesaid church for the benefit of my soul 10s. I leave to William my son two cows and two young oxen and one colt of a white colour. I leave to my son Thomas one cow and to Johanna my daughter another cow. And I leave to Margaret Parlebeyn, my servant, one cow and a calf.”

Here follow legacies of land, money, and some property in Walden to his wife and children.

“And Johanna my wife and John Colwelle her brother, I make nominate and appoint my true Executors of this my Testament and my

last will that they may ordain and dispose in the best manner they can for the benefit of my soul and know to please God. Witnesses – Master Thomas Robynson, vicar, Thomas Barker, Robert Constable and many others.”

A Trental consisted of thirty masses for the departed, either repeated on thirty successive days or all sung on the thirtieth day after burial. The custom was founded by St. Gregory the Great and provisions for Trentals are usual in pre-Reformation wills.

A written bond dated 1381.

“Sunday next after the feast of St. Mark the Evangelist, 4 Richard II 28 April 1381.

Be it plain to all men that I, John Rynere (of the town of Walden) the elder am held and by the presents firmly bound to John Saman of Wymbissh the elder, in 20 marks sterling (of good and usual money) to be paid to the same John Saman or his attorneys at Walden, in the parish church there, at the feast of the Nativity of saint John the Baptist, next to come after the date of these presents without further delay. To which payment of the said 20 marks to be well and truly made and observed at the said day and place I bind myself, my heirs and executors and also all my goods moveable and immoveable wheresoever they may be found.”

All business transactions of this nature were carried out in the church porch or sometimes in the little room above the porch

A Deed dated 1335.

“Edward III 24 January 1335. To all Christian people whom the present writing shall reach Robert son of John Herui (Harvey) of Wymbisch and Isabell daughter of William de Coulynge greeting in the Lord. Know that we conjointly and severally by unanimous agreement and desire have granted and by these presents confirmed. to John son of the said John, six acres of arable land lying divid-edly in the town of Wymbisch, to wit, in the Fields of Wylebyfeld, Brokfeld, and Langgelongfeld, and two acres of meadow, fit for mowing, near to Waterschepe (watercourse) as it is enclosed with, hedges and ditches and with all its appurtenances. We have previously granted to the same John two days ploughing each year at any season and a cartload of fuel annually and all that our

message which was sometime of Lewis the Wheelwright as it is built with hedges and ditches and with all its appurtenances Lying between our land on one side and the High Road called Nethererstrate and it abutts at one head upon the message of William Stonhard and at the other head upon the message of master Roger Stonbard, Priest. Paying therefore to us and to our heirs one Rose at the feast of the Nativity of saint John the Baptist for all services and all secular demands."

The Rent of the Rose was the usual condition of tenure when the property passed to the recipient for life only, or where the conveyors themselves retained a life interest. A more practical rent in kind was that of 8 capons, 2 cocks, 3 hens and 60 eggs, which appears in a deed concerning certain land in Wimbish and Thunderley.

A Will dated 1495.

"This is the last will of me John Colwelle of Wymbysch of the diocese of London sound of mind and being of robust memory in the year of our Lord 1495 and in the twenty year of the reign of king Henry VII in this manner.

"Firstly I bequeathe my soul to Almighty God, to the blessed virgin Mary and to all saints and my body to be buried in the graveyard of the parish church of Wymbysch aforesaid. I leave to the high Altar in the aforesaid Church for my tithes and oblations forgotten or withheld 3s. 4d. I leave to the upkeep of a light before the image of the crucifix in the said church one cow worth 6s. 8d. I leave to the upkeep of a light before the image of the holy cross upon the altar of St. Mary Magdalene in the aforesaid church one cow worth 6s. 8d. I leave to the support of a priest to celebrate in the church aforesaid for my soul through a half year within a year next following my decease III li. I leave for the purpose that a trental of masses be celebrated in the church aforesaid through half a year within the term of five years next following my decease III li. I leave to my wife Margaret for funeral expenses 6s. 8d. I leave to Anne my daughter one cow worth 6s. 8d. I leave to Alice my daughter one cow worth 6s. 8d. I leave to Agnes my daughter one cow worth 6s. 8d. I leave to Joan my daughter one cow worth 6s. 8d."

Here follow legacies of land and money to his wife and children. He continues: -

“I will that an obit or anniversary for my soul and the souls of John I will that an obit or anniversary for my soul and the souls of John Colwell and of Agnes my parents, of Katherine, Joan and Margaret my wives, be kept and celebrated every year in future in the church aforesaid, to wit, on the Tuesday in Whitsun week with funeral processions according to the praiseworthy custom of the same church from the issues and profits which shall annually arise from and in a certain croft of mine called Rosstrecroft in Wymbysch aforesaid, before the gate of my messuage next the highroad, into whatsoever hands they may descend in the future. I bequeathe and will that the present vicar of the church aforesaid and other vicars for ever there being for the time, have every year for ever 8d. from the issues of the croft aforesaid, with this restriction that they shall pray especially and by name for my soul every Lords day in the year in the said church as by custom it is used to do for others whose names are entered in a certain Roll called the Bederolle. These being witnesses — Thomas Robynson vicar of the church aforesaid, William Colwell, Thomas Seryche, John Seryche (later Surridge), Walter Sexteyn and others.”

John Colwelle seems to have farmed land which is now part of New House Farm. His last wishes were not carried out for very long. Prayer for departed souls was a practice which came to be regarded as superstitious after the Reformation and it was forbidden. The money bequeathed to priests for prayers and for candles, etc., was taken by the King, Henry VIII, to replenish his coffers. The sum of 6s. 8d. which is repeatedly named would be worth about £30 of our money today.

*

It will be found that names continually disappear, while new names occur, themselves in turn vanishing, leaving only four or five families at the present day who can be said to have been in the village five hundred years or more. Old legal documents give a picture of constant change in land tenure. As those who could not cope with the hard struggle for existence gave up their few acres these were leased by more thrifty or fortunate men and we see a class of yeoman farmer rising up, working one hundred or more acres and adding to these as opportunity occurred. In another two hundred years some of these yeomen families became

powerful and wealthy, only in many cases to give up or die out in their turn.

CHAPTER 5.

TUDOR TIMES

Henry VIII, 1509-1547, carried out an anti-clerical revolution which can be said to mark the end of mediaeval society in England. He denied the authority of the Pope, ordered the Bible to be translated into English and a copy placed in every church, suppressed the monasteries, divided their vast estates and sold the greater part of their lands and tithes to private purchasers.

In the short reign of Henry's son, Edward VI, the first Prayer Book in English was written and ordered to be read in all churches.

It was in this century that the church took the place of the manor for the purpose of administering village affairs. The vestry meeting had been an assembly of all the parishioners, presided over by the priest to arrange the conduct of church affairs. Now it became usual at the Easter vestry meeting to appoint a committee consisting of the leading figures of the village to carry out parish business.

At this time landlords everywhere were turning smallholdings into sheep runs, and labourers were thrown out of work. The country swarmed with unemployed. The advance of the birthrate against the death rate had made good the ravages of the Black Death, although this plague recurred at intervals in the towns, causing a large number of deaths. More land had to be enclosed to feed the growing population. More pasture was needed for sheep as the cloth trade was increasing rapidly. The yeoman farmers were more prosperous and important than at any previous time, much of their wealth being derived from the sale of wool.

A prosperous wool merchant, John Barton of Holme near Newark, built himself a fine new house and had this motto set in the stained-glass windows:

"I thank God and ever shall

It is the sheepe hath payed for all."

Cottages remained much the same, of timber and clay, but chimneys had become fairly usual because of the increasing use of O. For instance, the old house known as Hodges, had its chimney; added about one

hundred years after it was built, circa. 1450. The beams in the ancient hall at Tiptofts are black with the smoke which left the room through a louvre in the roof, the fire being made on the floor in the centre of the room. The chimney-stack and fireplace were not built until Tudor times. Brick was beginning to be used in the Eastern counties, where timber was running short owing to deforestation.

Our Elizabethan parson William Harrison, wrote of Wimbish woods at this time: "But now in manner they are utterly decayed, as the like commoditie is everie where, not onlie through excessive building for pleasure more than profit, which is contrarie to the ancient end of building, but also for more increase of pasture and commoditie to the lords of the soile, through their sales of that emolument, whereby the poore tenants are inforced to buie their fewell and yet have their rents in triple manner enhanced."

Harrison seems to have preferred the good old days of smoky rooms for he writes concerning fireplaces and chimneys, "In the village where I remain old men recall that in their young days under the two Kings Harry, there were not above two or three chimneys if so many in uplandish villages, the religious houses and manor places of their lords always excepted but each one made his fire against a reredos (a brazier in the centre of the hall) where he dined and dressed his meat. Now we have many chimnies, and yet otrr tenderlings complaine of rheumes, catarhs and poses. Then had we none but reredoses and our heads did never ache. For as the smoke of those daies was supposed to be sufficient hardning of the timber of the houses, so it was reputed to be a far better medicine to keep the good man and his family."

Our parson had something to say too about soft beds. "Our fathers yea and we ourselves have lien full oft upon straw pallets covered only with a sheet under coverlets made of dogswain or hop harlots and a good round log under their heads instead of a bolster. If it were so that our fathers or the good man of the house had a mattress or flockbed and thereto a sack of chaff to rest his head upon, he thought himself to be as well lodged as the lord of the town (village) that peradventure lay seldom in a bed of down or whole feathers."

He also records a change during his lifetime of wooden platters into pewter, and of wooden spoons into silver or tin. Forks were not in use

at this time. He notes that until the reign of Queen Elizabeth, "A man should hardly find four pieces of pewter in a farmer's house."

The farm horse more and more shared the work of the farm with the ox, but it was still a heavy cumbersome animal. The racer and hunter of Eastern breed had not yet been brought into the country.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth, 1558-1603, potatoes were brought into England. These were at first grown in pots as interesting plants. They gradually got into garden plots, but were not grown in fields as a crop for some considerable time.

Bread and meat were the chief foods. A Spaniard at this time wrote: "These English have their houses made of sticks and dirt, but they fare commonly as well as the King."

Though sheep and cattle were reared in abundance they were small and thin compared to our present-day standards, and continued so until the great improvement in all forms of agriculture, which took place in the 18th century.

The first Poor Law was passed in Queen Elizabeth's reign to cope with the problem of poor relief and vagrancy. Under the new law every parish had to look after its poor and needy. A compulsory poor-rate was levied, work was to be found for the genuine unemployed and the vagrant sent to a House of Correction. Voluntary Overseers of the Poor were appointed in every parish and were compelled to buy a "convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron and other stuff to set the unemployed poor to work."

Elizabeth's reign saw the stabilisation of the Protestant Church in England and the Prayer Book ordered to be read in English in place of the Latin Mass. Church attendance was compulsory; anyone not attending was summoned and fined. It was no uncommon thing for women to take their sewing to church and for the men to stand about and discuss corn prices, smoking long clay pipes. The sermons were of great length.

In 1582 the Lord Chancellor wrote the following letter to Mr. Browne, clerk of the peace for Essex. "I understand that Mr. Thomas Wyseman of Wimbish has been once called in question for his absence from church by an indictment procured against him by them who had no knowledge

of his estate, nor of his obedience and conformity. The cause of his absence was (as I am given to understand) for that he hath bene of long time visited with extreme sicknesses in such soft as 'he hath not bene able to travell to his parishe Church, being distant from his dwellings two myles. 'I am also informed' that in his house there is usuall prayers according to her Majesties lawes.'"

That he was a sick man is true. He was so crippled with gout that he lived upstairs in his room where he spent his time praying, reading and giving lessons to his children, the girls as well as the boys. Owing to his efforts they all turned out good Latin scholars, and Mary, who became a Prioress, spent her old age in translating into English, homilies and sermons of the Church Fathers. William, when a prisoner in the Tower, wrote several books on any odd scraps of paper he could find. These fulsome devotional works are now preserved in the Library of Stoneyhurst College.

The letter of the Lord Chancellor satisfied the Privy Council on this occasion and no fine was levied. But a year later we find "that Jane Wyseman wife of Thomas Wyseman of Wimbish, esquire, doth wilfully absent herself from her parish Church and hath not bene there at Divine Service 14 the space of this whole year last past."

In 1584 — "We present that Thomas Wyseman of Wimbish, gentleman, and his wife came not at there parys church these III yeare to heare devyne sarves."

This family remained Roman Catholic after the Reformation and only in a few instances did they have any connection with the parish church. Fori the next hundred years or so, with unflinching regularity, Thomas and his descendants were indicted and fined, together with their servants, and on a few occasions one or two others in the village, usually members of the Harrison family.

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The keeping of Parish Registers and Accounts dates from 1538. Wimbish Registers date from 1572 and are in very good order. The vicars seem to have been exceptionally careful to keep the records well.

Following is a list of families still living in the village which have an unbroken record since their names first appear in the Registers.

Some of these families were established here and farming long before Parish Records began to be kept, and Cornelis, Safuls and Taylors were witnessing Wills and other legal documents in the 14th century. Our translated documents begin in 1300, but no doubt these names appear on earlier Deeds. Chapmans, Martins, Coe and Swans were active in Walden from the times of the earliest translated records. For many hundreds of years the Marshall family farmed land under the lord of the manor of Wimbish, and their name occurs repeatedly in the records of Court Baron and Court Leet held at Wimbish Hall. Norman lords always had a retainer called a marshall who held a high position in the household and estate affairs. The first Marshall may have held this position under the Fitzwalters or the de Wantons, and as surnames became general the "le" or "the" would have been dropped. In the reign of the first Elizabeth, Stephen Marshall of Georges Farm was known for many miles round Wimbish for his activities in horse and sheep dealing.

Cornell, 1572; Wright, 1573; Savill, Savil, Savell or Saful, 1574; Taylor, Tayler or Taillour, 1577; Banks, 1.581; Marshall, 1608; Chapman, 1626; Martin, 1657; Coe, 1688; Mansfield, 1688; Jarvis, 1722; Ridgewell, 1731; Moule or Mowle, 1740; and Swan, 1759.

In Tudor times the mass of the people were still quite illiterate or only half taught to read by village dames. But the clever boys of all ranks of society were able to attend the grammar schools. Although roads everywhere were appalling there was a great increase of travelling. The farmers were compelled by law to give six days a year to repair any roads which ran through their villages. It is not difficult to imagine the grumbling caused by this law, nor how often the work was put off until at last conditions became so bad that the farmer received a summons to explain why he had not attended to his portion of road. Sometimes one man was involved, sometimes the whole parish.

At the Chelmsford Quarter Sessions for 1584, the following matter was brought up: -

"We do present one bridge called Prowdes bridge the one half lying in the parish of Thackstayd and the other in the parish of Wenbech that is in ruin and great decay, so that the Queens liege people cannot well pass by, and we find that the parishioners of Thaxted ought to repair

and amend the one half, thereof, and the parishioners of Wimbish ought to repair and amend the other part."

In 1596 it was found that "a highway in Wimbish is very noisome to the Queen's people, leading from Wimbish Hall to Anthony Barkers and is to be mended by the town."

In the October Sessions of 1599 "Henry Merytounne has digged up the church path in Wimbish lying in a field of his called Chappell croft; containing 18 perches, to the great annoyance of the parishioners, that their church path do lie that way. We present the said Henry that he has hedged up a stile which Was in a footpath to the church in Wimbish, to our great annoyance in a field called 'the more'.

"We present that there is a stile within the parish of Wimbish leading from 'Elder Strate' to the Church which is denied and hedged up, lying betwixt the field called Thyrte acres and one Close called ye Moores which is hedged up by Henry Merytounne of the same."

In 1601 – "We find a highway in the parish of Wimbish that leads from Walden to Thaxted lying between a farm called the Abotes and a house called Thunderley, to be made up by the inhabitants of Wimbish."

In 1636 – "John Wright for making pits in the highway and not making a hedge and ditch leading from Wimbish to Debden adjoining the highway. James Driland for not scouring a ditch upon the footway leading from Wimbish to Thaxted. Both of Wimbish."

In 1676 – "John Cross of Wimbish, yeoman, from 19 September to the date hereof, viz, 9 Jan. did not scour a ditch there containing 9 yards lying next the pound in the highway from Thaxteci towards Saffron Walden."

It was necessary to procure a licence before building a house and in 1592 the vicar petitioned the Sessions in these words: –

"From Lancelot Ellis vicar of Wymbyshe and preacher of the word of God reciting that whereas he has bought one piece of customary ground containing by estimation four acres lying in Wimbish for him and Mary Ellis his daughter, and their heirs for ever, and for that the said Lancelot fearing it to want something of the said measure, for his better safety and better provision of his daughter and having two or three children

besides her, would erect a house upon the same piece of ground, as the custom of the manor will bear, for the better compassing of the said piece of ground (which is called by the names of Hores); he therefore humbly craves licence to build a house upon the said parcel of ground 'the which if your worships grant, your said poor orator shall be yet further bound daily to pray for your worships health and felicity.'" After such an abject appeal it is a relief to know that the licence was granted.

Crime in Wimbish seems to have been of a mild nature on the whole during this period. Rarely did anything more serious take place than the selling of ale without a licence, or worse still, selling a short pint for one penny. This latter was a frequent offence. A number of people brewed their own ale and it was easy to make a little extra money by selling it without troubling to obtain a licence.

The parish constables were volunteers appointed every year by the Justices of the Peace, and are known to have existed as far back as the 13th century. By 1856, the constable had ceased to exist as a parish officer and instead he became a paid member of the County Police Force.

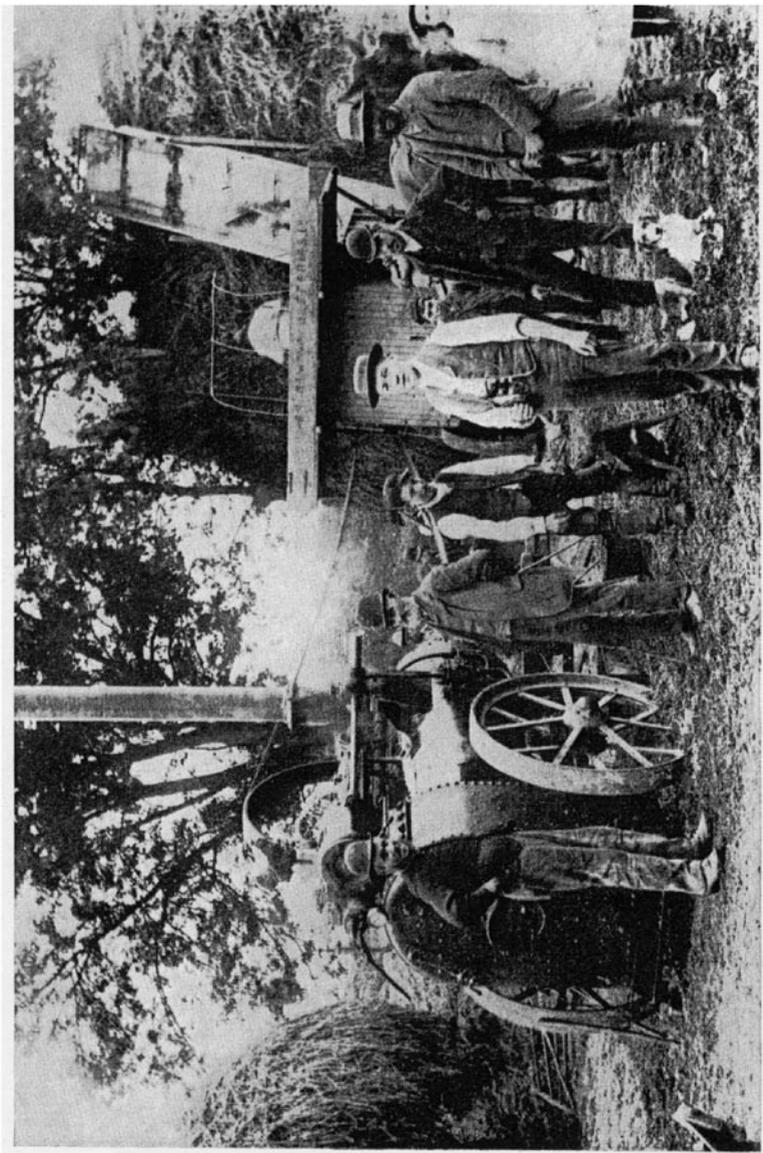
In 1571, the two constables of Wimbish presented their report to the Quarter Session as follows:—

"We do present that Thomas True of Wimbish doth sell ale and doth suffer playenge at cards in his house and whether he hath sureties or no we know not. We do present that all other things are in good order, and all estatutes well executed."

For the next few years Thomas True was regularly summoned for selling ale without a licence and as regularly failed to appear in Court. At last he was outlawed. Eventually he applied for and obtained a licence in 1588 and became a law-abiding citizen.

In 1599 there was some excitement when John Hagger the blacksmith broke into the house of William Richardson and stole twelve cheeses.

On the 9th September, 1601, Edward Meade and John Meade of Elmdon, gentlemen, and a yeoman farmer of Wimbish, were reported with other persons unknown, "for breaking into the deer park of William Wiseman, esquire, called Broadoaks Park, in the night time, and hunting the deer there with greyhounds, and for making an assault and affray upon William Nicholls, keeper of the park, beating him so that he



Threshing at New House Farm (about 1890)

despaired of his life.”

Lead-stealing is not a modern offence. In 1603 a Wimbish man, with two others from Stansted, stole a certain amount of lead out of Debden parish church.

In 1626, a husbandman of Wimbish “I December, stole 5 chickens worth 10d. of Thos. Parker there. Acknowledges. To be whipped.”

In 1641, “William Evans of Wimbish, labourer, 30 October, stole there a white wether worth 5s. of Edw. Meade.” He confessed to this theft and was branded.

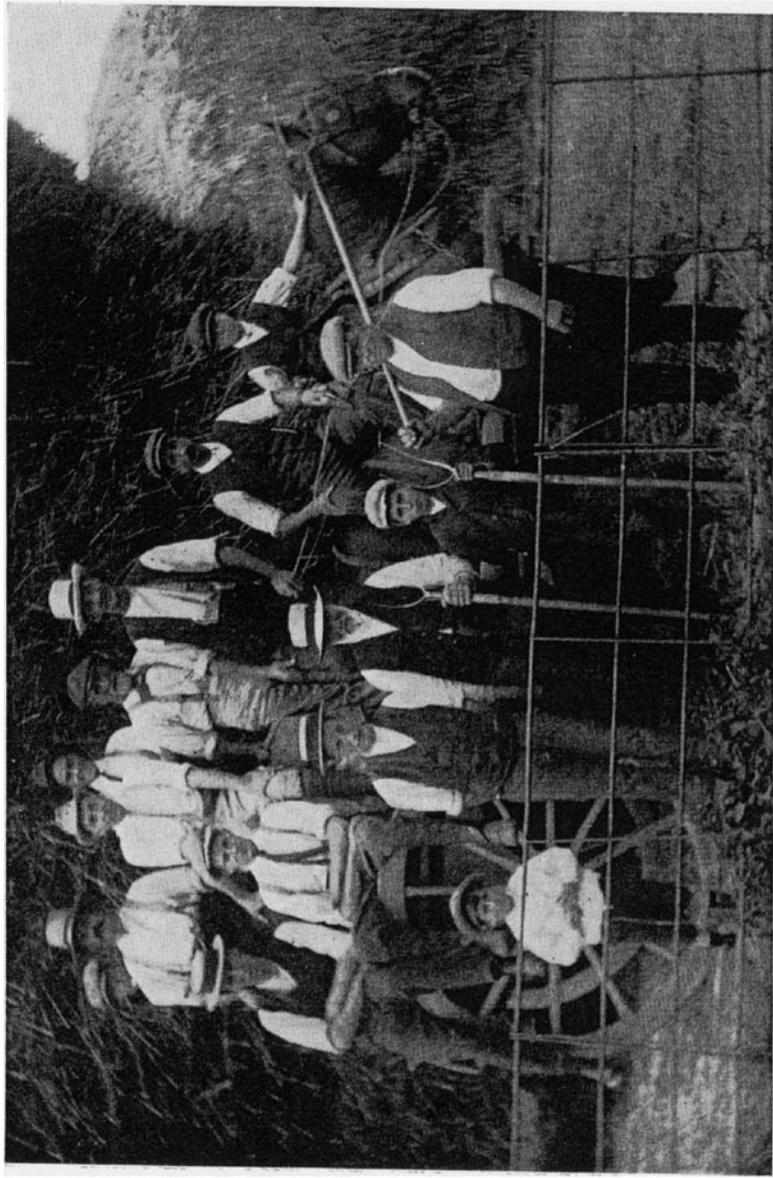
The women of a family named Stanton seem to have been a target for the hatred of the people, and on several occasions farmers were bound over to keep the peace following on brawls with these women. We understand why this was so when we read the following account of an indictment against Marjery Stanton at Chelmsford Lent Sessions, 1579.

“It is presented for our lady the Queen that Marjery Stanton of Wimbish, spinster, being a common enchantress and witch as well as of men as of beasts and other things, and exercising the diabolical and cunning art of witchcraft and enchantment, not having God before her eyes but seduced by the instigation of the Devil on the above date, of her malice aforethought, cunningly bewitched and enchanted a white gelding worth .£3 and a cow worth 40s. at Wimbish aforesaid, by reason of which enchantment and witchcraft the said gelding and cow languished from the above date until 24 August the next following when they died, and so the jurors say the said 24 August the next following when they died, and so the jurors say the said Marjery killed the said gelding and cow against the peace of the said lady the Queen, her crown and dignity etc.”

It is probable that this woman was able to bring a certain number of witnesses as was usual then, to swear that in their opinion she was not a witch, as she was released.

From a contemporary pamphlet with the strange title of *A Detection of Damnable Driftes*, it appears that Marjery Stanton was indicted on another charge, but was again released because no manslaughter was objected against her and her victim recovered.

The Stantons no doubt lived at Cole End, because the trouble more



Harvest Group at Burnt House (1906)

often than not was between this family and John Cornell. At this time the Cornelis were farming the greater part of Cole End as well as other land in the neighbourhood. Certainly the tradition that there was once a witch at Cole End has been handed down to the present time, and the belief in, and practice of witchcraft, lingers on still in some of our Essex villages.

CHAPTER 6.

STUART AND CROMWELLIAN TIMES

During the reign of Charles I, 1635-1649, there was a great change in manor-houses. Old ones were altered and new ones were built. Many old houses were abandoned and no trace of them remains. One such site is on Ellis Green, described in a Survey of 1670 as "One acre and a half called Bishops Garden whereon a large mansion house formerly stood encompassed in with moats between the Upper Field and diverse woods and Groves on all sides." Similarly nothing remains but the moat of the manor-house of Heyhams at Cole End, and the names of Peter de Heyham, and William and James de Heyham on 14th and 15th-century documents.

The house on Ellis Green was probably the home of the Harvey family who, in the Middle Ages, owned the land from the Thaxted Road, across who, in the Middle Ages, owned the land from the Thaxted Road, across Nethererstrate (now Lower Green), to the land farmed by the Stonhard family, Andrew, William and Roger who was the priest. At some later period a new farmhouse was built on the Harvey's land and became known as "Harvies" well into the 18th century, and then the name was changed to the Elms Farm.

In 1557, some of this land which had belonged to the Harvey family, was left to Walden Almshouse by the owner at that time, Agnes Corbett, who also left Barkers Farm and Great Braggs in Elder Street to the same Almshouse.

Agnes Corbett was the daughter of William Myddlton, who built Hogs Green House, now known as Myddlton House in Walden. William Myddlton left all his property, first to his mother, and on her death to Agnes. Failing these, it was to go to the Treasurer and Chamberlains of the Guild of the Holy Trinity, to be used for the benefit of the poor on the advice of the vicar. Agnes and her husband also had property left to them by John Smyth of Walden, who re-organised the Walden Almshouse after the suppression of the Guilds by Henry VIII, and it is not likely that she allowed the occupants of Wimbish Almshouse to suffer after the place had been closed down.

72 A Lease between the Walden Almshouse and the Trustees of Harvies, William Sexten, dated 1560, states that the tenant is also to provide for the use of the inmates of the Almshouse 10 gallons annually of good sweet butter by instalments as specified. One hundred and six years later, in 1666, the Trustees leased Harvies to Richard Banes. This old-established Wimbish family has died out in the village within the last forty years. The Trustees reserved the right of free liberty at Hawkeing at Parteridge and Pheasant at seasonable and convenient times. Richard Banes had to prepare 20 loads of wood for the Almshouse, and take 4 loads in payment for the carriage of the 20 loads to the Almshouse and 1 load in return for protecting springs and woods from damage from cattle. The farm was eventually sold by the Trustees and is privately owned.

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Harvest Festivals were introduced into churches at this time and at first were a great novelty. The Archbishop of Canterbury tried to reform the conduct of services. Sewing, talking and smoking were forbidden, and dignity and order restored to a certain extent, although many lords of the manor continued to make themselves very comfortable in church down to our own century. The present incumbent of Wimbish, the Rev. L. C. Davies, recalls that when he was a boy in the village of Chirk in Denbighshire, the lord of the manor kept a cosy fire burning in his room-like pew and smoked an old cob pipe during the sermon.

During the next hundred years or so a large number of people from the towns and villages of eastern England went to North America and founded settlements there, so that they could enjoy liberty in their religious beliefs. Between 1645 and 1647 two hundred witches, for the greater part poor senile old women, were put to death in the eastern counties. Essex was always renowned for its witches and sixty were hanged in the county in one year. It was not until 1736 that a law was passed forbidding the putting to death of witches.

The Plague ceased after the great outbreak of 1665 in London and never returned. This was because the black rat, which was the great flea-carrier and plague-spreader, was gradually exterminated century, but there was not one death in Wimbish from it. In 1721 the vicar, wishing to be prepared in case of an outbreak, copied into the Register this recipe for the prevention of plague:

"The Antipestilential Preservative. — Take of Rue, Sage, Mint, Rosemary, Wormwood and Lavender a handfull of each, infuse them together in a gallon of the best white wine vinegar. Put the whole into a stone pot closely covered and pasted over ye cover. Set the pot thus closed up upon warm wood ashes for eight days after which drain off and strain through fine flannell the liquid and put it into bottles well corked, and into every quart bottle put a quarter of an ounce of camphor. With this preparation wash your mouth and rub your loins and your temples every day, snuff a little up your nostrils when you go into the air, and carry about with you a bit of sponge dipd. in the same in order to (use it) upon all occasions when you are near any place or person that is infected."

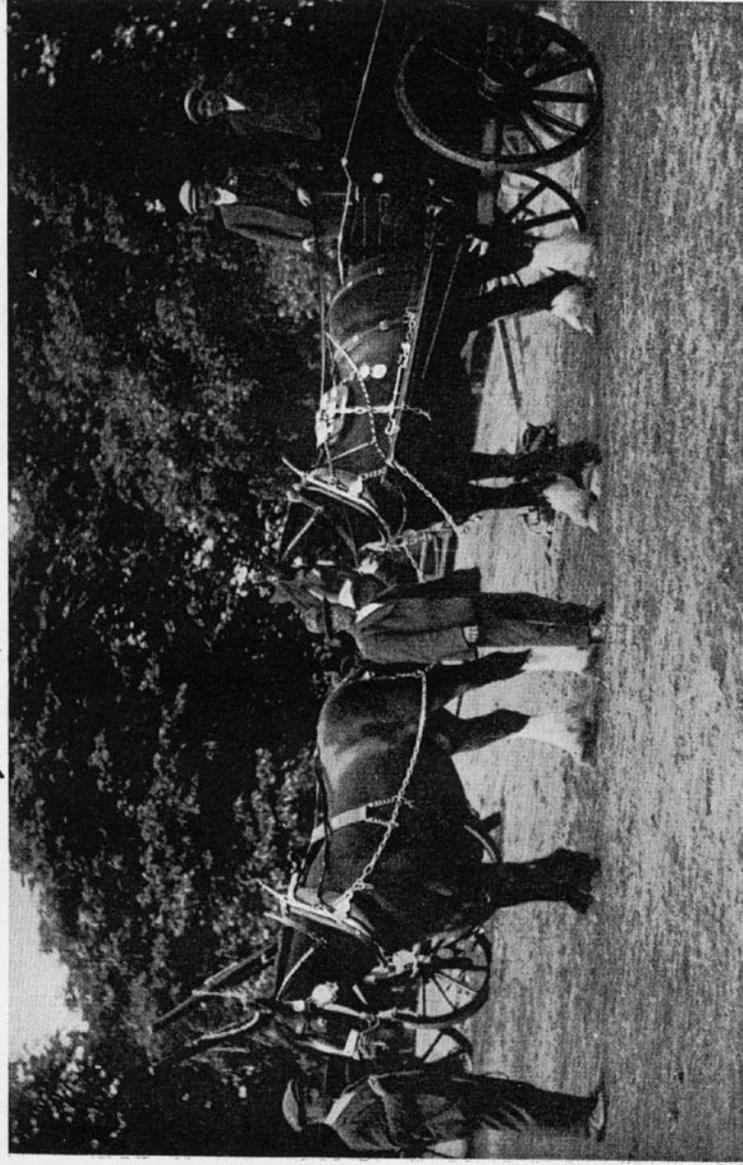
In the case of plague the vicar's fears were groundless, but small pox soon appeared and deaths from this disease are recorded in Wimbish for the first time in 1757.

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The Civil War of Charles and Cromwell was a war of conflicting ideas in Church and State. In 1642 town and country alike rushed to arms. Essex and the London area were at once seized by Cromwell and the yeomen flocked to join his army.

For a time Cromwell made his headquarters at Walden at the Sun Inn in Church Street, while his army of forty thousand was quartered on all the surrounding villages as well as in the town. It was from the Sun Inn that Cromwell sent a body of soldiers to the Isle of Wight to seize King Charles I, and bring him to the trial that resulted in his execution.

Not all people were for Cromwell, for a Wimbish labourer named Christopher Emberson appeared at the Chelmsford Quarter Sessions to answer a charge of "not having the fear of God in his heart but with a devilish malicious mind and imaginations uttering scandalous words against Cromwell, the Lord Protector, saying that he is a murderer and a ruffian, a murderer of the late King (Charles Stewart) and his fall will be great. The said Christopher Emberson did speak publicly and in a high voice hoping thereby that the faithfull people of England should withdraw their cordial love and fidelity and obedience from his Highness the Lord Protector by means of the said malicious seditious and devilish and scandalous words aforesaid."



Wimbish Winners at Saffron Walden Horseshow (1927)

History has repeatedly shown that where force is used to further spiritual and material aims there is no ultimate gain, but much suffering and loss of life. So it was in the struggle between Puritans and Royalists, and in the end England was left much as it had been before the Civil War began.

The pages listing marriages in Puritan times are missing from the Parish Register. For a time only Civil marriages were recognised as legal. Unfortunately these losses can never be made good. By an order of Queen Elizabeth in 1558, all vicars had to make a copy of their registers. These were called Bishops Transcripts and were kept by the Bishop. Wimbish was at this time in the Diocese of London, and our early copies were destroyed in the Great Fire of London, 1666. Great Fire of London, 1666.

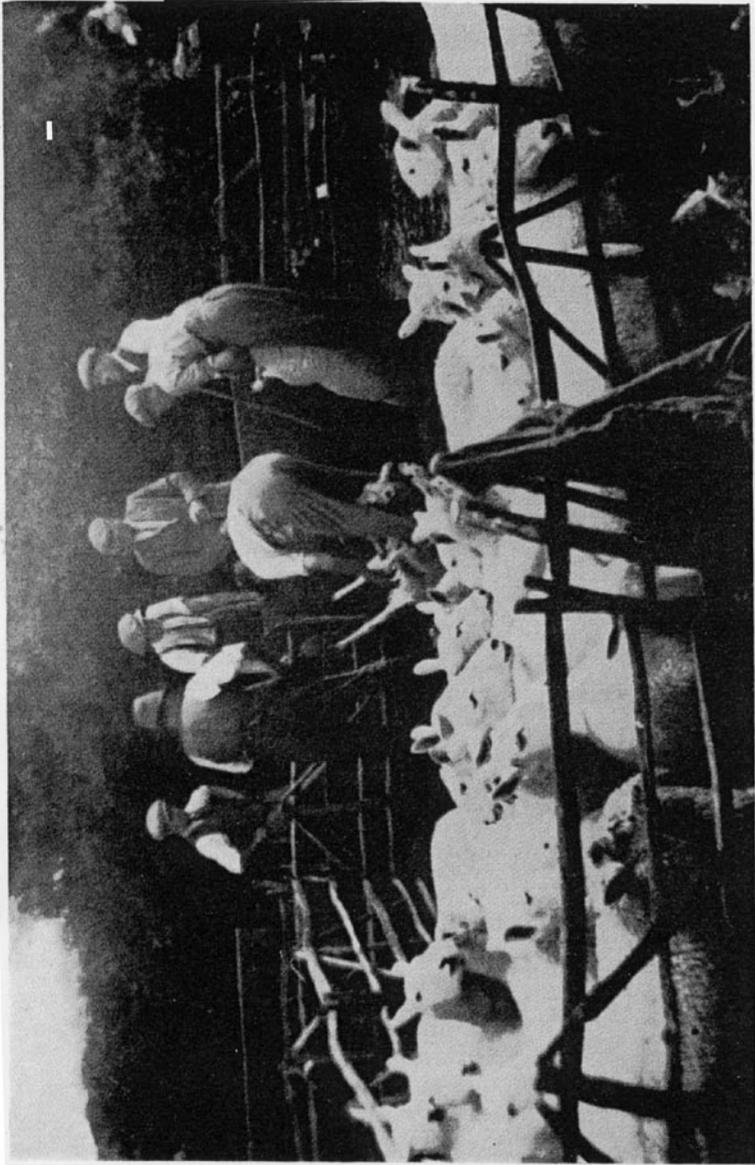
This is a return made by the constables of Wimbish to the Quarter Sessions, March 1670:

“We have not any Alehouse keepers in our parish licenced nor unlicenced we have not any poor children that are setten for to be put out to prentice nor have we any servants that lack service nor have we any that are destroyers of the game nor have we any that are eavesdroppers nor idle we have made search at all suspicious houses and we find . . . (here the writing has worn away but we can be sure that the missing word is nothing) and we present James Pettit and Michel Pettit for keeping from Church.” The Pettit family lived in Wimbish for over six hundred years without a break, and fields in Cole End bear their name. The name first occurs in 1395, when Thomas Peteyt witnesses a Deed between Robert Elys and master Robert Hamond, the vicar of Wimbish.

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“Dr. Wivel of Walden gave .3 per annum payable out of a farm called Wills Alley in Walden for six sermons to be preached in Lent in Thunderley Church, which being demolished, they were by a decree in chancery ordered to be preached at Wimbish. So says Morant in his History, and this lost charity has been a source of concern to many successive vicars of Wimbish.

On the 7th August, 1698 the vicar, Edmund Heywood, wrote to Mr. William Greenwood, son of his predecessor Rowland Greenwood (1636-

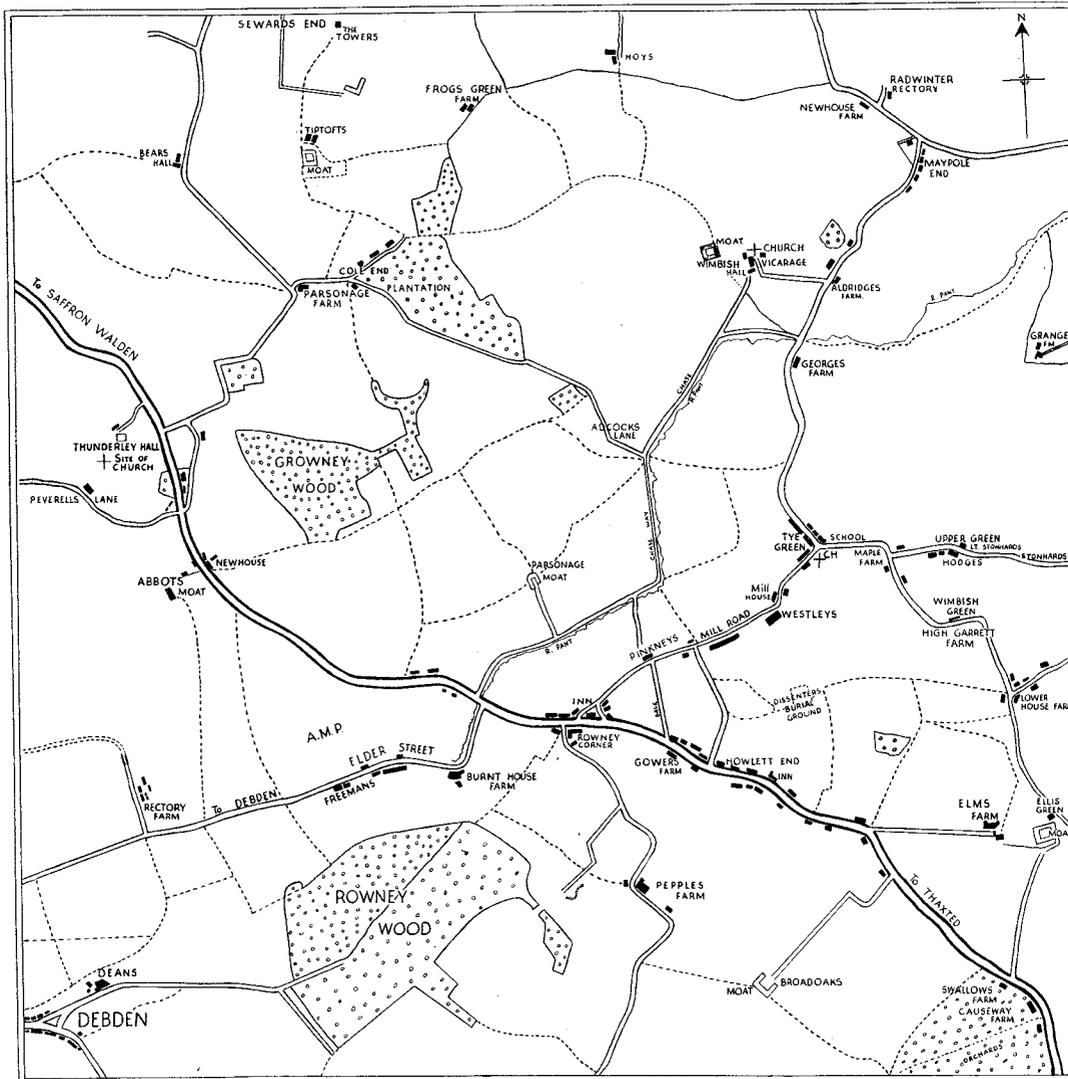


Sheep Dipping (1932)

1657) that "he cannot come to meet him at Stratford because he has no horse at present. I desire that you will be pleased to go to my old friend Mr. Strype, of Low Leyton and tell him I desire him to take an account of you of what you know concerning the endowment of a chapel at Thunderley with £5 per an. and who gave it-a cottage and close in Wimbish of 40s. per an. was given I hear to have 4 sermons preached quarterly in the said chapel, and .£3 per an. was given out of a farm called Wills Alley in the parish of Walden to have a sermon preached at the said chapel every Wednesday in Lent. And let me know whether your father did not preach at the said chapel and receive the money."

On the 27th August Heywood wrote again, "I have a very good proof at home concerning the 40s. given to the chapel, but cannot get sufficient proof of the .£3 per an. given out of the farm called Wills Alley, although fully satisfied there was such a gift. I have given my Lord of London an account of those who kindly promised me assistance. Upon Tuesday last the steeple of Debden church fell down; had it fallen upon the Lord's Day when people were at church it had killed one third part of the people, it standing in the middle of the church, which is not usual; it will cost several hundreds of Pounds to build."

Mr. Heywood must have been successful in his efforts to recover some of this money, because nearly one hundred years later, in 1781, the vicar, signing himself A. Stephenson, made this entry in the Parish Register payable annually out of his estate at Wills Alley, now occupied by William Cornell and was recovered at length from Mr. Dillingham the owner and paid after deducting Land Tax which was 4d. in the pound according to the rate of the tax of Wills Aley Farm viz. £2. 9. 0. from the year 1758. N.B. The payment had been discontinued for many years and the arrears are still unpaid."



CHAPTER 7.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

In Queen Anne's reign, 1702-4714, a primitive form of cricket began to be played all over the country on village greens. As early as the Middle Ages a game called cyrc was being played in some Surrey villages.

Until the last years of the 18th century the two wickets each consisted of two stumps only one foot high, about twenty-four inches apart, with a third stump or bail laid across them. The space between the stumps was known as the "popping hole" into which the batsman had to thrust the end of his bat before the wicket-keeper could "pop" the ball into it at the risk of a nasty knock for his fingers. The bowler trundled the ball fast along the round against the low wicket, when, as often happened, the ball passed between the stumps without hitting them, the batsman was of out. The bat was curved at the end. Towards the end of the century the game was altered by abolishing the "popping hole", adding a third stump and raising the height of the wicket to twenty-two inches. The straight bat was soon adopted as a result of these changes.

Many other games were played and a furious kind of football had been played for centuries. On Shrove Tuesday, when street football was always played, the players thought little of maiming or even killing a man in their endeavours to race through the streets with the ball and deliver it to the appointed goal.

*

In this century great changes took place in agricultural methods. Between 1696 and 1795 approximately two million acres waste had been added to the agricultural land of England and Wales by purchase or by agreement.

Wimbish was very little affected by the Acts of Parliament which enforced enclosures at this time, because most of the acreage had been enclosed hundreds of years before. The "open field" known as Wylbe field appears to have been cultivated almost entirely by the tenants of Harvies (The Elms) from the time of Richard Banes in 1666, although it was not enclosed, divided and ditched, until the middle of the 19th century. Recently these hedges and ditches have been removed

and it is again almost as large as in the old days when as many as twenty men leased "strips" in it.

During the reign of George III, 1760-1820, a total of five and a half million acres of land was enclosed. In the past, earnings had always been supplemented by milk and butter from a cow that grazed the common land, by a few pigs that foraged for themselves in the woods, and by poultry. All that was ended now. The rapid increase of the population made it absolutely necessary that farming should be carried on at the highest level.

The social price paid for economic gain was a decline in the number of smallholders and a rise in the number of landless labourers. New solidly-built farmhouses and good out-buildings were erected all over the country.

About 1701, a farmer named Jethro Tull of Berkshire, invented the drill and horse hoe.

Crop rotation began to be practised; turnips, clover and new grasses were introduced, mainly from Holland. This made it possible for people to have fresh meat through the winter and rendered the salting down unnecessary. The health of the people improved as a consequence as too much salted food had caused scurvy and other skin diseases.

Manure and cattle cake began to be imported. Cattle, sheep and pig breeding were developed, the undesirable characteristics bred out, and the type fixed. The average weight of cattle and sheep sold at Smithfield doubled between 1710 and 1795.

	1710	1795
Oxen	370 lbs.	800 lbs.
Calves	50 lbs.	150 lbs.
Sheep	38 lbs.	80 lbs.

The output of wheat and barley had for a long time supplied bread and beer for a population that nearly doubled itself in the course of the century, while corn was exported from the eastern counties. But in the latter part of the century the population rose even more rapidly and soon we were importing more grain than we exported. The improvement of

land made it possible to grow wheat in areas where only rye, oats or barley had been grown before.

There was a great improvement in horses. Horses from Arabia and North Africa had been brought into the country and in the reign of George III all the world came to England for horses, from the cart horse to the race horse.

The result of all these improvements was that England came safely through the Napoleonic blockade, and the countryside became a pattern of fields enclosed by hawthorn hedges, and farms, much as we know it now.

In the twenties and thirties of the 18th century the problem of the rural poor became too heavy for the single parish to bear. In 1723 Parliament enabled parishes to combine for the purpose of erecting a workhouse – hence the word Union, which was until recently applied to workhouses. At this time Wimbish had its own workhouse, the cottage on the Thaxted Road now known as the Orchard or Beeholme. This had a large garden and two or three fields which were expected to provide all the food eaten by the inmates.

The village overseer lasted until 1927, chiefly as the assessor of parish rates.

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Between 1682 and 1776 twenty-five adults and children were buried privately in fields and gardens in Wimbish. This seems to have begun after an illegitimate child was not baptised and was refused burial in the churchyard.

It is probable that the majority of these twenty-five people were members of Nonconformist sects which had grown rapidly during the last hundred years, and although the law against the burial of Dissenters in churchyards lapsed in 1686, it is still possible that they were refused burial or had left instructions that they were to be buried elsewhere.

In 1690, John Barker of Swards End was “buried in Wimbish in his own land called Done Meads.” This field is in Cole End. In 1692 his daughter’s child was buried in the same field. Then follows Thomas Cornell “buried near Richard Carters,” then a daughter of Thomas and Dinah Franklin buried in “Richd. Carters ground” in 1695. In this year

too, John Cornell was buried in the same ground. In 1697, William Day of Castle Camps "was buried in James Barkers ground." A child was "buried in Richard Carter's burying place" in 1699. In 1701 George Carter of Radwinter was buried in the same place, also Isaac Barker was "buried in a private burying yard." In 1703 James Pettitt of Walden was "buried in Daniel Pettitt's garden." In 1729 Thomas Sprigg, son of John "buried at Howlet End." In 1750 Emma Carter, widow, was also buried at "Howlet's End." In 1754 Mary Cornell was "buried in the burying yard."

*

The remainder were buried in a small field near the Star Inn, which became known as the Dissenters Burying Ground. This was no doubt the piece of ground referred to in the previous paragraph as Richard Carter's burying place, and this same ground may be meant by buried at Howlet End. In the early part of this 20th century some of the stones, sunken and broken, could still be seen but they gradually disappeared. For about one hundred years the place had been neglected. Five members if not more, of the Franklin family, who had farmed the Elms Farm. and Pinkneys in Wimbish, and Great Brockells in Radwinter for a considerable time, are buried here, also two of their relatives. One large stone has now been erected by their descendants, members of the old Essex family of Tanner, to commemorate them. The last legible stone was removed to Thaxted by the late Mr. Benjamin Franklin, and there incorporated in the wall of the Congregational Church. This little graveyard is once again tidy and cared for.

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In some cases in the 18th century the vicar wrote short comments in the Register after the name of the dead person. Thomas Claydon "an ould bachelour" died in 1720, and in 1757, Mary Harrison "an old maid." In 1751 "George Surridge aged 39 years. Killed by the sails of Radwinter Mill - his skull being fractured on the right temple." John Nottage was "hurt by a wagon wh. occasioned his death." When poor little Ann Harrison was baptised in February 1754, the vicar tersely comments "Water froze." Later on in the May of that year, the twentieth child of John and Mary Everett was baptised. In 1772 died "Nathaniel Andrews, 42, a butcher in ye. Churchyd." "Joseph Perry, bachelor, 61,

a faithful servant at Pinkneys," died in 1780. In 1781 Joshua Baynes, parish clerk aged 37 "a plain honest man." Also in 1781 "Mary Andrews an honest inoffensive widow from ye. Churchyard house." In 1793 Thomas Willett died from a fall from his horse. A descendant of this man, William Willett, a Chelsea builder, proposed the idea of daylight saving in 1908. This was acted upon in 1916 by the introduction of the Daylightin 1908.

On June 6th, 1756, an event occurred which must have caused great excitement and much superstitious talk in the parish. A fireball struck the church, and the vicar, Mr. Thomas Carter, wrote the following wordy account of the affair:

"June 6, 1756 being Whitsunday at 3 oclock in the afternoon – Sermon just begun a tempest arose, and suddenly a collection of fire was observed at the West End of the North Isle of the Church which instantly struck with great violence, just below a window about the middle of the same Isle and made an explosion like the firing of a gun. It drove out a stone weighing 29 lbs. that was fixed in the wall under the said window. It likewise struck down 8 or 9 men and boys none of which were able to move for some time and then not without help - some of them appeared to be dead and one boy is judged was a full hour before any signs of life were discovered in him, tho drops and other means were used for his recovery as well as for the others. One man thought that he felt something enter in at his back and pass quite thro his body; he was forced to keep his bed a day or two and for 3 weeks could not stoop without pain. The fire made its way thro the coat and waistcoat of another (in a small hole as if made by a shot) near the right shoulder - the coat was scorched within and without and the waistcoat had the appearance and smell of brimstone spread upon it on both sides, about the breadth of a crown piece, his shirt and back were scorched down to the hip. The skin was raised on his hip which gave him excessive pain; a small piece was melted out of the back of his knife in his breeches pocket. Several others had their hands or legs scorched and likewise suffered violent pain-a dog was killed. Only one woman was hurt, having one hand and one leg very much scorched, was forced to be carried home.

"There was a strong smell of sulphur and smoke in the church - fire was also seen in the church and seemed to go out at the Chancel Door.

Upon further inspection the following particulars were observed. The coping stone at the N.W. corner of the new built steeple was broken and several bricks under it were forced out. The fire appeared to have entered the church at 7 places thro a window in the N. Isle directly opposite to the steeple – the window lead being melted, the glass scorched looking white on the outside and black within. Where the fire touched the stones of the window frame they were made black even on the outside. No glass was beat out tho in one place it was shattered into many. pieces. Like raies meeting in a centre about the size and shape of a crown piece. The glass was not broke so far as it was scorched. From this window the force seems to have been directed against the steeple, the bricks being battered in several places. From the steeple it appears to have returned with great violence towards the same window for the bottom of the frame is marked as if struck with a bullet which loosened it and forced its way quite through the joining and underneath a large stone weighing 77 lbs. and made a broad black mark in its passage and a considerable crack in the brickwork under the stone from thence it directed its course right up the church and besides making the havoc before described battered the wall in several places.

T.C.”

Two rather curious entries in the parson’s account book are these:

“1774. 31 March. Began to whiten the Chancell 2 April finished it.”

“1775. Blackd. ye Chancel cleaned ye Chancel T. Window.”

Nearly one hundred years before this the Archdeacon on one of his Visitations had ordered the walls of the church to be whitened. He also wrote in 4his report: There wants a New Common Prayer Book. There wants a Cloth and Napkin for ye Communion Table. The Sexton needed a new Mattock and various seats needed repair. In many villages the Archdeacon found it necessary to admonish the parson for being more interested in his land and pigs than in his parishioners but this was never the case in Wimbish.

During this century there was only one case from Wimbish presented at the Quarter Sessions. A poor widow who did domestic work stole some flour from her employer.

CHAPTER 8.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

The poverty of the villagers after the war with France was acute. Wheat rose from 43 shillings a quarter in 1792, the year before the war broke out, to 126 shillings in 1812, the year Napoleon went to Moscow. The poor suffered terribly from the price of bread. Bread and cheese became in many southern counties the sole diet of the labourer. They seldom saw meat, though many grew potatoes.

A pauperising system of relief was instituted by which every poor and industrious person should receive from the parish a certain sum per week in addition to his poor wages, so much for himself and so much for other members of his family, when the loaf cost a shilling. As the loaf rose the dole was to rise with it instead of an increase in wages, whip would have helped the worker to keep his self-respect.

At the beginning of the century, in preparation for a Napoleonic invasion, a form was sent to millers and bakers worded in this manner: "We the undersigned millers of the parish of Wimbish have taken into consideration a plan recommended by the Lord Lieutenant for ensuring a regular Supply of Bread to His Majesty's Forces in the District during the Continuance of the present Wars, in Case it should become necessary to assemble large Bodies of Men, in one or more given Points for the Purpose of opposing an Enemy."

The millers were asked to prepare and deliver such Quantities of dry, sweet and clean Flour, made of good marketable English Wheat, out of which the Bran shall have been taken by means of a Twelve Shilling seamed Cloth. The millers of Wimbish, Messrs. Giblin and Winter, filled in their form, obviously in a hurry, with the words No cloth, no wheat, one windmill. But they did promise to see that as much bread as possible was provided every twenty-four hours. Perhaps it is as well that they were never called upon to do so.

Between 1801-1831 the inhabitants of England, Scotland and Wales rose from eleven to sixteen and a half millions. The population of Wimbish in 1811 was 655, and by 1831 it had risen to 921. In 1851 it was 1,004, but from that time steadily declined and is at present approximately 555.

People left the villages in thousands for London and, the manufacturing towns in the north, while others emigrated to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. A large number became the mobile army of unskilled labour known as navvies, engaged in gangs that moved from place to place digging canals, making roads, and in the next generation constructing embankments and tunnels for railways.

Throughout this century Nonconformity increased. Reg. Groves says in his book, *Sharpen the Sickle*:

“Innumerable small groups came into existence, governing their own affairs, having their own unpaid teachers and preachers and paying their own way. In the chapels the labourers learned self-respect, self-government, self-reliance and organisation; here men learned to speak, to read, to write, to lead their fellows.”

In 1811 a Society was formed called The National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church throughout England and Wales. This Society provided a large number of schools for children between the ages of seven and ten. At first they were free, but when money ran short, a very small fee was charged. They were known as Church Schools. Wimbish Church School was built in 1840. Later a State Elementary School was built and the old school building has been consecrated and is now St. Paul's Mission Room.

As a result of the Education Act of 1870, it became possible for everyone in the village to learn to read and write. In 1884 the agricultural worker received the Parliamentary vote and could from now on vote as he wished.

Under the Local Government Act of 1894 the vestry was deprived of all its civil powers, and the Parish Council was set up in its place. The village is governed by three Councils: the Parish Council, the Rural District Council, and the County Council.

In the last quarter of this century a great agricultural depression set in. The summer of 1879 was the wettest on record and to make matters worse the country was flooded with cheap American corn grown on the newly broken-up prairies. Arable farming never recovered and the bottom fell out of corn production. From 1890 onwards, meat, cheese, butter and wool were heavily imported.

Between 1871 and 1901 the corn area of the country declined by nearly three million acres, and stubbles returned to rough grass. Agricultural workers decreased by more than 300,000 in thirty years. The dread of ending in the Union was always in people's minds, as there was no pension and nothing whatever to fall back upon in time of trouble.

The corn-growing districts suffered most, particularly Eastern England. A large number of farmers became bankrupt. As farms became empty they were quickly taken by younger Scottish sons or north of England farmers, accustomed to hard work and poor living, and these were able to rent land at thirteen and fourteen shillings an acre and in some cases even less.

In the early part of Queen Victoria's reign John Reade invented porous clay pipes. These solved many of the problems of field drainage, which was carried out extensively after 1850.

Steam was now introduced for ploughing and threshing, and new or improved implements such as cultivators, rollers, drills, reapers, mowing-machines, horse-rakes, elevators, turnip and chaff-cutters, began to make an appearance.

The first engine to travel under its own power seen in this part of the country belonged to Mr. Townsend of Burnt House, and was converted from a portable engine for him by a Mr. Choppen, who came from another district and lived in the cottage opposite Burnt House while working on this job. He later settled in Saffron Walden and founded the well-known firm of agricultural engineers of that name.

This engine was used for road haulage work for many years. It seems not to have had brakes and travelling downhill was often an adventure, judging from tales still told about it in the village.

There were two blacksmiths' shops in Wimbish in the early part of the century, one opposite the shop in Howlett End and the other near the White Hart.

In these days, Mr. Edward Harrison, in whose family the shop, until recently owned by his grandson, Mr. Herbert Buck, had been for a very long time, sent a waggon-load of meat and poultry to Smithfield Market every week, leaving Howlett End on Tuesday morning. The driver stopped at Epping to rest the horses in the evening, and set off again

in the early hours of Wednesday morning arriving at Smithfield later in the day. The waggon was then unloaded and the driver drove to the Saracens Head in Aldgate and slept there on Wednesday night. He left in the early hours and, spending the next, night at Epping, arrived back in Wimbish on Friday night.

Farmers sent their hay and corn to London by waggon, and the writer, when a small child, was once given an account of the last public hanging at Tyburn, by an old Wimbish man Who had been one of the crowd there when a boy. He had regularly gone to London with loads of hay at that time.

In the last few hundred years Wimbish has not attracted the attention of Royalty to any great extent, but King Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, when travelling from Easton Lodge to Audley End, changed horses at the White Hart. Some bystanders and helpers told him that they would like to drink his health and he obligingly handed out half-crowns. These were kept as souvenirs for many years by some of the men.

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Wimbish Tithe Barn stands at the Parsonage Farm on land which was at one time rectorial glebe land. Tithe was originally a voluntary offering of one-tenth of the annual yield of stock and crops, and had been used for the relief of the poor and to aid Church expenses. From about the 10th century it became a compulsory tax, and was levied for the benefit in particular of the priest. It was never popular. The produce was stored in the tithe barn, and the parson himself remained a practical farmer right up to the 19th century.

The Tithe Act of 1836 allowed a rent charge to replace tithing in kind, based on the price of corn averaged over seven years. Later laws of 1918, 1925 and 1936 standardised payments and introduced a system of redemption. As a result tithe is now being gradually extinguished, and the Church is being compensated with Treasury Stock. The parsons stipend therefore has no longer any direct dependence on the land, and the fact that he no longer farms his own glebe land has almost severed the Church's practical connection with agriculture.

Wimbish Parish Barn, which stood in Howlett End, has been pulled down. In this barn villagers were able to store the corn, beans and peas grown on their allotment and in their gardens.

CHAPTER 9.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Conditions for the agricultural worker did not improve very much until the First World War. However, the Old Age Pension Act of 1909 and the National Health Insurance Act of 1911 were steps in the right direction. The number of farm workers in England and Wales declined from 612,000 in 1921 to 511,000 in 1939 at the beginning of the Second World War. As a consequence farming has become a mechanised industry and the heavy farm horse appears to be dying out. At the present time only 7% of the population is engaged in agriculture, whereas 93% is engaged in industry.

Where oxen ploughed "on the lande of the Abbote" in the Middle Ages, there is now an aerodrome. Where once were lanes and bridle paths there are good roads, but otherwise the appearance of Wimbish cannot have greatly changed in the last six hundred years, and the cutting down of hedges is probably causing the landscape to resemble the village of the open fields more than has been the case for hundreds of years. But whereas now, except for a solitary figure on a tractor here and there, the fields appear to be empty, in those days they must have been full of men and women workers. Langland in *Piers Plowman* depicts the scene in an open field as "A fair field full of folk with all manner of men working and wandering. Some putten them to the plough and others in setting and sowing swonken (work) full hard." In spite of the hardships of their lives and the complete lack of luxury, judging from old writings they were a naturally robust and jolly people, fond of singing, horseplay and laughter. This, combined with the shouts of encouragement and reproof to the oxen, must have made the village a more alive and human place than it seems now when little sound can be heard but the noise of aeroplanes, road traffic and farm machinery.

CHAPTER 10.

THE STORY OF BROADOAKS

Shortly after the accession to the Throne of Queen Elizabeth in 1588 the laws against Roman Catholics, which had fallen into abeyance for several years, were revived and were rigorously carried out. Any Catholic priest found in the country was liable to execution, so that all but the old and feeble were forced to renounce their vows or to seek refuge abroad.

In order to combat these conditions a number of English Catholic gentlemen went secretly overseas and were trained as priests by the Jesuits. They were then secretly smuggled back into England, and by means of their remarkable organisation, which made full use of disguises, secret communications and cleverly-constructed hiding-places, they contrived to effect a Catholic revival which seriously perturbed the Government. To counteract this movement, a body of priest-hunters known as Pursuivants was formed.

The Wisemans of Broadoaks were Roman Catholics and liable to persecution, but, preferring peace and comfort to being perpetually hounded by Pursuivants, would have no dealings with the Jesuits. There were but few other Catholics in the district and the small congregation, which only assembled four times a year for Mass in this isolated house, quite escaped official notice.

All this was changed, however, when the Wiseman brothers, Thomas and John, went on a visit to relatives in Suffolk and there met Father John Gerard. They became very interested in him and introduced him to their family at Broadoaks, and it was soon arranged that he should make Broadoaks his headquarters. The family consisted of four brothers and two sisters, their widowed mother and the wife and two children of William, the older brother and head of the house. Two other sisters had previously become nuns of the Bridgettine Order; one was an Abbess in Lisbon.

After the advent of Father Gerard the two remaining sisters entered the Augustinian Convent at Louvain. The two brothers who had been instrumental in introducing Father Gerard to Broad-oaks, went abroad to be trained as priests by the Jesuits. The third brother, Robert, a soldier,

was killed in battle in the Low Countries. The widowed mother, Jane, removed herself with a private chaplain to the original family seat near Felsted, so that there could be one more safe place of call or hiding for priests.

In the autumn of 1592 Broadoaks was visited by Pursuivants. Letters were seized, a collection of armour discovered in a vault behind a door, and a secret place between two walls was found to contain not only the equipment for Mass but a poor old priest named Thomas Jackson. What became of him is not known. Father Gerard was away at this time.

When Father Gerard took up his abode at Broadoaks most of the Protestant servants were replaced by trustworthy foreign Catholics. Fresh precautions for hiding were taken and it was soon considered to be a safe place of call for priests. For this purpose, a Jesuit lay-brother, a carpenter and mason, named Nicholas Owen, was brought to the house, whose speciality it was to devise and construct the Jesuit hiding-places. He observed every precaution and for this reason always made a pretext for his presence in a house by engaging in some job of alteration or repair. The true purpose of his visit was carried out during the night when he could work in secret. His contrivances were simple but clever. He often made one hiding-place within another so that should the first be found the second might be passed over. His favourite trick was to quarry in the thickness of a solid wall a place just large enough to conceal a man, covering the tiny entrance with a substantial secret door. Such an arrangement was practically sound-proof, but its great advantage lay in the fact that no exterior measurements would betray its position. Such a place as this he made at Broadoaks. We know from official records that he was at Broadoaks during December 1593, quite unsuspected in that suspicious atmosphere; yet at least 80 cubic feet of brick work was secretly quarried out and disposed of, though none but he and the Wisemans knew of it. There is in the living-room adjoining the hiding-hole, a carved stone fireplace of early Renaissance work which is of later date than the other fittings of the house. It is reasonable to surmise that the erection of this fireplace, in the days when its design was new and fashionable, was carried out by Nicholas Owen to afford an excuse for his presence in the house.

The room which the Wisemans used as a secret chapel was the long, low attic, which has remained almost untouched to this day. Then, as now, it had only one door, which led in from a dark stair. But there was an exit through a small window to the leads of the roof, and a trap in the ceiling to the spacious garrets above. These places had no connection with the hide, but they tended to lead pursuers on to search far afield for what actually lay under their noses.

In this chapel Nicholas Owen took up the tiles from the fireplace and constructed a false hearth. Beneath this he burrowed downwards into the solid brickwork. The place he made adjoins the large living-room below and is located high up and slightly to the side of the Renaissance fireplace. It was separated from this room only by the lath and plaster covered with a panelled wainscot. The hiding-place is two feet wide and five feet six inches tall at the highest point – not a very comfortable place to conceal such a figure of a man as Gerard who was both broad and tall.

Whilst these preparations were going on, two noted Pursuivants, acting on the treacherous information of an old and trusted Protestant ex-servant of the Wisemans, named John Frank, raided Mrs. Jane Wiseman's house at Feasted on the day after Christmas of 1593. A priest named Brewster escaped by taking to a hiding-place constructed in the chimney, from whence he was later smuggled by night to Broadoaks and thence to another district. Mr A. Wiseman was arrested and taken to London to appear before the officials who acted as judges in cases concerning Roman Catholics. The Magistrate reported that her house was "a house of resort for all wicked persons." She was kept in prison for two years and it then came to the ears of the authorities that a priest brought her Holy Communion on fixed days. The Law was again invoked against her and she was brought up for trial. She received the sentence of death by the torture of the pressyard. On hearing the sentence "she said with a cheerful countenance "Deo Gratis," according to Father Gerard. He continues, "Her position and good name gave the Queen's councillors second thoughts. They did not want to shock London by their barbarity, so after her condemnation they had her removed to another and worse prison (the Clink) and kept her there. What they were after was the property for the Queen. And had she

been executed, this would have gone, not to the Queen, but to her son! William Wiseman, my host."

It is also stated by the compiler of St. Monica's Chronicle, on information given by her daughters, Bridget and Jane, who were nuns in this Belgian convent, that the Queen on hearing how " for so small a matter she would have been put to death rebuked the justices of cruelty and said she should not die."

Father Gerard writes: " There in a filthy cell she lingered on until the accession of King James when she received the pardon usually granted at the coronation of a new king. On her return home she continued to serve God's servants as she had done before and still kept two priests in her house."

She was in prison for nine years and lived for five years more, dying happily after a severe illness. She was a Welsh woman, her father being a Vaughan and her mother a Tudor of the blood royal, and she had all the courage and tenacity of her race.

At the time that Mrs. Wiseman was arrested at Felsted, Father Gerard was away in London. He was staying at a house in Southwark which William Wiseman had purchased. By trickery on the part of the authorities a message was sent to William Wiseman at Broadoaks which caused him to hurry to London to consult Father Gerard. He was immediately arrested and sent to the Tower. Father Gerard hastened back to Broadoaks to discuss events with Joan Wiseman, the wife of William, and to make preparations for the Easter services. The treacherous ex-servant followed with the most reliable Pursuivants available and a hpdy of soldiers.

The story is best continued in the words of Father Gerard, translated by Philip Caraman from the Latin in which it was written.

"On Easter Monday 1st April 1594, we rose earlier than usual for Mass, for we felt there was danger about. As we were preparing everything for Mass before daybreak we heard, suddenly, a great noise of galloping hooves. The next moment, to prevent any attempt at escape, the house was encircled by a whole troop of men. At once we realised what was afoot, We barred the doors; the altar was stripped, the hiding

places opened and all my books and papers thrown in. It was most important to pack me away first with all my belongings.

"I was hardly tucked away when the Pursuivants broke down the door and burst in. They fanned out through the house, making a great racket. The first thing they did was to shut the mistress of the house in her own room with her daughters, then they locked the Catholic servants in different places in the same part of the house. This done, they took possession of the place (it was a large house) and began to search everywhere, even lifting the tiles of the roof to examine underneath them and using candles in the dark corners. When they found nothing, they started knocking down suspicious-looking places. They measured the walls with long rods and if the measurements did not tally they pulled down the section they could not account for. They tapped every wall and floor for hollow spots, and on sounding anything hollow they smashed it in.

"Two days of this revealed nothing. On the second day the justices went off thinking that I must have left the house on Easter Sunday. Some Pursuivants remained behind to take the mistress of the house and Catholic servants, men and women, up to London to be examined and imprisoned. They were going to leave the other servants, I mean the non-Catholics, to watch the house. The traitor was one of them."

Presumably, from what follows, they were taken for temporary confinement to a neighbouring house. When nothing could be proved against them they were allowed to return.

Father Gerard continues: " This pleased the lady and she hoped with his (the traitor's) help to save me from dying of slow starvation, for she knew I had made up my mind to die in this way between the two walls rather than come out and save my life at the sacrifice of others. Indeed, during those four days of hiding all I had to eat was a biscuit or two and a little quince jelly, which my hostess happened to have by her and had handed to me as I was going in. As she had not expected the search to last more than a day she had looked for nothing else.

"But now two days had passed and she was to be taken off next morning with all the servants she could trust. Afraid I might die of starvation she called up the traitor. She had heard he was to be left behind and had noticed that, when the searchers broke in, he had made

a great show of resisting them. Certainly she would never have given away my hiding place to him had I not been in such straits, but she thought it better to save me from certain death, even though she was taking a risk. So she instructed him after she had been taken away, when there was no one about, to go into a certain room and to call out my name; he was to say that everyone else had been taken off, he alone was left and would set me free. She told him that I would answer from the hiding place behind the panelling and plaster.

“The traitor promised to carry out these instructions faithfully; yes, he was faithful but only to men who did not know the meaning of faith. Of course he reported everything to the party who had been left behind, and they at once sent a call for the magistrates who had already left. First thing in the morning they were back and the search was resumed. Much more thoroughly than before they measured up and sounded every place for a hollow spot, particularly in that room, but during the whole of the third day they found nothing at all. They decided, therefore, to spend the next day tearing off the plaster.

“Meanwhile they set guards that night in every room round to watch any attempt I might make to escape. From where I was hidden I heard the password which the head of the party gave to his men, and if I could have come out of my hiding place without being seen I would have used it and tried to get away. But there were two men watching in the chapel where the entrance to my hiding place was, and there were several others in the plastered room, which they had been told about.

“But an amazing Providence protected me. Here I was in my hiding place. I had got into it by raising part of the floor under the grate. It was made of wood and brick and constructed in such a way that a fire could not be lit in it without damaging the house. But wood was kept there as though it were meant for a fire.

“That night the men on guard decided to light a fire in the grate and they sat down by it for a gossip. In a few moments the bricks, which were not laid on other bricks but on wood, came loose and almost fell out of position as the woodwork subsided. The men noticed this and poked the hearth with a stick and found the bottom made of wood. I heard them remark what a curious thing it was, and thought that there

and then they would smash open the hiding place and peer in. However, they decided to put off their investigations until the next day.

“Escape was out of the question now. I began to pray earnestly that, if it was for God’s greater glory, I might not be captured in that house and bring retribution on my host, nor in any other house whatsoever where others would suffer for it. God kept me safe in that house. A few days later when I was captured no one suffered for it, as you shall see in a moment.

“The next day the search was resumed with great thoroughness. But they left alone the top room which had served as a chapel and in which the two guards had made a fire above my head, and had commented upon the strange structure of the grate. God had wiped all memory of it from their minds. During all that day not a single Pursuivant entered the room, and it was, not without reason, the most suspected room in the house. If they had entered they would have found me without any search at all; rather, they would have seen me, for the fire had burned a hole in my hiding place, and I had to move a little on one side to avoid the hot embers falling on my head. The Pursuivants seemed to have forgotten all about this room; at any rate they seemed not to care about it. Instead they concentrated on the rooms below, in one of which they had been told I was hiding, and did in fact discover the other hiding place. It was quite near to where I was and I heard their yelps of joy when they came on it; and then their consternation when they found it empty. All they discovered was an untouched store of provisions laid up against a long search like this. Possibly they concluded it was the place that the mistress of the house meant; it would certainly have been easy to answer from there any call made by a person in the room she had mentioned.

“But they kept to their plan of stripping off all the plaster from the other large room and with the help of a carpenter they began their work close to the ceiling not far from where I was. (The lower parts of the walls were covered with tapestries). Going right round the room they stripped off the plaster, until they were in front of the exact spot where I was hiding. There, despairing of finding me, they gave up. My hiding place was in a thick wall of the chimney behind a finely inlaid and carved mantel-shelf which they could not remove without risk of

breaking. Yet if they had had the slightest suspicion that I was behind it they would have smashed it to pieces. They knew that there were two flues and thought it would be impossible for a man to hide there.

“Earlier, on the second day of the search, they had been in the room above me and had examined the fireplace through which I had got into my hole. With the help of a ladder they had climbed into the flue and sounded it with a hammer and I had heard one of them saying to another: “ There might conceivably be room for a person to get down into the wall of the chimney below if this grate was raised.” “ Hardly,” said the other, “ there is no entrance down that way into the other chimney. But there might easily be an entrance at the back of the chimney.” As soon as he had said this he gave the place a kick. I was afraid he would notice the hollow sound of the hole in which I was hiding. But God, who set limits to the sea, said to these determined men, “ You have come as far as this but you go no farther,” and He spared his sorely stricken children and would not give them up into the hands of their persecutors. Nor would He allow anything worse to come upon them for their great charity to me.

“As their search was a failure they thought that I had managed to escape somehow or other and they went off at the end of the fourth day. The mistress of the house was set free, and her servants also; the traitor, however, still undiscovered, stayed behind after the searchers had left.

“The doors of the house were then barred and the mistress came to call me out. Like Lazarus, who was buried four days, I came forth from what would indeed have been my tomb if the search had continued a little longer. I was very wasted and weak with hunger and lack of sleep. All that time I had been squatting in a very confined space. While the search was on the mistress of the house had eaten nothing whatsoever, partly because she wanted to share my discomfort and find out by testing herself how long I could live without food, but chiefly to draw down God’s mercy upon me and upon herself and her whole family by fasting and prayer. When I came out I found her face so changed that she looked a different person; and had it not been for her voice and her dress I doubt whether I would have recognised her.

“The traitor met me after I had come out. We still had no suspicion of his treachery. He did nothing then; he did not even call the Pursuivants

back for he knew well that I meant to be off before they could be recalled."

Father Gerard set out at once for a friend's house not far away and there he lay low for a fortnight. He then continued to London and very soon was caught. He was imprisoned for three years and suffered severe torture, but nothing would make him betray his friends or fellow Jesuits.

In his Autobiography he has left a remarkable account of his years in prison and subsequent exciting escape from the Tower.

William Wiseman had been able to purchase his release from the Tower, and he and his wife lived in their Southwark house for two years so that they could be near his mother, who was confined in the Tower at that time.

For a time Father Gerard stayed with them in Southwark. A few months later they all returned to Broadoaks and the Wise-mans urged him to take up his quarters there once more, but he refused to submit them to further danger.

In spite of the hue and cry after him he managed to live in this country until just after the Gunpowder Plot. Guy Fawkes, in his confession, stated that the conspirators took a solemn oath and vow to execute their plot, and that they received the Sacrament from "Gerard the Jesuite" to perform that vow, but that "Gerard was not acquainted of their purpose." Whether he knew or not, after the discovery of the Plot the country was too unsafe for him, and his supervisors ordered him to return to Rome. Three years later he was ordered to write his Autobiography as a guide and source of encouragement to other young priests.

Scarcely a year after the search previously related, there was another raid on Broadoaks. Mass was preparing, and the members of the congregation were arrested, but the record merely says that the priest escaped.

This priest was Father Richard Banks, a Jesuit, described by Gerard as a "good and devout man—a finer man than me in every way. At first my old friends seemed not to think so highly of him, but when they

came to know him better they found everything I had said about him was true. Soon they came to regard him as their father.”

On yet another occasion the house was searched, and this time William Wiseman was re-arrested for being in possession of a rosary and a few prohibited books. He was eventually released.

Of his two young daughters, who were present at the time of the search, one married and the other entered a convent and became Prioress of St. Monica’s in Louvain in succession to her aunt.

For some time Father Gerard held the post of Master of Novices in the English College at Louvain and there, no doubt, he sometimes visited the Prioress of St. Monica’s, and talked with her of bygone days in the house in Wimbish that neither would ever see again.

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