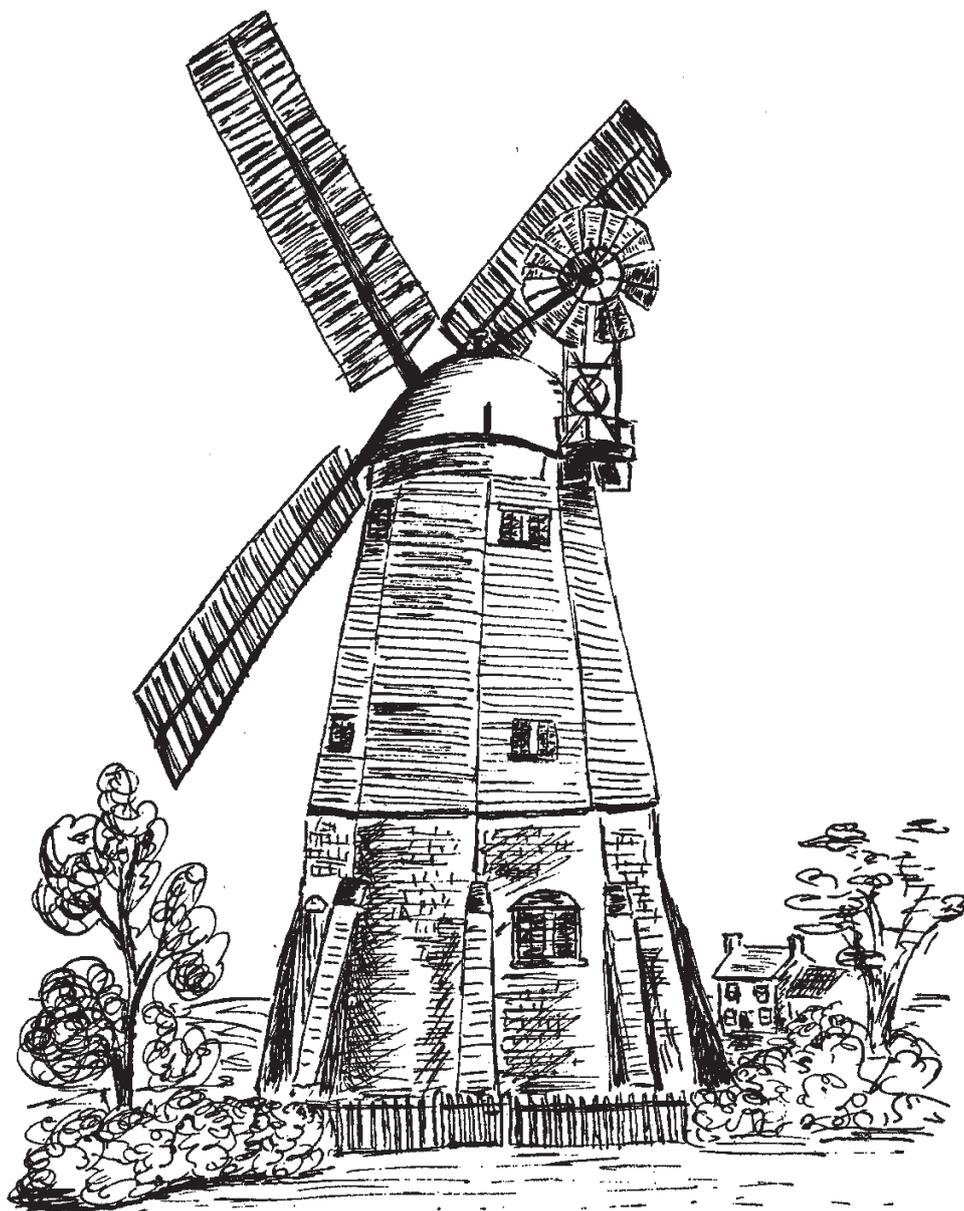


Wimbish Memories



by
Ben Taylor

This PDF Edition

This booklet was originally printed in 1976 on a Roneo duplicator for sale in aid of the Wimbish School. It has long been out of print. The late Ben Taylor [author], Fred Haslock [editorial], G W Ingram [Index] & the late Mrs M Haslock [cover artwork] produced this booklet in its original form. Although this electronic version is given free to anyone who wants it, it is still copyright. It may not be incorporated in other works, in whole or in part, without permission of the copyright holders.

This edition has been created by OCR (Optical Character Recognition) from an original edition. The text is more neatly typeset than the original but the words are exactly the same and on the same pages as in the original edition: so the index should still work.

If you find this booklet enjoyable, interesting, useful (or all three) please consider making a donation to Wimbish School so that the wishes of the author are respected.

Fred Haslock was the school headmaster (and chairman of the Wimbish Paris Council) at the time the book was produced and deserves thanks for ensuring that this valuable record exists.

David Corke, Tye Green House Wimbish, CB10 2XE August 2002

INTRODUCTION

Ben Taylor was born in Wimbish, like his father and his grandfather. In fact, it is said that this family of Taylors can be traced back in the district for nearly 500 years. He was born in the house known as Star Cottage, one of ten children. He had three sisters and six brothers and, except for one child who died in his teens, all his brothers have lived to over seventy years of age. He has lived all his life in the village, save for the time he spent in the army during the First World War. He went to the village school, and his name and deeds are forever enshrined in the pages of the old punishment book. He married a local girl, in fact she was the girl next door - and they were blessed with over fifty very happy years together.

Ben originally wrote his memories between the years 1970-71 of the people and places he knew as a boy. The Reverend W.P. Witcutt had a short excerpt printed in the Wimbish Newsletter. When I took over as editor I had further extracts printed. They aroused a great deal of interest at the time, and I have long felt many people who know Wimbish today, or who remember it from the past, would be interested to read all of Ben's account. To his written record I have added transcriptions from a long tape - recorded conversation I have had with him. I am very grateful to Ben for all the time he has given and interest he has shown to see that I have set down his memories correctly. I would also like to thank Mrs. Janet Swan for all the typing and duplicating work she has done, my wife, Muriel, for the drawing of the windmill in Mill Road as it was around 1900 and to Mr. G.W. Ingram for preparing the index which is to be found at the back of the booklet. The sketch maps are intended as a guide, and are drawn to a scale of approximately four miles to an inch with the exception of the detail of Rowney Corner. They are based on maps that were drawn many years ago. The roads as we know them today have been, in most cases, very much widened since the turn of the century. The route of the A130 has changed particularly at Cole End.

Finally, I hope, on a fine summer's day you might be seen walking round Wimbish, seeing the places and remembering the times as seen through the eyes and memory of one of our most respected and well loved local characters - Mr. Ben Taylor of Wimbish.

F.J. Haslock. Wimbish School, Saffron Walden, Essex. February 1976.

Any profits from the sale of this booklet are being donated to Wimbish School.

WIMBISH MEMORIES by BEN TAYLOR

From Gunters Farm to Causeway End.

At the back of the three old brick cottages there was built, around 1850, a tower for taking the levels of the surrounding countryside, this being one of the highest spots in the district. Further on to the right is Thunderley Hall, beyond which is the site of Thunderley Church. All traces of this have now disappeared as the site has been ploughed since the Second World War. From New House Farm thatching stakes were obtained by many farmers in the district. These were used for thatching their hay barns, corn stacks and also many of the cottages. The stakes were cut from Crowney wood. Just inside the wood stood a keeper's cottage, but this was burnt down in the early 1900's and has not been rebuilt. Debden Aerodrome has taken most of the land from Abbots Manor Farm and also from a small farm known as Mellors Farm.

At the top of Four Turn Hill, on Rowney Corner, there once stood three post windmills, though this was many years ago. on the triangular green at Rowneys, near the small thatched cottage, there once stood a small tythe barn. Here the farmers brought one tenth of their corn for payment to the Church.

We next come to the White Hart, which has been a Public House for many years. When I went to school a fair or feast was held on, the green adjoining the White Hart on the first Friday and Saturday in May. There were swinging boats, coconut shies and many other entertainments, and everyone had a good time.

Across the green the village blacksmith lived in the house now known as the Old Forge. The blacksmith's shop was near the house, and is standing to this day, though it is now used as a garage. As a boy, along with several others, I would watch Mr. Norden making horseshoes and then fitting them to horses. He was an excellent tradesman. He taught himself music and played the organ at the Mission Hall, which is now used for storing furniture. The Old Forge was sold, so he bought the cottage near the Mission Hall and built himself a blacksmith's shop there. The cottage was known in those days as Osborne's Cottage, but is now called Little Amberden. His son started the first cycle shop and garage in Wimbish. The cycle showrooms were in the shed with the large window still standing next to the house. Petrol was sold in two gallon cans. During the first World War Mr. Norden opened a garage at Newport near the station, and closed his smithy at Wimbish.

In the meantime the Old Forge was carried on by a man named Cocane until taken over by Mr. Jack Wright. Later Mr. Wright bought himself a cottage further along the Thaxted road and built himself a new blacksmith's shop there. Opposite the Old Forge on the green was a sawpit where men could be seen occasionally, sawing tree trunks into planks.

Further along the A130, about 100 yards from the Old Forge, opposite Little Gowers Farm, stood the wheelwright's shop and cottage, owned by a man named Blanks. Mr. Blanks was also the Village Bobby. I well remember being told of an

occasion of a Flower Show that was being held in the meadow between Westleys and the cottages in Collier Row. Mr. Blanks had said he intended staying the night in the field to keep an eye on the exhibits, which had been brought there on the eve of the Show. One or 'two locals' told him there would be no need to spend a sleepless night as no-one would pinch the flowers. Appearing to believe them, he set off up the footpath to Howlett End, doubling back past the Old Forge along Mill Road and back to the field. He caught these same locals loading up a cart with the best exhibits in the Show. The wheelwright and carpenter's shop was afterwards taken over by Mr. Jim Pallett, who was an excellent tradesman. After his death the house and workshop were pulled down, and no trace can now be seen. On the right hand side of the road, about 200 yards from the carpenter's shop, was a pond with a hard bottom known locally as a horse pond. Tradesmen's horses and farm horses often pulled into the pond for a 'drink', though it was mainly used by waggons and carters travelling between Thaxted and Saffron Walden.

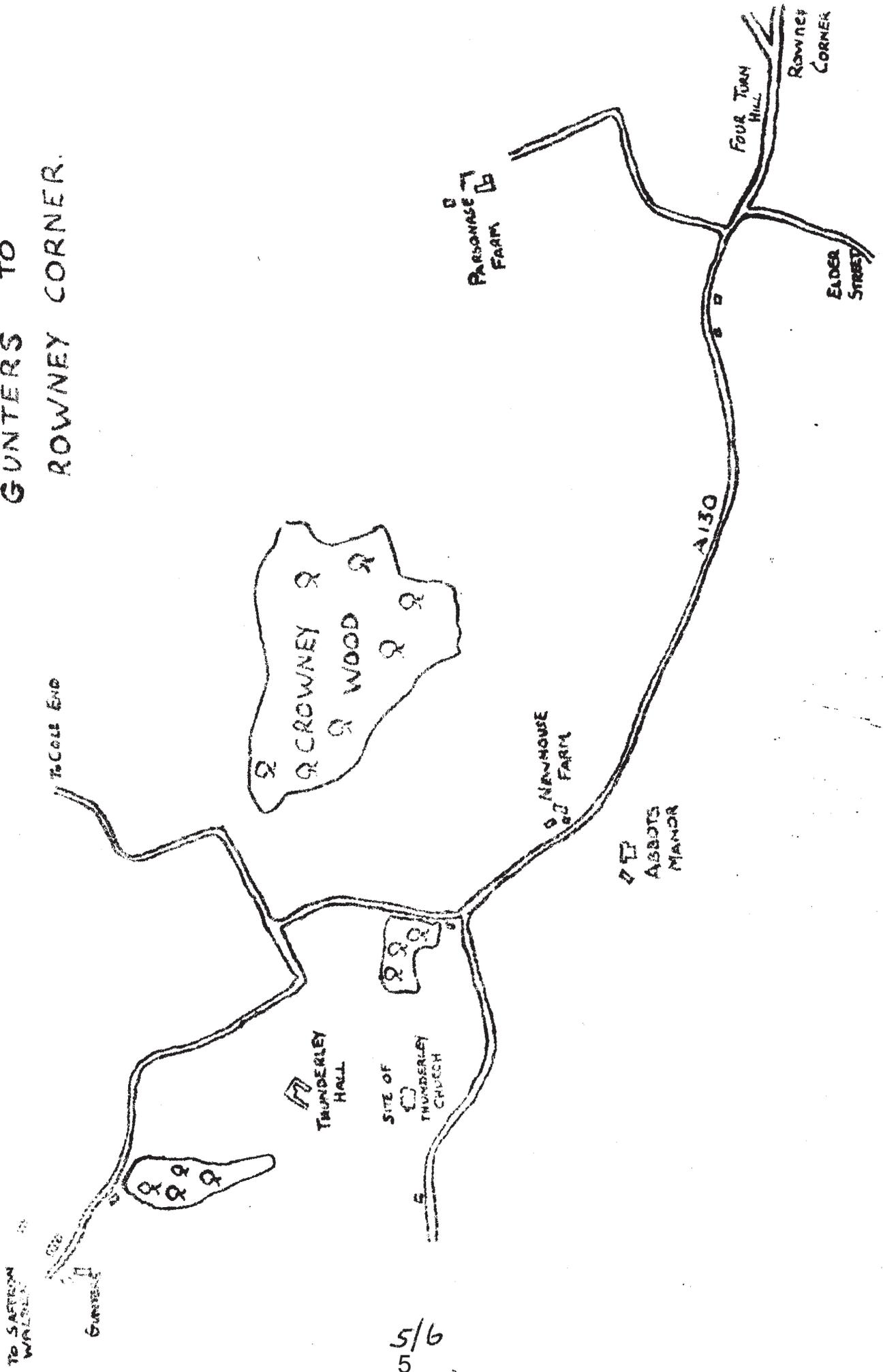
Along the road further the Post Office and Village Stores was situated. The shop was originally run from the two thatched houses next to the Post Office and was owned by Mr. Harrison. Where the Post Office is now was a Public House, known as either; The Oak or The Royal Oak, Mr. Harrison ran a covered wagon to London twice a week with chickens, eggs, pigs and other farm produce, and brought back all kinds of supplies for the shop. Mr. Benjamin Buck, who married Miss Harrison, considerably enlarged the business. In addition to being the local undertaker he sold at the shop bread, coal, flour and clothes, as well as running a pork butcher's shop, killing his own pigs or purchasing them from the village people or from market. The killing shop, as it was called, is still there. Usually two or three pigs were killed each week. During the weekend the killing shop was turned into a brewery.

Many people brewed their own beer for harvest, the water coming from local ponds. I have carried many buckets of water from the ponds to fill the copper. A few days later, when the beer was made, it was buckets again, taking the beer to the house whose owner had brewed it. It was then put into wooden barrels and kept. The grain from the brewery was put in boxes or tubs outside the shop to feed the pigs. This was in lieu of payment for the use of the brewery.

Care had to be taken not to get the sugar mixed with the paraffin or the coal with the coffin boards, salt with the whiting balls or ipecacuanha wine with the mineral waters. Next to the killing shop was the mangling room. There was a large mangle, approximately eight feet by four feet, box-shaped and filled with stones. One penny was charged for mangling the washing.

The Saffron Walden Weekly had to be delivered on Saturday to Elder Street and Wimblsh Green. Several of the Coe family served as errand boys for Mr. Buck, as did the Taylors, followed by the Swans. The Bucks owned about fifteen cottages at Howlett End. At the back of the shop was a well - the only really good drinking water in the area. In the summer, however, it was often dry, which meant either a tramp of half a mile to Well Mead Spring in the valley owned by Broadoaks Farm or drinking the water from local ponds if these hadn't dried up too.

GUNTERS TO ROWNEY CORNER.



5/6
5

At one time Benjamin Buck kept twenty pullets and a cockerel. He had brought them up from chicks. The pullets had just started to lay when, during the night, thieves stole all the pullets save one. On the henhouse door was found pinned next morning a note saying:

Mr. Benjamin Buck, we wish you luck,

We've left you a cock and a hen.

We have left them for store,

So you can hatch some more

For when we come this way again.

The Bucks have all passed on, and the Post Office and Stores are now owned by Miss Holt.

The Star Inn was kept by Charles Marshall, but when I first remember the Star it was looked after by Mr. Sharp, followed by Mr. Wright. He kept cows, and milk was sold by him at the door. The next tenant was Henry Gift in, an ex P. C., who had a straight leg. He held the licence for fifteen years or more. He gave up the licence in 1915 or 16, when Mrs. Coe became the tenant for a few years, although her son, Laurie, ran the pub. He also owned several horses, carts and traps and, ran, a carrier's business to Saffron Walden and back. He would also hire them out for weddings and other parties. War wounds and old age caused him to retire in December, 1969.

I knew the Star for over seventy years, and enjoyed many a happy night with its rough and noisy customers. Many stories were told and jokes enjoyed, often while playing Dominoes, Rings, Darts or Ring-the-Bull, during which time several pints, of beer were consumed. I first remember mild beer there costing 2d per pint, and the last pint before the Star closed as a public house on Monday December 22nd 1969 cost 1/10d. It had been a public house for nearly 100 years and held by Laurie Coe for over fifty.

A small field of some three and a half acres, adjoining the Star Inn but not owned by the Brewery, was known as Barn Field. At one time a Parish Barn was situated near the thatched cottage, though the barn had long since disappeared before I was born. It was here that the poor of the village brought the corn they had gleaned for threshing. There used to be five cottages next to the Star, though two have been pulled down and the other three converted to one house, Billy O'Connor lived in one of these cottages. During the Second World War he had an incubator on the grass verge. At Thaxted Police Station the Fire Watchers were on duty. One night they saw a glow in the sky in the direction of Wimbish. They set off to investigate, and knocked at Billy's door telling him they had come to put the fire out. "What fire?", he said, "I haven't got a fire". "Oh yes you have", he was told, "Your incubator is burning down".

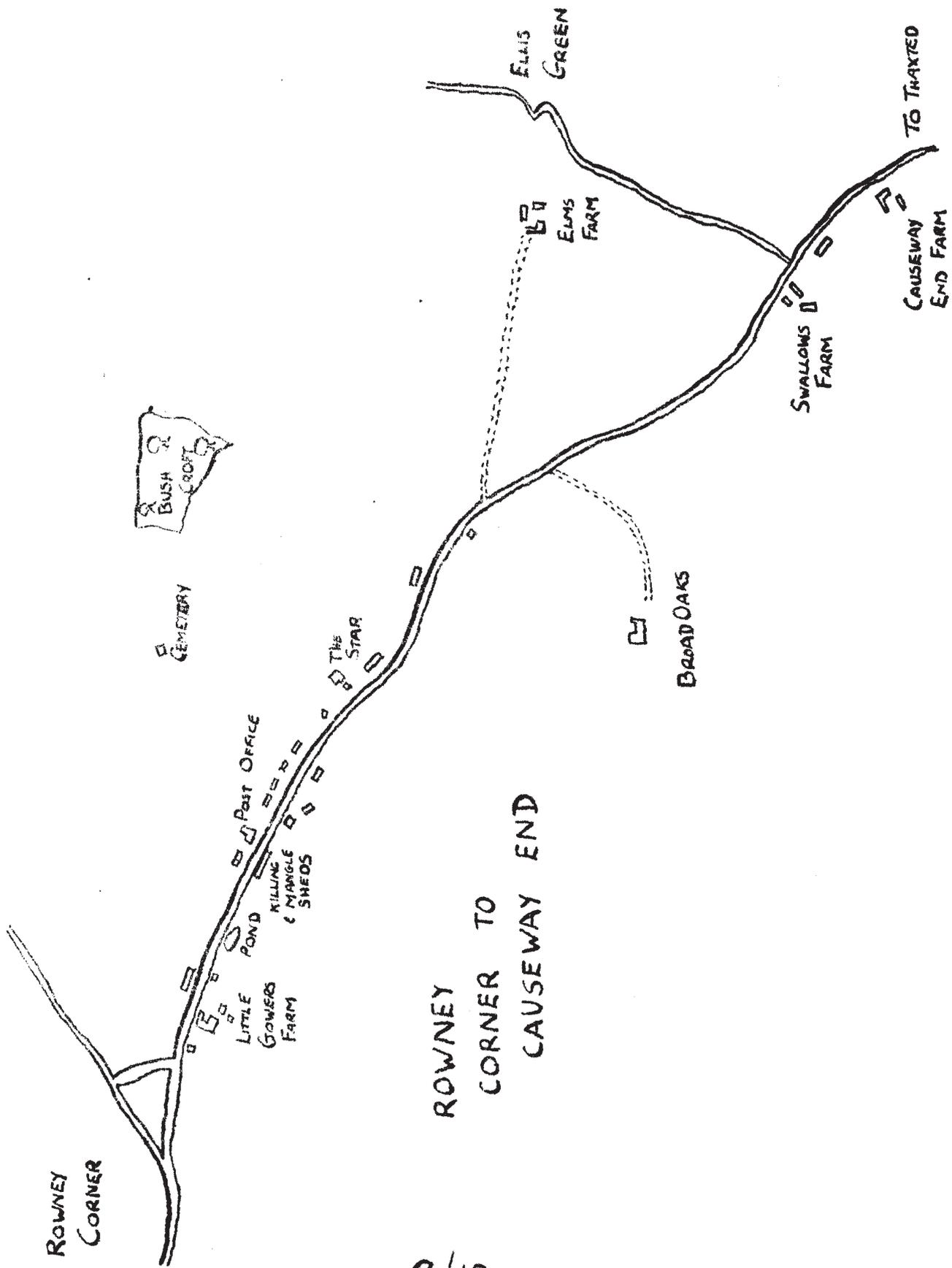
Behind this field is a small meadow at the bottom of which is a tiny private cemetery. Several members of the Franklin family were buried here about 200 years ago.

A quarter of a mile along the road is the drive leading to Elms Farm, once owned by the Franklin family and now farmed by the Wiseman family. A quarter of a mile further on is the drive to Broadoaks. This farm, and house are very old. Many stories are told of secret hiding places, some of which I have seen. Along the road to Thaxted at the end of the Wimbish boundary is a small cottage. The parish boundary passes through the living room, so the people living there could cook their meals in Wimbish and eat them in Thaxted.

From Ricketts Farm to the A 130

Ricketts was farmed by Mr. Payne, who was very musical, being able to play several kinds of wind instruments. He also had one of the first gramophones in the village, which I believe was called the Edison Gem. Mr. John Bunyan Hare farmed Freemans Farm. Several cottages were burnt down in the Second World War as a result of enemy action. One of these cottages was in a dangerous state, and the police would not allow the owner back in. Nevertheless, when they weren't looking he nipped in the back way. One of his friends asked if he hadn't been afraid of the place collapsing? "I was more afraid of losing my money!", he said, "I had left thirty bob in there". A block of four brick cottages, adjoining the Aerodrome and opposite the present four thatched cottages, were demolished after the war. This part of Wimbish was known as Elder Street.

Probably the best spring water in Wimbish was found here near the Cafe, and supplied many parts of the parish during the dry summer of 1921. The stream that runs at the side of the road commences here and passes under the A130, on towards Radwinter. Further down the road Burnt House Farm is on the right. A horse pond on the opposite side of the road was cleared of mud during the early days of the Second World War and filled with hardcore. A steam roller was driven into the pond by Charlie Taylor, and many layers of hardcore were used to fill the pond, which was seven or eight feet deep. At Burnt House Farm a steam portable engine was converted to a travelling engine by fixing a chain drive. Joe Cornell, standing on the front, steered the engine. On its journey to the Essex Show, the first to be held at Saffron Walden, the engine ran away down the Cement Factory Hill and was smashed to pieces, as it had no brakes. The driver behind the engine shouted to Joe, known as Belfrey, "Stick to it, Belfrey, stick to it", but Belfrey was thrown in 'the air as the engine turned over. Fortunately he escaped with a few bruises and cuts. Many farm labourers at Elder Street did their harvest brewing at Burnt House.



ROWNEY
CORNER

ROWNEY
CORNER TO
CAUSEWAY END

9/10

Mill Road to Tye Green.

Pinkneys Farm is the first farm on the left, and on the right at the road junction is a small brick building known as the Mission Hall. Religious services were held here every Sunday and sometimes during the week. Pinkneys Farm was a fair sized farm, and there were eight to ten horses kept and between eight and twelve men employed. Mr. William Wiseman was farming here when I first remember it. Opposite the farm was a pond, known as the sheep pond, in which the sheep were dipped, but I remember it first for the many slides I had on it during the winter. Just past the pond was a small cottage owned by Jack Parking and his wife, Sally. Jack was a cobbler, and his work was strong but very clumsy. As a schoolboy he made me a pair of boots I could wear on either foot. Jack had a club foot, but could run pretty fast, as many of my school friends knew, as he chased them from his orchard, helping them over the hedge with his club foot.

Opposite Cobblers Cottage the Recreation Hut was built by the Gladstone League in 1912. The ground was bought, by Mr. Wiseman from Mr. James Taylor. This hut was burnt down just after the Second World War.

The row of ten cottages called Collier Row, now renamed Mill Road Cottages, housed at least fifty people, adults and children. Nearly all the families kept a pig or chickens or both, and a well at the back supplied them with drinking water, but was often dry during the summer. The pig sties and, hen houses were on the opposite side of the road to the cottages, and a path from Howlett End joined the road at the end of the cottages, along which we splashed our way to school. Some ponies were also kept at Collier Row,.

Westleys Farm, was farmed by Henry Giffin when I first remember it. Westleys, the house, was rented by Mr. William Bruty. He had a groom, a gardener and a butler. He had shooting parties every weekend and his shoot exceeded 3,000 acres and included Crowney Wood. Twenty or thirty beaters were employed for Friday and Saturday, with a wage of 2/6d per day with a lunch of bread and cheese and beer. This was the main income for many single men during the winter.

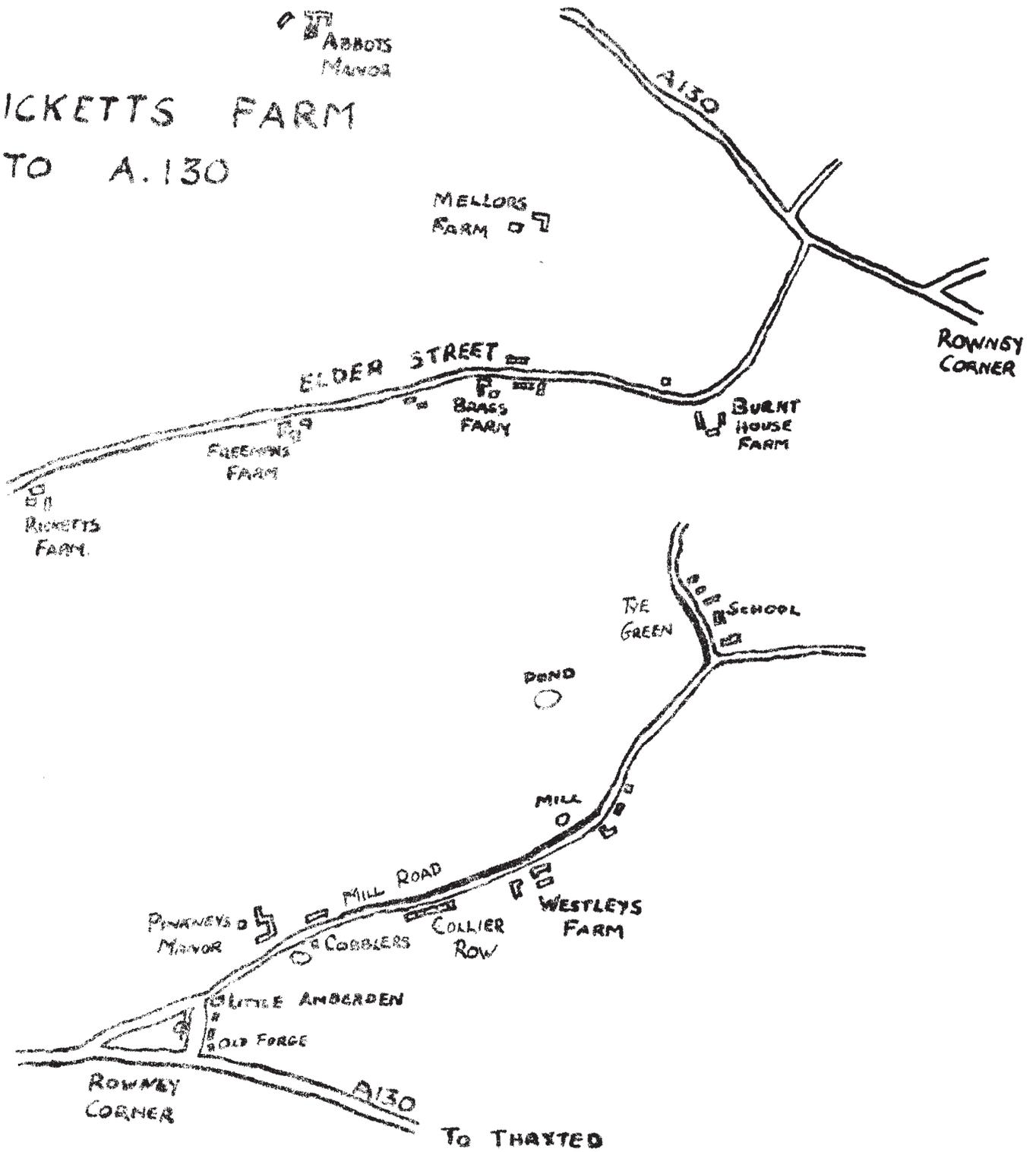
On the left of the road some hundred yards further on was a windmill. When I first saw it at the turn of the century four sails were fitted, but later two were removed and it worked in this condition until 1912, when the top part was pulled down. A few layers of bricks were added to the round house, an oil engine was fitted to drive the mill stones, and it was business as usual. The mill was owned by George Munson and his son, Robert. Many of the farm labourers' wives who had gleaned wheat during the harvest would thresh it, then take the wheat to George to grind into flour. When the mill depended on the wind, George, a very small man, said "You old women keep bothering and bothering. How can you grind if the wind don't blow?" A steam portable engine would be hired to drive the mill during the summer when the work had been held up through lack of wind. About 1930 the mill was no longer used for grinding, and was later converted to a house.

The Mill House was approximately a hundred yards from the mill. Mrs. Munson sold sweets and we could get 1 Almond Rock, 1 Red Ball (this was as large as a small apple), 1 Mint Rock and 5 ft. of Spanish Liquorice, all for 1d. Next door lived Sam Osborne. He always wore a long smock and kept pigs on the roadside in sties made of grass and bush faggots.. Their huts would be sugar tubs and bacon boxes. Sam would buy the pigs when they were about eight weeks old and keep them until they were twenty or more weeks old. Sam's pigs always did well, mainly on food begged, borrowed or found. Sam had large pockets underneath his large smock. and, at threshing time, usually went home with his pockets full of corn. He was a tall., raw-boned man who could carry four to five hundredweights, and was up before the sun on his rounds. If he saw anyone trying to catch a rabbit he always looked the other way. His wife sold sweets, the same as Mrs. Munson. Often Sam's pigs would get out, helped by the local boys. These same boys would then tell Sam. They had seen his pigs in the road, and then kindly helped him to round them up, hoping for a reward of some sweets.

In the hatched cottage close by the Mill House, Mr. and Mrs. Chapman lived. He owned a pony and trap and did carrying of people and goods to Saffron Walden and other places. In the next house, part slate and part thatch, now known as, St. Helens, Mr. Matthews lived. He played the organ at Wimbish Church and, in conjunction with Rev. Walsh, formed the Wimbish drum and fife band. Mr. Matthews was a shoemaker, and was a very good tradesman, neat and strong.

In the field opposite was a large pond, from which most of the drinking water for the school and nearby cottages had to be ferried. The pond was known by all as Melfilay, though its proper name was Mill Field Ley. The water, was good and clean, and I well remember the schoolmaster sending two of the bigger boys with a pole and two buckets slung between them to fetch water for the school. The cluster of houses near the school was known as Tye Green.

RICKETTS FARM
TO A.130



ROWNEY CORNER TO THE SCHOOL

13/14

Tye Green to Ellis Green.

Right opposite the school, and near No. 6 Tye Green, was another pond though this was quite small. One summer during harvest time the Parish Council, I presume, had the pond cleaned out, removing tin cans, mud, weeds and old boots. It was then fenced round with barbed wire, leaving only one small entrance from which water could be obtained. To make a good job of it, all the posts and rails were tarred. This, of course, made the water more hygienic and many who drank from that pond are still with us today.

An old man named Thompson lived near the school in one of the two thatched cottages now converted into the house called Wildings. He made many wooden toys including windmills, and fixed them on poles in his garden. They were often broken by stones thrown by the school children. The school is still with us, and plain for all to see on the corner of Radwinter road. The old school, now St. Paul's Church, was the first public school in Wimbish, and the children paid 1d per week.

Around 1911 a well was sunk on the school green and a wind pump was erected. The water was stored in a nearby reservoir and a hand pump placed on the footpath between the school and Mr. Thompson's cottage. This pump was only removed during the last war.

Moving now to Wimbish Green, the first farm on the right was Maypole Farm, and was farmed by Mr. Marshall and his sister Betsy. She was an excellent butter and bread maker. She sold skimmed milk for 1d a quart and would not accept 1d or ½d on which the date could not be seen. Eggs were also sold and most other produce of the farm and garden. She was as deaf as a post, and if she could not see you, did not know you were there. As she moved from room to room in the house you had to follow along outside in the hope of catching her attention. The Marshalls retired during the First World War, and went to live at Brick House at Rowney Corner. There was a well there, and they sold water at so much a bucket. When they died their executors had to advertise in the News of the World to find their next of kin.

A Salvation Army Hall was built near the farm early in 1900. Further down the road is a house, part thatch and part slate, which had an off-licence for the sale of beer. It was known as The Pudding. This later became a nursery and was known as White House. A quarter of a mile down the road was Garretts Farm. Mr. Ridgewell farmed here at the turn of the century, and it was later farmed by Mr. H. Raven and his son, John. This farm was hit by bombs during the Second World War.

Before coming to Lower Green I remember two thatched cottages on the left. These were burnt down and were replaced by two brick ones. Several thatched cottages stood on Lower Green, and no hard road went up to them so there was plenty of mud in the winter.

The first person I remember to farm Lower House Farm was Mrs. Wright, but it has been farmed by the Stock family for more than sixty years.

An old man, Mr. Chapman nicknamed Darkin, was a hurdle maker and thatcher. His donkey cart was made almost entirely of ash poles. He was a very swarthy man with a dark beard, long brown hair and had brown piercing eyes. Nearly all of us boys were afraid of him, but he was really a kind and generous man.

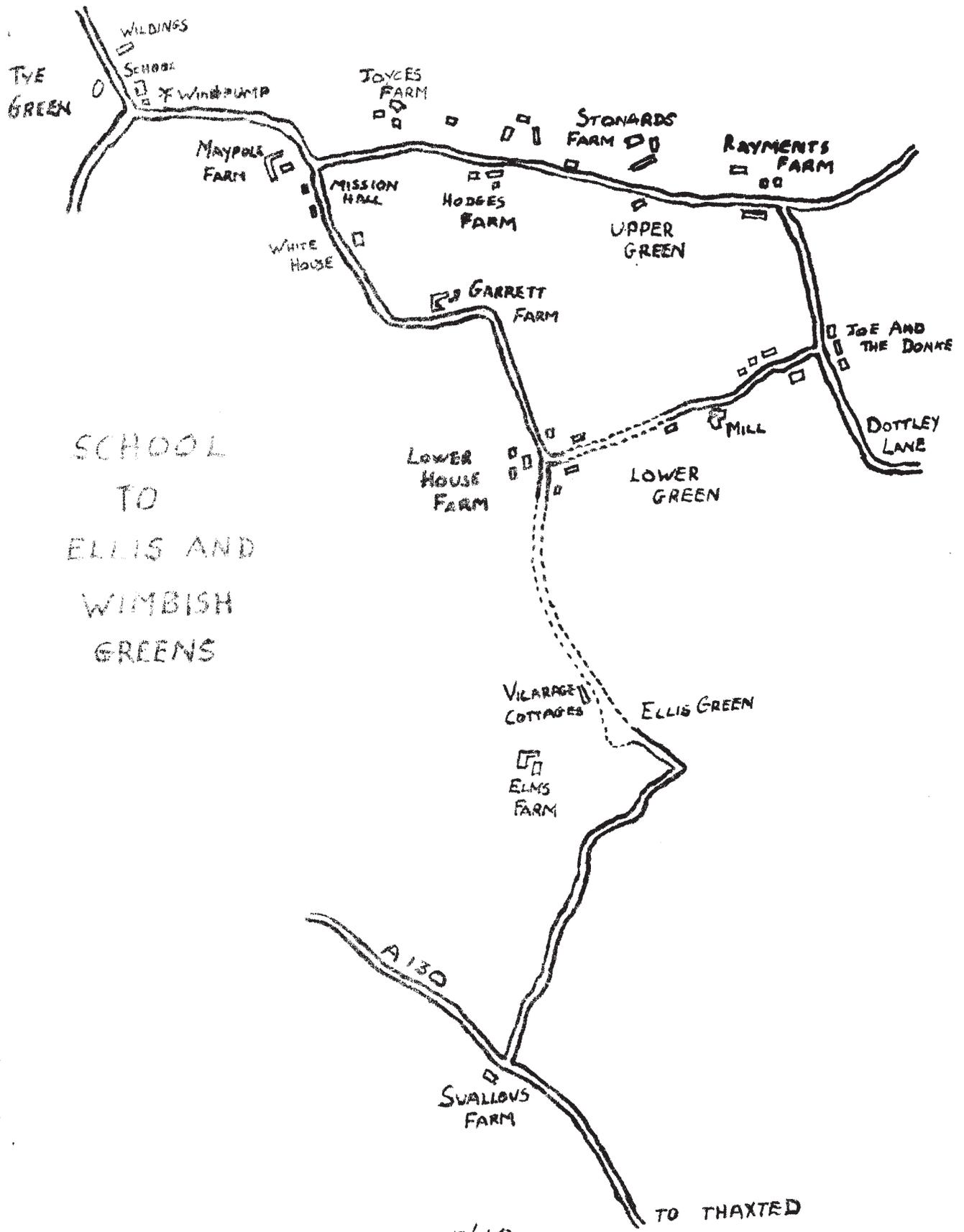
From Lower House Farm we go up the green lane to Ellis Green, now registered as common land. At the end of the lane a small field surrounded by a moat was the site of a large house owned by a man named Ellis. Keeping left, further down the lane were two thatched cottages, but these have now disappeared, having been allowed to fall down. I can remember a man named Chapman living in one of them. The two thatched cottages on the right hand side of the lane were known as Broomfield Cottages, and were owned by Wimbish Parish Church Council. These have now been sold.

I remember two characters who lived down Ellis Green. They were rough and lived rough. The people living at nearby Highams Farm used to keep chickens. Running in to the main hen house was a large pipe so the chickens could move freely in and out during the day. At night a slide was dropped over the end of the pipe. One of these two men, who was very wiry, crawled along the pipe one night and grabbed as many chickens as he could reach, pushing them back down the pipe to his friend, who filled up a sack. He then went back home, leaving the first man in the pipe. Unfortunately for him, trying to crawl backwards he became stuck. There he remained until the next morning when he was found. The police were called, and when they visited the house of the man who had gone home he was found tucked up in bed with the stolen chickens running around underneath it.

Approximately 200 yards across the meadows was Elms Farm.

This has been farmed for as long as I can remember by the Wiseman family. A road from the A130 near the Dell was a private one to the farm. Another road, a public one, from the A130 passed within a short distance of the farm and on to Ellis Green.

An amusing incident happened at the Elms Farm many years ago. A man named Tom Crompt attempted to fly from the high thatched barn by fixing two barn fans to his shoulders. These barn fans were made of wicker and were used for carrying chaff for feeding cattle. They were approximately 3' x 2'6" and very light. These he intended to flap with his arms. This he did and landed straight into a deep muddy moat just below, and was only saved from drowning by the help of his pals.



SCHOOL
 TO
 ELLIS AND
 WIMBISH
 GREENS

17/18

From Lower House Farm to the School via Wimbish Lower Green.

Along Lower Green on the right were a pair of thatched cottages. One of these was used by the Salvation Army before the Army Hall was built. On the right, further on was Mill House. Mr. Edgar Mynott carried on the business of miller and baker. When I first remember it part of a windmill stood in the yard. It was a tower mill but it's sails were missing and for some time it was driven by a portable steam engine when required. The business was closed down after the Second World War. A puff bought from the miller when he passed the school was more than enough for a boy or girl's dinner.

A man named Mr. Abe Stalley, who worked for the miller, had driven back from delivering around Walden and unharnessed the horse. He was then told to deliver a sack of flour, which, weighed 20 stone, to some cottages on the Upper Green road. These cottages were half a mile by road and approximately 300 yds. by a footpath across the fields. Stalley said to the miller, "Is that all there is to go ? On the reply being "Yes", he said, "I'm not going to harness a horse to take that up there, I'll take it on my back." This he did, without pausing for a rest.

Several cottages were built on the left, In one of them lived the gamekeeper, Mr. Stalley, and next door to him his son, Joe. He was a carpenter and jobbing builder. On the right was a small farm cottage. A religious, service was held here in part of the house every Sunday morning. The Joe and the Donkey was an off-licence and shop. At this time it was kept by Mr. David Stalley the gamekeeper. This is now a private house. Dottley Lane, leading to Sampford, had high hedges on both sides, mainly bushes. On Boxing morning the labouring men would gather in the lane and light a fire of faggots. Then they would send to the Joe and the Donkey for a bushel (4 gallons) of beer, 'and when this was empty it would again be filled. There were stories told, and singing and dancing took place and a goodtime was had by all. There were several thatched cottages adjoining the Joe and the Donkey. The road was very poor leading to Wimbish Green, this part only having two hard tracks for the cart wheels. A large Camp, consisting mostly of wooden huts, was built during the Second World War between here and Hodges Farm.

Now to Rayments Farm, which is on the right, and on the left are several cottages, in one of which lived Joe Frost, a bricklayer and jobbing builder. There were several cottages and small farms between here and Maypole Farm - Stonnards, Little Stonnards, Hodges and Joyces.

Wimbish School Green was where we played. There were many large holes in it and one of the games we played was called foxes. One boy would be the fox and had to run from one hole to another, chased by the other boys, then he was caught someone else had to be the fox. Another game was called cats. The cat was a piece of wood 6" long. This was pitched at the hole, and another boy would defend the hole with a stick three or four feet long. If he hit the cat he had to run to the next hole. He was out if the cat was caught, but he was also out if the cat went into the hole. Running from one hole to another counted as runs, the same as cricket. Another game was called ducker. Two large stones were set one on top of another. One boy would be picked for ducker.

The other boys threw stones to knock off the top stone. Sometimes the players got hit by a stone, but cuts and bruises were all part of the game. The schoolmaster was named Smith, and his teaching was done with the stick. His daughters also taught at the school. His wife and one of his daughters are buried in Wimbish Churchyard.

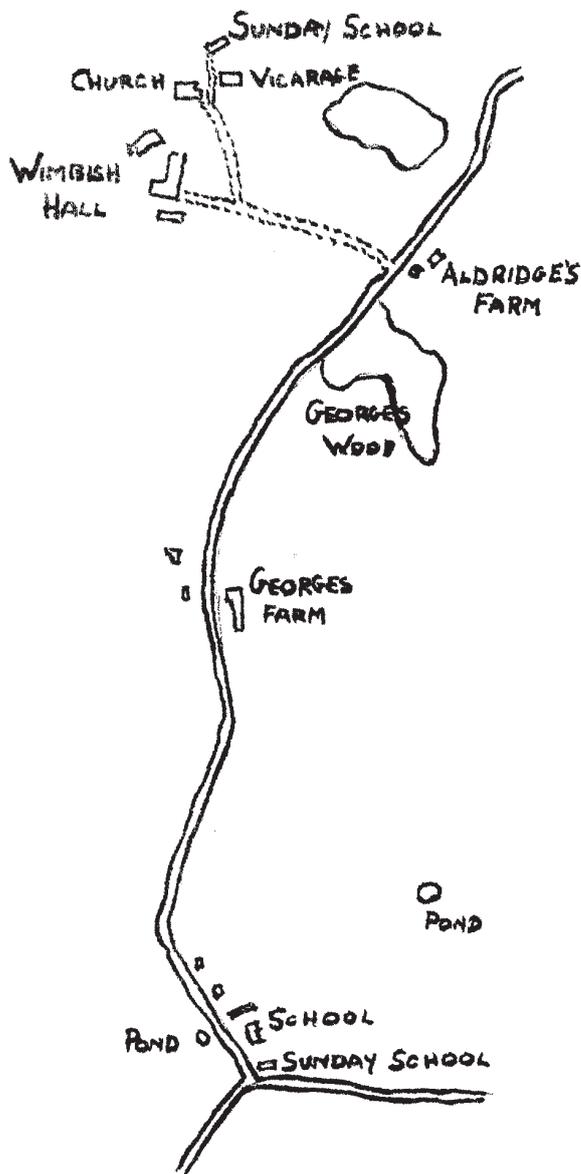
At school, I always remember fearing that if you didn't do something right you were going to get the stick. If you couldn't spell you got the stick - whatever you couldn't do you got the stick. When I went to school in the morning I thought to myself I shan't get through the day without getting the stick - spelling - I always got the stick for that. I didn't get the stick for sums and I didn't get it for recitation - I could tell the tale even in those days! Sometimes we had a school concert. Miss Smith was good at organising these. Singing, little plays and recitations. I remember reciting "Little Boy Blue". Parents were charged 6d at the front and 4d at the back. We seldom had School Christmas Parties. Nobody bothered to give us thoes. Bright children were pushed up into higher classes. We left school at fourteen.

From the School to Wimbish Church

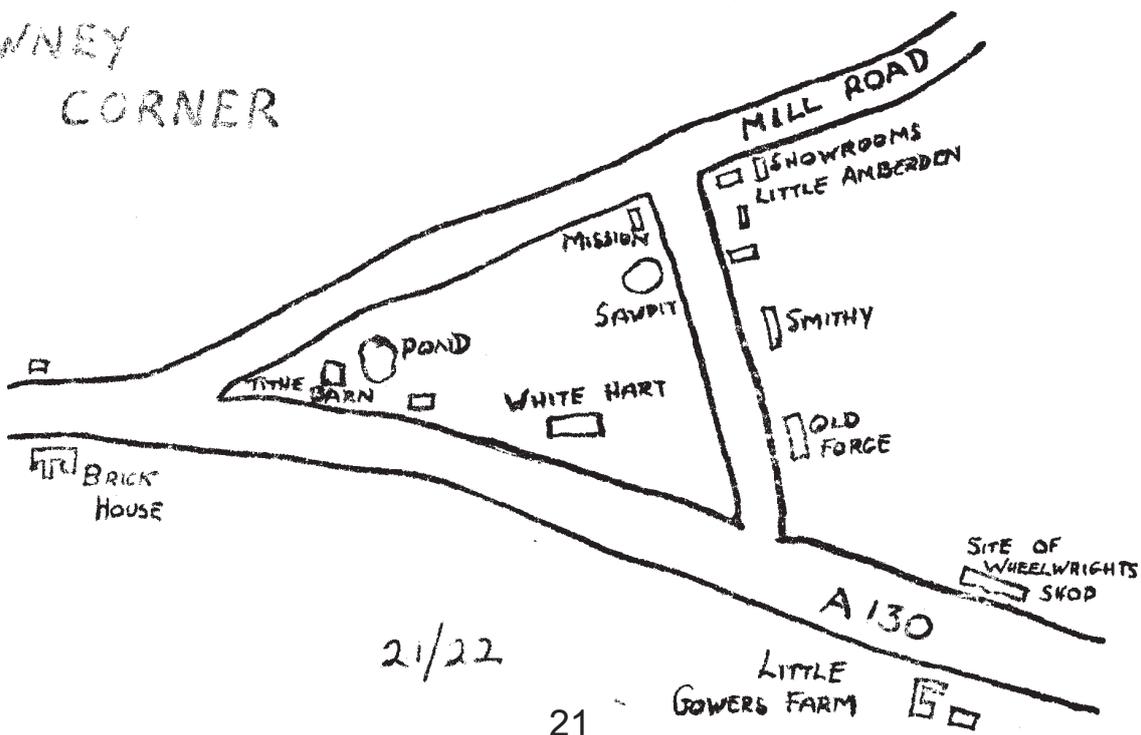
Mr. Billy Frost lived in one of the old cottages on the right. He was shepherd for Charles Kettley, who farmed Wimbish Hall Farm, Georges Farm, Cole End Farm, Abbots Manor and Tiptofts. Below Georges Farm was a small plot of land called the Pyckle. Here Mr. Frost had his lambing pens. They were made of straw some eight or ten feet high and approximately eight square yards in area. Here he spent many cold winter nights looking after his flock during the lambing season, At Wimbish Hall Farm a man named Cracknell was farm foreman. He often chased the Sunday School boys from his orchard, where they had been after his apples and walnuts. Some ten to twelve horses were used on the farm, and often Charles Kettley would be round on his horse before 5.00 a.m. Although he had two sons and two or three daughters I do not think he had any grandchildren.

The Reverend Walsh was Vicar at Wimbish Church when I first went to Sunday School. He was a very kind man but very strict. We could play around the churchyard and meadow so long as we did no damage. We were sent to Sunday School before 10.00 a.m. but rarely arrived in time, reaching the church just in time for the 11.00 church service. We would take our dinner with us - bread and cheese - and then stay down at the church, spending our time in the Sunday School near the fire in winter if cold, until the afternoon. In the afternoon we attended. afternoon Sunday school. After this it was church again with, father and sometimes mother watching us, who would tell us off afterwards if we did not sit still. The Vicar would nearly always bring some apples for us after our dinner, Often when we were playing round the churchyard one boy would dare another. We would then climb up the church wall where the bricks stick out. You certainly had to climb higher than the arch to win. I have climbed high enough to look over the church roof. I am told my brother actually climbed onto the ridge of the church roof, but he was afraid to come down and a ladder had to be found to get him down. The worst part of this, after his descent, was a painful interview with the Vicar.

TYE GREEN
TO
WIMBISH
CHURCH



ROWNEY
CORNER



In the summer we had our Sunday School treat in the vicarage meadow. This is where the new part of the graveyard is now. Then the Reverend Walsh Was Vicar, he took the choir, both boys and men, on trips to Clacton, Yarmouth or Lowestoft. I still have some of the mugs, decorated with the names of the towns, that I bought on these outings. I once went on an outing with the people at the Mission. I rarely went to the Mission myself as a lad, but my dear old Mum wanted me to go to the seaside and she asked the ladies organising the trip if I could go. It was an excursion to Hunstanton, cost 3/6d, and I went. I had never seen the sea before. I was nine years old.

Bygones.

There was usually plenty of work in Wimbish. Today more people work outside it than in the village. A farm labourer could earn twelve shillings a week. He had to beat work by 6.00 a.m. and worked until 9.00 and then had half an hour off for breakfast. Lunch was from 2.00 until 3.00, though later it was changed from 1.00 to 2.00. Work finished at 5.30. In Cambridgeshire the men went on until 6.00 p.m. and the wages were possibly only eleven shillings. The closer to London, the higher the wage, It used to be a six day week and, at times like harvest, sometimes seven. Money was tight. The cottage might cost £4 or £5 a year rent. Food was plain and good, not like today, puffed up sawdust and you don't know what's in it. There was never much choice. When father went to work he took a hunk of bread and cheese and sometimes butter as well. He would arrive home about 6.00 p.m. Mother would have cooked a suet pudding and bought a week's supply of half a pound of streaky pork for about 3d or 4d. Gravy was poured over the potatoes and the pudding. Sometimes we had a rabbit, - they were never out of season. My dad, would catch them with a snare or a dog. The dog had to be a good one - quiet and quick. If the dog barked ray dad would sell it. He had to have a quiet dog for catching rabbits or the farmer or gamekeeper might hear it barking.

Jack Challis, the fish man, would come through the village shouting "Herring-O, Herring-O". They would cost 1d or 1½d, depending on size. As children we always had enough to eat. I can never remember going short. My dad had an allotment between a third and half an acre. He would grow potatoes on half of it, yielding 10-14 cwts., and barley or oats on the other half. He used to sell the corn. Green vegetables were grown in the garden. Dad usually kept one or two pigs.

I remember buying my first suit, which cost eighteen shillings, from Haywards of Saffron Walden. I wore it from when I was sixteen until I had grown out of it for Sunday best. Then I wore it f or work, and by the time I left it off it wasn't fit to go in the rag bag.

My brother was more crazy over steam engines than me. He earned twelve shillings a week as cook boy on the engines, which was the same as my dad earned on the farm. Mind you, he had to be at work by 4.30 a.m. and work a twelve to sixteen

hour day. He would often bike twenty miles to work on Monday morning. He would stay during the week in the steam plough van, returning home late Saturday. I can remember cycling thirty miles to Great Totham, Goldhanger and Heybridge and being ticked off for arriving ten minutes late on Monday morning. I was expected to have the roller on the road by 7.00 a.m.

I remember a strike among the farm workers just before the First World War for more money. They came out at Burnpstead and Ashdon. Henry Wiseman of Wimbish was sharp. He didn't want to see his harvest ruined. He gave the men what they wanted, sixteen shillings a week. In other areas the men stayed away from work some were sent to prison. One was an old reserve soldier, and when war came they didn't bother about prison. He was let out to serve his King and Country. He fought right through the war in the Horse Artillery or Transport. One battle he laid alongside his wounded horse that froze to death in the night. The shelter from the horse's body saved his life. Work and life was hard in those days.

EPILOGUE

You may recall, earlier on, Ben talked about his schooldays and his recitations. I asked him if he could remember any today. From his memory, back through the mists of time, he quoted part of "Little Boy Blue — a poem he had recited in Wimbish School as a child some three quarters of a century ago. As fresh today as it was in those days so long past:

“Now don't go till “I come”, he said,
“Don't you make any noise”,
Toddling off to his trundle bed
He dreamt of his pretty toys,
And as he was dreaming an Angel Song
Awakened the Little Boy Blue,
“The years are many, the years are long
But the little toy friends are true”.

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