



Local and Landscape History Research Group

LLHRG Bulletin No.12

Current Research

Much of the research mentioned in this bulletin was started during lock down when archives and libraries could not be accessed, but we had time to think about topics and go back through old transcripts and notes. Some of the results of this are now appearing in print, completed when sources became available again, and exploration of the landscape and buildings became possible. In other cases the research started in lock down is continuing , and new research projects are being formulated. We hope members of the Landscape and Local History Research Group will keep in touch with news of their research, relevant events and conferences and publications.

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Researching the possibility that the Battle of Brunnanburh took place in Cambridgeshire

Terry Hart

The Anglo Saxon Chronicles poem Brunnanburh of AD937 describes a battle between the English King Athelstan and a combined force of Scots, Dublin Norse and Strathclyde Welsh. The battle has been described as the birth of modern England.

For centuries the location of the battle has been debated, with around fifty sites suggested. The predominant site among academics is one on the Wirral, which has made national news and is even seeking heritage recognition as the location of the battle. It is a contentious idea but not without precedent to suggest that the battle might have taken place in Cambridgeshire. Cyril Hart suggested Bourn as a possibility due to its earlier names of *Brunne* and *Brunna*.

This study investigates this suggestion. It does so by considering Cambridgeshire evidence from a range of sources, including folklore, previous archaeology and early place names. The aim is to match these to references in traditional Brunnanburh sources such as The Anglo Saxon Chronicles, Egil's Saga, and the Annals of Clonmacnoise.

A further aspect is trying to understand the landscape as it was: the road network including Ermine Street and the Ickneild Way, the rivers, meres and Roman canals that might prove significant in a military context. There are also high points that may have been part of a signalling network. Records of archaeology in the area are reviewed as they might prove pertinent on reinterpretation. The Cambridge ditches could be crucial as could the disputed boundaries of contemporary kingdoms.

It seems likely that there were several confrontations in the area. Trying to understand the changing political status of the area over the time running up to the date of the battle might also give a rationale for the location. The range of evidence is varied, the study could easily be split into many, far more focussed research projects.

Conclusive proof of the battlefield identification is not possible. However, a good case can be made. A discussion paper is being drafted to share a suggested scenario, matching Cambridgeshire places with the sources and its landscape and archaeology with the battle description. A re-evaluation of excavations by Lethbridge, Fox and Palmer along with finds from the coprolite mining era may be pivotal, especially if they could be Carbon 14 or otherwise accurately dated. Any information relating to this would be welcomed.

Of the evidence gathered to date, each element considered individually is open to more than one interpretation, coincidence may play a part and researcher bias must be taken into account. Yet taken together, these elements form a case that at the very least warrants peer examination. Though the acceptance of this area as a plausible location is the chief aim, the evidence may lead to a different conclusion. Whatever the eventual outcome proves to be, Brunnanburh, or another event, there is plenty of local interest to be uncovered.

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Current Research

Lyn Boothman

I decided at the start of the pandemic to use the time to begin sorting out 30 + years worth of notes, transcriptions, photocopies and othe materials, many of which I had 'mined' for data to add to my population reconstruction but had not fully transcribed or otherwise dealt with. I managed to stick to this resolve for a good period, but in the last 18 months or so I have undertaken a few small pieces of research ... mainly entirely for my own interest.

I am currently engaged in trying to trace the freehold land in Long Melford from the 16th century to the 19th. There are maps from 1580 and 1613, and the survey for the latter, which identify freehold, and the later, post 1660, manorial records record some freehold land transfers, but the evidence is very bitty. The great majority of Melford was copyhold or leasehold land; even in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century the majority of the farms were leased from the owners of Melford Hall and Kentwell Hall. However there was a third gentry house in the parish and its owners held the majority of freehold land in the manor of Melford Hall ... although even in the 1660s no one was quite sure which of these lands were free or copy and the owner just paid an annual rent for the lot.

There is other freehold land, but it is largely small pieces attached to some copyhold, or freestanding and surrounded by copyhold. There are however a number of freehold houses with attached crofts, interspersed among the copyhold in the main streets of the parish.

I have also been researching the accuracy, or rather the inaccuracy, of the Hearth Tax returns for Melford. I have considerable other evidence for the population in the 1660s-80s, over and above the 'standard' items, and there is plenty of evidence of people who were present in the parish, do not appear to be poor, and did not pay in either one, two or both of the surviving returns.

Painted Cloths and other things

Evelyn Lord

Like most local historians during lock down I went through copies of work done in the past. In this case copies of probate inventories. What stood out in these was the ubiquity of ‘painted cloths’ found in the houses of all sections of society from labourers to knights. Intrigued this encouraged me to look further. Only a handful of these have survived and apart from the mentions in wills and inventories and a few descriptions of what images they contained we know little about them, who painted them, and where or how they were obtained. This part of the research is still to be completed, with work on the few surviving painters’ or St Luke Guild records. What is known is that the cloth was either canvas or stiff linen, prepared for painting with an egg tempura, and with a frame or hooks at the back to hang them. The assessed values in inventories were modest, usually a few shillings, but by the time the inventories were taken the painted cloths could have been very old. The earliest mention in a domestic setting is about 1450 and the latest the end of the 1630s.

As I already had a number of published inventories search on the web enabled me to buy others at acceptable prices, so with the copies already made and these I now have a large amount of records of painted cloths from across the country which are being analysed, with the aim of assessing the urban, rural and regional differences. However, the brief has now widened from painted cloths. As one of the functions of the painted cloths was to provide warmth and comfort in the house, the research has broadened to look at comfort in early modern households, the survival of traditional cooking techniques on a regional basis and the consumer items assessed in the inventories. As the consumers could also be producers as a by-product supplying the market is being analysed. One of the definitions of comfort being used is measured by the number of rooms in which the inventory lists hearth goods but no cooking utensils, suggesting in those rooms the hearth was for warmth and not for cooking. The discussion will centre on the question of whether it was the increased use of coal as a fuel which encouraged this, even though changing from wood to coal meant changes to the way in which the fire was managed, and to the architecture of the hearth and chimney. I would go as far as suggesting that coal was responsible for the great rebuilding.



The hearth in Pepys House in Brampton, Huntingdonshire, showing the phrases that went into adapting it for coal rather than wood; a stone plinth, the hearth narrowed by brick piers, and the hearth stone. Photo author’s own.

Most of this research has been done using printed versions of wills and inventories, and those supplied by friends. When it is written up (if I live that long) it will be dedicated to record societies and the volunteers engaged in transcribing volumes for these societies.

Evelyn Lord

The Impact of the Reformation on Huntingdonshire

Ken Sneath

My current research focuses on the English Reformation. Fortunately, I am not alone, and a group of colleagues have joined together to work on a Reformation Project. Being such a large topic, with such an extensive historiography we have focussed on two major questions:

Was the Reformation a largely sixteenth-century affair, as argued by Arthur Dickens, or was it principally a religious movement which continued to be contested well beyond the reign of Elizabeth I, as suggested by Nicholas Tyacke, Alec Ryrie and most recently Anthony Milton?

Was the English Reformation welcome or tolerated? Was it a political imposition from above, as the revisionist Christopher Haigh has argued, or were local communities active in the development and spread of Protestantism, as advocated by Dickens?¹

The impact of the Reformation varied in different parts of the country.² It ranged from bloody, to contested, to peaceful and well managed by local elites.³ Robert Whiting argued that the destruction of Catholicism proceeded more rapidly in the south and east than in the north.⁴ Dickens referred to a 'great crescent' of Protestant heartlands, comprising Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Kent, parts of the Thames Valley and certain urban centres such as Bristol, Coventry and Hull.⁷ Diarmaid MacCulloch suggested that the further east one goes, the more positive enthusiasm for the new religion one finds.⁸

Local studies therefore contribute to our understanding of the varied responses to the Reformation. We have focussed our research on Huntingdonshire which is relatively small and therefore possible for scholars to study sources representing the whole county. Huntingdonshire constituted an archdeaconry within the great diocese of Lincoln, the largest diocese in England. Apart from being small, the county is a suitable choice to study the impact of a 'long Reformation'. To what extent do 'Protestant heartlands' extend westwards?

Huntingdonshire was the location of Ramsey Abbey, one of the wealthiest and most important religious houses in England prior to the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s.⁹ The county had strong links with some of the more important individuals in the seventeenth century religious changes. Oliver Cromwell was born in Huntingdon and Stephen Marshall, the notable preacher of Fast Sermons, in nearby Godmanchester.¹⁰ The ceremonialist Archbishop Laud was appointed Archdeacon of Huntingdon in 1615. Emphasising continuity with the medieval church, the Laudian George Herbert rebuilt Leighton Bromswold Church and Nicholas Ferrar exercised his ministry at Little Gidding.

My research focussed on Godmanchester. The Parish Church of St Mary In Godmanchester had important links with both Ramsey Abbey, being part of the foundation gift by King Edgar, and Huntingdon's Priory, as King Stephen

¹ Important contributions to the debate include A. G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* Second Edition (Pennsylvania, 1989); E. Duffy, *The Voices of Morebath: Reformation and Rebellion in an English Village* (New Haven, 2001); E. Duffy *Stripping the Altars* Second Edition (New Haven, 2005); E. Duffy, *Fires of Faith* (New Haven, 2009); E. Duffy, *Reformation Divided: Catholics, Protestants and the Conversion of England* (London, 2017); C. Haigh, *The English Reformations: religion, politics and society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993); C. Haigh, 'A G Dickens and the English Reformation' *Historical Research* Vol. 77 2004 24-38; D. MacCulloch, *Tudor Church Militant: Edward VI and the Protestant Reformation* (London, 1999); A. Ryrie, *Age of Reformation* (London, 2017); J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); N. Tyacke, *England's Long Reformation: 1500 – 1800* (London, 1997).

² Dickens, *The English Reformation*; P. Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York, 1988); Tyacke, *England's Long Reformation*; A. Ryrie, *The English Reformation: A Very Brief History* (Oxford, 2020) p.xiv; A. Ryrie, 'When did the English Reformation happen? A historiographical curiosity and its interpretative consequences' *Études Épistémè*, 32, 2017, last accessed 1 June 2022. A. Milton, *England's Second Reformation: The Battle for the Church of England 1625–1662*, *Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History*, (Cambridge, 2021) p.4.

³ Haigh, *The English Reformations* pp.14ff; Dickens, *The English Reformation*.

⁴ R. Whiting, *The Blind Devotion of the People Popular Religion and the English Reformation* (Cambridge, 1991) p.262ff.

⁵ C. Haigh, 'Review of The Reformation in English Towns, 1500-1640 by Patrick Collinson and John Craig' *Engl. Hist. Rev.* Vol. 115, No. 460 Feb.2000, p.198.

⁶ Whiting, *Blind Devotion of the People* p.265.

⁷ R. Lutton, 'Geographies and Materialities of Piety' in R. Lutton and E. Salter (eds.) *Pieties in Transition: Religious Practices and Experiences c. 1400-1640* (Aldershot, 2007) p.1.

⁸ Cited in Tyacke, *England's Long Reformation* p.13; R. Whiting *Local Responses to the Reformation* (London, 1998) p.202.

⁹ A.R. DeWindt, Anne and Edwin and E.B. DeWindt, Anne and Edwin, *Ramsey: The lives of an English Fenland Town 1200-1600* (Washington, 2006) p.10.

¹⁰ J. Morrill, 'The making of Oliver Cromwell' in J. Morrill (ed.) 'Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution (Harlow, 1990) pp. 19ff. T. Webster, Stephen Marshall and Finchingfield (Colchester, 1994) p.1. K. and P. Sneath *Godmanchester: A Celebration of 800 years* (Cambridge, 2011) pp.188ff.

transferred the church to Merton Priory on its foundation in the twelfth century.¹¹ Godmanchester was also less than twenty miles from Cambridge, which has been called both ‘Little Germany’ and the ‘cradle of the Reformation’, due to the prevalence of new reformed ideas which influenced neighbouring towns and villages. As well as religious links, Godmanchester had important economic ties with local religious houses.

Godmanchester had a substantial number (287) of extant wills covering the period 1520-1652. Wills are problematic sources and raise many questions. How can recorded expressions of faith be interpreted? Did pious statements in wills indicate a pious life? Gifts to the church may not have reflected a life of active devotion but sparse attendance at church, which bequests in wills were attempting to rectify.¹² Katherine French emphasised that wills were compiled at a particular moment in testators’ lives, as they were approaching death.¹³ Whilst religious motivation may be beyond recovery, the moment when wills were compiled might be when recorded religious beliefs were at their most authentic. However, did wills record the genuine voices of testators or the religious faith of the compiler?

A particular problem concerns will preambles. Preambles raise two major questions. To what extent did they reflect beliefs of testators and did changing preambles over time reflect changes in those beliefs? An example of a traditional CatholicCatholicism preamble is found in Alice WestWestAlice’s will of 1532.¹⁴ (Figure 1.)

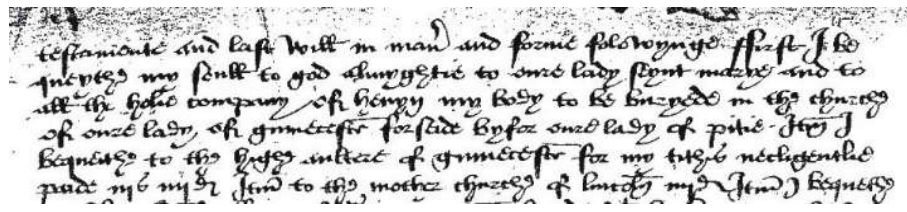


Figure 1. Alice West’s will, a Godmanchester widow

Alice bequeathed her soul to God, the Virgin Mary and all the holy company of heaven and asked that her body be buried in the parish church. This traditional CatholicCatholicism preamble with the bequest of the soul to ‘god almyghtie to oure lady seynt marye and to all the holic company of hevyn’, was used in all but one Godmanchester will up to 1548. Traditional preambles subsequently disappeared and testatorsProtestantism left their soul to God, usually making no mention of Mary or saintssaints. However, traditional preambles returned during the reign of Queen MaryMary I, when two thirds of wills again had CatholicCatholicism preambles. After the accession of Elizabeth, only one will in Godmanchester, JohnFrost (1564) used the Catholic formulation.

Abrupt changes in preambles can be seen in Godmanchester wills of the same family who died during Reformation changes. In 1545, Thomas Upchurch senior used the traditional formulation. Thomas also followed traditional practice in leaving 4d. to the mother church of LincolnLincoln and 16d. to the high altar of the parish church for tithes forgotten.¹⁵ By contrast, in 1570 his son Thomas commended his soul to ‘almighty God redeemed by the death and passion of his sonne our saviour Jesus Christ’. Thomas junior made no contributions to the high altar or the mother church of Lincoln but instead left 12d. to the poor box.

To what extent could the adoption and spread of CalvinistCalvinism theology be detected in religious preambles? John CalvinCalvinJohn taught that the true church of the elect was saved by God’s grace, not good works and that the elect could not lose their salvation.¹⁶ ProtestantProtestantism theology was not settled and key elements relating to salvation continued to be debated in the seventeenth century and beyond. Both Arminian and Calvinist theology appear in Godmanchester preambles in chronological proximity. In 1614, John HeronHeronJohn bequeathed his soul to the almighty and everlasting God who hath bought me and all mankind with his most precious blood shed on the cross desiring to depart this life a member of his holy church CatholicCatholicism for I hope to be to be saved only by the merits of my saviour Jesus Christ. Heron’s preamble expressed hope rather than certainty of salvation. The wording also suggested that the compiler, or Heron himself, believed that Christ’s blood bought salvation for **all mankind** and not just the CalvinistCalvinism elect. The preamble also raised the question, what did Heron’s recorded wish to die a member of the holy church catholicCatholicism precisely imply? On the other hand, William Vinter’s and Elizabeth Fisher’s preambles in 1617 and 1621 reflected a clear conviction of their election and a belief in CalvinistCalvinism theology. Their almost identical preambles suggest that the wording was provided by the compiler rather than testators. William Vintner’s preamble read:

11 K. Sneath, *The Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin, Godmanchester* (Godmanchester, 2019) pp.27-28.

12 J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984), p.11.

13 K. French, *The People of the Parish: Community Life in a Late Medieval English Diocese* (Pennsylvania, 2001) p.11.

14 Huntingdonshire Archives HA AH15-1-4 Wills 1530-1534 Vol. 4/100.

15 N. Orme, *Going to Church in Medieval England* (New Haven, 2021) p.34.

16 D. MacCulloch, *History of Christianity* (London, 2009) p.634.

'I do bequeath my spirit back again unto God almighty who breathed into me the breath of life and to Jesus Christ my Redeemer and to the Holy Ghost my sanctifier who sanctifieth me and all the elect people of God'.

Scribes were supposed to read wills back to testators before they signed them, so testators would at least passively concur with the recorded theology. Whilst interpretation of preambles is a minefield, they do reveal something of the geographical and theological spread of Protestantism so the evidence from Godmanchester contributes to that debate.

Bequests to Church fabric and ornaments provide much clearer evidence of religious commitment than more problematic religious preambles. Celebration of the mass was the central act of Catholic devotion. When the consecration words were uttered, the bread literally became the body of Christ and the wine, His blood. Vestments emphasised the elevated status of the priest in performing the miracle of transubstantiation.¹⁷ Prior to the Reformation the priest wore a cassock, surplice, cope and stole. The cassock was a coloured full-length gown over which was a white surplice. The cope was usually the most ornate garment and could be made of silk or velvet. Bequests for altar cloths and vestments in Godmanchester ranged from William Pelman, who bequeathed 6s.8d. to buy a cloth for the high altar in 1530, John Pownte, who left 40 shillings to buy a vestment for St Katherine's altar in 1533 to Henry Smythe who left £10 for liturgical vestments.¹⁸ Other bequests also reflected Catholicism practice. In Godmanchester, William Kynge provided 40s. in 1530 to make an image of Christ to walk on the high altar on Easter Day at the resurrection. William Myntt left two shillings for gilding the tabernacle of our Lady of Trinity in 1522. This does not appear to represent the full cost, as a bequest by Richard Lyndon in Birmingham for gilding a tabernacle in 1537 was for 13s. 8d. Lyndon also gave 26s. 8d. to make a tabernacle over the picture of Jesus at the high altar.¹⁹

Interpreting arrangements for funerals and bequests for masses in wills supplied further evidence of the extent to which the Reformation was welcomed or merely tolerated. Bequests for obits and trentals continued to be popular in Huntingdonshire up to the eve of the Reformation. Obits provided for a mass on the anniversary of the deceased's death, either for a set number of years or forever, and trentals were a celebration of 30 masses on consecutive days. Robert Whiting found that 70 per cent of wills in Devon and Cornwall included endowments for intercessions between 1520 and 1529.²⁰ Locally, in Huntingdon Archdeaconry, 60 per cent of wills included bequests for prayers for the dead in the year 1529-30.²¹ Godmanchester wills provided impressive evidence of belief in the efficacy of intercessory masses. William Pelman will (1530) required his wife in the three years after his decease to arrange for three trentals (30 masses on 30 consecutive days) to be said in church for his soul and his parents' souls.²² In 1530, Robert Vinter required his executor to hire a priest to sing for his soul three months of the year, *He to have for his wages 8 marks (£5 6s. 8d.)*. In the same year, William Kynge made several bequests for masses for his soul, including a trental at the friars of Huntingdon immediately following his burial. After his house was sold, a priest would be paid eight marks to pray for his soul. In 1543, John Vinter willed that: '

Robert Vinter my son his heirs and assigns and every of them to do yearly after my decease a dirge and a mess of Requiem to be sung and done in the Church of Our Lady of Godmanchester foresaid forevermore upon that day of the month that I do depart out of this transitory world to pray for the soul of William Vinter my father and for the soul of Elizabeth my mother and for my soul and for Joanne and Marion, my two wife souls and for all Christian souls'.

In 1545, William Frere also gave an acre of meadow lying in the West meadow to uphold and keep the anniversary (of his death) yearly with *dirige* and requiem mass for his soul. In 1546, Annes Heideleis requested a mass on the anniversary of her death for twelve years and Marion Hawden required mass and dirige on the day of her burial, the seventh day and thirtieth day. Bequests provided for payments to priests (4d.), parish clerks (2d.) and bellman (1d.) for anniversary masses.

These are just a few snippets from my research which suggested that there was little evidence to support Dickens' contention that the Reformation was largely a sixteenth century affair, or that it was generally welcomed. On the eve of the Reformation, the Catholic church was still popular with the people of the county, with only a few recorded incidents of opposition and dissatisfaction.

The research, together with that of my colleagues (see below), has led to the publication of *Religious Reformations in Huntingdonshire: Welcome or Tolerated* by EAH Press. The book, which contains many illustrations, is available from Amazon or from Evelyn Lord at the very modest price of £9.99. In other chapters, Joanne Sear has also used wills to survey traditional Catholic religion throughout the county, prior to the momentous changes of the Tudor reformation. The researchers in the project agree that the Reformation and its impact continued well beyond the reign of Elizabeth I. Evelyn Lord and Liz Ford researched the battle for the future of Protestantism in mid-17th century Huntingdonshire which reflected profound differences in theological outlook of the clergy. In the 18th century, Simon

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p.71.

¹⁸ Sear and Sneath, *Origins of the Consumer Revolution* p.183.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.66.

²⁰ Whiting, *Blind devotion of the people*, p.30.

²¹ Haigh, *English Reformations* p.37.

²² HA HK 2455/4/1.

Clemmow explored the response of the Church of England to the challenge of nonconformity. Finally, Tony Kirby surveyed the profound impact of the Reformation on the physical setting of worship.

A study day on the topic will be held on Saturday November 12 at Hemingford Abbots Village Hall. Details can be found on the Cambridgeshire Alliance of Lifelong Learners. [Cambridgeshire Alliance of Lifelong Learners » CALL Events \(call-ed.org.uk\)](http://CambridgeshireAllianceofLifelongLearners.org.uk). Click on Call events and select Autumn Study Day for full information.

Where did the Summer go?

Tony Kirby

This was intended to be the Summer when I finally got back to various projects that have been sitting in files on my desk for longer than I care to remember, but somehow that didn't quite happen. The weather, of course, didn't help: record temperatures are not conducive to doing very much, and other things kept getting in the way. The biggest of these was writing a chapter on church buildings for Ken Sneath's *Reformations in Huntingdonshire* (just published by EAL Press: orders to Ken.) This arose from my being asked to write a recommendation for a grant in aid of publication from Huntingdonshire Local History Society's Goodliffe Fund: in all innocence I mentioned to Ken that there ought to be something on how the physical surroundings of worship were affected by the Reformation and what followed (down to about 1800) and consequently found myself writing it.

And then there were the talks which I'd promised over the past couple of years I would deliver once the pandemic had subsided, which seemed comfortably in the future. So back to getting Power Point presentations ready, some still for on-line delivery, others (thankfully) in person at places such as Cambourne Library. Possibly the most difficult was doing an on-line recording for 'Open Cambridge': I should have done this in person, but inadvertently omitted to note that we booked to have a week in Suffolk, at the same time, so did a recording. The experience left me filled with admiration for presenters talking straight to camera on TV: when you can't see your audience (which at least you can on Zoom) and are desperate not to dry up, it's a nerve-racking experience. I eventually forced myself to watch it and was appalled at the numbers of 'Ums' and 'Ers', which you can get away with in real time, but not when recording. It was on Cambridge railways, which I know like the back of my hand, but still managed to make a mistake in inadvertently talking about the view from Mill Road bridge rather than Coldham's Lane. But I suppose we live and learn...

But my major work has been in connection with Alan Godfrey Maps. Normally, writing the commentaries on 25" maps is a relatively relaxed process, but this Summer was different, as the firm had set up a subscription service for customers wishing to purchase the whole series of maps covering both sides of the lower reaches of the Thames, from Barking Reach down to Tilbury and I had the job of covering the Essex bank and thus ended up, having started in West Ham (did you know that Gandhi was a West Ham supporter?) with Rainham, Purfleet and no less than four maps of Grays (all from the inter-war period) For a subscription service you have to keep the customers happy, so this became quite a pressing undertaking from April onwards.

As there is only room for about 3,000 words of commentary on the reverse side of the map, selectivity is paramount and the amount of original research correspondingly limited. Obviously the major features that the maps shows have to be explained, and this usually means including a potted history of the community depicted to put these into some sort of historical context. Also – and an unknown quantity – who are the readers? Locals? Map enthusiasts? People who've holidayed in the area? In the case of Thurrock, the latter can be discounted: holiday cottages are not thick on the ground in Purfleet.

Luckily, in the case of the Thames Estuary, the *Victoria County History* has been there first, with Volumes 7 (1978) and 8 (1983) covering the area that now lies in the London Borough of Havering (west) and Thurrock Unitary Authority (east). They are reasonably helpful, although manorial descent perhaps occupies a disproportionate amount of space, and of course rigidly eschew any interpretation of the developments they record. But the VCH offers a good starting point and – in an ideal world – its scrupulous referencing gives ample pointers to the primary sources one should follow up in the Essex Record Office and the London Metropolitan Archives. In practice, most research has to be confined to those primary sources that are available on-line, particularly the local and national press (British Newspaper Archive), the Census Returns and Directories (both via Ancestry). Most of the communities I've investigated over the past few months also have some sort of published local history (of wildly varying quality) and most of these are obtainable from Essex Libraries at Saffron Walden (luckily Cambs residents can join Essex, and the latter's request service – unlike Cambs – is free of charge), and the larger ones a local history society, which have proved very helpful, not least in checking my drafts for accuracy.

Comparison of the sheets with earlier and later maps of the area is essential. Its strategic importance meant that the Thames Estuary was one of the earliest surveys carried out by The Board of Ordnance, with the resulting One Inch map being made available for public sale in 1805. The plates had become worn out by the 1840s and it was re-engraved in 1843, with a few changes in detail, mainly in the metropolitan area, and then subsequently re-issued down to 1892, although changes were mainly confined to the addition of railways (see the Appendix). More useful, because more detailed and up-to-date are the Six Inch (surveyed 1862-66, although not published until 1875) and the

Twenty-five Inch (surveyed at the same time, but not published until 1880): these and subsequent editions allow the growth of built-up areas to be traced with some degree of accuracy.

The following paragraphs give, I hope, some feel for the areas I've been looking at most recently: my guess is that they're probably unknown to most readers, whose acquaintance with this part of Essex is probably limited to the view from the M25 approaching the Dartford Crossing, or from HS1 en route to the Kent Coast or the Channel Tunnel: a dreary landscape of pylons, warehouse units and retail parks only enlivened by the distant view of the North Downs on the other side of the Thames. And of course all are united by the river, with a trading past (now largely dead), the Thames-side marshes (now largely built over) and the London, Tilbury & Southend Railway of 1854 (now electrified and operating as 'c2c'). Yet this seemingly unpromising area has a rich landscape history, which can be at least partially unraveled from the maps, although many questions remain unanswered.

The complete sheets from which the extracts are taken are available on the National Library of Scotland's website, to which reference is given for each.

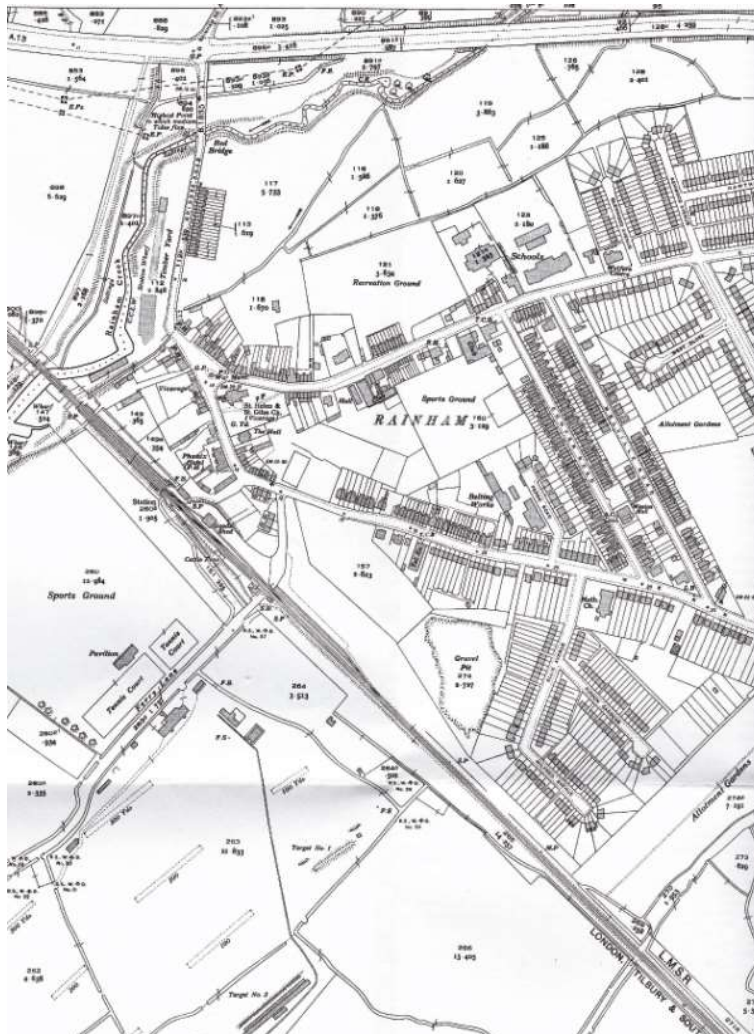
I have appended a list of the major sources used, but have eschewed footnotes: a full list of references is available in the unlikely event of anyone being interested.

Rainham 1939

Essex Sheet 87.2, NLS <https://maps.nls.uk/view/104194896>.

Although surveyed in 1939, this map was not actually published (on security grounds) until 1947. Rainham, fortunately, had suffered less from bomb damage than areas further up the Thames, and was still relatively unchanged. It marked – and remains – the easterly limit of the continuously built-up area of Greater London, with an air of 'seperatedness' from the sprawl of Dagenham to the west and Hornchurch to the north; and there is still open countryside beyond, with the village of Wennington retaining a precarious rural isolation with a handful of houses and its parish church.

Map 1: the historic 'core' of Rainham



Here we can see how medieval Rainham grew up on a tongue of slightly higher ground on the east bank of Rainham Creek, the lowest section of the Ingrebourne River which meanders across the NW quarter of the map, and centred on the roads to Upminster and Wennington; the irregular space at the junction being the market place, first recorded in 1270 but defunct by the 16th century. The village itself was always small (population 444 in 1801), with housing extending for only a short distance along the roads from the former market place; Nos 2-8 Upminster Road, a row of timber-framed cottages, survive in 2022 as the oldest domestic buildings in the village. On the south side of the market place is the parish church of St Helen & St Giles (1170), in the possession of Lesnes Abbey, on the other side of the Thames at Erith (a reminder of how the Thames, which can today be seen as a barrier, united disparate communities when it was a major highway for trade).

Almost next to the church is Rainham Hall ('The Hall' on the map), whose history is intimately linked to the Creek. Rainham had been a port since medieval times, trading with London, other Essex ports and the near Continent (a graffito in the church

gives a remarkably accurate depiction of a ketch beached with an anchor cable) and it was doubtless this which attracted Captain John Harle to settle here and build the Hall. His family hailed from South Shields, and derived their wealth from coastwise coal shipments from the Tyne; in the late 17c they moved to London, where John married a rich Stepney widow and with his wife's money was able to buy Rainham Wharf in 1718 and carry on an extensive trade in coal and building materials, with more exotic imports from as far away as Venice and the Baltic. The Hall was built in 1729, a relatively small but comfortable house in a slightly old-fashioned (Queen Anne) style. This may possibly have been to give the impression that the Harles had been settled in Rainham for longer than they were, and it also acted as an advertisement for his business, with extensive use of Baltic pine, Delft tiles in the fireplaces and Italian marble in the Hall. It had mixed fortunes after Harles' death in 1742, but was eventually vested in the National Trust in 1949, although not opened to the public until 2015.

The Wharf remained in the ownership of the family until the mid-19c, after which trade declined other than for the import of timber (note the 'Timber Yard' on the map) which continued until 1969. Today the area has been landscaped (in a rather half-hearted fashion) and it is impossible to visualise the hive of activity that it once was. The second wharf (south of the railway) appears to have been built c.1860 by local merchant John Circuit, primarily for the import of London 'muck' for use as fertilizer on the local market gardens, a matter of constant complaint in the local newspaper from passengers awaiting trains on the station platform.

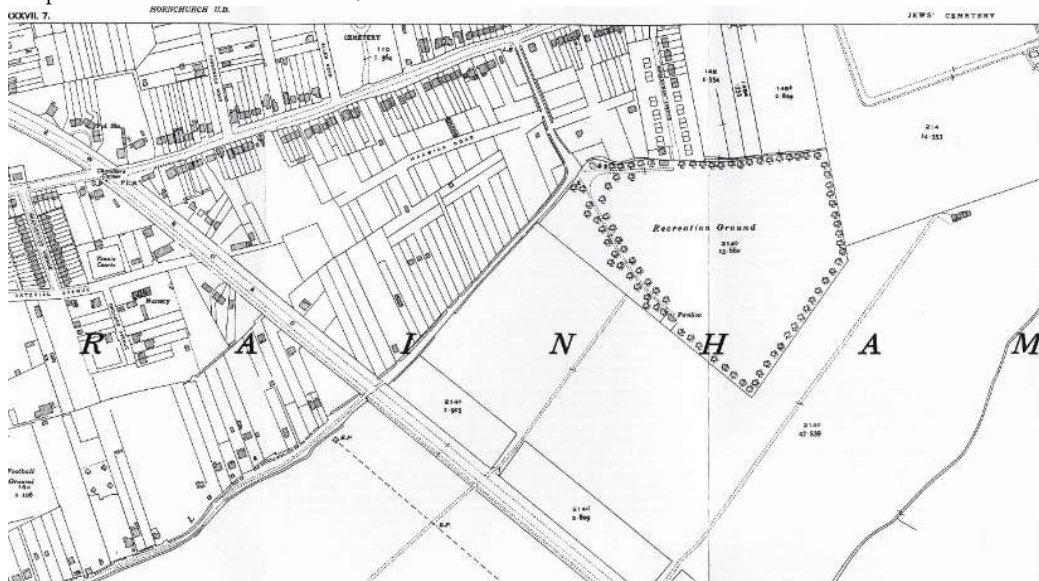
Matters were made worse after 1890 when large-scale rubbish dumping started at Rainham Ferry (off the map to the SW); the smoke rising from this being burned (and the smell) was raised in Parliament several times in the 1920s and even managed to make the pages of the *Times* (28 September 1929). By this time, the unwelcome variety of olfactory sensations for rail passengers had been added to by Rainham UDC's sewage works on the west bank of the Creek, which again was the source of much adverse local press comment.

The village's population grew quite rapidly after 1851, reaching 1,669 in 1901 and 1,972 ten years later, largely as a result of industrial development (tar-refining, fish-manure making and soap manufacture) at Rainham Ferry. Consequently the village outgrew its medieval core: the terraced houses in Bridge Road (known as 'Flood Row') had appeared by 1895 and Cowper and Melville Roads were developed slowly in the same period, although developed in a rather patchy fashion and not completed until the 1920s. The village was described in a pamphlet for the Church Restoration Appeal in 1906 as 'entirely working class' and this is borne out by the 1911 Census, which showed only four houses (out of a total of 450) having domestic servants.

Much of the rest of the housing shown on the map is obviously (from its layout) inter-war; that to the NE was council property (of a relatively high quality and with tree-lined roads), that to the south private. Rather surprisingly, the new Southend Road (A13) which cuts across the north of the map, did not attract the serried ranks of 'semis' that are such a feature of other inter-war arterial roads, and even today remains surprisingly rural in character. The new housing changed the social character of Rainham to some extent, with Civil Registration (1939) showing a sprinkling of white-collar workers in the new estates, but most occupiers were skilled working class and employed either locally at Rainham Ferry or the new Ford works (1931) at nearby Dagenham.

Prominent on the marshes SW of the railway are the Rifle Ranges. This area was bought by the War Office in 1906, as a consequence of the poor showing of British marksmen in the Boer War and the need to train men (both Regulars and Territorials) on the new Lee Melford 0.303 rifle. There were five lengths of butts, allowing 70 men to fire simultaneously, connected by a narrow-gauge railway used to take troops to the various sites.

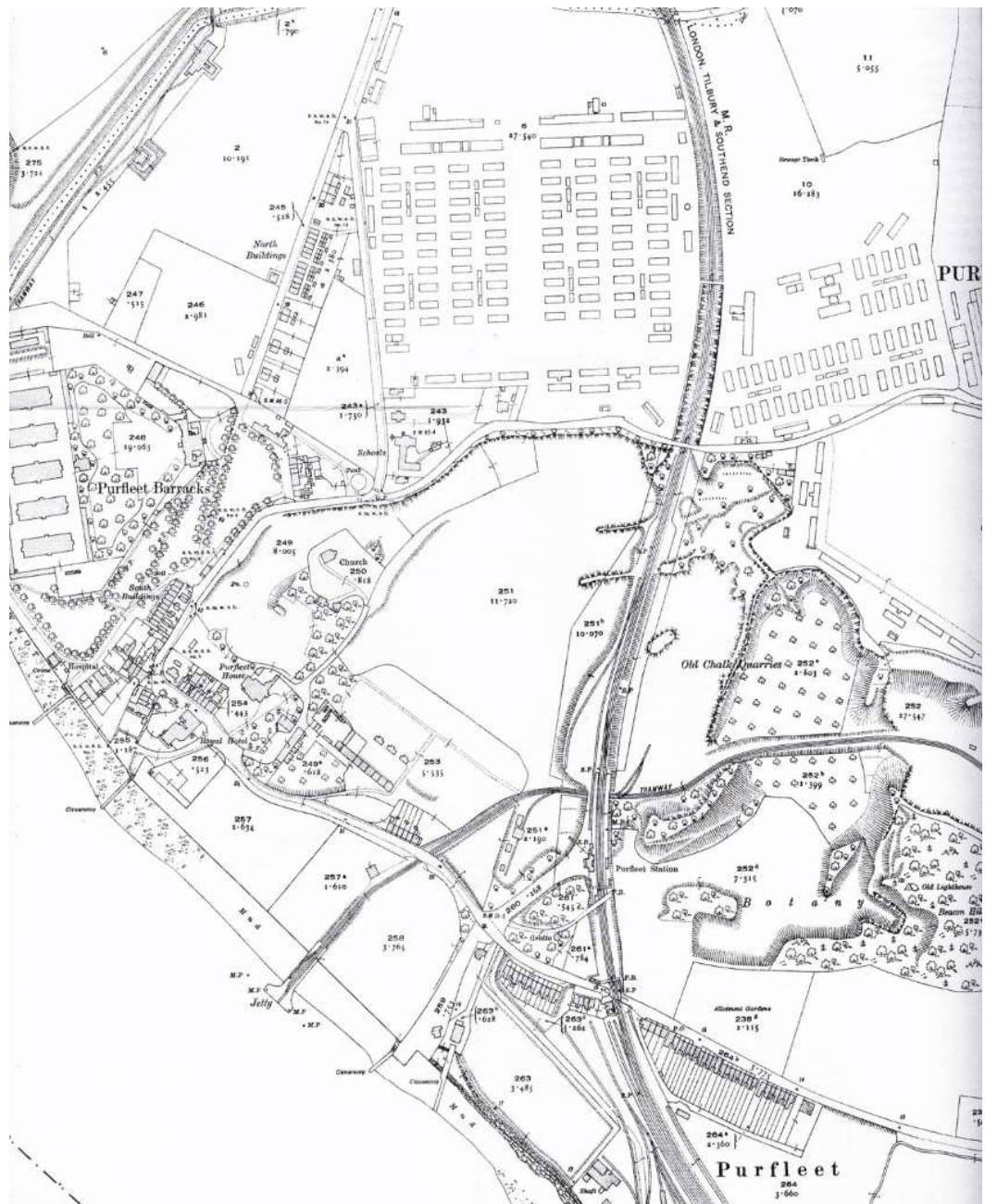
Map 2: The Rainham 'Plotlands', 1939



This area (the NE corner of Sheet 87.2), shows a very distinctive area of land division around the Upminster Road (known as Lamb's Lane at this point), resulting from the sale in 1920 of two large farms (Bright's and Parsonage, 363 acres in all) to Mr Allen Ansell, an ambitious property developer from Cheam (Surrey) who then sold individual plots on very cheaply: it was said that they were cheaper per square foot than linoleum. He found a ready market in the shape of the South West Ham & District Horticultural Society, whose members were losing their allotments to building development and which bought many of the plots, others being sold to individual East Enders. Cheap weekend rail fares from London were a great boon to the new small-holders, but by 1924 Romford RDC was expressing concern that many of them were staying overnight (or longer) in makeshift shelters. It lacked any powers to stop them, and within a few years a rash of dwellings had appeared along Lamb's Lane and also SW on both sides of the A13, contributing to the rise in Rainham's population from 2,196 in 1921 to 3,897 ten years later. The estate remained rather primitive, with no mains drainage until c.1960, and some of the side roads were not made up until 1972. Today it hides its origins very successfully, but scattered among the housing of the 1960s and 1970s that now predominates are a few bungalows that may have at their core the pioneering habitations of the 1920s.

The final point of interest to note is the open space at the extreme NE of this extract, identified in the top margin as 'Jews' Cemetery'. This belonged to the Federation of Synagogues, established in 1887 to provide for Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe and whose original 1889 cemetery at Edmonton was running out of space. They bought the land (106 acres) in 1936 and the cemetery (with space for 50,000 graves) was opened in 1938. In practice it filled up less rapidly than expected and 2017 surplus land was sold off for a multi-faith cemetery.

Map 3: Purfleet 1916



Three miles downstream from Rainham, Purfleet has a very different landscape as here the marshes that line the north bank of the Thames give way briefly to higher ground, a chalk ridge rising to about 130' above sea level in the parish of West Thurrock. A quarrying industry developed here from the late Middle Ages. This originally took the form of small scattered pits ('dene-holes', very similar to the flint mines at Grimes Graves, Norfolk), but by the 18c these had coalesced into the quarries that are such a feature of the map and individual excavators (or family groups?) replaced by a large single employer. From 1738 this was Matthew Featherstonhaugh (pronounced 'Fanshaw'), a London merchant with wide-ranging business interests (everything from coal to wine) and the profits from the quarry. Chalk came mainly from agriculture (it was used for making lime to improve soils) and it was the workings and surrounding land purchased in 1790 by Samuel Whitbread II, the London brewer. At this time the Whitbreads were steadily building up their land holdings as they made the transition from industrialists to country gentlemen, although this was mainly in Bedfordshire and I have been unable to discover what aroused their interest in Purfleet. Their investment proved a shrewd one, Purfleet bringing in 22% of their income from land in 1797. The demand distributed widely by road (Arthur Young noted the damage this was doing when he visited the area in 1805), river and coast-wise shipping. The latter led to the building of what is generally regarded as the first railway in Essex to connect the quarries and limekilns to the Thames. Details are sparse, but it would appear to have been a tramway of 3' 6" gauge, and of course horse-worked. Young saw it on his visit and was impressed, saying that it meant that four horses could now do the work of 25 (an important consideration with the escalating price of horse fodder in the Napoleonic Wars). Its exact course is unknown, but it probably ran from the quarries down what later became the station approach road to the 'Causeway' marked on the map.

Purfleet thus became an estate village, with cottages for the workers in 'The Dipping' (not marked as such on the map, these are the terraced houses just north of the wooded area Plot 249), a school and a chapel ('Church' on the map), originally Methodist but by the 1850s a chapel of ease to the parish church of St Clement, West Thurrock. The Whitbreads also built Purfleet House; although 19c Directories give a succession of Whitbreads as owners, there is no evidence that they ever lived there, census evidence from 1841 showing it occupied by a succession of tenants (usually professional men) and their families.

Estate villages usually make an attempt at the 'picturesque' or at least some architectural style; Purfleet failed to live up to the standards set by the Whitbreads in Bedfordshire, being described by a visitor in 1812 as 'a small, dirty garrison town' and the presence of the military is very evident in the shape of 'Purfleet Barracks'. These were actually rather misnamed by the OS, as they were the Government Powder Stores, moved here from Greenwich in 1760 – 1773. There were five large magazines – the rectangular blocks – designed by Gabriel Montresor, RE, to withstand both internal explosions and bombardment from the river. To minimise the risk of accidents, all internal fittings were of wood rather than metal and the internal movement of powder was by overhead cranes in each magazine, possibly the first use of this technology in the country. Later additions. Later additions included an administrative HQ (Ordnance House, the block separated from the magazines by ornamental grounds) and the long straight road northwards towards Wennington. The whole complex closed in 1962 and subsequently largely demolished, but No 5 Magazine survives and is a now a 'Heritage Centre'.

Quarries and Powder Stores provided ample local employment in the first half of the 19c (most of the work at the latter was carried out by civilians), but Purfleet was hit hard in the 1840s when the Whitbreads closed the quarries: the population of West Thurrock shrank from 965 in 1841 to 754 in 1851 in consequence. Some compensation was offered, however, in its rather unexpected emergence as a pleasure resort. Its dramatic scenery had attracted artists since the late 18c (Turner painted 'Purfleet and the Essex Shore' in 1808: auctioned by Sothebys in July 2021 it was sold to a private bidder for £4m). From the 1820s visitors started to arrive by the London – Gravesend 'Long Ferry' to climb the heights and enjoy the panorama of shipping on the river, and in 1854 the LTSR, taking advantage of the old quarry workings to avoid the expensive engineering works that would otherwise have been needed to cut through the chalk ridge, brought Purfleet within easy reach of Londoners with half-day excursions offered: visitors could enjoy boating trips on the river, walk through the overgrown and thickly-wooded old quarries, marketed by the Whitbreads as 'Botany Gardens', climb Beacon Hill and, back in the village, take advantage of several tea-rooms or, for more substantial fare, patronise the 'Royal Hotel' (a Whitbread house, needless to say), famed for its whitebait suppers and patronised by clients as different as the Irish Nationalist leader Charles Stewart Parnell and his mistress Kitty O'Shea (the revelation of their affair in 1890 ended Parnell's political career) and the Prince of Wales.

Another visitor to Purfleet in the 1890s was Bram Stoker, at that time Assistant Manager of the Lyceum Theatre in London, whose staff regularly enjoyed Sunday afternoon outings there. It obviously made an impression on him, as it features in his novel *Dracula* (1897) as it was to Purfleet that the 50 boxes of earth that were brought from Transylvania (to enable the Count to regenerate his powers) after being shipwrecked off Whitby were eventually consigned to 'Carfax', the house purchased for him by Jonathan Harker. There was in fact a 'Carfax House' in Purfleet but this was not built until after publication of the novel and presumably so named by its owner, who must have had a macabre sense of humour (and a plentiful supply of garlic in his garden?). The consensus of opinion is that the house was based on the Whitbread's Purfleet House, although it had none of the Gothic details Stoker

describes. It did, however, have suitably gloomy surroundings and the chapel that figures in the story. The other major building that Stoker includes is the ‘private lunatic asylum’ nearby, surrounded by high walls, from which the insect-eating inmate Renfield escapes to go to the chapel; almost certainly Stoker got this idea from the high walls that fronted the Powder Stores, and ‘Ordnance House’ may well have been the model for the asylum.

By the time the map was published, Purfleet’s halcyon days as a resort were over, with the steady industrialization of the foreshore and the revival of quarrying in 1902 (hence the tramway shown running down to the river’ the chalk was carried by Thames sailing barges to Trechmann Weekes’ cement works at Halling (Kent).

The impact of the First World War on Purfleet is very evident, in the shape of ‘Purfleet Camp’, which was established within a few weeks of the outbreak of hostilities to accommodate units of the BEF bound for Belgium via Tilbury. The first troops to arrive, in mid-September, were the East Surreys, who were housed in tents, which were later replaced by ‘hutments’ (following standard OS practice, these are shown in outline only on the map). By 1915 12,000 men were encamped here, with a steady flow of wounded troops in the reverse direction to the temporary military hospital opened to the east of the camp (and off the map). The camp continued in operation until (so far as I can discover) c.1960.

What remains?

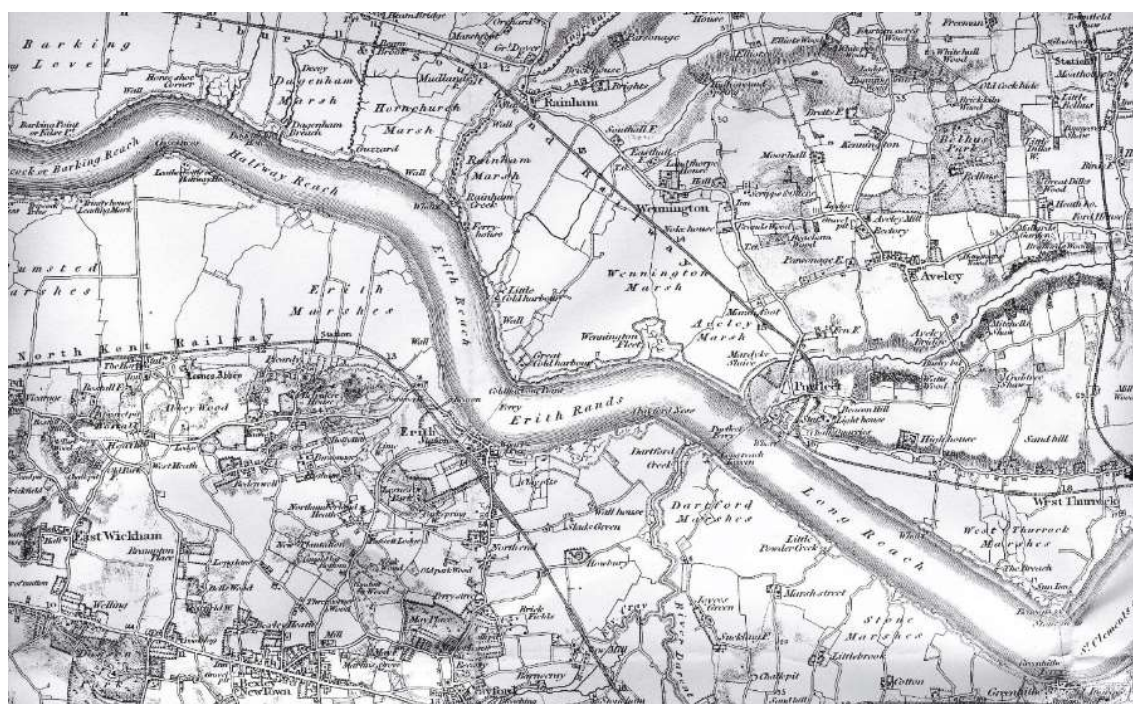
80 years after its publication, the map of Rainham is still a good guide to the town today, in spite of the spread of warehousing and the like over the marshes, a new A13 dual carriageway bisecting them, the building of HS1 parallel to the LTSR and a major Tesco store north of the historic core. Much marshland remains in its old state; proposals in the 1990s to develop a theme park and studio complex here put forward by the Music Corporation of America and the Rank Organisation were abandoned in favour of a site adjoining Euro Disney in Paris, and the area is now protected by the RSPB.

The story is very different at Purfleet. The Whitbread estate was sold off in 1920. Purfleet House and the chapel were sold to the Vicar of West Thurrock, who demolished the house and built a new church, the old chapel left to slowly become a ruin. By 1939 much of the area around the railway was covered by oil storage tanks and the closure of the Powder Works left only its quite ornate clock tower in a re-developed residential area. The quarries themselves have been filled in, once again in favour of warehousing and light industry. In 2020 the area was renamed ‘Purfleet-on-Thames’ as prelude to an ambitious regeneration programme, a £1 billion project to create (by 2025) a new town centre, a ‘creative quarter’, a new station and – an interesting hark back to what Purfleet had once been – a new ‘urban waterfront’ and esplanade to revitalize the dispiriting Thames shoreline. Whether it will succeed, time will tell.

And if any readers would like a happy day exploring the area, let me know! There’s always Lakeside nearby, for retail therapy...

Appendix: the Rainham/Purfleet area on the One Inch Map (First Edition)

As noted above, this map is based on the original survey of the early 1800s, with railways added. This printing is probably about 1870.



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Current Research

William Franklin

I continue to research the development of the landscape across Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire and encourage others to consider the landscape history of their locality. In respect of the first point, the development of the landscape, I continue to use a multi-faceted approach to this, using the documentary evidence of historic field systems as derived from documents and maps, these are viewed and transcribed as necessary. The range of documents includes Court of Chancery records, surveys, terriers, field books and enclosure wards and other supporting documents such as maps. Maps from Parliamentary enclosures and where available pre-enclosure maps are photographed, and many have been georeferenced and digitally traced to create a Graphical Information System (GIS) database. Within the next year I will have a digital and interrogatable map of every parish that has undergone parliamentary enclosure in the old county of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely. Huntingdonshire is also in progress.

Adding to this I am digitally processing pre-enclosure maps and material from other sources to build a picture of the pre-enclosure landscape. Where no old maps exist, I have been using old aerial photographs, LiDAR and fieldwalking to identify pre-enclosure field remains.

The aim is to produce a book on the enclosure of the old county of Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely in 2024 and one on Huntingdonshire a couple of years later. The database which will provide a visual view of changes to the landscape from medieval times to c.1900, will I hope eventually to be put on to a website for the use of others wishing to study Cambridgeshire history.

The vast amount of data lying behind the visual database will be used to inform on other aspects of history such as village development, the development of transport and other items. All the maps are produced in such a way as they can be viewed as stand alone maps or overlaid onto the first serial Ordnance Survey (via National Library of Scotland) or on top of Google Earth satellite imagery. Georeferencing historic map has the added advantage of creating 3D images. This can be achieved by draping the photographic image over a LiDAR image. This may sound very difficult but is quite easy. The hardest part is working out where the locations on a historic map are in the modern landscape. Two examples will now be considered.

Example 1. Milton - Figure 1 (overleaf). shows the now heavily built-up landscape of Milton. In this example the Enclosure Award Map has been draped over a LiDAR image. This allows the viewer to see the extent of modern housing and roads underneath the hedges, buildings and roads of the village at the time of enclosure. Also visible in the lidar image are the even earlier remains of the outer boundaries of the pre-enclosure medieval fields. This technique works to greater effect in hilly parishes.

Figure 1. Milton



Example 2.

Soham – figure 2 (below), where the owners or occupiers of land are known from either maps or other documents digitally tracing and populating the background database with the name of the owner or occupier can, once complete, allow the database to be interrogated and the lands of one or more individuals displayed. Figure 3 show this for Soham, where a map of 1656 gives the name of the occupier of every strip of land and the acreage. In this instance John Cropley's land has been selected. John was a yeoman farmer in Soham in the 1650's and his farmhouse survives.

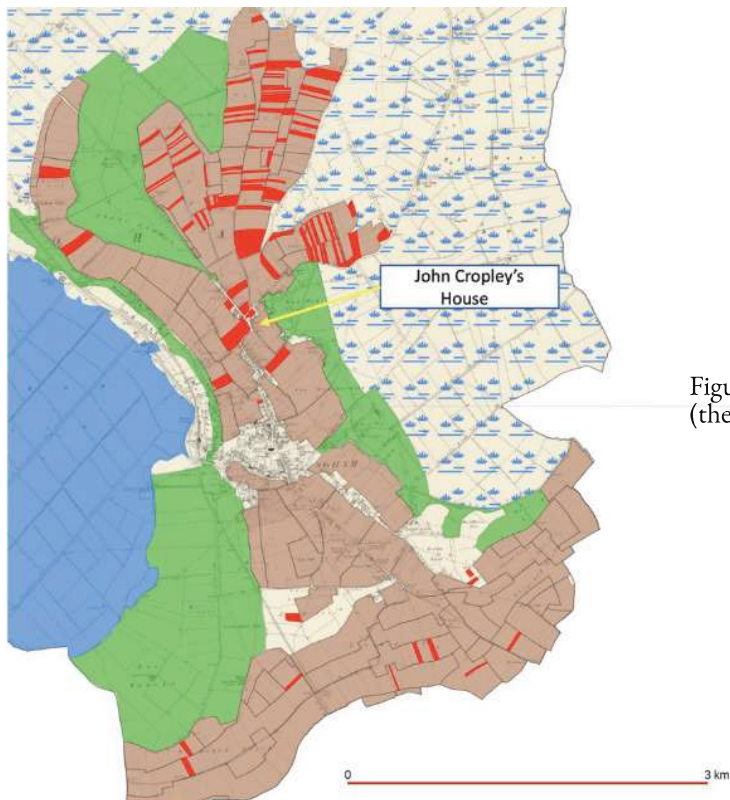


Figure 2. John Cropley's lands in Soham 1656 (the red strips) spread across the fields of the parish.

New book

I have just finished a book, *Enclosure for Local and Landscape Historians* and I'm currently looking for a publisher for this. There are hundreds of books on enclosure, most either look at the subject from a sociological perspective, considering the fate of the poor and other groups, or they consider it from a more scientific perspective, looking at the number of enclosures and the statistics of enclosure. There are currently no books in print which give an overview of the subject, details of the various enabling acts and standing orders brought in by parliament to control the flow of enclosure bills, the progress of a bill through parliament and how the commissioners undertook and completed their task (the mechanics of enclosure). The book also includes a detailed chapter on all of the documentary sources available to those studying the landscape and in particular enclosure, including some not mentioned in any other books on enclosure.

Other research

Occasionally when undertaking research on a particular parish or facet of the subject I come across something that leads me away from the primary research for a while, recent tangential research has included the returns of the inquisitions of depopulation, sheep taxation records, woods and deforestation and the large number of disputes that occurred in the 17th century land grab.

Supporting individuals and local history societies

Alongside all of this I continue with a small group of like-minded colleagues to work with individuals and historical societies across the county, helping them to explore their local history through documentary sources and archaeology.

News from the archives

Sue Sampson

Below are some of the more significant records we've acquired since June this year:

Cambridgeshire Archives

Records deposited by Bourn Hall Clinic including: building plans 1980s; research and publications on the history of the building and its previous owners c.1967-2013; photographs of Bourn Hall 20th century; close-up photographs of Bourn Hall showing structural features in detail; letters and autograph album belonging to the French family of Melbourn c.1914-1954 [R122/072]

Records of Munsey & Co., jewellers of Market Hill, Cambridge including Articles of Association and related paperwork 1901-1941; annual statements of account 1905-1963; register of jewellery repairs 1936-1938 [R122/073]

Records of Histon Road Oral History project: A Community Remembers 2019 – 2022 [R122/100]

Records of Wisbech Working Men's Club including annual reports and accounts, 1895-1912; rules 1902, 1911 and papers relating to the clock tower and other building works, 1890-1892 [R122/105]

Records of a Duxford doctor's surgery and others including account book for Duxford doctors surgery, 1919 – 1948, Day book 1950 – 1957, diagnosis book 1933 – 1947 [R122/106]

Papers of Allan Brigham of Cambridge, historian, Blue Badge guide and road sweeper including list of workmen in the Highway department, 1900-1902; memorandum of agreement between GER and the Mayor and Burgesses of Cambridge, 1905; plan of Great Eastern Railway boundary on Mill Road, n.d; plan of Mill Road store yard office, 1951, interviews with various employees including refuse loader; personnel manager; road sweeper, cleansing manager and works manager, 1991-1996 [R122/109]

Huntingdonshire Archives

Huntingdon Union letter book, 1836-1839 [6156]

Records of Huntingdon and Hail Weston including E. T. Page, undertaker: British Undertakers' Association Year book and diary, 1919 and funeral expense book, 1884 – 1948. Huntingdon Grammar school exercise books, 1911, 1942 – 1945. Hail Weston Baptist Church Christian Endeavour Society member list, 1899-1908. Personal album of Elizabeth Lumley, 1881 [6148]

The Poll Tax and Census of Sheep in Huntingdonshire, 1549

William Franklin

Agriculture and Inflation

Between 1348 and 1379 the population of England had been decimated by plague and it was not until the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century that it began to rise again. The early sixteenth century was a period in which that population growth was particularly rapid and agricultural production failed to keep pace, partly due to harvest failures in 1545 and 1549. This led to a period of sustained inflation. To cope with this inflation the coinage was debased on three occasions, 1542, 1547, and 1549, which brought in cash to the royal coffers, but did little to resolve the issue as prices, especially that of food rose sharply. The price index of articles consumed in the ordinary labourer's household, which stood at 100 in 1508, had risen to 231 by 1547, and rose again to 285 in 1551.²

In the 1480s it had been suggested that much of the problem of insufficient agricultural output and inflation was the result of enclosure for sheep. A subject taken up by Sir Thomas More, who in his 'Utopia' wrote about "sheep eating up men". The underlying assumption was that the enclosure of land led to unemployment and deprivation, and as less corn was produced, prices for corn and bread rose. Similarly, engrossing, the joining together of two or more farms in the occupation of one person, was viewed with equal suspicion as it was believed that this often coincided with enclosure and left farmhouses and cottages to fall into decay.

Initially, the response had been to attempt to control enclosure. The first Act to control enclosure was passed in 1488.³ Known as the husbandry act this Act required that all land that had been enclosed since the start of the reign of Henry VII be returned to the plough and was unsuccessful in curbing the process of enclosure and further Acts followed in 1515 and 1516. Part of the reason for the failure of these Acts was that they failed to distinguish between enclosure for sheep and enclosure to improve arable output, for not all enclosure was for conversion to pasture. In 1517-18 Cardinal Wolsey established enclosure commissions, enquiries that would investigate enclosure and engrossment. Further enquiries were held in 1548. These did not achieve what parliament and the crown hoped for, a reversal in the process of enclosure and engrossment, and accordingly further demands were made to land owners in 1526.

The Commonwealth

On 28th February 1547 at the age of nine years King Edward VI ascended to the throne. As a minor he was unable to govern and he was placed in the hands of his uncle, the Duke of Somerset, and a committee of trustees who were to act on his behalf until he came of age. Somerset manipulated the committee and was quickly in control and became known as Protector Somerset. At the time of his coronation, Britain remained in conflict with France, the monarchy still believing they were the rightful rulers of much of France and were struggling to maintain order in Ireland. The cost of maintaining armies was rising, as was the cost of maintaining the royal court. Outside of the court inflation was high and as in the reign of Edward's father, King Henry VIII much of the blame was put on enclosing and engrossing.

In Henry's reign and that of his predecessors, it had been usual practice to resolve issues of royal or parliamentary debt by introducing forms of taxation, known as subsidies, often for a limited period of time, and in 1548-1549 this practice continued, only this time it was called a relief and would be one of the catalysts for civil unrest in 1549.

Somerset relied upon the advice of others in carrying out his role and many of his advisers were of the school of thought labelled 'Commonwealth Men'. They were a diverse group comprised of divines, politicians, and pamphleteers, who wished to curb the acquisitive powers of landlords.⁴ In particular the 'Commonwealth Men' sought to promote tillage and discourage the conversion of tillage land into pasture. Amongst this group was Hugh Latimer, a former Bishop of Worcester who used his sermons to deride those enclosing land. As noted previously, a serious flaw in the thought process here was the continued assumption that all enclosure was for pasture and the rearing of sheep. This was not the case, Thirsk, in her work on Tudor enclosure⁵ showed from her studies that

¹ Brenner, Y.S. (1961) "The Inflation of Prices in Early Sixteenth Century England", *Economic History Review*, New Series XIV, pp. 231-2.

² Phelps-Brown and Sheila V. Hopkins, *Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables compared with Builders Wage Rates*, *Economics*, New Series. XXIII, p. 312.

³ 4. Henry VII c.19

⁵ Beresford, M.W. (1953) *The Poll Tax and Census of Sheep, 1549 (Part I)*. *Agricultural History Review*. Vol. 1., p.1.

⁵ Thirsk, J. (1958) *Tudor Enclosures*. Historical Association, London. pp.4-8.

enclosure took many forms and was not solely the conversion to pasture for sheep. However, as advisors to Protector Somerset, they had an opportunity to promote their cause and took it.

While dissatisfaction regarding inflation and employment was rising amongst the growing general population Somerset and his colleagues were more intent on dealing with the cost of maintaining the army and the growing royal debt. This was partly fuelled by the fear of attack from Scotland, which was allied to Catholic France. To deal with the issue of the debt a tax on sheep and cloth was proposed. Such a tax would certainly not help the problem of inflation, and Somerset's advisors appear to have believed that any tax placed upon those rearing sheep and those producing cloth from wool could be passed on to the purchasers of cloth. In the fifteenth century, wool prices had been high and Britain had become one of the chief wool producers in Europe, but in the first half of the sixteenth-century wool was no longer as profitable as other European counties saw increases in flocks. The decrease in sales in of wool to Europe meant that those selling wool for manufacture increased their prices in the domestic market and accordingly those manufacturing cloth passed the increase to their customers, and any tax on sheep and cloth produced from wool was going to further inflate prices and cause resentment on the part of landlords, graziers, cloth manufacturers and consumers.

The Census of Sheep

In 1548 a memorandum was drawn up for Parliament by John Hales, advisor to Protector Somerset, called 'Causes of Dearth'.⁶ This memorandum estimated the number of sheep and the yield of a tax on those sheep. It was estimated that there were 3,000,000 sheep, however, this was only an estimate and from this, it was estimated that a tax of sheep might yield about £48,000, with a further sum in excess of £32,000 coming from a levy on cloth.

There were problems in implementing a tax of sheep, not least that the crown had the right of purveyance, that is the right to purchase goods supposedly for the royal household at below market prices and in 1548-9 this was well below the inflation rate, for example a lamb worth two shillings could be purchased by the crown purveyor for two pence. A second memorandum for parliament recognised this and revised the income from a sheep tax as £17,187. 10s. Hales proposed the abolition of the right of royal purveyance from Christmas 1548, with a few exceptions for items being directly for the use of the royal household.

In 1549 the Act for the Relief was passed. This Act granted "*unto his Royall Majestie a Relif to contynew by the space of thre yeares, to be rated, taxed, levyed and gathered of every pson, of what estate or degree he be...beinge worthe tenne poundes in monye coyne, playte, stocke of merchandyse, corne grayne, sheep, beuf cattall or other goodes movable with this Realme as without*".⁷ This money was to be paid at the rate of twelve pence per year for every pound. Additionally clauses five to seven of the Act included a relief on sheep and clauses eight to ten a relief on cloth. Of the rate of sheep which we are concerned here the Act states,;

"of every Ewe kept for the most part of the yere in salt or fresh marshes or in severall pasture, that is to say groundes not comon nor comonlie used to be tilled, thre pens; of every wether and other sheere sheepe kept in pasture or marshes as is aforesaid, two pens; And of every shere sheepe kept on comons or on severall groundes used to be tilled thre half pens; to be paid yerelie during thev said thre yeares, by the owners of the same sheepe".

Also, every person not having above ten 'sheere sheepe' had to pay a half penny for the poll of sheep, those having between ten and twenty sheep were to pay a penny per sheep per year for the poll. The Act states that the poll was to commence immediately and the first year's tax was due to be in by 1st November 1549, with the other two payments due on 1st November 1550 and 1551.

The Act set differing rates for different types of sheep. The reason given for this was that the sheep feeding on enclosed pastures gave their master more wool, thus a ewe kept on an enclosed pasture was charged at 2d while a sheep kept on the common field was charged at 1.5d. Initially it might appear that those keeping sheep, which might be included in the relief of goods were paying twice for their animals. So, to counter that a clause in the Act states that the payment of the tax on sheep was to be paid where the charge on sheep was greater than the assessed value of the person's goods.

As instructed the commissions in the counties were set up and the census and collection of money commenced on 25th June 1549. The whole thing was badly received and considerable disquiet arose amongst the sheepmasters, land owners, cloth manufacturers and the poor. John Hales toured the Midlands, meeting with the commissioners, met with hostility and abuse, including that from many of the commissioners who were themselves sheep masters. Never-the-less the census continued and money was collected in the counties. Nationally things changed rapidly. By November 1549 Protector Somerset had been deposed and was in the Tower of London. His successor was the Earl of Northumberland and within a month of the tax being due the House of Commons was debating its abolition. The

⁶ State Papers Domestic, Edward VI, v. No.20, in *A Discourse of the Commonweal*, Ed. Lamond. (1929) pp.xlii-v.

⁷ Statutes of the Realm. pp.78-9

House of Commons Journal recording on the 18th November: “Mr Speaker with the King’s Privy Council of the House and twelve others of the House shall be suitors to know the Kings Majesty’s pleasure by his Council if, upon their humble suite, they may treat of the last relief for cloths and sheep at four of the clock in the afternoon.”⁸ On 20th November the speaker reported that the house might “treat for the Act of Relief, having in respect the causes for granting thereof.” This was then discussed in the House of Lords and on 11th December a new Bill was introduced, which after its third reading in the House of Lords on 17th January 1550 was passed and became statute. Entitled, “*An Act e concerninge the release of the braunches in the last Acte of of Relief for the payment of sheepe and cloths. Also a graunte of subsidy to be paid in one year.*”, this Act killed off the poll tax on sheep and the levy on cloth.

The preamble of this new Act stated the reason for the repeal of the relief as: “*Whiche Reliefe of Cloth appeareth nowe so comberous to all Clothmakers, and also so tedious to the same for makinge of there bookcs and the accomptes thereof, by reason of lacke of the Alnegers not allwayes p’sent when tyme requiereth, that in maner they are discouraged to make anye Cloth, or to sett anye men on woorke aboute the same : And also the saide Relieff of Shepe ys to yor poore Comons, havinge but fewe shepe in nomber, a greate charge, and also so comberouse for all yor Comissioners and Officers named and appointed for executinge of the same, that they cannot in much tell howe to serve yo Highnes therein accordinge to their duties.*”⁹

The Act of Repeal removed the need for any subsequent census of sheep and removed the obligation of payment on sheep flocks, other the the continuing obligation to pay the tax on the value of goods. Beresford, in his studies of the issue believed that the money collected may have been repaid,¹⁰ although he was unable to find any trace of an order for repayment.

The Returns

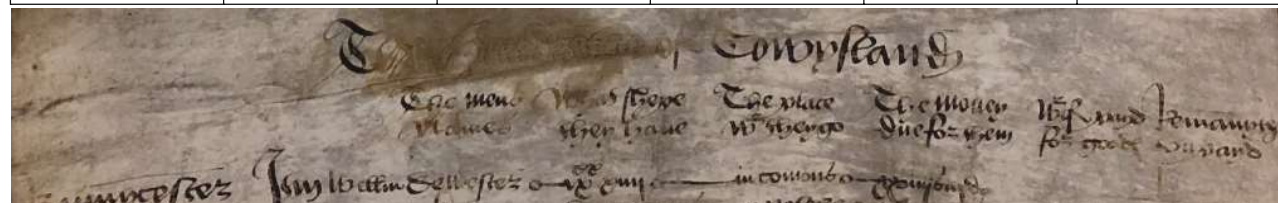
Returns, mostly incomplete, survive for a number of counties including Huntingdonshire and neighbouring Northamptonshire, in The National Archives. Of all the surviving returns the Huntingdonshire returns are the most complete, comprising of four sets of membranes, set out by the administrative Hundred (see below). A fourth membrane, the most illegible is a collectors certificate for the Normacross Hundred.

Reference Number	Hundred(s)
E179/122/143	Hurstingstone
E179/122/144	Normancross
E179/122/146	Toseland, Leightonstone and the Borough of Huntingdon.
E179/122/145	Normancross collectors certificate.

Within the return for each hundred the order is by village and then by sheep masters resident in that village. If that sheep master had sheep in a number of villages his sheep in the village were noted first and then in subsequent lines are the numbers of sheep he held in the other parishes.

The returns are written in ink on vellum and have suffered from damp and dust etc., over the intervening years between 1549 and their transfer to the new National Archives building. Which for some parts of the returns makes reading a challenge. Added to the challenge of reading the documents is the method used by the commissioners. On some returns they used standard notation in Roman numerals, for example CCLx to indicate 260 sheep, but in other cases they counted by the score, writing the number down as xiiij^{xx} ij (13 x 20+2) to indicate 262 sheep.

When compared with the returns of some other counties, the Huntingdonshire returns are very detailed. The commissioners set out their returns in a tabular form (although not always neatly), with the following headings:

The Mens Names	The Nombre of the shepe	The place where they goe	the money deu for theym	whereof payd for goods	Remayneth unpaid
					

⁸ House of Commons Journal, I. p.11.

⁹ Statutes of the Realm, IV, p.122

¹⁰ Beresford M.W.(1954) The Poll Tax and Census of Sheep, 1549. Part 2. Agricultural History Review. Vol. 2., p.22.

In addition to the tabular form, the commissioners undertaking the poll of Toseland, Leightonstone and the Borough of Huntingdon were particularly thorough in their approach to the poll, noting that one person had 3 sheep on Huntingdon Common. However, even in their return there are parishes that are completely absent. The commissioners were required to report the flocks of any owners living out of the county. In this the Toseland, Leightonstone and the Borough of Huntingdon commissioners were again most thorough, setting out at the end of the document a list of every such person and the number of sheep they kept, including in which parish the sheep were pastured. For the Normancross Hundred the sheep of any person not resident in the county are given in the entry for the village in which the sheep are pastured and not as a separate list. No out of county sheep masters are recorded for the Hurstingstone Hundred.

At the time of the census the majority of almost every parish in the county still operated medieval open fields. Within these fields sheep were grazed on those areas left fallow as part of the normal crop rotation or on the grass balks and the verges of the lanes where they were fenced in to keep them from devouring the arable crops. The commissioners variously described the sheep in these areas as either being ‘in comons’¹¹ or ‘feyld sheyp’.¹² Ewes, wethers and sheep contained in pasture are noted in the returns.

E179/122/145 within the collection is different in its layout from the other documents and because of the poor quality of the document posed a particular challenge. In this document there are only three columns, that on the left contains names group by parish and the centre and right hand columns contain monetary amounts. The preamble, particularly faded states that it is the “sertyficat” of the commissioners for the relief. Many of the names listed in the document do not occur in the sheep poll and it therefore appears that this is the only surviving list of persons charged the tax on goods to the value of ten pounds and over, and as such will not be described further here.

The Huntingdonshire Census

From the one hundred and eighty six Huntingdonshire returns it appears that in excess of 37,876 sheep were pastured in the county by Huntingdonshire resident sheep masters. The term ‘in excess of’ is used as a number of parishes in each hundred are absent from the returns and a couple of entries are totally illegible. Where the number of sheep is illegible it has been possible to calculate the number of sheep from the tax due, providing the type of sheep is known. Where neither the tax due or the type of sheep entries cannot be read the number of sheep is impossible to calculate. In only two villages, Great and Little Raveley, were nil returns provided. In Keyston, no sheep were recorded as being kept by persons resident in the parish. The only sheep recorded there were those belonging to Robert Catlyn of the neighbouring Northamptonshire parish of Raunds. The total number of sheep kept in the county by persons resident outside of the county was 2,119, giving a total number of sheep pastured in the county as 39,995. Winwick is recorded as having the least number of sheep (9), while St Ives is recorded as having the greatest number of sheep (1,988). The mean average being 477 sheep.

The Commissioners

The commissioners appointed for the census were all local men. They were named in the preamble to the roll and would have signed the rolls at the end. The Hurstingstone roll has a badly damaged preamble making the reading of the commissioners names impossible, however, their signatures have survived albeit in poor condition. They were Thomas Riddeley, Richard Teryngton, Robert Rowley and William Eday. The Normancross roll has a better preserved preamble from which we find that Richard Ashwell was the High Collector for the Hundred and commissioner along with Miles Forest, commissioner. For Toseland, Leightonstone and the Borough of Huntingdon, there were four commissioners and a High Collector for the Hundred. The commissioners being Lurence Taylard, knight, Silverster Leder, Thomas (surname illegible), Robert Drewell and George Symcock. Silvester Bedylls was the High Collector. Robert Drewell, George Symcock and Silvester Bedylls were all sheepmasters whose names appear in the roll.

The Sheepmasters

One hundred and twenty five sheep masters names can be identified from the documents. The numbers of sheep the had varied from 20 owned by Thomas Thame, to the 1,828 sheep owned by Richard Danyell. William Stoking of Abbots Ripton and Wennington was the only one of the sheepmasters with a very large flock to hold all his sheep within one parish (he owned a single flock of 1,203 sheep), all the other sheep masters with large flocks held animals in the pastures of various parishes, often close together, although some held flocks in parishes up to 10 miles apart. The mean average flock size for the one hundred and twenty-five sheep masters was 238.5 sheep. Five sheep masters

¹¹ TNA E179/122/2143, 146

¹² TNA 179/122/144

had flocks of between 500 and 999 sheep and three had flocks greater than 1,000, these were William Coney who had a flock of 1,006 pastured at at Botolph Bridge, Elton, Haddon, Orton Longueville and Yaxley, William Stoking of Abbots Ripton whose whole flock was pastured at Abbots Ripton and Wennington in that parish, and Richard Danyell of Alconbury, who had a flock of 1,828 which were pastured in Alconbury, Grafham, Little Stukeley and Diddington.

Where the sheepmasters are described, the descriptions vary from ‘gentlemen’ to ‘yeomen’ and ‘husbandmen’. From the Hurstingstone return, we learn that at least one of the commissioners was himself a sheep master, for the return states “Richard Teryngton one of the comyssoners hathe..”. Richard’s sheep were all in the parish of Ramsey. There he had 232 ewes in pasture, 30 wethers in pasture, and 377 “feyld shepe”. While it is known that other commissioners were sheepmasters (see The Commissioners above), this is the only entry that states the sheep master was a commissioner.

Those resident out of county who owned sheep pastured in Huntingdonshire parishes often lived at a considerable distance from where the flocks were located, for example, John Vous (Vaux) of Sywell in Northamptonshire held 95 ewes at Southoe, a distance of 35 miles between parishes, while Thomas Benet, a butcher from Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire held 272 sheep at Brampton, a distance of 50 miles between the two places. In this instance, the flock may have been in transit between the place where they were reared and Thomas Benet’s butchery, and at the time of the census were stopping over at Brampton. Another flock in transit was that of Richard and John Fysher whose sheep were staying over at Alconbury. Huntingdonshire farmers often rented out pasture land next to the main drove ways such as the Bullock Way for animals traveling south to market.

Table 1. Out of county sheepmasters, sheep and distances.

	Number of Sheep	Distance from home parish
<u>Itm John Vouse of Sywell in the countye of Northton esquire hathe going in the fylld of of Sowthow in the countye of Hunt</u>	95	35
<u>Itm Robti Catlyn of Rawnds in the countye of Northampton gent have going in the fylld of [illeg.] in comon in the countye of Hunt.</u> Ewes	99	
<u>Itm the sayd Robti Catlyn has in pasture in the sayd towne & county</u> Ewes	34	
<u>Itm the sayd [illeg. Robti Catlyn has in pasture] in the sayd towne & county</u> sherhoge	16	
<u>Itm the sayd Robti had at the day of survey of shepe at Abbotysley in the countye of Hunt going to Keston warde pasture</u> Wethers	80	37
<u>Itm Thomas Snagge of Letchworthe in the countye of Herford duth have going at Covyngton in the countye of Hunt in comon.</u> Ewes	27	33
<u>Itm Richard Fysher of Byllyng in the countye of Northton yoman hathe at Wulley in the countye of Hunt in pasture on [syus eser?]</u> Ewes	108	30
<u>Itm the sayd Rychard and John Fysher of the sayd towne and countye hath going in the pyshe of Awkenbury in pasture called [Certe?]</u> Fyld Ewes	30	32
<u>Itm the sayd Rychard and John Fysher hathe in the sayd pasture other shepe</u>	66	32
<u>Itm the sayd Rychard and John hathe going in the sayd towne & countye in the comons</u>	309	32
<u>Itm Crystover Catlyn of Harrold in the countye of Bedford gent hathe going in Groffham in the countye of Hunt in comons</u>	97	21
<u>Itm Thomas Benet of Hoddysden in the countye of Herford, Bocher, harthe at Brampton in the countye of Hunt, in comons.</u>	272	50
<u>Itm Jamys Barcocke of Basshmei (Bushmead) in the countye of Bedford, husb[andman], hathe at Moche Stoughton in the countye of Hunts in comons</u>	163	2
<u>Item John Bisshoppe of Herdgrave in the countye of Northton, husb[andman], hathe at Covyngton in the countye of Hunt in comons</u> Ewes Wethers	12 41	2
<u>Itm Richard Deacon of Barnewell in the countye of Northton, husb[andman], hathe at Wynweke in the countye of Hunt in comons</u>	59	5
<u>Itm Jamys Hey of Achurche in the countye of Northton, yeoman, hathe at Moche Gydding in the countye of Hunt in comons</u>	41	10

<u>Itm Willm Jenkyng of Wemblington in the Eylde of Elye hath at Moche Paxton in the countye of Hunt in comons</u>	46	25
<u>Itm John Androwe of Strettam in the the Eylde of Elye, yoman, hath at Hayllweston in the countye of Hunt in pasture shepe a monethe before the survey 12 lamhoge, 20 wethewrs ane ewes</u>	20	33
<u>Itm Robti Bordfyld of Staplelow in the countye of Bedford husb[andman], hath at Hayll Weston in the countye of Hunt in comons</u>	42	3
<u>Itm Willm Byrrey of Busshemede in the countye of Bedford gent., hath at Moche Stoughton in the countye of Hunt in pasture 4 ewes and in the same pasture he hath weythers</u>	144	2
<u>Itm [illeg.] Colle of Glaston in the countie of Rutland esquire (at Elton)</u>	128	16
<u>Henry Catthorn of Warmyngton in the countie of Northton (at Elton)</u>	160	4
<u>Henry Catthorn of Warmyngton in the countie of Northton (at Haddon)</u>	30	6

Note: The term Moche (Much) is used by the commissioners in place of Great.

Taxation on Goods

As discussed earlier the Act for the relief stated that the payment of the tax on sheep was to be paid where the charge on sheep was greater than the assessed value of the person's goods. Consequently, if a person was taxed £1 for his assessed good and the value of his sheep was £2, his poll tax charge was £1. The Huntingdon returns inform us of the amount already paid, that is the amount paid in respect of the tax on goods above £10, as well as the value of the sheep and the amount due i.e. the sheep tax. The payment of the tax on goods was 1s for every £1 above £10. Thus from the returns it is possible to calculate the value of a persons goods. As examples we will consider the value of four persons, Richard Wynkfeld, knight of Glatton, William Beytt a yeoman of Somersham, William Just, a husbandman, of Somersham and Myles Forest esquire of Morborn.

Richard Wynkfeld, Knight, paid 18s. therefore the value of his goods was £28. His sheep were assessed at 45s. 1½d. Therefore his sheep tax charge was 15s. 1½d.

William Beytt, Yeoman, paid 23s. therefore the value of his goods was assessed as £33. His 173 sheep were assessed at 44s. 7½d. His tax bill for the sheep tax was therefore 21s. 7½d.

William Just, Husbandman, paid 22s. for his goods which were therefore worth £32. His 133 sheep were valued 19s. 1½d. As this was less than the value of his goods he paid no sheep tax.

Myles Forest of Morborne, Esquire, paid £3 (60s.) for his goods which therefore must have been worth £70. His 300 sheep were assessed at £5. 5s., therefore he was charged £2. 5s.

The value of the goods owned by the yeoman, knight, husbandman and others whose rank is not given varied only a little. In all probability they either held their house, buildings and land either by copyhold tenancy or by leasehold, thus the only real difference is in the assessed value of their movable goods. Myles Forest, esquire, probably owned his property and therefore the assessed value of his goods was considerably higher at £70. A similar amount was assessed of Simon Cotton, lord of the manor of Conington who held a considerable estate in that parish as well as 651 sheep, for which he was assessed as needing to pay 30s. 8½d. in sheep tax. the person who was assessed as having the greatest value in goods was William Coney of Yaxley. He paid £10 in tax on his goods (200s.) in tax on his goods suggesting that his goods were worth £210.

Sheep and Enclosure

While sheep and enclosure of arable land for pasture were the subject of much debate in the sixteenth century, the poll tax returns of 1549 in their raw form give little indication of enclosure in individual parishes. Typically, three sheep will require one acre of pasture to feed on per year. Using this figure gives us an estimate of the amount of land used in each parish as pasture for sheep. If this is considered as a percentage of the possible arable land in a parish it gives a rough indication of the amount of land that was either permanent pasture or arable land converted to pasture. However, many Huntingdonshire parishes lie upon the fen edge. The fens were always better suited to grazing for cattle, as the damp conditions caused disease which decimated sheep flocks. Therefore, to truly

understand the information in the sheep poll tax returns on enclosure in the county other documentary sources are required. A three of examples are now considered.

Table 2. The ten biggest sheepmasters

Richard	<u>Teryngton</u>	334
Simon	<u>Campyon</u>	378
Robert	<u>Drewell</u>	500
Thomas	Toney	571
John	<u>Duppant</u>	640
Simon	Cotton	651
Mathew	Andrew	781
William	Coney	1006
William	Stoking	1203
Richard	<u>Danyell</u>	1828

Example 1. Great Gidding

Great Gidding has one of, if not the earliest map, of any parish in Huntingdonshire, dated 1541, eight years before the census of sheep took place. This map, part of the private Watson family archive was reproduced in the Victoria County History for Huntingdonshire and shows the three medieval open fields surrounding the village, which were at that time still extant. To the south-west, over the Alconbury Brook, was an area of land wholly enclosed. This piece of land, known as Gidding Grove Pastures, formerly woodland in the earlier medieval period was turned over to pasture by 1541. Similarly, in the east corner of the parish lay an area of land taken out of Hangerhill Field and enclosed as three small enclosures, known as Glovers Closes. The acreages of these lands are 364.6 acres and 56 acres respectively. Both lay alongside the medieval permanent pastures alongside the two streams that pass through the parish. In 1549 six hundred and ninety-one sheep were pastured in Great Gidding by four sheep masters, all of which could easily have been pastured on the enclosures shown on the

1541 map. The sheep masters here were Simon Grey (120 sheep), Thomas Warren (400 sheep), Robert Howsby (130 sheep) and James Hey of Thorpe Achurch, Northamptonshire (41 sheep).

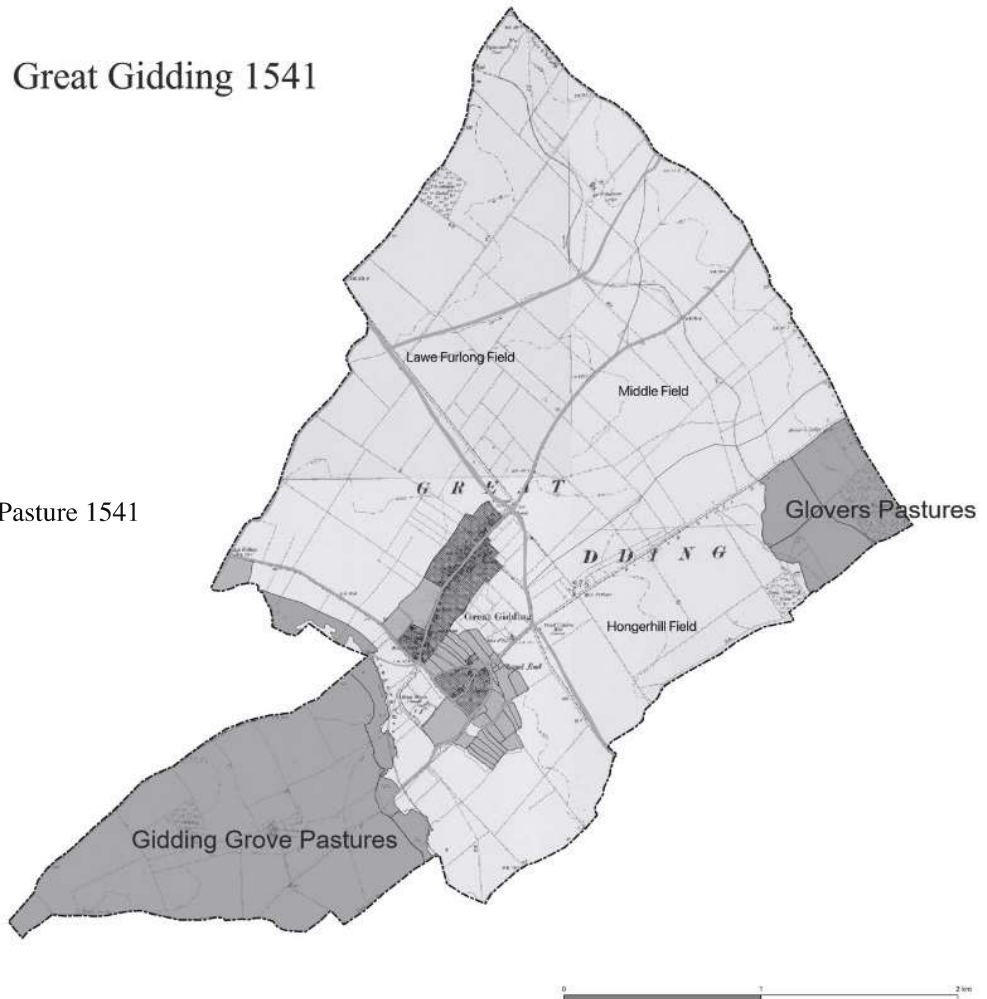


Figure 1. Great Gidding Enclosed Pasture 1541

Example 2. Little Gidding

Little Gidding is a good example to study for alongside the sheep poll tax return is a map of 1596 and an inquisition into enclosure in the parish from 1594-5. Little Gidding is a small parish of 723.8 acres, which in 1549 was in the hands of the Drewell family. The poll tax shows they had 500 sheep pastured in the parish. Two streams pass through the parish, the Alconbury Brook forming the west boundary. The eastern boundary being an ancient drove way now known as The Bullock Way. The permanent pasture lay along the sides of these two streams with the open arable fields between them. Modern field studies¹³ have shown that the medieval permanent pasture alongside the streams comprised of around 100 acres or fourteen percent of the total acreage. This was around 60 acres short of the land required for the number of sheep in 1549, when the village still retained two or possibly three open fields. The field to the east of the smaller stream and next to the Bullock way, an area of 138 acres, was probably already enclosed by 1549, and certainly enclosed by 1596.¹⁴ While the extent of the Drewell's enclosing in 1549 is unclear, what is certain is that they had by that time commenced enclosing the parish and clearing the village. This caused complaints not least by the parish priest, which in turn led to a commission of inquiry¹⁵ that interviewed a number of people who had either tilled the land in the parish or pastured animals there, including John Wilkinson alias Stevens of Great Gidding, aged 60, Henry Stretton of Hempston (Helpston), Northamptonshire, aged 68 years, Henry Figen of Baldock, Hertfordshire, aged 60 years Henry Berridge of Steeple Gidding, aged 60 years, and Thomas Webster of Winwick, age 48 years. All of those interviewed testified that Humphry Drewell and then his son Robert Drewell had been enclosing the fields of Little Gidding within their lifetime.

What is certain is that in 1596 Robert Drewell sold Little Gidding to Sir Clifton Gervase. On taking up occupation of the land Sir Clifton had a map produced which shows clearly that of the two or three open fields in the parish only one remained (Huntingdon Archives 5806). The rest of the land having been enclosed for pasture (Figure 2.).

Little Gidding 1596



Figure 2.
Little Gidding – showing the enclosures
made by the Drewell's

¹³ Franklin, W. (2017) *The Ferrars and the Enclosure of Little Gidding*. Proceedings of the Cambridgeshire Antiquarian Society. Vol. CVI.

¹⁴ Huntingdon Archives 5806

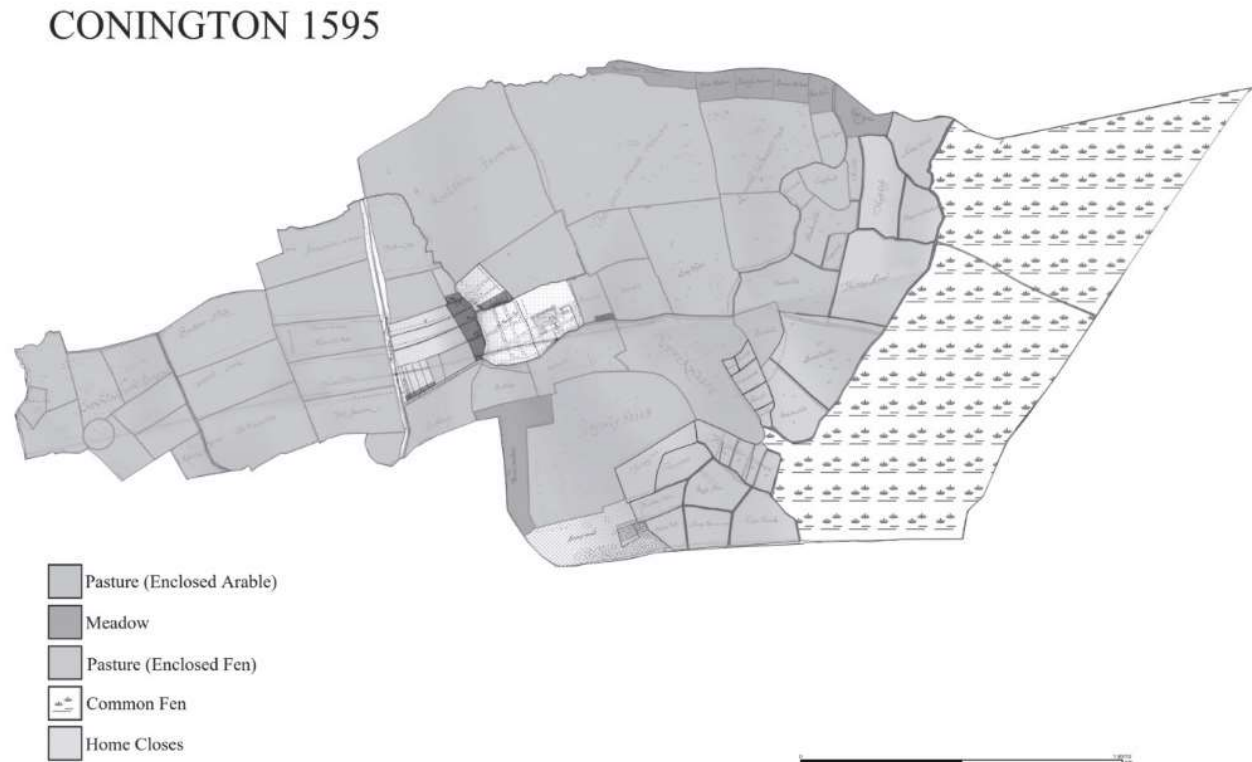
¹⁵ TNA E 134/37Eliz/East23

Example 3. Conington

Conington is a fen edge parish, the total acreage of which is 3175.2 acres, of which around 2,200 acres were either permanent pasture alongside streams or open arable fields, the remainder being fen. In 1549 the manor was in the occupation of Simon Cotton who had 651 sheep pastured in the parish. A Henry Gull also had 108 sheep pastured in the parish (he also had sheep pastured in Great Stukeley). these 751 sheep would have required 250 acres of pasture per year.

A map of 1595 shows a mostly enclosed parish with sheep in the enclosed pastures collectively called Cunnington Down, to the west of the Great North Road, and in the enclosures immediately south and east of the manor house, including the as yet largely undivided Spinney Field.

Figure 3. Conington 1595



Summary

The surviving documents of the census of sheep taken for the relief of 1549 give a very good indication of the number of sheep pastured in the majority of Huntingdonshire parishes during 1549. No other set of documents gives a well-defined insight into the pasturing of flocks. It is clear that some landowners were renting land on the heavy clay soils to persons from other parishes both within and without the county, and to those driving sheep from the place where they were raised to the slaughterhouses and markets in the southern counties.

In addition the sheep census and taxation records give a good indication of the worth of a good section of the Huntingdonshire community, albeit for one year. Like most taxation records their use as stand-alone documents is limited but can be used to understand changes in the landscape and farming practices when considered alongside other documents such as early maps, terriers and records of enclosure commissions, and inquiries at the beginning of the early modern period.