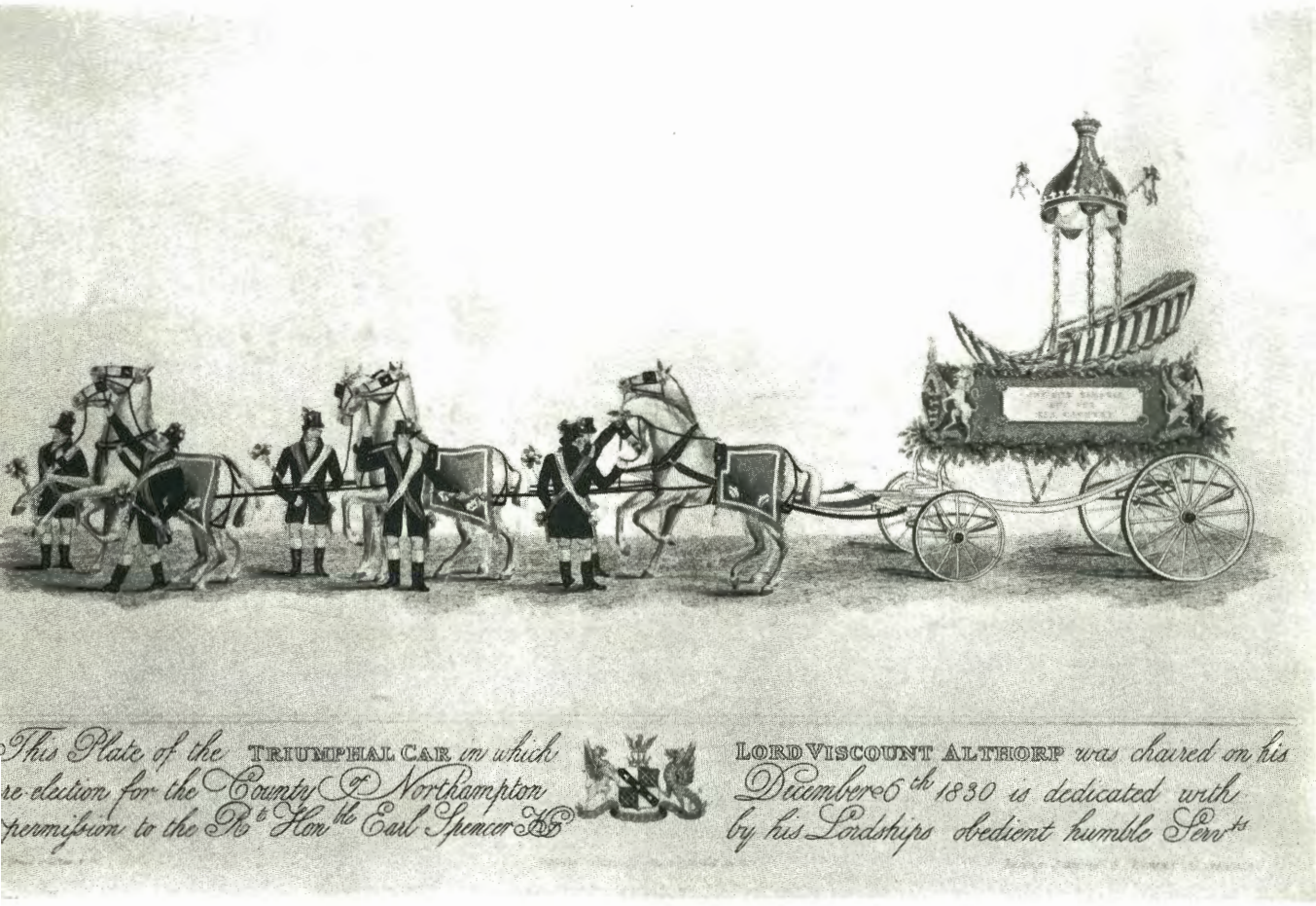
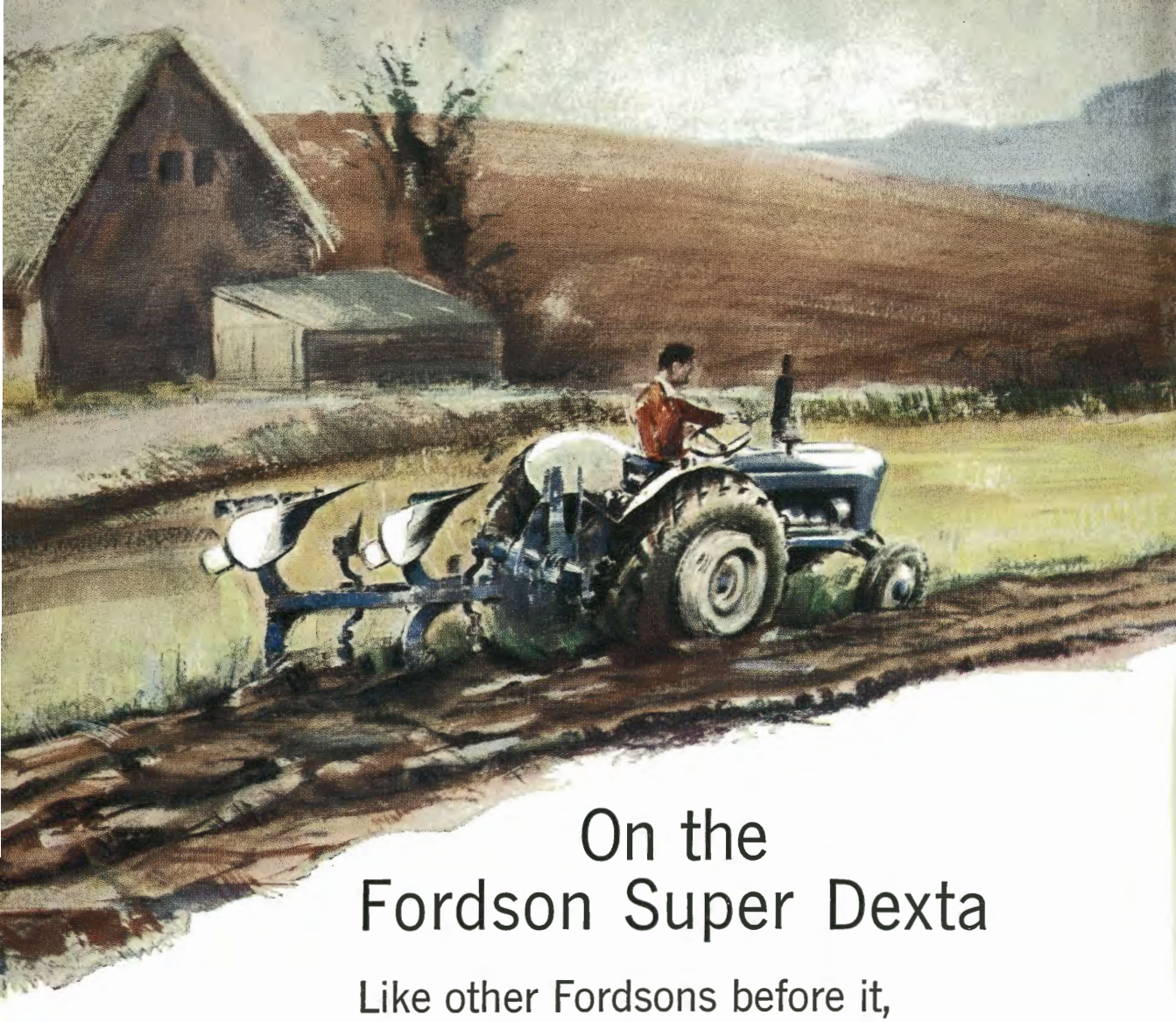
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PAST & PRESENT



COUNTY ELECTIONS: 1830 STYLE

Published by
THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY
DELAPRE ABBEY, NORTHAMPTON, ENGLAND
1964

VOL. III PRICE 2s. 6d. No. 5



On the Fordson Super Dexta

Like other Fordsons before it, this important and powerful tractor is extensively equipped with Timken bearings.

Quality turns on

TIMKEN®

REGISTERED TRADE-MARK

tapered roller bearings

British Timken, Duston, Northampton, Division of The Timken Roller Bearing Company.
Timken bearings manufactured in England, Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, South Africa and U.S.A.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE PAST AND PRESENT, 1964

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Particulars of the Society	ii
Institutional Members of the Society	ii
Notes and News	173
The Development of Corby, II. *Sir Frederick Scopes*	175
John Clare: the Northampton Years. *Sir Gyles Isham*	185
John Clare: Some Unpublished Documents of the Asylum Period *I. M. F. Hooker and N. Dermott Hunt*	190
Some Clare MSS. at Stratfield Saye. *Sir Gyles Isham*	199
John Clare's 'Paradise Lost' - and Regained. *Robert Shaw*	201
The Coming of Railways to Northamptonshire. *Norman Marlow*	203
The Northamptonshire Crop Returns for 1801. *David M. Clark*	213
Cob Cottages in Northamptonshire. *M. V. J. Seaborne*	215
The Sulgrave Washingtons and their Villiers Connexions. *George Washington*	231
Northamptonshire in Southern Rhodesia. *Joan Wake*	233
Obituary: Charles Darby Linnell. *Joan Wake*	237
Book Reviews: Great Oakley Cricket, by Harold and Edward Bagshaw	238
Bowden to Harborough, by J. C. Davies	238
The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke 1644-45, edited by H. G. Tibbutt	238

ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Corby Works and part of the Housing Estate —April 1938	176
Miss Elspeth Macdiarmid lighting No. 1 Blast Furnace, 8th May, 1934	180
Sir Allan Macdiarmid	181
John Clare in the Portico of All Saints' Church	186
Joseph Stenson as Mr. Knight and John Clare knew him	190
The first page of John Clare's Letter to Mr. Knight, 8th July, 1850	190
Cob Cottages in Northamptonshire—	
Fig. 1. Sketch Map showing distribution of Cob Villages	216
Fig. 2. House at Ravensthorpe	223
Fig. 3. Row of Cottages at Braybrooke	224
Fig. 4. Cottages at Braybrooke, Cold Ashby and Hollowell	225
Plate I. Nether Heyford	220
Plate II. Guilsborough	220
Plate III. Hollowell	221
Plate IV. Spratton	221
Plate V. Great Creaton	222
Plate VI. Braybrooke	222
Elizabeth Washington	231
Anne (Villiers), Lady Washington and her daughter Elizabeth	232
Col. Henry Washington as a boy	232
Major Godwin Wake (1879-1949)	233
Mr. Eric Linnell	234
Vigila in 1947	235
The Parlour at Vigila, inspired by the Library at Courteenhall	235

All Communications regarding articles in *Northamptonshire Past and Present* should be addressed to the Editor, Sir Gyles Isham, Lamport Hall, Northampton

Published by the Northamptonshire Record Society

1964

VOL. III No. 5

PRINTED IN ENGLAND BY DALKEITH PRESS LIMITED, KETTERING, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RECORD SOCIETY

(FOUNDED IN 1920)

DELAPRE ABBEY, NORTHAMPTON

President:
Sir George Clark, D.LITT., F.B.A.

Chairman of Council:
S. L. Elborne, Esq., M.A.
Water Newton
Wansford, Peterborough

Hon. Secretary:
P. A. J. Pettit, Esq,. M.A. D.PHIL.
Delapré Abbey,
Northampton

Hon. Treasurer:
C. E. G. Mumby, Esq., M.A.
3 Spencer Parade,
Northampton

AIMS AND OBJECTS

The objects of the Society are the furtherance of the science of history and of historical literature by the publication of historical records relating to Northamptonshire, and the stimulation of interest in historical studies by exhibitions, lectures, etc.

MEMBERSHIP

THE ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION, which has not been raised in over forty years, is ONE GUINEA only. This entitles members to free copies of publications issued for the period in respect of which they have subscribed and the right to attend meetings and lectures. Forms of membership will be gladly sent on application.

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY

EUROPE

ENGLAND

Allen, A. H., & Co. (Engineers) Ltd., Northampton.
Allen-Lyman Bureau, Northampton
All Souls' College, Oxford
Society of Antiquaries of London
Ashby, E. J. & R. S., F.V.I., Northampton
Ashby Estates, Ltd.
Banbury Public Library
Bedford Public Library
Berry Bros. & Bagshaw, Kettering
Billingham & Son, Northampton
Birkbeck College, University of London
Birmingham Public Libraries
Birmingham University Library
Boughton Estates Ltd., Weekley, Kettering
Bristol & Gloucestershire Archaeological Society
Bristol University Library
Buckinghamshire County Library
Burnham Son & Lewin, Wellingborough
Carlyle, F. & Son, Corby
Cooper, Henry & Son, Northampton
Corby Grammar School
Corby Natural History and Archaeological Society
Corby Secondary Modern School for Boys
The Courtauld Institute of Art
Dagenham Borough Council
Dalkeith Press Ltd., Kettering
East Anglia University Library
Frames Tours Ltd.
Society of Genealogists
Gotch, Saunders & Surridge, Kettering
Guildhall Library, London
Hammersmith Public Libraries
Hertfordshire County Council Records Committee
Hull University Library
Huntingdonshire County Library
Inner Temple Library, London
Institute of Historical Research (University of London)
John Lea Secondary School, Wellingborough
John Rylands Library, Manchester
Kettering Grammar School
Kettering High School
Kettering Public Library
King's School, Peterborough
Lamb and Holmes, Kettering
Leeds University Library
Leicester City Libraries
Leicester County Archives Department

Institutional Members—*continued*

Leicester University College Library
Leicestershire County Library
Lincoln City Public Library
Lincolnshire Archives Committee
Liverpool City Public Libraries
Liverpool University Library
The London Library
London School of Economics & Political Science
Library of the University of London
Magdalen College Library, Oxford
Magdalen College School, Brackley
Manchester Public Libraries
Manchester University
Marshman & Warren, A./A.R.I.B.A., Northampton
Merchant Venturers, The Society of
New College, Oxford
Northampton Business & Professional Women's Club
Northampton Central Townswomen's Guild
Northampton Grammar School for Girls
Northampton Grammar School
Northampton High School
Northampton Photo Engraving Company
Northampton Public Library
Northampton Technical High School
Northamptonshire County Council
Northamptonshire County Library
Northamptonshire Newspapers Ltd.
Notre Dame High School, Northampton
Nottingham Central Public Library
Nottingham University Library
Oundle School
Oundle Secondary School
Overstone School
Oxford City Libraries
Oxfordshire County Library
Paten & Co. (Peterborough), Ltd.
Dean and Chapter of Peterborough
Peterborough Museum Society
Peterborough Public Library
Peterborough Technical College
Public Record Office, London
Raunds History Society
Reading University Library
Roborough Library, Exeter University
Royal Historical Society
Rugby Public Library
Rushden Secondary School for Boys
Rushden Secondary School for Girls
Rushden (Newton Road) Junior School
Rushden Public Library
The Samuel Lloyd County Modern School, Corby
Sheffield Central Library
Sheffield University Library
Soroptomist Club of Northampton
Stamford High School
Stamford Public Library
Stewarts and Lloyds Ltd., London, W.1
Temple Reading Room, Rugby School
Timsons Ltd., Kettering
Towcester Grammar School
University College Library, London
Wallis's Garage Ltd., Kettering
Wellingborough Grammar School
Wellingborough County High School
Wellingborough Public Library
City of Westminster Public Libraries
The Historical Society, Whittlebury School, Towcester
Charles H. Wicksteed & Co., Kettering Ltd.
Wilson & Wilson, Kettering
Woodford Halse History Society
York University Library

SCOTLAND

Aberdeen University Library
St. Andrews University Library
Edinburgh University Library
Glasgow University Library

WALES

Swansea College, University of Wales
Aberystwyth College, University of Wales

DENMARK

Royal Library of Copenhagen

SWEDEN

Lund University Library, Sweden

AFRICA

The Government Archives of the Republica of South Africa, Pretoria
City of Johannesburg Public Library

AMERICA

CANADA

Bibliothèque de la Législature, Quebec
Legislative Library, Regina, Saskatchewan
Manitoba University Library, Winnipeg
Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario
Toronto University Library

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Boston Public Library
Brown University Library
Cache County Public Library, Logan, Utah
Cache Genealogical Society, Utah

Institutional Members—*continued*

California University General Library, Los Angeles
California University Library, Berkeley
California University Library, Davis
Chicago University Library
Cleveland Public Library
Columbia University Library
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Connecticut University (Wilbur Cross Library)
Cornell University Library
University of Delaware Memorial Library
Duke University Library
Emory University Library, Georgia
St. Edwards University Library, Texas
Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.
Geisel Library, St. Anselm's College, Manchester, New Hampshire
Genealogical Society of Utah
General Theological Seminary, New York
Harvard University Law School Library
Library of Harvard College
Haverford College Library
Library of Johns Hopkins University
Henry E. Huntington Library
Indiana University
Illinois University Library
State University of Iowa
Kansas State University Library
Public Library of the City of Los Angeles
Massachusetts State Library
Michigan State Library
Library of the University of Michigan
Library of the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis
Missouri University Library
Newberry Library, Chicago
New England Historical and Genealogical Society
New York Public Library
Northampton County Historical and Genealogical Society
Notre Dame University Library, Indiana
Pennsylvania Historical Society
Pennsylvania University Library
Princeton University Library
Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence
Rutgers University Library, New Brunswick
St. Edward's University Library, Austin, Texas
St. Vincent College Library, Latrobe, Pennsylvania
Santa Clara University (Varsi Library)
Smith College, Northampton, Mass.
Stanford University Library
Tennessee State Archives and Library
Texas University Library
Utah University Library
Virginia Historical Society, Richmond
Virginia State Library
Virginia University (Alderman Library)
Washington University Library
Wayne State University, General Library, Detroit
Wisconsin University Library
Yale University Library

ASIA

The University, Hong Kong

AUSTRALASIA

AUSTRALIA

Commonwealth of Australia National Library
Sydney University Law School Library, N.S.W.
State Library of Victoria, Melbourne, Victoria

NEW ZEALAND

Alexander-Turnbull Library, Wellington

The illustration on our cover is peculiarly appropriate in the year of a General Election. It shows the triumphal car used by Lord Althorp (John Charles Spencer) in 1830, *when he was re-elected one of the two M.P.s for Northamptonshire, on being made Chancellor of the Exchequer. He steered the Reform Bill of* 1832 *through the House of Commons. He succeeded his father as* 3rd *Earl Spencer in* 1834. *It is feared that less colourful equipages will be used by the new M.P.s in* 1964

Thanks are also due to the following for supplying photographs for blocks and giving permission to reproduce material in their possession: The Governors of St. Andrew's Hospital, Lord Dartmouth, Miss I. M. F. Hooker, the Proprietors of Country Life, *Sir Frederick Scopes, Mr. M. V. J. Seaborne, Lord Spencer, Miss Joan Wake and Mr. George Washington.*

Notes and News

This year has emphasised that the face of Northamptonshire will be changed ever more rapidly. Daventry and Wellingborough have made 'overspill' agreements; Corby continues its rapid development; and it is proposed that the size of Northampton be doubled. Yet, precisely when traditional communities and industries are being revolutionised, the discovery of Northamptonshire history is exciting a growing number of Northamptonshire people and also those whom we now welcome to make a new home in this County. The Northamptonshire Village History Committee, the Leicester University Department of Adult Education (with its research class in our Library at Delapre), the Workers' Educational Association and similar organisations are helping to awaken this interest. Certainly **Northamptonshire History merits study** both for its own sake and in illustration of national history.

This Society is proud of the leadership it has given in publishing texts and in stimulating an awareness of our heritage generally. We are pleased that further volumes in our Main Series will shortly be ready for publication. This journal again takes scholarly articles on Northamptonshire throughout the whole world, and we are grateful to our Editor, Sir Gyles Isham, to our contributors, and particularly to our advertisers, who together have made its publication possible.

Over one hundred members attended the Society's **Annual General Meeting** at Delapre Abbey on May 23rd. Dr. W. G. Hoskins then delivered a most incisive lecture on "New Approaches to Local History", when he opened our eyes to the value of the study of vernacular architecture and topography to the local historian. Our **Autumn Lecture** was of immediate topical relevance. Mr. E. G. Forrester lectured to the Society on the history of electioneering in Northamptonshire. His talk was widely appreciated.

The Society has a valuable **Library** of books on local and national history, as well as series of sundry local journals. This Library has been enriched by further gifts from members during the year. At the A.G.M., Mr. V. Hatley was appointed Honorary Librarian to the Society, and he would welcome further gifts.

As an experiment last year the Society sponsored a **Young Historians' Competition.** Our judge, Mr. M. V. Seaborne of the University of Leicester, awarded joint first prizes to L. R. Baldwin of Northampton Grammar School and to Susan Eldridge of Northampton Grammar School for Girls. Miss Eldridge wrote: "As I am taking up History as a career I found the Competition a stimulating and interesting preliminary to my College course". This year we have widened the appeal of the Competition to pupils in all types of secondary schools and we are expecting a pleasing response; a young person's appreciation of history often begins with an awareness of his immediate environment.

It is wholesome news that the Upper Nene Archaeological Society has taken the initiative in proposing the formation of a **Northamptonshire Federation of Archaeological Societies.** No complete archaeological survey of the County has been made since the beginning of the century and there has not always been sufficient correlation of the work by local archaeological societies and individual enthusiasts. Little but good can issue from a County Federation and, if it is established, this Society wishes it every success.

We are pleased to record that the **Northamptonshire Record Office** has received several important deposits. Entirely as a result of Dr. Joan Wake's contacts with Mrs. Cecil Dryden, originals or photostat copies of most of the Dryden (Canons Ashby) records have been sent to Delapre from Southern Rhodesia. These include seventeenth and eighteenth century account books, correspondence, three day books of a local builder and carrier, 1758-67, and architectural drawings by Sir Henry Dryden. Another valuable accession is a series of about forty draft inclosure and draft tithe maps for parishes south of Northampton, 1798-1856.

The original of a roll containing a description and valuation of goods in Northamptonshire chantries in 1548 was recently sold by auction and is going out of the country, but through the Board of Trade the Northamptonshire Record Office has been able to secure a photostat copy of the roll.

One of our members was vigilant enough to inform us of the intended destruction of several tons of documents by a long-established firm of local solicitors; the papers included the eighteenth century records of a boys' charity school and others of similar interest. If any member learns of the intention to destroy other historical documents, he is asked to inform the County Archivist or the Hon. Secretary of this Society immediately.

Many of our members have been led by their interest in genealogy to examine local wills. Mr. P. I. King has recently written a **Guide to the Northamptonshire and Rutland Probate Records.** In his Introduction Mr. King shows the value of wills and inventories to social, agricultural and religious historians and he defines some of the technical terms used. He then gives a succinct guide to the probate records, together with their indexes and calendars, of the Archdeaconry of Northampton, the Consistory Court of Peterborough, other ecclesiastical authorities, and of the district probate courts. We commend this **Guide** to our members. It may be obtained from the Northamptonshire Record Office, Delapre Abbey, price 1/-, postage 6d.

Members of the Record Society will be delighted to learn of the recovery of Mr. Patrick King the County Archivist whose serious illness was reported in last year's issue. He is now back at work at Delapre and as helpful as ever to the students there.

1964 has been the centenary of the death of the Northamptonshire poet, John Clare. This Society makes its contribution to the celebrations held throughout the county by devoting part of this issue of **Northamptonshire Past and Present** to articles on Clare. It is really remarkable that, in a year also devoted to Shakespeare and Marlowe, John Clare has attracted so much attention, and so many books have been written about him. Professor and Mrs. Tibble's edition of the poems is being published later on in the **Everyman Edition,** which will make Clare's poetry even better known to the wider public. We hope you enjoy it.

We regret to report the death of Mr. Laurence Gotch on 27th January, 1964. As mentioned in our last issue, Mr. Gotch, a member of the well known Kettering family, had recently completed a series of articles on the Kettering of his early days in *The Kettering Leader*.

With the death of Mr. Douglas Montagu Wood at Seaford on April 19th 1964, the Brixworth Estate passes to two Trustees for the benefit of great-nieces and nephews, none of whom bear the name of Wood. The Woods acquired the estate from the Raynsfords about 1800. They were a Northamptonshire family, stemming from farmers at Arthingworth who appear to have been Quakers. They married into the Sprigge family of Scaldwell, one time Lords of the Manor there, and were connected with the family of Thomas Roes, benefactor both of Scaldwell and Brixworth. The Woods were also connected with the ancient armigerous family, the Waytes of Brixworth. Mr. Douglas Wood was the youngest son of the late Mr. Thomas Dixie Wood, and inherited the estate from his brother Vere, who died in 1949. Mr. Vere Wood was High Sheriff in 1936/7, and took a prominent part in County affairs. Mr. Douglas Wood occasionally resided at the Manor at Brixworth, but spent most of his time at his house at Seaford, especially after his wife's death in 1956. He was at one time a member of the Council of the Record Society. Mr. Vere Wood had deposited a good many deeds at the Record Office, and it is hoped that the whole collection will now go to Delapre, and be available to students.

The Council of the Society sends greetings to members and friends throughout the world. New members to the Society are always welcome. If you or a friend would like to share in our endeavours to preserve Northamptonshire History, please return the enclosed form of application for membership to the Honorary Secretary.

WE must apologise to our readers for a slip on p. 80 of No. 3 of the current Volume III. The special services for November 5th, January 30th and May 29th were omitted from the **Book of Common Prayer** quite constitutionally in 1859. For this mistake, blame attaches to the Editor, and not the writer of the article, Miss Joan Wake.

The Development of Corby

Part II — 1917 - 1939

In Part I of this article reference was made to the interest shown in 1911 by Stewarts and Lloyds, Limited, in the possible acquisition of a pig iron works in England, either in Lincolnshire or Northamptonshire. No immediate decision was reached but the question of raw material supplies for the tube works of the Company continued to be a major preoccupation of the Board. This was accentuated during the period of the first World War.

In October, 1916, the Company began to examine various proposals for steel works development in England and the advantages and disadvantages of Lincolnshire versus Northamptonshire were carefully considered in the light of technical and other requirements.

In March, 1917, the Board decided against acquiring Lloyds Ironstone Company, Ltd. and in favour of developing in Lincolnshire. Accordingly, after prolonged negotiations, a controlling interest in The North Lincolnshire Iron Co. Ltd. was acquired in 1918 and during the next few years large sums of money were spent there with the intention of developing a steel works on a site adjoining the existing blast furnaces. The scheme was, however, ultimately abandoned and the Company's interests in Lincolnshire were sold to The United Steel Companies in 1931.

The decision of Stewarts and Lloyds, Limited, in March, 1917, not to acquire Lloyds Ironstone Co. Ltd. was a blow to the hopes of Mr. A. W. Lloyd and Mr. S. J. Lloyd. They were, however, determined to link with a steel-making concern and within a few months were discussing terms for an amalgamation with Alfred Hickman, Ltd., ironmasters and steel manufacturers of Bilston, who were anxious to secure increased supplies of pig iron and ironstone.

The whole of the share capital of Lloyds Ironstone Co. Ltd. was acquired by Alfred Hickman, Ltd. and agreement to give effect to this was completed on 31st March, 1919. Mr. S. J. Lloyd and Mr. Andrew Crawford (Directors of Lloyds Ironstone Company) were appointed Directors of Alfred Hickman, Ltd.

After the end of hostilities in November, 1918, business everywhere was booming and almost everyone in the iron and steel industry was convinced that a long period of high demand lay ahead; those who expressed doubts were silenced by the argument that it would take years to make good the devastation and deferred maintenance due to four years of war.

Early in 1920 it was clear to the Board of Stewarts and Lloyds that their various requirements of steel for tube making could not be met in the immediate future from their proposed new steel works in Lincolnshire. In particular, the directors responsible for the production of tubes at the large works at Coombs Wood near Halesowen became increasingly worried about the security of their supplies of raw materials. Their most important supplier—directly and indirectly—was Alfred Hickman, Ltd. and in March, 1920, an approach was made to their Chairman, Mr. Edward Hickman. It is interesting that at this stage only casual references were made to the ownership by Alfred Hickman, Ltd. of their recently acquired subsidiary, Lloyds Ironstone Co. Ltd. It is clear that the preponderant reason for the negotiations was to secure supplies of suitable tube-making material for Coombs Wood.

The terms of the acquisition were agreed in August, 1920, and provided for the issue of one Deferred Share of £1 in Stewarts and Lloyds plus 7/6d. in cash in exchange for each of the Ordinary and each of the Participating Preference Shares of Alfred Hickman, Ltd. The purchase was completed on 30th October, 1920. By that time the short-lived post-1918 boom was on the verge of collapse; exports of steel were diminishing and imports were rapidly growing. Things became much worse in 1921, with a national coal strike lasting from April to June and consequent closing down of blast furnaces and steel works throughout the country.

This was the beginning of what Duncan Burn has called "The Black Decade". Stewarts and Lloyds were much less severely hit than most of the other large companies in the iron and steel industry and were one of the very few who continued to pay dividends on their Deferred Shares from 1921 to 1930.

The scheme for building a steel works in Lincolnshire was not abandoned when Hickmans were acquired, although it was put into suspense soon afterwards. It was not a case of substituting a scheme of development in Northamptonshire for the Lincolnshire scheme. At that time there was no intention of developing immediately at Corby: operations there were continued as a separate unit for producing ironstone and pig iron, although efforts were made from 1921 onwards to co-ordinate the operation and control of the three blast furnace plants of the Company—Alfred Hickman at Bilston, Lloyds Ironstone Company at Corby and The North Lincolnshire Iron Company at Scunthorpe. At Corby quarrying operations were under the control of Mr. S. J.

CORBY WORKS AND PART OF THE HOUSING ESTATE — APRIL 1938

Lloyd, who became a Director of Stewarts and Lloyds in 1920. Mr. Andrew Crawford and his son, John, were responsible for the management of the blast furnaces.

In 1925 Mr. J. G. Stewart, who had been Chairman of Stewarts and Lloyds since 1903, died and was succeeded by Mr. R. M. Wilson for about a year. On 1st July, 1926, Mr. A. C. Macdiarmid took office as Chairman, the position which he held until his death in August, 1945. He was a brilliant Chartered Accountant who had been appointed Secretary of Stewarts and Lloyds in 1909, a Director in 1918 and a Deputy Chairman in 1925. At the time of his appointment as Chairman Mr. Macdiarmid was 45 and at the height of his powers. He was knighted in 1944.

On 15th July, 1926, Mr. Macdiarmid submitted to the Board his first general review of the Company's position and prospects, in which he outlined the many problems facing the Company and put forward for consideration several lines of policy that might be adopted. Stewarts and Lloyds did not look upon themselves as primarily iron and steel makers with important tube finishing works—they considered that their business was essentially that of tube makers. It was on this basis therefore that the Directors took stock of the situation and examined ways and means of securing an adequate supply of steel of the right qualities and cost for tube production.

The most decisive step taken during the next three years was the appointment in July, 1929, of H. A. Brassert & Company, of Chicago, to review all the Company's activities and resources with particular reference to the possibility of producing steel for tube manufacture from home ore, and to report generally as to the best policy for future development.

H. A. Brassert & Company were consulting engineers with extensive experience in the construction and operation of iron and steel producing plant not only in the U.S.A. but also in Europe. In 1927 they had reported on the properties of the Pearson and Knowles Group including the Partington Steel & Iron Co. Ltd. (who were controlled by Sir W. G. Armstrong-Whitworth & Co. Ltd.) and in 1928 on Ijmuiden, in Holland. In 1929 they were commissioned by Lord Weir on behalf of most of the steel-makers in Scotland (including S & L in respect to their Clydesdale Steel Works) to investigate the manufacture of iron and steel in Scotland. Broadly, their recommendation was concentration with blast furnaces and steel works to be constructed at a new site on the Clyde. The scheme was not, however, carried out. It was through this connection that Stewarts and Lloyds first came into contact with H. A. Brassert & Company.

Brasserts submitted their report (dated February, 1930) to Stewarts and Lloyds in March, 1930. It recommended that an iron and steel works be built at Corby, on the Northamptonshire ore field where Stewarts and Lloyds by this time controlled ironstone reserves estimated as sufficient to meet over a hundred years' demands. The purchase of the Islip Iron Co. Ltd. and its subsidiaries in 1930 had increased the Company's holdings of ironstone properties in the county to some 26,000 acres, containing about 450 million tons of ironstone.

H. A. Brassert & Company reached the definite conclusion that the Corby location provided the basis for the lowest cost of iron and steel production in Britain—a cost equal to the best which had been realised on the Continent. Before reaching this conclusion exhaustive consideration was given by Brasserts and by the Company's directors and officials to the possibilities of various other sites in different parts of the country. Experiments had also proved that the composition of the ironstone deposits in Northamptonshire was particularly suited for the production of basic Bessemer steel, the grade of steel required by Stewarts and Lloyds for the manufacture of welded tubes.

The works as recommended by H. A. Brassert & Company in 1930 were to consist of a combined basic Bessemer and Open Hearth Plant, with an annual capacity of 625,000 ingot tons, with modern blast furnaces to supply the required tonnage of basic Bessemer pig iron, including coke plant of 1,000 tons per day capacity, and rolling mills for the manufacture of semi-finished steel only. The steel was primarily for Stewarts and Lloyds' own requirements but also included a substantial tonnage for sale in the form of slabs, billets, sheet bar and skelp. The scheme did not include tube manufacturing plant and contemplated the retention of the existing three small blast furnaces at Corby for the production of foundry pig iron.

The estimated total cost was £5,710,000 which included the cost of the plant, interest charges during the period of construction and the necessary additional working capital.

Detailed examination of the scheme convinced Stewarts and Lloyds that it was economically sound and practicable. Its magnitude in terms of capital outlay, however, made it impossible for the company to undertake it during a period of acute world crisis.

It was, of course, essential also for Stewarts and Lloyds' proposals to be considered against the background of the reorganisation of the steel industry of the country as a whole, which was the subject of intense discussion and debate between 1929 and 1932 and in which the Bank of England was actively concerned. The Bank first became involved in the financial reconstruction of part of the iron and steel industry in 1927 when its Governor, Montagu Norman (later Lord Norman) decided to sponsor the amalgamation of the armament firms, Sir W. G. Armstrong-Whitworth & Company and Vickers, Ltd. As already mentioned, Armstrong-Whitworth controlled Pearson and Knowles and the Partington Steel & Iron Co. Ltd. with large steel interests in Lancashire.

As early as 1925 Montagu Norman on the advice of Mr. (later Sir) Edward Peacock brought in as adviser, James Frater Taylor, a Scotsman who had spent a large part of his time in Canada and had reorganised Algoma Steel. He recommended a general reorganisation of the steel industry in this country, but became particularly absorbed in the management of what became the Lancashire Steel Corporation. In 1929 Sir Andrew Duncan, then Chairman of the Central Electricity Board, was elected to the Court of the Bank of England and on his recommendation Charles Bruce Gardner (later Sir Charles) until then Managing Director of Shelton Iron, Steel and Coal Company, became industrial adviser to the Bank about the end of 1929. Sir Andrew Duncan was, of course, very much in the confidence of the Governor of the Bank of England from 1929 onwards, though it was not until January, 1935, that he became the first Independent Chairman of the newly reconstructed British Iron and Steel Federation. He continued to be a member of the Court of the Bank of England until he became President of the Board of Trade in 1940.

The first recorded contact between Mr. Macdiarmid and the Governor of the Bank of England was a meeting on 21st January, 1930, and a copy of Brasserts' report to S & L, dated February, 1930, was sent to the Governor in April. By coincidence it was received by him on the same day as the Bankers' Industrial Development Company (B.I.D.) held its first Board Meeting. B.I.D. was formed, with Montagu Norman as Chairman and Bruce Gardner as Managing Director, "to examine, assist and finance the amalgamation, reconstruction and reorganisation on an economic and rational basis of groups of British companies engaged in important industries". The intention was to deal with industries rather than individual companies, but Stewarts and Lloyds' plans were from the start regarded favourably in principle by B.I.D. because they fitted admirably into the general scheme of regional rationalisation of the industry which was strongly recommended from 1930 onwards by Bruce Gardner.

Finance nevertheless proved an insuperable difficulty for a considerable time. In 1930 world trade was depressed to an unprecedented degree. Great Britain was still on the Gold Standard and a free trade country and the heavy industries were regarded with particular disfavour by the investing public. Discussions with B.I.D. about finance occupied nearly three years and it was not until the autumn of 1932 that a revised and smaller scheme was agreed and accepted and finance arranged. Although the trade depression persisted, the development of Stewarts and Lloyds' plans was greatly assisted by the protection afforded under the 1932 Import Duties Act. Under this Act the Import Duties Advisory Committee was appointed: from that time until the outbreak of war, the Committee exercised a dominant influence on the Iron and Steel Industry.

The revised Corby scheme provided for the integration of basic Bessemer steel and tube production with an annual output of 200,000 ingot tons of steel (to meet the requirements of S & L and its associates—no steel being available for outside sale) and 130,000 tons of tubes. The existing blast furnace plant of Lloyds Ironstone Company was to be reconstructed to increase the annual capacity from 150,000 tons to 300,000 tons of iron. Plant at Clydesdale Works in Scotland suitable for use at Corby was to be transferred. The estimate included provision for equipment for the production of ironstone, ore preparation and sintering plant, coke ovens with a capacity of 400 tons a day, by-product plant, rolling mills equipment and water supply. The tube plant installation was to include continuous weld units and a seamless plant.

The capital required to finance the scheme was £3,300,000 (£2,550,000 for plant and construction plus £750,000 to cover the amount already spent on the purchase of the Islip Iron Company, Ltd. and the current Bank overdraft) and a loan for this amount, repayable by 31st December, 1935, was arranged through B.I.D. The reduction in the size of the scheme from some £5,710,000 to £3,300,000, and the elimination of capacity for the production of semi-finished steel for sale, made the scheme much more acceptable both to the City financial authorities and to the rest of the steel industry of the country. In the event the Company drew only a small part of the loan arranged through B.I.D. Trading conditions improved continuously between the end of 1932 and October 1933 and money for investment at low interest rates became available. Stewarts and Lloyds took advantage of the favourable conditions and issued Debenture Stock in January 1934 to provide finance for Corby and working capital for the business as a whole.

On 29th November, 1932, Stewarts and Lloyds advised their shareholders of the decision to proceed with the new developments. The announcement concluded "When the new plant is completed the products of the Company will be wholly British, both in workmanship and material, the economic situation of the Company will be strengthened and its competitive position secured".

Clearing and preparing the site began in January, 1933, and orders were rapidly placed for all the plant and equipment. New equipment purchased for working ironstone included an electrically driven excavator with a bucket of 9 cubic yards capacity. The machine was designed and built by Ransomes & Rapier, Ltd. and at the time was the largest of its type to be constructed in Great Britain and one of the largest in the world.

The increasing depth of cover which it was necessary to remove by mechanical means in order to provide the ironstone supplies on which the whole of the vast Corby developments were primarily based, intensified the impact on amenities which was the subject of growing concern throughout the County. Stewarts and Lloyds were fully alive to the importance and seriousness of the problems of restoration of the areas where ironstone had been worked out, but of course they also appreciated far more than the general public the difficulties involved.

The first attempt to deal with these questions on a national basis was the investigation made by the Kennet Committee, appointed by the Minister of Health in January, 1938, "to consider and report on the problems raised by the destruction of agricultural land as a result of the excavation of iron ore in Northamptonshire and neighbouring counties and to advise what measures should be taken for the future utilization of this land to the best advantage whether by restoration or otherwise and how the necessary expenditure should be met". The appointment of this Committee was the direct result of the attention called to the problem by the Import Duties Advisory Committee in their report, published in 1937, "on the Present Position and Future Development of the Iron and Steel Industry". The Kennet Committee's report was issued in May, 1939, but before any action could be taken the war intervened.

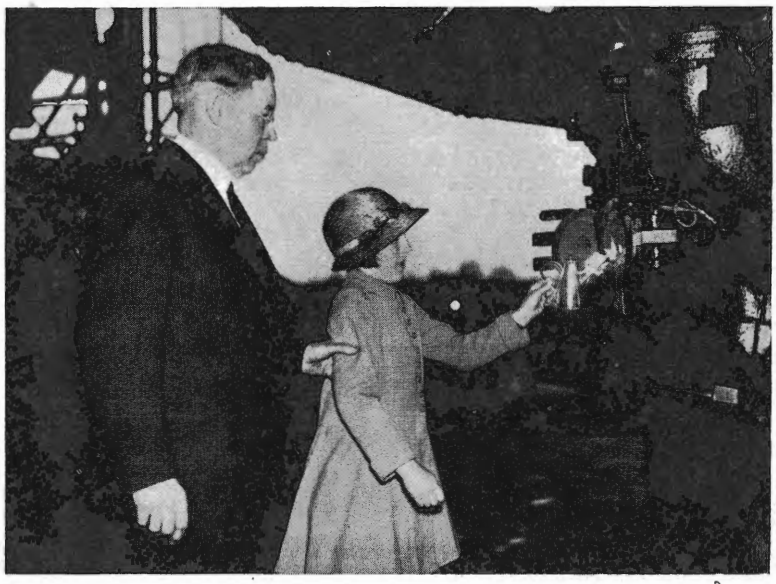
In 1932 seven to eight hundred people were employed at Corby; by the end of 1939 there were about four thousand workmen and staff. Of the additional number about one-third were transferred from other works of the Company, about one-half were engaged locally, and the remainder were recruited from other districts.

In the scheme approved in 1932 no allowance had been made for expenditure on houses for employees as it was hoped that the Local Authorities would assume responsibility for the provision of houses. When it became clear that this hope was not to be realised, Stewarts and Lloyds engaged an architect and contractors to plan a housing scheme, the cost of which was almost entirely financed by loans from Building Societies subject to guarantees under the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1933. First plans were based on approximately 1,000 houses for workmen but this was steadily increased over the next few years and by the summer of 1938 over 2,000 houses had been built by the Company. To provide a housing estate and hostel for staff the Company purchased East Carlton Park and Hall, about four miles from Corby. Recreation facilities, including a Welfare Hall for indoor social activities, tennis courts, football and cricket pitches and a bowling green, were also provided by the Company for all grades of employees.

When developments began at Corby there were, of course, no facilities for technical education in Northamptonshire. After consultation with the County Secretary for Education and

the Local Authorities, Stewarts and Lloyds gave a site and built the Corby Monotechnic Institute for Engineering for the benefit of student-apprentices throughout the County. The Institute was opened on 28th October, 1938. Subsequently the Northamptonshire County Council purchased the building from the Company. This was the basis from which Corby Technical College has developed.

The first unit of the new works to be brought into production—No. 1 blast furnace—was lit by Miss Elspeth Macdiarmid, Mr. Allan Macdiarmid's youngest daughter, on 8th May, 1934, and in December of that year the first steel was made in the Bessemer plant. In the same month a satisfactory trial run was made on the continuous weld tube plant using steel strip imported from Belgium; 350 tons of tubes made during this test were the first tubes made at Corby. The blooming mill and strip mill were started in January, 1935, and shortly afterwards the tube works went into regular production.



MISS ELSPETH MACDIARMID LIGHTING NO. 1 BLAST FURNACE, 8TH MAY, 1934
Miss Macdiarmid was under the guidance of Mr. J. S. Fraser,
Superintendent of the Iron and Steel Works

Fortunately, the period of the erection of the works coincided with a rapid improvement in trade conditions. By the autumn of 1933 the Directors had sufficient evidence in confirmation of their confidence in the Corby project to enable them to consider substantial additions to the original scheme. During the next two years extensions to increase the annual capacity of the Steel Works to 450,000 tons were put in hand. The plant to produce seamless tubes was also installed.

In 1936 Stewarts and Lloyds and the Lancashire Steel Corporation agreed on a scheme which included the formation of a jointly owned company to manufacture, at Corby, flat-rolled products from semi-finished steel supplied by S & L. To meet increasing demands for steel for the tube works and also for the Lancashire and Corby company, Stewarts and Lloyds proceeded with further developments to increase the total pig iron and steel ingot capacity of the Works to 600,000 tons per annum. The extensions included additional equipment for ironstone production, the construction of a fourth blast furnace, additions to the coke oven and Bessemer plants and the installation of a new strip mill.

The fourth blast furnace was blown in on 4th July, 1937, and by the end of the year it can be said that the whole Works were in commercial production. Outputs for 1938 and 1939 were as follows; for comparison provisional figures for the year to 3rd October, 1964, are also given:—

	1938 Tons	1939 Tons	1964 Tons
IRON AND STEEL WORKS—			
Ironstone	1,702,500	1,969,500	2,537,000
Coke	466,200	503,400	654,000
Pig Iron	465,600	565,400	877,300
Sinter	384,300	441,200	1,578,750
Bessemer Ingots	430,000	498,500	812,850
Other Ingots	Nil	Nil	358,400
Blooming Mill	346,900	398,600	917,000
Strip Mills	176,400	221,400	804,000
TUBE WORKS—			
Continuous Weld Tubes ...	148,400	198,300	553,400
Other Tubes	34,100	44,200	114,500

By the end of 1939 Stewarts and Lloyds had spent nearly eight million pounds on the installation and development of their Iron, Steel and Tube Works at Corby, including expenditure on housing and ancillary activities.

It was fortunate for the county, and the nation, that the project was so far advanced when World War II started in 1939. At a shareholders' meeting in September, 1939, Mr. Macdiarmid

SIR ALLAN MACDIARMID
Chairman of Stewarts and Lloyds Limited, 1926-1945

said—"Our policy is on the one hand to hold our whole resources, potentialities, and skill at the disposal of the Government for the successful prosecution of the war, and on the other hand to do our utmost to preserve throughout the difficult times ahead of us the fabric of the company, so that when peace comes we may emerge strong in resources and ready and able to deal with the conditions that will then arise". These hopes were indeed realised and the Corby Works are a continuing memorial of the foresight and courage of Sir Allan Macdiarmid.

FREDERICK SCOPES.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Burn, Duncan	*The Economic History of Steelmaking*, 1867-1939. (Cambridge University Press, 1940). *The Steel Industry*, 1939-1959. (Cambridge University Press, 1961).
Carr, J. C. and Taplin, W.	*History of the British Steel History.* (Basil Blackwell, 1962).
Clay, Sir Henry	*Lord Norman.* (Macmillan, 1957).
Import Duties Advisory Committee	*Report on the Present Position and Future Development of the Iron and Steel Industry.* (Cmd.5507. H.M.S.O., 1937).
Kennet Committee	*Report to the Minister of Health by the Committee* (Chairman, Lord Kennet) on *the Restoration of Land Affected by Iron Ore Working.* (H.M.S.O. 1939).
Scott, J. D.	*Vickers, A History.* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963).

DARWIN'S CLERICAL FORERUNNER

THE Revd. John Morton, Rector (and Patron) of the living of Oxendon, Northants, from 1707 to 1726, published in 1712 his *Natural History of Northamptonshire*, one of the best books of its kind to come out of a Parsonage. Mr. William Humphreys, writing in *Country Life* on February 27th of this year, says of Morton:

"After years of observation, Morton devoted more than 60 pages of his book to the description of fossils, differentiating between such a multitude of scallop shells, ammonites, cochleas, astropodiums and other ancient forms of life that we become dazed with the treasure-house that the earth held out to him.

At the end of these chapters he begins to sum up the evidence: 'To be brief, Tis as certain that those shells are real: that they were once, the Covers of Shellfish and had their Origin at Sea, as that our Senses are capable of making a true report of any Thing whatever . . . . These Marine Bodies are found bury'd in the Earth, from near the surface downwards to the greatest depth we ever dig or lay it open . . . . They are essentially different from the strata in which they lodge'. Then, just as it seems certain that the solution must be grasped, Morton, in one short sentence, writes that he intended to have handled this subject at large, and say by what means they became embedded in the earth; but on further consideration he will do no more at present than refer the reader to the account already given by Dr. Woodward.

What can have been the reason for this abrupt ending? Did the shadows of his great patrons, the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Bishops of Ely and Carlisle, rise before him warning of heresy and iconoclasm; or did he become troubled in his attempt to reconcile the evidence of his eyes with the teaching of his Church? But, saying in his preface that he has followed nature herself, 'with as much Steddiness and Closeness as I could', does he not now say as clearly that he has laid his evidence before his readers, and that they, like himself, must draw their own conclusions?".

The above is reproduced by kind permission of the editor of *Country Life* and Mr. Humphreys.

ASHBY
F.A.I.

R. STERRY ASHBY, F.A.I.

Chartered Auctioneers and Estate Agents
Surveyors, Valuers & Property Managers

4 & 5 GEORGE ROW, NORTHAMPTON
(Town Centre) Telephone: Northampton 37282 (4 lines)

ALSO AT

NORTHAMPTON AUCTION GALLERIES

33-35 SHEEP STREET . NORTHAMPTON
Telephone: Northampton 37263

Better days start here!

Everyone starts the day better with a square meal. Golden, delicious Weetabix and milk gives you the goodness of a cooked breakfast—without the cooking. All the nourishment of *whole* wheat with its protein and energy value, plus added vitamins and iron. Every day of the year, start the family off with two crisp Weetabix and milk—for *square-meal* nourishment!

Weetabix

GIVES **SQUARE-MEAL** NOURISHMENT

TITMUSS FARM BUILDINGS

SPECIALISTS IN
GRAIN STORAGE AND
DRYING BUILDINGS

DUTCH BARNS

COVERED YARDS

LEAN-TO'S

Eligible for Grants under the Farm Improvement Scheme

F. E. TITMUSS (Agricultural) LTD.

Mill Rd. Works, Wellingborough

NORTHANTS Phone 3592

JOHN CLARE: The Northampton Years

JOHN CLARE has been a neglected poet. This year has seen the centenary of his death, and despite the competing quatercentenaries of Christopher Marlowe and William Shakespeare he has had more attention paid to him than for many years. Northampton had its own most appropriate commemoration on May 20th, the anniversary of his death at the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum; a service at All Saints Church, a recital of music, which Clare loved, and readings of his poems by Miss Margaret Rawlings, a lecture by Edmund Blunden and a tea party at St. Andrew's hospital, as the Asylum is now known, where Clare died. There was also a Clare Centenary Exhibition of documents and pictures at the Central Art Gallery in Northampton. Many of those who have led the way in stressing Clare's importance as a poet attended these functions. Professor Blunden, of course, stands by himself: to hear a poet on a poet was a rewarding experience. Mrs. Tibble, Mr. Eric Robinson and others, who love Clare and have worked to make him better appreciated, came to join in Northampton's one-day Clare Festival. Peterborough, too, had its own celebration of the Centenary.

John Clare's story is a sad one. Born at Helpston on July 13th, 1793, of poor and illiterate[1] parents, he enjoyed as a young man a brief fashion as a "peasant poet". He was taken up, given a small but regular income, patronised, and met some of the leading writers of the day. His later work, however, was not successful, although some of it, notably *The Shepherd's Calendar* which has been republished this year in the form that Clare wrote it, was a great advance on his early work. He married and had seven children; he was now too well known to be accepted by his own people, and too little known for the favour of the great world. Improvident and moody, his mental state deteriorated, and in 1837 he was admitted to a private asylum, High Beech, Epping Forest, from which he escaped four years later. Finally, he was sent to the Northampton Asylum, at the age of forty-nine, where he spent the remaining twenty-three years of his life. A correspondent wrote to F. Martin (Clare's early biographer),

"I saw Clare frequently during his residence at the Asylum. At first, he was allowed to come into the town (the Asylum is a mile out of it) unattended, and his favourite resort was beneath the portico of All Saints Church, where in summertime he would sit for hours together. He was moody and taciturn and rather avoided society".[2]

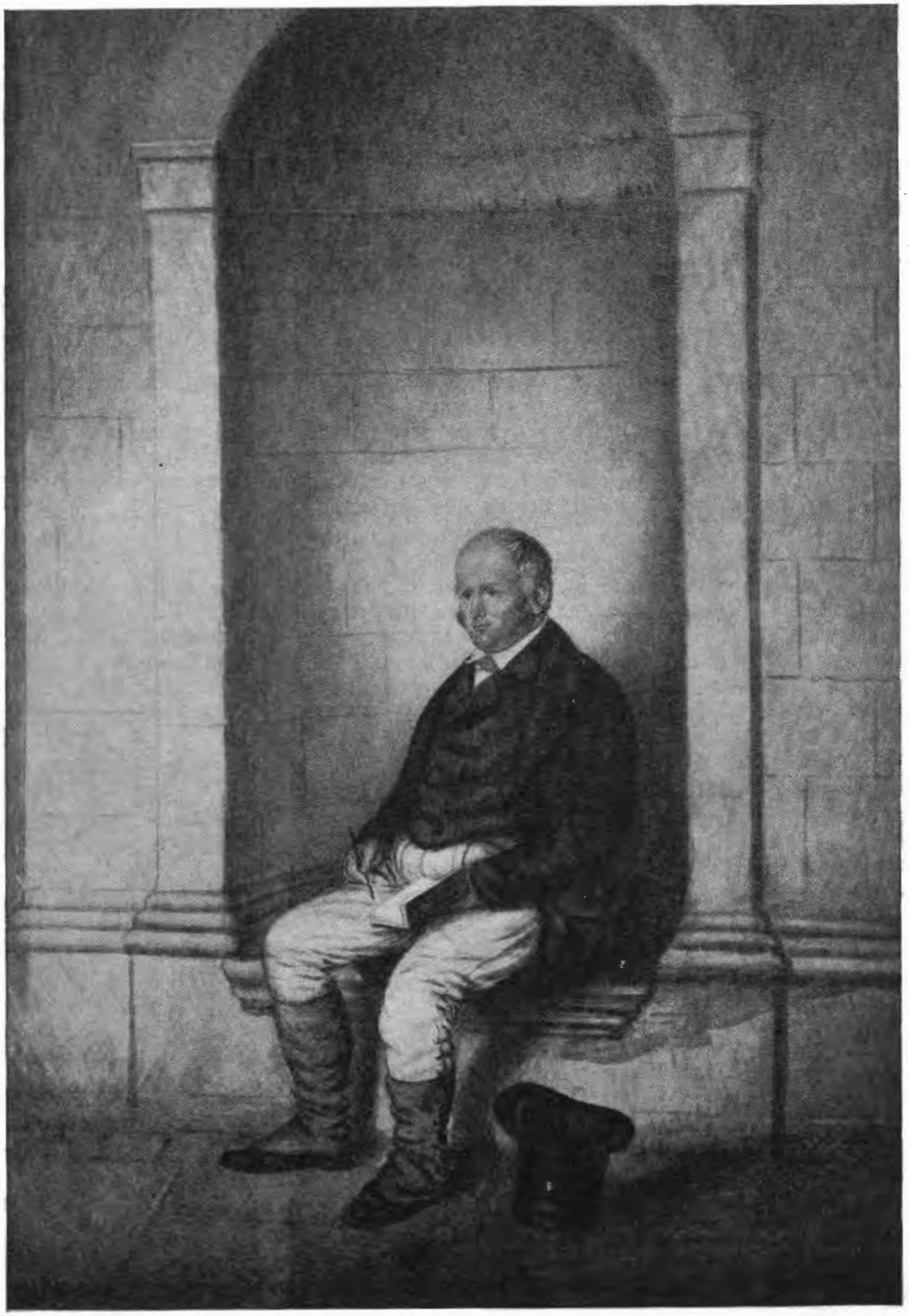
It was in this typical pose, that George Maine drew Clare: sitting in the portico of All Saints, notebook in hand. The illustration, which is reproduced here, is from the picture which has hung for many years in the office of the Medical Superintendent at St. Andrew's Hospital. There are three versions of this picture apart from the one at St. Andrew's. The version in the Public Library is dated 1848, and there is another at Abington Park Museum. There is also at the Public Library a small preliminary study by Maine of Clare seated, three quarter length, without the background. No one has yet identified the artist, George Maine (he signs simply "G. Maine"). The parish registers of St. Giles Northampton,[3] however, record the burial of George Maine of St. Giles Street on January 25th, 1850, where his age is given as 49. *The Northampton Mercury* of January 26th, 1850, contained this notice:

> "On Wednesday the 23rd instant, Mr. George Maine, artist only surviving son of Mr. George Maine gardener, of St. Giles's Street, in this town, aged 49.
> Deceased was highly respected by all who knew him; he expired rather suddenly after a very short illness."

[1] Clare wrote "both my parents was illiterate to the last degree."

[2] G. J. de Wilde to F. Martin, 1865. Quoted in *Sketches in the Life of John Clare*, ed. Edmund Blunden (1931).

[3] I have to thank the retiring vicar, Canon Hughes, for permission to consult these.



JOHN CLARE IN THE PORTICO OF ALL SAINTS', *by George Maine*

George Maine, gardener, occurs in the Northampton Poll Books from 1826 to 1852.[4] His burial is not recorded in the registers of St. Giles, which have been scanned from 1830 to 1870, but the burial is recorded on September 24th, 1849, of Ann Maine of St. Giles Street, aged 85, perhaps the wife of the gardener and the mother of the artist. Among the Hooker family papers, the subject of the following article, is an acrostic on George Mayne, *sic*, by John Clare which he sent to Mr. Knight, the former Steward of the Asylum, on April 11th, 1851. This acrostic clearly refers to the artist, as it is about painting and drawing of portraits and landscapes. By the kindness of Miss Hooker, it is here reproduced:

raise
Good & substantial painter merits
Encouragement from censure into praise
On the plain canvass in poetic strife
Rich pictures rise from nothingness to life
Great in semplicity [*sic*] the pencil vies
Endearing nature with her simple dies
Making the portraits look from out the
frames
& almost speak in answer to their names
Yea Landscapes too & many a pleasant scene
Naked in winter grow to evergreen
Enjoy thy labours & relapse between [5]

John Clare, however, was not allowed to sit in his favourite place in All Saints' portico as much as he would have wished. Dr. Prichard, the first Medical Superintendent of the Asylum resigned in 1845, and the Directors appointed Dr. P. R. Nesbitt in his place. Dr. Nesbitt has been criticised for imposing stricter discipline on Clare by confining him to the Asylum grounds. We now know, from the Hooker MSS., that it was Dr. Prichard who first applied these disciplinary measures to Clare, and Dr. Nesbitt has been perhaps unfairly criticised. Dr. Nesbitt retired in 1858, and, in 1865, wrote with some understanding of Clare.[6] Dr. Nesbitt's opinion about the origin of Clare's mental condition was the usual medical opinion of that day.

"I was always led to believe that [Clare's] mental affliction had its origin in dissipation. It was characterized by obsessional ideas and hallucinations. For instance he may be said to have lost his own personal identity as with all the gravity of truth he would maintain that he had written the works of Byron, and Sir Walter Scott, that he was Nelson and Wellington, that he had fought and won the battle of Waterloo, that he had had his head shot off at this battle, whilst he was totally unable to explain the process by which it had been again affixed to his body. He was generally docile and tranquil, but would brook no interference—anything approaching to this last would excite his ire in a torrent of ejaculation of no ordinary violence in which imprecations were conspicuous: but this was an exceptional state of things. Seated on a bench and with his constant friend a quid of Tobacco, he would remain silent for hours. He was a passionate lover of the beauties of Nature—wild flowers being especially objects of interest to him. He was once asked how he had contrived to write his pretty poetry—his reply was that it came to him whilst walking in the fields—that he kicked it out of the clouds. On another occasion he presented me with the following scrap,

Where flowers are, God is, and I am free.

. . . . . if there was one subject more than another that he had an aversion to it was biography—he designated it as a parcel of lies—but the beauties of poetry he could always appreciate, and was never more at home and at his ease than when the production of one of the time-honoured Bards was placed in his hands.

[4] For this information, I am indebted to Mr. Bruce Bailey of the Northampton Public Library. He also copied the entry in the *Mercury* for me.

[5] Mr. Stenson, Miss Hooker's grandfather, has endorsed the envelope in which the paper was placed "From Mr. Knight Acrostic to Dr. Nesbitt's child—and one of Clare's letters to Mr. K." Why Mr. Stenson, who was familiar with the Asylum's Steward, and presumably Dr. Nesbitt, the medical superintendent, should so have described the George Maine of the Acrostic is not easy to see. Several possible explanations suggest themselves, none entirely satisfactory.

[6] Letter of April 15th, 1865, quoted from *Sketches in the Life of John Clare*, op. cit.

He was essentially a kind-hearted, good-feeling man with an usually large cerebral development, possessing great breadth and altitude of forehead, such as we are in the habit of associating with men of the highest order of Intellect".

Dr. Nesbitt retired in 1858, and was succeeded by Dr. Edwin Wing. In the *Annual Report of the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum for* 1864, Dr. Wing wrote:—

"In speaking of the obituary, I have already alluded to the death of John Clare, who though ailing for some time, yet not in a degree to excite serious apprehensions of immediate danger, was suddenly cut off by apoplexy on the 20th of May. It had been my purpose, had space and my physical strength permitted, to have written somewhat at length on the character of his insanity, and to have pointed out the frequent connection between mental aberration and genius, and especially as illustrated by some of our most noted poets. Latterly his intellect had become sadly clouded, yet there were periods when the shadow would be temporarily lifted. There are some verses, written long after his admission into the Asylum, that I cannot forbear to introduce, as showing the deep melancholy under which he must have laboured at the time they were written. They are entitled

I AM !

I am ! yet what I am none cares or knows
My friends forsake me like a memory lost;
I am the self consumer of my woes,
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,
Like shades in love and death's oblivion tost;
And yet I am—and live with shadows lost.
Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life nor joys;,
But the vast shipwreck of my life's esteems;
And e'en the dearest—that I loved the best—
Are strange—nay, rather stranger than the rest.
I long for scenes where man has never trod;
A place where woman never smil'd or wept;
There to abide with my Creator, God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept;
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie;
The grass below—above, the vaulted sky."

Dr. Wing retired in September, 1865, but he never wrote "at length on the character of (Clare's) insanity", as he himself died in December of that year at Hardingstone. It will, perhaps, be noted that the version of "I am" quoted by Dr. Wing differs from the published versions.[7] Much more interest has been expressed recently in Clare's later poetry that he wrote in the Asylum. On p. 201 is a review of *The Later Poems of John Clare* edited by Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield, and published this year by the Manchester University Press. This is typical of the careful editing now devoted to Clare, especially in his later phase. The present writer can detect but one material error. W. F. Knight, to whom as the editors say, gratitude is due "for transcribing so much of Clare's poetry and thus preserving it for posterity", was not the Superintendent, but the House Steward of the Northampton Asylum. The Superintendent was the resident medical officer, who received a salary of £500 per annum, whereas Mr. Knight received £60 a year (Minutes of the Directors' Committee Meetings).

One further point about Clare's residence at the Asylum may be mentioned. The patients consisted of pauper patients, and private patients, the former class greatly exceeding the latter. Some of the private patients were assisted then as now from the charitable funds of the Hospital, if they could not meet the full fees.

Lord Fitzwilliam paid 11/- a week towards John Clare's maintenance, and Clare's name under the initials "J.C." appears in the *List of Private Patients, whose Payment for Maintenance are in the lowest remunerative rate of payment viz. 21s. per week, shewing the Amount of Benefit derived from the Funds of the Institution,* which was printed in the *Annual Reports* of the Asylum, during Clare's residence. This shows 11/- weekly was paid on Clare's behalf and the "weekly

[7] E.G. in the last two lines of verse 1, the words "lost" and "tost" are transposed.

benefit" from the Hospital Funds was 10/-. Thus the total amount he received from the Charitable Fund in a typical year (1863) was £26.0.0. At that time, the Charitable Fund was charged £642 per annum in respect of the patients of the same status as Clare, whereas today the demand on the charitable funds of the hospital runs at over £20,000 yearly, in assisting patients to stay at reduced, nominal, and, in some cases, no fees. Some discussion has arisen over Clare's exact status, but the Annual Reports make clear the position.

In this issue of *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, we are privileged to print some new material on Clare. The first material is recorded in an article by Miss Hooker and Mrs. Dermott Hunt on the MSS. in the possession of the former, which have never been printed, and which shed valuable light on Clare during his time in the Asylum. It is unfortunately impossible to print the entire correspondence between William F. Knight, Joseph Stenson and John Clare himself, the author of two of the letters, or the text of Clare's own MS. poems and jottings, but it is hoped that this article will indicate how rich this material is, particularly as Miss Hooker has allowed one complete letter of Knight and one of Clare to be reproduced in full. There is no question but that these letters and documents, so carefully preserved by Miss Hooker and her family, shed much light on Clare's earlier period at the Asylum.

Less important, but equally welcome is the note on the Clare MSS. at Stratfield Saye. This information derives from the enterprise of Miss Joan Wake, and the kindness of the Duke of Wellington, who has placed the material in his possession unreservedly at the disposal of the Editor of *Northamptonshire Past and Present*. This material refers to Clare at a much earlier stage in his career, when he was seeking the patronage of the Cecils. This was indeed before the shades of the prison house began to close! It is also before Clare's "climb to the niche in Poetry beside Blake and Keats where he belongs: in his case such a slow climb".[8] That Clare has now securely been placed in that niche is due both to the fact that the modern world is more properly appreciative of his merits, but also to the labours of the scholars who have established what Clare wrote, and have devoted such time and trouble to giving us a proper text of Clare, a proper appreciation of his life and work, and, above all, let us recognise him simply as a Poet, without any qualifying adjective.

G.I.

[8] Letter from Mrs. Tibble to the writer March 5th, 1963.

"The Mock Bird"

I've often tried, when tending sheep and cow,
With bits of grass and peels of oaten straw
To whistle like the birds. The thrush would start
To hear her song, and pause, and fly away;
The blackbird never cared but sang again;
The nightingale's fine song I could not try;
And when the thrush would mock her song, she paused
And sang another song no bird could do.
She sang when all were done, and beat them all.
I've often sat and mocked them half the day
Behind the hedgerow thorn or bullace tree.
I thought how nobly I could act in crowds;
The woods and fields were all the books I knew,
And every leisure thought was Love and Fame.

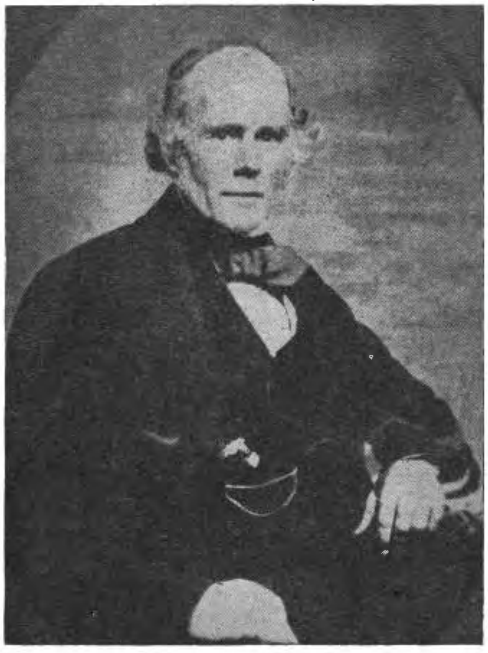
—John Clare.

JOHN CLARE

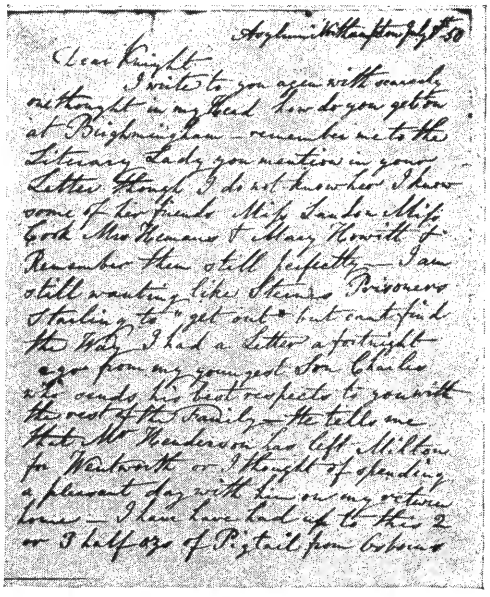
SOME UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS OF THE ASYLUM PERIOD

MISS HOOKER of Bristol treasures most, among her family possessions, a small group of documents about John Clare, which she inherited from her great-grandfather, Joseph Stenson of Northampton and Luton. He was a partner in the firm of Stenson and Company, Patent Iron Scrap Forge Works, of which he was iron-master. From about 1839 until 1844, he lived with his wife Sarah, and their growing family in Cow Lane, in the parish of St. Giles, Northampton. He died in 1882 at Groombridge, Kent. Selina, his eldest child, who married Samuel Hooker, a straw-bonnet manufacturer of Luton, inherited her father's papers. The present owner, grand-daughter of Selina and Samuel Hooker, inherited the documents from her aunt, Elizabeth, Selina's eldest child.

When Joseph Stenson was living in Northampton, in Cow Lane, he was not the head of a prosperous firm, but is described in the Northampton poll-book for 1842 as a book-keeper. He first became friendly with William F. Knight, later appointed House Steward of Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, but, at that time employed by the Directors of that Institution in some other capacity. The Asylum had been opened in 1838, as a result of voluntary effort, and was one of the first Institutions at which care of mental patients was medical and scientific rather than punitive. On December 29th, 1841, John Clare had been admitted as a patient at the Asylum, then under its first Medical Superintendent, Dr. T. S. Prichard.



JOSEPH STENSON
AS MR. KNIGHT AND JOHN CLARE KNEW HIM



Asylum Northampton July 8th 50

Dear Knight

I write to you again with scarcely
a thought in my head how do you get on
at Birmingham — remember me to the
Literary Lady you mention in your
Letter though I do not know her I have
some of the friends Miss Lawson Miss
Gold Mrs Hemans & Mary Howitt &
Remember them still perfectly — I am
still wanting like Stevens Prisoners
Starling to "get out" but can't find
the Way I had a Letter a fortnight
ago from my youngest Son Charles
who sends his best respects to you with
the rest of the Family — He tells me
that Mr Henderson has left Milton
for Wentworth or I thought of spending
a pleasant day with him on my return
home — I have lost half of the 2
or 3 half ozs of Pigtail from Osborne

THE FIRST PAGE OF JOHN CLARE'S LETTER
TO MR. KNIGHT, JULY 8TH 1850

William F. Knight is known today as Clare's faithful friend and admirer, who preserved many of Clare's poems, which he transcribed. Most of these transcriptions are in the Northampton Public Library today (Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield, *The Later Poems of John Clare*, Introduction, pp. 12-18; this volume is reviewed on p. 201). According to Hooker family tradition, it was through William Knight, later to be appointed House Steward at the Asylum, that Joseph Stenson met Clare, and took an admiring interest in him and his poetry. Clare gave Stenson some of his poems, or let him make copies of them.

Spencer Timothy Hall, friend of all three men, bore independent witness to this in the article, *Bloomfield and Clare*, which he published in 1866, and reprinted as the twelfth chapter of his *Biographical Sketches of Remarkable People* (1873). Geoffrey Grigson, in his introduction to *Poems of John Clare's Madness* (1950) quoted the passage in which Hall, describing his own visit to Clare in May, 1843, mentioned "a beautiful and logical poem" Clare had been writing for "my friend, Mr. Joseph Stenson, the iron-master".

The earliest of Miss Hooker's documents, however, is dated 1844, and when Joseph Stenson moved to Luton in the second half of that year, he had with him copies of three of Clare's poems, dated in the first half of 1844. The first was *A Valentine nosegay to Mary*, and the other two, *Maid of Jerusalem* and *Graves of Infants* were written, according to W. F. Knight, when Clare's movements were restricted to the Asylum grounds. Clare's poems of this spring and summer were composed under extraordinary stress. Ordinarily, he was allowed to pass outside the Asylum grounds into the town and neighbouring countryside. If the privilege was abused, it was withdrawn for a fitting length of time. Knight's letter to Stenson, is dated from Northampton March 3rd, 1846.

My dear Friend

You will be sorry to hear
that poor John Clare is not allowed to go out
of the walls of this place—for on Saturday last he
went into the town, and some one made him
intoxicated—for this, he is incarcerated—and
although he says he does not care about it—
yet I can see he feels it, for to day in some
verses he has composed he says—

"Fancy, thou burning mirror of the mind
That like the sun on Nature's memory shines
In thee, alone my free born spirit finds
'I'ts liberty, and pasture -" -

And again in another verse he says—speaking
of the Blackbird's song—

Thou bird chief mourner to my lonely quill
Shut out from thy lov'd haunts—a prisoner still—

And again he says—

"no more I walk where thou art wont to sing".

thus you see how acutely he feels his confinement
and it behoves me to make it as light as
I can—for I find him in tobacco—books
and paper—and sometimes spend an hour
with him talking poetry———————

When last he was kept in—he made the
"Infants Graves"—and "Maid of Jerusalem"—some
say he writes more at such times—and
his poetry is far better—yet it seems a crime
to keep him from his loved haunts—where

he sits sometimes on the stump of a tree—and converses with his parent Nature—pouring out his soul in verse—and loading all with sweets—I know you will feel regret at this information—for just at this season he roves more about the fields—and as he told our Friend S. Hall—"pick up his poetry—

Good Night

I am sorry to trouble you so often—if is it a trouble to you—but I know you will excuse this if it [is] all about poor John—last night before he went to bed—he gave me the following love song—

By the spring that shines so clear
By the flower that blossoms near
And every day—and every year
My life, and soul, I love thee

By the spring in shine and gloom
By the flower and its perfume
Thou art to me perpetual Bloom
My life, and soul, I love thee.

By the sunbeams as I pass
By the wild flower in the grass
Thou art to me the bonniest lass
And fondly do I love thee

I love thee more than words pretend
Thou'(rt *struck through*) dearer than the dearest friend
And when my pilgrimage shall end
In heaven I hope to love thee

March 3rd 46

Thus John keeps joging on from theme to theme—from passion to calm nature—from solitude to bustling life—I have not yet seen him this morning but I have no doubt he has something for me—early as it is—for he is up most mornings at six o'clock—and his mind must be employed in writing poetry or Clare, will be Clare no longer—

I should like your opinion on the last piece I sent you with the Valentine—for I have a liking for it myself—

I am in all sincerity your
enquiring and wellwishing
friend—and medley correspondent
W. F. Knight

PS.

I had finished my letter just as our Porter handed me over your welcome epistle—I was pleased to hear of your Institution—your debates and all other encouraging matter connected with it—but I tell you what friend S- I have not so much philanthropy about me now, as I

had some few years ago—for I find the worlds world is self ! SELF ! SELF ![1]
and he that devotes most time to the benefit of others is in the
worlds eye the greatest fool—
Mr J Stenson this I have learned by the schooling I have had
in its rough chanels—I thank you for
Luton your letter—and I care not how frequent
I have the pleasure of another and
another—though they are

This letter, which breaks off abruptly, was quoted at length by Mr. Eric Robinson in his broadcast talk *John Clare in the Asylum* from the Midland Studio of the B.B.C. on May 20th of this year. It gives evidence of Clare's restriction to the Asylum grounds, after Dr. Prichard's departure, in 1846, but it also gives proof that it was Dr. Prichard who first restricted Clare in 1844, the year of *Infants Graves* and *Maid of Jerusalem*, and not his successor, Dr. Nesbitt, who succeeded Dr. Prichard as medical superintendent in October 1845, and who has generally been regarded as the initiator of this form of punishment.

Joseph Stenson's work held him in Luton from 1844 to 1847. He regularly corresponded with W. F. Knight, but certain of the letters were destroyed years ago, only those relating to Clare having been carefully preserved. These contain some of the most significant private material on his life in the Asylum, and show Knight's evocative influence on him. The first one extant was written from Northampton on September 22nd, 1844,

My dear Sir
I promised you in my
last to copy one or more of Clare's poems
for you and in doing so I entrust them
in the hand of one I can trust for I have
given my promise not to circulate them
without leave—so you will see my reason
for wishing them to go no further than
your own hands—for fear I should not
get any more by my transgressing of
what ought to be kept sacred—but
I know you are not of the class of persons
that cannot enjoy unless they have others
to take a part in their treat so I
do at once break the chain that binds
me—and now for some hopes of pleasing
you—and cheering a few moments of this
monotonous life I will commence with
a "Valentine nosegay for Mary—

the poem, with some variants, that Mr. Stenson already possessed.

Mr. Knight added one of his exact footnotes. 'This was written on Valentines day this Year - - - - - - I do not know if you can read it for I have written as though I alone was to read - - -'. A copy of Clare's *Evening* ('The cool of evening is the hour of heaven'.) followed. The letter concludes:

'I was much pleased with your lines on our dirty people—
but they cannot have their own way—L. Lloyd has given us 25£ this

[1] 'self ! SELF ! SELF !'—is written in larger and larger letters. Had Knight been reading Charles Dickens' *Martin Chuzzlewit* which was issued in parts in 1843-4? "It was natural for him to reflect—he had months to do it in—upon his own escape, and Mark's extremity. This led him to consider which of them could be spared, and why? Then the curtain rose slowly a very little way; and Self, Self, Self, was shown below" (Chapter XXXIII, Biog. Edn, 1902, p. 425). See also Chapters LI and LII where this key phrase occurs.

last week — — I would have written you more but for press of time
and a bad pen—My respects to all—I am yours &c. W. F. Knight'

Something of Knight's sympathetic, animating personality is revealed in this letter, which also shows that already, in 1844, he had Clare's confidence, had begun collecting his poems and was encouraging his creativeness.

The transcription of *A Valentine* here given by Knight differs from the published versions (e.g. J. L. Cherry, *Life and Remains of John Clare*, 1873, p. 219) particularly in the fifth verse, which, in Knight's version, is given as—

'Here's the pale Primrose on the skirts of the wild-wood
And Violet blue neath the thorns on the green,
The wild flowers we pluck'd in the days of our childhood
On the very same spot as no changes had been
In the very same place where the sun kiss'd the leaves
And the Wood-bine its branches with thorns interweaves'.

In the writers' opinion, this version is more genuinely Clare's than the published one, where the last line reads,

'And the Wood-bine its branches of thorns interweaves'.

In 1845, those changes took place in the administration of the Asylum, to which reference has already been made. The Prichards gave notice of their resignation as Medical Superintendent and Matron on April 30th, to take effect six months later. At the very same meeting of the Directors, Mr. William F. Knight was appointed House Steward at a salary of £60 per annum.[2] Knight's ability to help Clare by his sympathy, and to compile a full collection of his poetry was thus enhanced. From 1846 to February 15th, 1847 his letters to Stenson contained copies of eleven more pieces of poetry, seven of them unpublished. On April 8th, 1846, he wrote:

'Thus you see I am still favoured by
your admired Clare with now and then
some beauties of his muse—but I think
some of his Child Harrold stanzas are very fine.
Here is one of last week after looking at a
picture in a book—the representation of a picture

These paintings, why they mock as if they spoke
Talking loud music, like to things that live
The lips are parted as if silence broke—
Into sweet language—such delights they give
Such happy visions to our fancies weave
The cheek seems warmer in the maidens face
From our too ardent look—the bright eyes live
And look out from the canvas on the place
While the ruby lips seem moving on the face

Thus and thus I transcribe to you some one/ or two of the
many effusions of the Poets mind . . What think you of them . .'

Knight, sending Stenson a copy of the well known poem *My early home was this* (Cherry, op. cit., p. 241) in December, 1846, comments:

'Talking of Clare, the other day I sketched the Cottage in
which he was born—(from a copy)—and Clare has made these
verses that please me much—here they are—what do you
think of them . .'

Stenson was given by his correspondent examples of most of Clare's styles, except the satirical or gross. Once, to prise an answer out of his friend, Knight wrote a five verse parody of Clare's quatrains.

On July 28th, 1845, the Directors of the Asylum appointed Dr. Nesbitt and his wife to succeed the Prichards on October 1st. The Nesbitts had been employed at Hanwell Asylum (now

[2] This information has kindly been supplied by Mr. A. G. Heritage, Secretary of St. Andrew's Hospital, as Northampton Asylum has been known since 1876, and has not previously been published.

St. Bernard's Hospital). This change is nowhere mentioned in the correspondence, but Dr. Nesbitt in the first year he was at the Asylum again confined Clare to the grounds, much to the poet's distress, as is shown by the letter quoted above. Clare turned to poetry for relief, aided by Knight, who, in turn, informed Stenson. That confinement to the grounds of the Asylum, which were very large, was not an unmixed hardship is proved by Knight's letter of April 8th, 1846: 'How I long for the sunny weather to come again—for this spot—(that is these grounds) are enchanting—and for this month past we have had Thrushes and Blackbirds nests—'

The last three letters belong to the years 1846, two letters in [December], and 1847 [February 15th], and are concerned with 'poor old friend Inskip'. Thomas Inskip, a watchmaker, who lived at Shefford in Bedfordshire, was known as an antiquarian writer and poet. He had assisted and housed the rural poet, Robert Bloomfield, which had doubtless endeared him to Clare, in whom, too, Inskip took an interest. In the first of these letters, Knight wrote that he had sent Inskip 'that piece of Clare's "I am" ' (see p. 188 of this issue), and records Inskip's comment; 'My opinion of its excellence, is, that it ranks high with the other occasional productions from the same pen; It is very sweetly pensive and has found an echo in my own mind, and I can say for my own part, what Pope has said of Art, it is, "What oft was felt, but ne'er so well expressed" . . .'.

But Clare's condition was worsening. He had become far from 'competent to converse' with visitors. At the end of December, 1846, Mr. Knight wrote, 'one day this last week W. Howett called to see Clare—but Clare talked nothing but of fiting and such like—Howett is a fine noble looking fellow with hair white eyes sparkling, a cheerful countenance and a constant smile, he told Clare how much he admired his works—and Clare only said "Do you"—then he rambled on again in his old way - - -'. Mr. Knight knew well how this would 'cut poor Inskip to the heart'. As for publication, 'I have not yet put any of the peices in the papers—and now think I shall not do it—I have more than one reason for changing my mind on this matter—and all considered conclude that it will be best not—'

The last letter offered Stenson an introduction to Inskip, and Knight added 'I like you am anxious to see Howitt's work—for I think he has Clare in it, as he was here to visit him sometime previous to the coming out of the work—' The allusion is presumably to William Howitt's *Homes and Haunts of the most eminent British Poets*, 2 vols. (1847). John Clare was not, however, mentioned in this particular work of Howitt.

The letters then cease, for, in 1847, Joseph Stenson suddenly returned to Northampton, where he became a successful inventor, iron-master and iron-manufacturer, and actually had a street named after him in the neighbourhood of his iron-foundry at St. James's end.

On January 30th, 1850, William F. Knight resigned as House Steward of the Northampton Asylum. He left Northampton in February to become Clerk and Steward of the Borough Asylum at Birmingham (later called Winson Green Asylum), where he remained until his resignation in 1892, at the age of 77. He did right to accept advancement. Clare, of whom he had written, 'his mind must be employed in writing poetry or Clare, will be Clare no longer—' was, with disease and time shrivelling the core of his sanity, beyond hope of improvement. Joseph Stenson, however, his new prominence in the town giving him weightier influence on Clare's behalf, could be relied on to help him and preserve whatever of Clare's came his way. Before he left, Knight made various arrangements for Clare's benefit and for continued transcription of his poetry.

Nevertheless, for Clare his departure was bleakly desolating and the years 1850-51 were the most grievous he ever lived through in the Asylum. The full impact of Clare's plight seems not to have struck home before mid-spring. Among the documents is the lower part of a sheet of paper (a spare piece from a letter to Dr. Nesbitt) containing a peacefully happy seasonal poem, 'No more Blustery winter rages—', dated 'March 8, 1850'; but on the back of the paper is a heartsick verse ending

. . . . 'Could I revisit all those scenes that's past
I'd make a dream so perfect as two[d] last'

These poems are not in Clare's handwriting, but are transcriptions by an unknown hand. On the same sheet is Dr. Nesbitt's name and address.

Clare was driven to use whatever scraps of paper chance offered, including blank spaces in the book autographed, 'John Clare From his friend Mary Howitt'—the now rare 6th edition of her husband's *The Book of the Seasons*, published 1840. Page two of Howitt's introductory chapter named Clare among the poets and writers of Nature and grouped him with Bloomfield, Burns and Elliott. The picture of haymakers fronting its *July* section was captioned by a quatrain of Clare's. A gracefully chosen gift, it was presented probably when Mrs. Howitt called on Clare on July 16th, 1844. 'Biddy Thorp Barnoak[3] 1849', Clare dated one entry; 'John Clare Northborough Northamptonshire Oct^{r} 23^{d} 1848', another. Lists of women's names, attempts at verses (one in his vowelless shorthand), lead on a to page where, across its foot, Clare wrote, again and again, the initials 'WK WK WK WK'.

This is evidence of how constantly Clare's mind reverted to his friend and benefactor, William Knight, and shows too how much he must have felt the personal deprivation involved in Knight's departure in 1850.

Prompted by Knight, Charles Clare sent his father an affectionate letter on June 27th, 1850. Clare's shaky writing fills all its blank spaces with two more women's names, four ten-line verses of a Burnsian love song and a sudden whirr of hedge-sparrows,

> 'The chelping sparrows little
> pilfering thieves
> Fly from the wheat & hide in
> hedge row leaves'

On July 8th, 1850, Clare wrote from the Asylum to W. F. Knight at the Birmingham Asylum. In this letter, which is here given in full, Clare alludes to certain literary ladies. Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802-38) was a minor poetess; Eliza Cook (1818-89) was more famous, and editress of an advanced monthly periodical for intellectual women, *Eliza Cook's Journal* (1849-54); more famous still, Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793-1835), the Liverpool poetess, still remembered for such poems as *Casabianca* and *The Stately Homes of England.*

Asylum Northampton July 8th - 50

Dear Knight

I write to you agen with scarcely one thought in my Head how do you get on at Birghmingham—remember me to the Literary Lady you mention in your Letter though I do not know her I know some of her friends Miss Landon Miss Cook Mrs. Hemans & Mary Howitt & Remember them still perfectly —— I am still wanting like Sternes Prisoners Starling[4] to "get out" but cant find the Way I had a Letter a fortnight ago from my youngest Son Charles who sends his best respects to you with the rest of the Family — He tells me that M^{r} Henderson[5] has left Milton for Wentworth or I thought of spending a pleasant day with him on my return home — I have had up to this 2

[3] i.e. Barnack, near Helpston.

[4] Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* (1758) has a chapter, entitled 'The Starling: Road to Versailles'.

[5] Mr. Henderson was a servant at Milton (the seat of the Fitzwilliams) with whom Clare went country walks.

or 3 half ozs of Pigtail from Osborns
the last about a fortnight or three weeks
ago —— Write to me when you can for
I am very lonely by times — I am without
Books or Amusements of any kind & have
got nothing to kill time or turn out
"Prison Amusements" what few books I have
had I lost somehow or other — all
I have left is "Fishers Young Mans
Best Companion"[6] which I bought my
self

I am Dear Knight
faithfully yours
Iohn Clare

Birghmingham
Borough Asylum

Mr Knight
Borough Asylum
Bermingham
Warwickshire

Letter from Clare
July 10th 1850.

William Knight promptly replied to this letter on July 11th with all his old warmth of reassurance and practical sympathy. It begins as if in the middle of one of their conversations.

> 'I am much pleased with your excellent Letter dear Clare—
> but sorry that you do not get the little Tobacco—I should have
> been pleased to have paid for, for you—yet never mind old boy—
> when I again come to Northampton I will some way provide you a
> store that shall last you some time—'

It is not known if William Knight revisited Northampton, and, if he did so, whether he stayed with the Stensons. It is probable that he did so, and the family tradition of his continuing kindness to Clare, and his close friendship with Joseph Stenson strengthen this probability. It is to Stenson he turns, in this letter, for quick help. 'I will write to Stenson and get him to take a bit of Tobacco up for you, the which I am sure he will be most happy to do—'

Chiefly, William Knight recommended Clare to fill his empty time with poetry. Adapting himself to Clare's troubled state, Knight made this writing of poetry to be a light undertaking, almost an amusement. At the same time he praised the outcome as worthwhile for its own sake, and for the pleasure given him of receiving Clare's poetry—'for that that I have in pencil of yours I am getting copied—and I like it better and better'. There was more for Clare to do. 'When you write to your Son again be so kind as to remember me to them all'. Better still, 'whenever you feel an inclination dear Clare, do always write to me, for I shall ever be happy to hear from you—' a sincere assurance he repeated in his closing words.

In every scrap of space left free in the double sheet of notepaper, Clare tried to write poetry, faltered and failed.

Clare's second, longer letter of April 11th, 1851, answered another from William Knight. Clare sent him an acrostic on George Maine (see p. 187 of this issue); then, torn between repressed irritation and resigned patience, wrote his heart out to William Knight.

[6] This work was first issued in 1806 by publisher Johnson.

'I hear U had broken your arm & now & then I wish I was near U as usual to talk about Songs in which matters I have run myself out—I have scarcely read a good one since U left here so I dont know how to write one' . . . Instead he named remembered books and a new one of Moxon's "Poets" which 'Stenson left me'. He wrote of his loved, inaccessible country-side, the little book of songs he could not make, his great need—'for the Chat of Books Poetry & Poets are what I want now—', his two American visitors, Dean Dudley and Dr. Elton; his caged life.

William Knight sent the letters on to Joseph Stenson, as he did one more item, part of a small, soiled, cash account book, its used pages cut away, leaving remains of one date, '184[-]'. It contains three of Clare's pencilled poems : *Song—Miss Hand* ('In this summers health & dew' . . .); *Song* ('Love lives beyond the tomb—' . . .); *Song* ('When in summer thou walkest' . . .). The last two vary from printed versions and have Clare's amendments here and there. The pages are ticked off in ink, presumably as William Knight finished copying them.

Finally, Joseph Stenson's marked, annotated copy of Cherry's *Life and Remains of John Clare* contains his initialled, pencilled note at the foot of page 126. In all Miss Hooker's documents, he is 'Clare' or, in grieving pity, 'John' or 'poor John'; but Cherry said Clare was always respectfully addressed as Mr. Clare by Asylum officials and townspeople. Joseph Stenson's footnote reads, 'Not so, he was too oblivious of such honours to feel any gratification from such had it been offered—he was "Clare" & amongst pauper patients. I.S.'[7] On this, we must allow Joseph Stenson the last word.

I. M. F. HOOKER and
N. DERMOTT HUNT

NOTE

Miss Hooker's Clare documents contain thousands more words than could be published here. The authors hope to publish in due course the complete transcripts. Briefly, the documents consist of the following: four sheets of copied poems, 1844 and 1850; eight whole and three portions of letters from William F. Knight of Northampton Lunatic Asylum to Joseph Stenson then in Luton, 1844-1847; Mary Howitt's autographed gift copy of her husband's *The Book of the Seasons*, many blank spaces in which Clare filled with pencilled jottings, two of them dated 1848 and 1849; a letter from Charles Clare, junior, to his father, 1850; two letters from Clare to William Knight in Birmingham and one in reply from William Knight, 1850-1851; Clare's undated note-book of MS poems; Joseph Stenson's annotated copy of Cherry's *Life and Remains of John Clare*, (1873). In all they contain eighty-seven pages of manuscript.

Winson Green Asylum (see page 195) is now known as All Saints' Hospital.

Copyright Reserved

[7] Joseph Stenson in signing his initials uses the old-fashioned "I" for "J".

Voltaire's View of English Historians

Les Anglois Manquent de bons Historiens

"Pour de bons Historiens je ne leur en connois pas encore. Il a falu qu'un Francois ait écrit leur Histoire. Peut-être le genie Anglois qui est ou froid ou impétueux, n'a pas encore saisi cette éloquence naïve, et cet air noble et simple de l'Histoire. Peut-être aussi l'esprit de parti qui fait voir trouble, a decredité tour leurs Historiens. La moitié de la nation est toujours l'ennemie de l'autre".

From *Lettres Ecrites de Londres sur Les Anglois et autres sujets*, Par M.D.V. . . [Voltaire] Basle, 1734.

Some Clare Manuscripts at Stratfield Saye

Among the manuscripts of the Duke of Wellington at Stratfield Saye are some copies of Clare's early poems and a letter dated March, 1820, to the Hon. Henry Manvers Pierrepont of Conholt Park, Hants., 3rd son of the 1st Earl Manvers. One of the poems has never been published in full, nor has the whole of the letter to Pierrepont.

At first sight, it appears difficult to say why these Clare manuscripts are at Stratfield Saye. Lady Sophia Cecil, only daughter of the 1st Marquess of Exeter and his second wife, Sarah Hoggins ("The Cottage Countess"), married in 1818, Henry Pierrepont. He was envoy to the Court of Denmark and a Privy Councillor. They had an only daughter, Augusta Sophia Anne, who married in 1844 Major General Lord Charles Wellesley, the 2nd son of the 1st Duke of Wellington. He was the father of the 3rd and 4th Dukes of Wellington, and the grandfather of the 7th and present Duke. Lady Sophia Cecil's brother, Brownlow Cecil, the 2nd Marquess of Exeter, was one of Clare's early patrons and it is to him that John Clare refers in his letter to Pierrepont; the text of the letter, which is endorced "an original letter of John Clare, the Northamptonshire poet" is as follows:—

"Hon^{bl}Sir

With some timidity, I feel an irresistible inclination to acknowledge the Hon^{b} Lady Sophia's present and return my grateful thanks to her Ladyship for it. If I had done wrong to trouble your honour with a letter, Ignorance betray'd me & my station (as I fancy) will make a good excuse. Be as it will, I cannot stifle my feelings: nature wispers the condescending kindness of the most noble the Marquess of Exeter & yourself as a miracle, and feels the warm gushes of gratitude she cannot conceal however she may think herself unqualified to make return she must thank your honor & the most noble Marquess & can boast however simple it may be that she despised flattery & that her gratitude issues from a heart which dare not entertain hope for the kindness providence has been so kind to bestow
—Yours hons' humble st. John Clare".

There are copies of five of Clare's poems;

(1) *Sonnet*
In Helpstone Church yard
(14 lines beginning) "What makes me love thee now, thou dreary scene?"
Copied from Clare's manuscript—Burghley Feby. 22d. 1820.
(Published in *The Village Minstrel*, 1821).

(2) Copied from Clare's manuscript—Feb. 1820.
(13 lines beginning) "O native scenes, nought to my breast clings nearer"
(Published in *The Village Minstrel*, 1821).

(3) Written on a birthday—20th year
by John Clare. MS.
Luckless day, the sorriest tidings
Thy last folded pages tell,
Youth from Manhood thou'rt dividing
Youth and pleasure, fare thee well.
Twenty years, and this thy blessing,
Much did hopes on manhood dwell;
Much tomorrow was expressing,
Better prospects, fare thee well.

Birthday—smiles thy youth attended,
Manhood's broke thy hopefull spell,
The curtain's dropt, hope's drama's ended
Clos'd illusions, fare thee well.

Note This is written on p. 1 of a quarto sheet. It is followed on pp. 2 & 3 by "Sorrows for a Favorite Cat", below which is written "Copied from Clare's MS—Burghley Feb^{y} 22$^{d.}$ 1820". This certainly refers to the copying of both poems.
The first two stanzas of this poem were quoted on p. 72 of *John Clare. A Life* (Cobden Sanderson, 1932) by J. W. & Anne Tibble. There are minor textual differences between the version there printed and the Stratfield Saye copy. There are three other versions among the MSS at Peterborough. The final verse has not been printed before. Mrs. Tibble has kindly supplied the information on which this note is based.

(4) Sorrows for a Favorite Cat. MS.
by John Clare, written Novr. 26, 1819.
(36 lines beginning) "Let brutish hearts as hard as stones".
(Published in *The Village Minstrel* 1821).

(5) O Sweet is Love. A Song. 1820.
by John Clare. MS.
(10 lines beginning) "Meeting Love,—its nameless joys".
(No note of previous publication)

I am most grateful to the Duke of Wellington for giving permission to quote from his documents, to Miss Joan Wake for having drawn my attention to them and for having copied the Birthday Poem and the letter to Henry Pierrepont from the original manuscript, to Mr. F. Needham, the Librarian at Stratfield Saye House for copies of the manuscript, and for supplying the material for the notes, and to Mrs. Tibble for assistance and encouragement, noted above. She points out that there is, as far as she knows, no exhaustive list of fugitive poems that Clare may have published between 1820 and 1830.

G.I.

"What is Love?"

Say, what is love? To live in vain,
To live, and die, and live again?
Say, what is love? Is it to be
In prison still and still be free—
Or seem as free? Alone, and prove
The hopeless hopes of real love?
Does real love on earth exist?
'Tis like a sunbeam in the mist,
That fades and nowhere will remain,
And nowhere is o'ertook again.
Say, what is love? A blooming name,
A rose-leaf on the page of fame,
That blooms, then fades, to cheat no more,
And is what nothing was before?
Say, what is love? Whate'er it be,
It centres, Mary, still with thee.

—*John Clare.*

JOHN CLARE'S "PARADISE LOST" — AND REGAINED

"Editors are troubled with nice amendings & if Doctors were as fond of amputation as they are of altering and correcting the world would have nothing but cripples", complained Clare in 1825, since which time he has been so badly served (or severed) by distinguished amputating editor-surgeons from John Taylor to Geoffrey Grigson, both of whose editions are discredited by recent textual research, that it is pleasant to record that "*The Later Poems of John Clare*" has been edited by *Eric Robinson* and *Geoffrey Summerfield* for the *Manchester University Press* (*at* 37/6*d.*) with meticulous care, informed by a proper respect for the integrity of Clare's poetic vision. This respect is extended to poor Clare's unusual spelling, punctuation and idiom, "corrected" in the past by even his most sympathetic editors. It is good to learn in the Introduction that we owe this faithful reproduction not to the editors' tolerance of quaintness but to a recognition that the distinctive texture of the poetry is part of the essential embodiment of Clare's sensibility. Not only do we get the words as Clare wrote them but also the editors attempt to give the best text—or amalgam of texts where no one is complete and to organize the material as Clare wished. Whatever our reservations about this text, they are, I think, likely to take the form (as mine do below) of wishing the editors had gone further in this direction. One cannot have too much of a good thing, especially when it is authenticity. Nevertheless, this is a textual achievement of a high order and to say that the way is now open for a critical revaluation of Clare would be to ignore the fact that such editing is itself part of a revaluation.

The result must surely be a vindication of Clare's later work and of the long, reflective work "Child Harold", in particular, which now that the songs have been restored to an integral position, appears as a more coherent and important piece of sustained writing than Grigson's presentation suggested. The structural influence of Byron (with whom Clare identified himself) is apparent in the relationship between the songs and the main, reflective body of the poem, but the success of the poem very much derives from Clare's own qualities. "Don Juan" is another, though much slighter Byronic exercise. Less intrinsically valuable than "Child Harold", it also comes off badly against Clare's earlier satirical achievement, "The Parish". Where in "Child Harold" the Byronic framework provides a helpful discipline for Clare's inventions, here it only serves to suggest embarrassing comparisons, particularly in Clare's hideously clumsy handling of sexual themes (which is not at all the same thing as the "earthy frankness" of folk art). "MS 110", in which Burns and Cowper are added to Byron as personae and influences, is like "Child Harold" in its mixture of reflective verse and song, but lacks its organization and staying power. It contains, nevertheless, spasms of genius, such as the apocalyptic starkness of "There is a day a dredfull day". There is, finally, a conscientious rereading of "The Knight Transcripts" containing much of intrinsic value. Unfortunately the editors choose only to give us a selection of these, excusing themselves by reference to their unevenness. Had we already a published good version of "The Transcripts", such exclusiveness based on unstated value-judgements would not matter, since we could judge the editors' wisdom ourselves.

Unfortunately we have no such points of reference, and over this section of the work is cast the shadow of Bridges' notorious 'selection' of G. M. Hopkins. Another debatable textual point is whether there is any justification in a volume, which, to judge from its introduction, is hardly intended for the general reader, for disentangling "Child Harold" and "Don Juan" from each other and from related subject matter in the manuscripts. If the scrapbook effect of the original were reproduced, we should have a clearer idea not only of *how* but also of the context of what Clare wrote. Part of the trouble here may be editorial ambivalence. Do the editors intend to give us a full definitive whole-hogging text ("confusions "and all) offering scholars and critics

valuable insights or a good streamlined popular edition, like the same editors' "The Shepherd's Calendar" for O.U.P.? The volume is marred only by a compromise between these two.

I suppose that, writing for a Northamptonshire periodical about the work of a Northamptonshire poet, much of it written on his native soil—on his return to Northborough from the High Beech home and after his admission to the Northampton Asylum, one ought to say something that will place these poems, relating them to their setting. Unfortunately, this cannot be done with the later Clare *—even if it were desirable. For however firmly placed in the landscape and social pattern of Helpston and its neighbourhood is Clare's early and middle work, the poems in this edition are as delocalized as "Paradise Lost", with which it shares a preoccupation with the themes of Eden and the Fall. Thus the Asylum is not just an Asylum or even the Bastille, but a Purgatorial Hell, symbolizing the Fall and loss of freedom, while the people and landscape of his childhood came to stand for the innocence he had lost. Contemporary events, such as the visit of Queen Victoria to Northampton, and people are mere grist to the symbolizing mill. (Significantly, it is not known whether the names of many of the women figuring in these later poems are those of real people or of fantasy-products). The sine qua non of Clare's being able to carry on writing poetry and, perhaps, living, in the confinement of the Asylum was that he escape its painful reality. It is his achievement that he did better than to escape it: he transcended it.

Beginning as an Augustan pasticheur, maturing as a classicist—of a peculiarly original turn but still a classical one, Clare's final art was Romantic. There was method and aptness in the madness of Clare's delusion in these years that he was Byron, a choice of persona that was significant not so much because of shared sympathies regarding sexual licence or radical politics or because Byron won with his poetry the financial rewards Clare so desperately once sought, but because Byron reconciled Augustan disciplines and satirical modes with contemporary Romantic attitudes. "The Later Poems" confirms not that Clare was a major poet, which he was not, but that his talent was an immensely and rewardingly varied one. The final irony is surely that as a poet he found 'freedom' from limiting material and from the distractions of poverty and emotional disturbance in a provincial lunatic asylum: Or as he himself wrote in "The Peasant Poet",

"A Peasant in his daily cares—
The Poet in his joy".

ROBERT SHAW.

Also published this year by the same editors who were responsible for *Later Poems* were F. Martin, *Life of Clare* (F. Cassel & Co.) and Clare's *Shepherd's Calendar* (O.U.P.). It is regretted that it has not been possible to review these books in detail, but as stated in the article "John Clare, the Northampton Years", the *Shepherd's Calendar* has now appeared in the form in which Clare wrote it, for the first time.

* The historians can, however, check the biographical minutiae. Sir Gyles Isham has already pointed out in these pages the inaccuracy by which the editors describe Knight as 'Superintendent' rather than 'Steward'.

The Coming of Railways to Northamptonshire

Northamptonshire, as we all learned at school, is like a long leaf, 70 miles from south-west to north-east and only 5 to 25 miles from south-east to north-west. It lies across the main routes from London to the north, and four main lines traverse it: from west to east those of the Great Central, the London and Birmingham (later the London and North Western), the Midland and the Great Northern, while a fifth, the Great Western line to Birmingham and Shrewsbury, just touches the county at the south-western end near Aynho. These lines in Northamptonshire give us a sample of the problems of engineering met and of the social effects brought by the railways throughout the country, for the London and Birmingham, opened in 1838, was the first main great line in the world, and the Great Central, completed in 1899, was one of the last.

The routes of our main lines have associations reaching far into the past. The London and Birmingham, like the Grand Junction Canal, keeps closely to the line of the Roman road known as Watling Street, along which as one reads the Annals of Tacitus one can imagine the tramp of Roman legions recalled hurriedly from Anglesey to subdue Boadicea;[1] and now of course the M1 has joined the other three. At the other end of the county the Great Northern main line is virtually a railway version of Ermine Street; and the Great Central and the Midland made the best of what was left.

The county has its Neolithic highway in Banbury Lane, leading from Hunsbury Hill south-west towards Banbury and Wales; its two Roman highways, small parts of which have again come into use on our new motorways; and a network of minor roads as well as six turnpikes, a navigable river and part of the principal canal in Britain, the Grand Junction.[2] Until the advent of the railways many drove roads were in use, and it has been calculated that about eight thousand cattle a week were driven along them to London alone.

Conditions of travel varied here as everywhere. In the Wealden clay of Sussex in the eighteenth century a journey of nine miles once took more than six hours, whereas in 1774 John Wesley rode the 285 miles from Congleton to Bristol and back in under two days.[3] In mid-eighteenth century letters commonly took a month to travel from Yorkshire to Oxford, whereas one of Cicero's had reached Athens from Rome in three weeks. Northamptonshire was lucky in having Thomas Telford to re-align the Holyhead road, but even earlier it seems from various indications that the county was not nearly as bad as some: in the diary of the boy Thomas Isham for 1672 we read on one occasion that Sir William Haslewood returned to Maidwell from London in a day, and on another that Sir Charles Harbord and his sons returned to Grafton Regis after dinner at Lamport, a distance of twenty miles.[4]

Just as we romanticise the dying era of steam trains, so past generations romanticised the stage coach, many of the most famous of which came along the Watling Street. A recent authority has this to say about them: 'It was the railways, even with their early third-class open trucks and first-class carriages like stage-coaches with flanged wheels, that first introduced the travelling Briton to something resembling comfort in motion. Before that he needed a hardy constitution and a mind of sufficient fortitude to disdain, or glory in, physical torment. Otherwise he was

[1] Tacitus, *Ann.*, xiv 33. I have retained the traditional spelling of the queen's name.

[2] For much concise information about these I am indebted to the guide to an exhibition of transport held in Northampton in 1958.

[3] For the Sussex journey and for a good account of travel in the 18th century see F. S. Williams, *Our Iron Roads* (London, 1852), pp. 1-14. For John Wesley's journey see *The Journal of John Wesley*, ed. N. Curnock (reprinted London, 1960), vol. VI, p. 14.

[4] Thomas Isham's diary for 1st and 24th August 1672.

better off walking, or staying at home'.[5] Two characteristics he adds, of the British travelling public, grousing and taciturnity, were born in the stage-coach; I would rather say that the stage-coach brought out what was there already.

As to fares, the first-class fare from London to Thurso in 1962 was just over £10; an inside place in the mail-coach in 1835 cost £17, exclusive of meals and tips. Mr. Rolt remarks that the halts were not at all like those pictured on Christmas cards with jovial landlords and the like, but were much more like a pit stop in the Grand Prix car race—even horses with spare poles stood ready at some points.[6]

Not that the by-roads were deserted. Sir R. Phillips, in a tour through the United Kingdom in 1828, gives an admiring account of the transport facilities in Leicester. There were six coaches daily each way to and from London, six to Birmingham, six to Stamford and the East Coast and 250 carriers who came in twice a week from the various villages.[7]

The canals, too, were reaching the height of their prosperity when the railways came, and Northamptonshire possessed a large part of the most prosperous of them all, the Grand Junction, which went on with undiminished traffic though with diminished revenue till 1870 and later.[8] How interesting and cheering it is to read that on June 18th-24th 1798 thirty barges took a considerable body of troops from Blisworth to Liverpool, taking six days instead of twelve, as they would have done on the march.[9]

The history of railways in the county begins with an unsolved problem. In John Clare's diary for June 4th 1825 we read: 'Saw three fellows at the end of Royce Wood, who I found were laying out the plan for an iron railway from Manchester to London. It is to cross over Round Oak spring by Royce Wood corner for Woodcroft Castle. I little thought that fresh intrusions would interrupt and spoil my solitudes. After the enclosure they will despoil a boggy place that is famous for orchises at Royce Wood end'. This is an astonishingly early date for a railway scheme in East Anglia—three months before the opening of the Stockton and Darlington, five years before that of the Liverpool and Manchester and twenty years before any railway reached that part of the country—but Grinling in his history of the Great Northern railway mentions a first short epidemic of 'railway fever' in the years 1825-27,[10] and as I shall show later in this paper some most unlikely schemes have been rescued from oblivion by patient research.

Paradoxically, a noticeable phenomenon of the coming of railways to Northamptonshire was its limited effect on the countryside. Mr. Rolt notices this in an admirable article on John Fowler published in 1962. 'Just as the waters of clear and polluted streams meet but do not mingle for some distance below their point of confluence, so, for a brief space in English rural history, the new world met the old without exerting any noticeable influence upon it. The trains hurried from growing town to growing town. The triumphant cry of a steam whistle drew the ploughman's eye from his furrow and straightened the reaper's back, but when the thunder of wheels had died away the old life that Chaucer and Shakespeare knew went on, its slow, ancient rhythm only momentarily disturbed'.[11] Mr. Rolt illustrates his point by a print of the Willington Dene viaduct on the Newcastle, North Shields and Tyne Railway, in the foreground on which is a ploughman at work with a wheel-less wooden plough such as we see in the illustration to a mediaeval psalter. 'So great and so poignant a contrast between old and new', says Rolt, 'had never been seen before in history and will never be seen again'. Next to the enclosures it was the steam plough of the 1850's that began to make detailed changes in the appearance of the countryside.

No more striking example of all this could be found than south-west Northamptonshire, that large tract of quiet pastoral country traversed anciently by Banbury Lane and now by the

[5] L. Gardiner, *Stage-Coach to John o' Groats* (London, 1961), p. 179.
[6] L. T. C. Rolt, *George and Robert Stephenson* (London, 1960), p. 219.
[7] Sir Richard Phillips, *A Personal Tour Through The United Kingdom* (London, 1828), pp. 78-9.
[8] C. Hadfield, *British Canals* (2nd ed., London, 1959), p. 221.
[9] ib., p. 116.
[10] C. H. Grinling, *A History of the Great Northern Railway* (London, 1898), p. 1.
[11] L. T. C. Rolt, *Great Engineers* (London, 1962), pp. 130-1.

road B4525 through Thorpe Mandeville, Canons Ashby, Litchborough, Bugbrooke and Kislingbury. At the remains of Culworth station, for example, a train may roar out of a green expanse and disappear into a similar expanse while all around are fields that breathe the very spirit of mediaeval England. Most striking of all is the contrast at Stowe-Nine-Churches, a village so old that no one knows what its name really means and whose church is famous for its early Purbeck marble effigy. This village looks down from its hilltop on the main line from Euston, where expresses roar onward as if in another world, as separate in spirit from the quiet fields as a space ship. The railways were not originally meant to open up this tract of country, and much of the activity they brought was a kind of camp-following, as in the Great Central locomotive depot at Woodford Halse.

This brings me to the famous case of Northampton versus the Railway, about which much nonsense continues to be written in spite of the exposition of the truth by Miss Wake in *Northampton Vindicated*, published in 1935, and by Mr. Victor Hatley in *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, vol. 11 (1959), pp. 305-9. The London and Birmingham main line is the most fascinating and most important of those which cross our county. Like its only great predecessor, the Liverpool and Manchester, it dates to the days when railway engineers had little experience of the effect of gradients on locomotives; in fact it is aligned as the old canals had been, which is not surprising when one remembers that most of its contractors and labourers had been employed solely on canals. With these it was always levels or locks, and we find that the main line from Euston has a ruling gradient of 1 in 330 everywhere except for a steep drop at 1 in 70 from Camden to the terminus, where the line was laid out for cable haulage. Hence the huge cutting at Roade, and the troublesome tunnel at Kilsby. These factors were probably decisive in the route taken which avoided Northampton, and can help us to arrive at the truth in spite of much conflicting evidence. For example Robert Stephenson, writing to Samuel Smiles in 1857, said that Northampton had 'distinguished itself by being rather more furious than other places in opposition to railways, and begged that the line might be kept away from them'. Mr. Hatley condemns the effrontery of this falsehood and suggests that Robert Stephenson might have wished to divert attention from his own part in the disastrous undertaking at Kilsby, but I think the truth is a shade less condemnatory.

For there was divided opinion at Northampton, as Miss Wake has shown. Some few landowners were against the railway whereas the majority of the townspeople were naturally all for it; and it is natural that Robert Stephenson should remember the energetic opposition of the Common Council of Northampton, including such landowners as Sir William Wake and the Duke of Grafton, and forget the less colourful efforts of the Town Assembly to obtain a line passing through the town, although these efforts had been strenuous and prolonged. With the issue thus in the balance I am sure that Stephenson and his consultants were not intending to include Northampton anyway, as this would mean a steep drop to the Nene and a long climb through Althorp, Long Buckby and Crick; and so they decided on a route which the landowners might favour. One other factor is important here, namely that the main line, like so many others, was planned to connect London with a provincial city, and intermediate traffic was a secondary matter. For instance Edmund Denison, chief promoter of the Great Northern, said at Peterborough in 1844: 'Our main object is to shorten the distance between London and Yorkshire. If a line through Peterborough is best for the general public Peterborough shall have it, but if not, it shall pass outside the town'.[12] This apparent indifference to local traffic explains many of the outcries in the local papers on such matters as poor and badly-situated stations, inconveniently-timed trains, churlish service and the like; there was probably at least an element of truth in all these criticisms.

At Stamford a similar legend has grown about the opposition of Lord Exeter to a railway going through the town, and here too the truth is far from clear. A little book called 'The Annals of Stamford 1837-1887' by a local resident named A. J. Waterfield gives racy and amusing accounts of local events in the reign of Queen Victoria. On August 12, 1844 we read: 'This month great disappointment was felt in Stamford on it becoming known that the York Railway would go via

[12] Quoted by O. S. Nock, *The Great Northern Railway*, (London, 1958), p. 4.

Peterborough, according to the decision of the engineer umpire, Mr. Locke, and would not come within several miles of Stamford'. From this and other evidence we at least know that the original decision to take the line over the flat country just east of Stamford was made by the engineers themselves, and there is no evidence whatever that the Marquis of Exeter disapproved of the obvious desire of the townsmen of Stamford to have the railway. In any event the Leicester and Peterborough line of the Midland passed within a mile of Burghley House, and there is no record of any opposition to this route. George Hudson and George Stephenson both visited the Marquis of Exeter at Burghley on the 14th of September 1844 'in connection with the projected line from Syston',[13] and work went forward rapidly.

Six years were to elapse before the Great Northern route was finally decided on, and in that time the residents of Stamford applied renewed pressure to obtain a diversion of the route. From a collection of bills and public notices in the Stamford Public Library it is possible to trace the following sequence of events.[14]

During 1846 and 1847 the representations of Stamford were supported by the Great Northern Company, whose chairman Denison assured a deputation on 25th May 1847 that 'the Company were sincere in their anxiety to come to Stamford, if they could do so on reasonable terms, or they would not have applied to Parliament for the Deviation, the Line of which was adopted to meet the views of Lord Exeter'. It appears that Lord Exeter originally supported the townsmen in seeking a re-committal of the Great Northern bill, 'on condition only that they should apply the next Session for the Deviation then proposed by him'. Perhaps he had second thoughts, for another handbill dated June 18, 1847 gives the text of a petition from the Marquis to the House of Commons against the proposed deviation, on the grounds of noise, inconvenience and obstruction of navigation on the Welland. On June 5 Sir James Buller East, in answer to a question from the Marquis of Granby, had assured the Commons that the rejection of the proposed deviation through Stamford was entirely on public grounds. 'It came, therefore, to a nice account for the Committee to settle between Stamford and all the rest of the travelling world, whether the people of Stamford should go three miles out of their way, or all other travellers two miles. It was, as it was, a fair match between Stamford on one side, and all England and Scotland on the other; and we thought all England had it'.

Whatever may be thought of the Marquis' change of attitude here, he certainly did his very best to keep Stamford on the railway map later on, for when a separate company, the Stamford and Essendine Railway, had been formed as a kind of subsidiary of the Great Northern to run the little branch from the main line, he ran both it and the Stamford and Sibson (part of the Midland line from Leicester to Peterborough, with a branch joining the L.N.W.R. Blisworth line near Wansford) out of his own pocket for seven years, from January 1, 1865 to February 1, 1872. As late as 1877 Waterfield tells us that the townspeople were still petitioning for a loop line from Huntingdon to Grantham which would take in Stamford.

It is remarkable that the innocent-seeming pastoral countryside of Northamptonshire should have offered the greatest obstacles to canal and railway engineers alike. Apart from Woodhead in the Pennines, the Catesby tunnel of 2,997 yards was the most troublesome of all their works to the engineers of the Great Central line in the nineties; and earlier, Blisworth canal tunnel and Kilsby railway tunnel had almost defeated William Jessop and Robert Stephenson. The two latter cases are almost identical. Blisworth hill is of rotten oolite and heavy shifting clays with powerful springs of water between them. These brought work to a standstill on the canal tunnel in 1795 and Jessop wished to abandon it in favour of locks, but on the advice of Whitworth and Rennie a new tunnel was laid out on a different line. A cast iron railway was laid over the ridge to take traffic to Stoke Bruerne, and when the tunnel was finished—and it took ten years—the rails were laid down from Gayton Wharf to the Nene at Northampton.[15]

[13] Waterfield, op. cit. (the book is not paginated).

[14] The Burghley papers are being catalogued by Mr. King, but so far he has not reached the years in question, and it is not as yet possible to use the papers as evidence. The collection of bills and papers from which I draw the following account is not paginated, but yields a sequence of events much as I have given them here.

[15] Rolt, *Great Engineers*, pp. 57 ff.

This history was repeated almost in detail at Kilsby Tunnel. Obviously Robert Stephenson must have known of the quicksands encountered not only at Blisworth but at Braunston and Crick tunnels on the Oxford canal, but what he knew nothing of was the cost of these obstacles, as of course the last thing the canal authorities wished was to help Robert Stephenson—in fact they even employed gangs to pull up the piles he had driven over the canal near Wolverton. So Robert had no access to Jessop's records, and his own estimates for the line fell far short. James Nowell, the contractor for the tunnel, collapsed and died of a heart attack, while in December 1835 three other contractors were dangerously ill. After ten shafts had been sunk and repeatedly flooded and a driftway parallel with the tunnel had been submerged, Stephenson had to instal thirteen beam engines, which pumped 1,800 gallons a minute for nineteen months, before the quicksand was finally mastered. By this time every other part of the line was completed, though passengers were still taken by road coach from Denbigh Hall, where Watling Street passes under the line near Bletchley, to Rugby. It was not till June 1838 that the first trains ran through in each direction, though a roisterous inaugural party had been held at the 'Dun Cow' at Dunchurch in December 1837.[16] In the columns of the Northampton *Mercury* and *Herald* one can follow the mounting excitement as the great day drew near. The final cost of the line was £5½ million, over twice the original estimate. This does not include £¾ million for land valued at a third of that price. 'If the landowners were shown blank cheques' says Rolt, 'the impending destruction of the *noblesse* miraculously ceased to be a matter of concern to them'.[17]

All this work, on a scale unequalled since the Pyramids, was largely in the hands of the 'navvies', a race of men which sprang up with the canals and early railways and then vanished for ever. They came from the Fens, from Scotland and from Ireland, and formed an élite among the labour force. Since Kilsby tunnel was the work of these men I can hardly pass them over, but I am sure you will all know a great deal about them since writers like Hamilton Ellis, Roger Lloyd and Lionel Rolt have dealt with them and they figure in many early railway histories. Shanty towns quite as riotous as those in the Middle West sprang up, the largest being on the top of the tunnel at Kilsby with 1,250 men in noisome turf huts. These men wore white felt hats with upturned brims, velveteen coats and scarlet plush waistcoats covered with little black spots, and rainbow-coloured neckerchiefs, corduroys and heavy calf-length boots. When William Morris saw navvies at Swindon he wrote as if they were giants. 'As I was not half their height, from my point of view their heads and shoulders were thrown, as it were, right against the heavens'. And of course he saw them surrounded by a Pre-Raphaelite halo.

Their speech was strange and they used nicknames, never their proper names: one of them, Catsmeat, is given to a rather different character in stories by P. G. Wodehouse. Their capacity for work was prodigious—each man could shovel twenty tons a day up into wagons above his head—and their chief food was beef and whisky—sixteen or eighteen pounds of beef each a week and no-one knows how much whisky, because they distilled their own. Their pay was about five shillings a day, but sometimes they were not paid for weeks, and they then proceeded to Saturnalia of riot and disorder. They were foolhardy in the extreme, and three were killed in trying to jump across the mouth of the tunnel shafts in a game of Follow my Leader. They recked not of God or man, and when one of their number was imprisoned they simply dug a tunnel and got him out again. Their loyalty was solely to their contractor and to one another, and when one of their number was buried at Kilsby, 'five hundred of his comrades in clean short white smock frocks, with their black handkerchiefs tied loosley round their throats, are seen in procession in pairs walking hand in hand after the coffin of their mate'.[18].

Forty years later, during the construction of the Kettering to Manton line of the Midland Railway, the first fine careless rapture had worn off, though we still hear of rough behaviour in the shanty towns at Corby Wood, Glaston and Wing, and still hear of huts with nineteen inhabitants—man and wife, seven children and ten lodgers—of drunkenness and profligacy. The Rev. D. W. Barrett, Vicar of Nassington and chaplain to the Bishop of Peterborough's mission to navvies, wrote in 1879 a little book called *Life and Work Among the Navvies*, a kindly and typically

[16] Rolt, *George and Robert Stephenson*, pp. 242 ff.
[17] Rolt, *George and Robert Stephenson*, p. 223.
[18] R. Lloyd, *Railwaymen's Gallery*, (London, 1954), pp. 32-45.

Victorian missionary tract full of curious information (who would have guessed, for example, that £400 a year was spent by navvies on pickles?) and great earnestness. Imagine the Bishop of Peterborough conducting a thanksgiving service in the depths of Glaston tunnel with an upturned wheelbarrow for a prayer desk, or Bishop Wordsworth of Lincoln being pushed along in an open truck to inspect earthworks.[19]

What of the reception afforded to the new railway? The columns of the Northampton *Herald* and *Mercury* are full of it, and indeed one wonders whatever these two papers would have otherwise done for copy. They voiced two rival factions, the *Herald* for and the *Mercury* against the railway, and it is remarkable how early the traditional complaints of travellers found a voice. Burst parcels and mishandled luggage for example—the railway seemed to specialise in surliness, and of course in those days all luggage was carried on top of the carriages, and a porter just edged it off and left the rest to gravity—unless he received a handsome tip. One clergyman named Phillimore complained that when he had come forward to vouch for a lady whose ticket, though quite valid, was refused by a clerk at a junction, he himself was assaulted, or as he put it 'collared' by the station staff. Were they, he asked, being deliberately rude at certain stations to discourage passengers?

There was a long squabble over the rival merits of Roade and Blisworth as sites for stations, Blisworth being thought of as the station for Banbury. In the event, of course, there were stations at both places. A novel argument for stage coaches was that the earliest morning train left Roade for London at 9.55 a.m., so that by leaving Northampton in the small hours one could actually reach London earlier by coach. And where did the railways deposit you in London? 'At Euston Square, a place very far from the points in London which nine travellers out of ten are desirous of reaching'. In spite of which the *Herald* deplores the fact that 'the people seem railroad mad'.

The first class fare from Roade to London was 16/-, whereas an outside seat on a coach was 8/-. Originally railway trains were more or less stage-coaches on wheels, and rail fares were divided between 'inside' and 'outside' or second class. G.M.T. was to be observed 'with local variations', each train would cater for 330 passengers and there was to be no tipping (tipping was a curse and a menace on the stage coaches).[20]

Among early writers on the railway the greatest was Dickens, who in *Dombey and Son* describes graphically the building of the London end of our railway. On the whole the Muses have not found the machine a congenial theme; but the London & Birmingham called forth a remarkable series of guides—no other railway ever inspired half as many, presumably because the novelty wore off—and it seems that almost every literary hack in London tried his hand at describing the route. About the style of these works there is the faded correctness and pompous classicism that makes much late eighteenth century English prose and poetry so very dull. Much the most amusing of these guides is William Wyld's of 1838. Mr. Wyld is resolved to enthral his readers. Let us look at his passage through our county.

Roade: (We pass over) 'a little tributary stream of the Tow, whose silver cord may be dizzily seen wound in a thousand tortuousnesses on the surrounding lea (the living is a curacy in the archdeaconry of Northampton and diocese of Peterborough; annual value £48)'.

Blisworth bridge: 'At this point, looking towards the right, the swelling hill and dale present a most pleasing and refreshing appearance, with which the true lover of the picturesque cannot fail to be highly ecstatized, or even the only common observer to be somewhat cheered and delighted'.

Weedon barracks (all the early guides profess special admiration for Weedon barracks): 'The scene which then appears stretched before us has not, perhaps, been excelled, if equalled, during our onward journeying, either in symmetrical arrangement of feature or pleasing shade of tint'. Then follows a rapturous description of the redcoats which reminds me of *A Shropshire Lad.*

[19] D. W. Barrett, *Life and Work Among the Navvies*, pp. 16, 18, 114, 122-4.

[20] All these and many other fascinating facts and arguments are to be found in the *Herald* and *Mercury* for 1838.

Daventry: 'The streets are, for the most part, narrow, dirty and badly paved, and the houses of a mean description'.

Weedon: 'Every needful affair having been transacted during our short stopping at the station, our journey is resumed'.

Brockhall: 'A short length of road, neither properly called excavated nor embanked, but partaking of the nature of both' (this must have been a remarkable piece of engineering).

Kilsby Tunnel: 'Into which we need not, like the Trojan hero on his visit to the kingdom of Pluto, any skilful sybil to conduct us, nor any golden branch to awe the gnomes, in our progress through the regions of darkness: for our leader, who has hitherto conducted us, and iron-hearted though he be, is yet faithful, and may be safely trusted in the gloom as in the day-gleam.

. . . 'we at length burst forth into the broad light of the ambient heaven, which seems lit up with an unwonted cheerfulness, to welcome our return to the empire of day'.

This height of rapture could not be maintained, and in Samuel Sidney's L.N.W. Guide of 1851 we find that Kilsby tunnel 'was one of the wonders of the world; but has been, from the progress of railway works, reduced to the level of any other long dark hole'.

In 1840 was opened a branch of the Midland Counties Railway from Derby to Rugby, and for some years thereafter all rail traffic from London to the north travelled to Rugby, thence to Leicester and on to Derby and Normanton where it transferred to the York and North Midland. Peterborough was without rail communication with London until the branch of 47 miles was opened from Blisworth in 1845. This has recently been closed and it is salutary to remember that even in 1845, the peak year of the great Railway Mania, this line was sanctioned by a Parliamentary majority of one vote. The much more ambitious scheme of the Great Northern railway, which was battling through Parliament a few months later, met the combined weight of all opposing interests—coach-owners, landed proprietors and rural tradesmen who saw the end of their lucrative share of the traffic to Euston. In the end the G.N. spent getting on for half a million pounds in buying its way through Parliament, more than the Blisworth-Peterborough branch did to build.

The Blisworth-Peterborough line provided a through route from London of 110 miles in length. It was single from Northampton to Peterborough, and since it followed the valley of the Nene almost no earthworks were needed—in 47 miles there are 21 level crossings, and the whole line was completed in just over a year at an average of a mile every ten days. There must have been a fair traffic over it, because in spite of the imminence of the Great Northern's bid for Peterborough the line was doubled in 1846.[21] It was signalled by electric telegraph right from the beginning, a very up-to-date method indeed for those days, and was the subject of a piece of romantic prose by George Borrow, who wrote of a train on it: 'With dragon speed and dragon noise, fire, smoke and fury the train dashed along its road'—how impressionable people were in those days. The spate of railway guides was not yet over, and those describing this placid line were of course lyrical about the churches *en route*—Whiston, Titchmarsh, Oundle, Fotheringhay (Earls Barton, being Saxon, was not yet the wonder in 1845 that we now consider it).

In the Record Office here is a letter of some interest relating to payment to the churchwardens and overseers of the poor. The London & Birmingham were paying yearly for the poor rates £160 a mile, and in 1850, in spite of the certain depreciation in value of the line when the G.N.R. should be completed, we find a Mr. Wilkins of Ringstead at the head of a group of parishes sticking out for £200 a mile. The letter I mentioned is signed by Edward Watkin, in 1850 a young man of 23, later to become one of the most formidable figures in railway history and personally responsible for the Great Central's great move for London. This letter corrects some false impressions about Watkin's early career: for example George Dow in his monumental history of the Great Central states that Watkin was touring the U.S.A. in 1851 before joining Captain Huish on the London & North Western, whereas we see he must have joined Huish early in 1850.

[21] See an article '*Roundabout Railway Routes*' by G. A. Sekon in the *Railway Magazine*, Dec. 1923, pp. 358 ff.

The letter itself, with its heavy invective, is rather like a steam-hammer to crack a nut, and concludes: 'Knowing (Mr. Wilkins') powers of calculation, whenever his personal interests are affected, I confess I can only reconcile the course he recommends with perfect rationality by supposing that having committed himself to results which he now finds to be futile, he has not the moral courage to draw back so long as he is supported by the parishes he has, so far, induced to combine'.

Peterborough is in some respects unique; a small city mediaeval and diaconal in its government, dating back to the powerful religious foundation at Medeshamsted, on to which was grafted a new railway town with a population as radical and with houses as humdrum as those of Swindon; and of course the railway itself has brought not only obvious industries such as the brickworks but lesser-known ones such as the coke ovens which at one time supplied two-fifths of the requirements of the London and North Western (coke was of course the staple fuel of locomotives till the late fifties, because of the ban on smoke and because in small grates it burned better). To the social and economic historian Peterborough is a fascinating study.

It is interesting to note the order in which the railways reached the city. First came the branch from Blisworth in 1845, then the Midland branch from Syston, opened from the Peterborough end as far as Stamford in 1846, then the Ely and Peterborough branch of the Eastern Counties, which met the Midland at Peterborough East and offered Stamfordians a through route to London via Ely and Cambridge. The Great Northern, by far the most important of all these lines, was the last to reach Peterborough except for a branch of the L.N.W.R. from Rugby through Market Harborough which is evidence of the East-West dream of which more later.

The Midland extension from Leicester to Bedford, opened in 1858, is in great contrast to the London and Birmingham. It enters the county on a steep gradient from Market Harborough and reaches its highest point between London and Leeds at Desborough, whence it winds its way down to Kettering and Wellingborough. It is really full of curves here, and some of the high speeds run by expresses have always been exciting to say the least. At Glendon North Junction begins what is, I think, still the longest stretch of four-track main line in Britain, the 75 miles to St. Pancras, and since the later extension from Bedford to St. Pancras this is without much doubt the busiest main line to the north. The night-shift, which I have often watched, at Kettering is much busier than the day.

The line was built cheaply, at a rate of £15,000 a mile,[22] and when goods lines were added in 1879 they were on easier gradients, so that the passenger between Glendon and Bedford sees the goods lines now above, now below him. For Kettering the line must have come almost in the nick of time. Nowadays one hears much of declining trade in Kettering, of shops standing empty in the High Street in consequence of the development of Corby's town centre, of the disappearance of its heavy industry (the Kettering Furnace chimneys were demolished on the same day that the town celebrated its quarter-century as a borough). These setbacks pale into insignificance beside the town's plight a century and a half ago, as depicted in Mr. Seyton's edition of *Kettering Vestry Minutes*, Vol. VI. of the publications of this Society. In 1821 half the population of Kettering (then 5,000) were in receipt of parish relief, and there was so little work that wages were at times even less than the dole itself, while dirt, disease and malnutrition took an increasing toll. I have seldom read so dismal a tribute to the good old days.

So eager were the landowners to have the railway that a Mr. Whitbread, through whose estates the line would run for seven or eight miles, promised to sell all the land the Company might require for £70 an acre, which was its simple agricultural value—in itself an astonishing change of attitude.[23] The existence of iron ore along the line was known, but it is curious that the full exploitation of the rich fields round Desborough, Kettering, Burton Latimer and Wellingborough was incidental; it does not seem to bulk largely in any early statement about traffic, and as late as 1836 people had been boring near Northampton in the vain hope of coal and neglecting the rich veins of ore near the surface.[24]

[22] F. S. Williams, *The Midland Railway*, (London, 1877), p. 376.

[23] F. S. Williams, op. cit., p. 139.

[24] ib., p. 378.

Both passengers and merchants from the north would breathe more freely when the line was opened, since three hours' delay at Rugby on the way to Euston had been a common experience, and queues of coal trains up to five miles long had been known at Rugby. Passengers to London went on from Bedford to the Great Northern line at Hitchin, and soon found that they were out of the frying pan into the fire; but at any rate one did not now travel from Kettering to Leicester by Wellingborough, Northampton and Rugby or Wellingborough, Peterborough and Stamford. A monograph awaits its author on the growth of the small boot-manufacturing towns of central Northamptonshire, Desborough, Rothwell, Burton Latimer, Finedon, Irthlingborough, Raunds—which all seemed to reach a population of 4,000 or thereabouts and then stop growing. Aristotle laid down the optimum size for a democratic city-state as 5,000; perhaps there is something in this.

When we come to the Great Central it is to marvel afresh at the power of the individual in the 19th century. As its most distinguished historian remarks, the London extension of the M.S. & L. was due almost entirely to the mule-like obstinacy of Sir Edward Watkin, now virtual dictator of half a dozen railway companies and the Railway King of the later Victorian era. He was dreaming of a line to London thirty years before,[25] and in 1871 a bill was actually before Parliament for a line from near Doncaster to Rushton, possibly to join at Rushton with the Metropolitan, which was not averse from doing a deal with the M.S. & L. over coal traffic to London, but which at this time was no further north than Baker Street. At any rate Price, the chairman of the Great Northern, feared that the Metropolitan might wish to come north, and in the event this wild scheme of the M.S. & L. was thrown out and no more heard of.[26] To think what engine-spotting might have come my way as a boy at Desborough!

The Great Central as built joined the Metropolitan just north of Aylesbury, and its passage through Northamptonshire is of no special significance. It is of course splendidly engineered with all the superiority of technique that sixty years had brought—there are particulars of every contract, numbers of men, engines, bricks, everything. The ruling gradient is 1 in 176, 30 feet to the mile, the long cuttings and long embankments exactly balance, every station from Finmere to Nottingham is an island, all the bridges are of blue brick and so on; but as far as our county is considered the line has been described as 'Icily regular, faultily faultless, splendidly null'.

There was one spot where interesting developments took place. From Woodford Halse a line goes down to the Great Western at Banbury and has been a great boon, rendering possible through trains from the north-east to Bournemouth and the Great Western line—there was even at one time a through coach from Newcastle to Barry. This line was not put in for any such far-seeing purpose, but owes its existence to the petty enmity of two railway clerks. One, William Pollitt, eventually became General Manager of the Great Central, and the other, John Bell, General Manager of the Metropolitan, where they continued their feud. The Great Central wished to build a line under the Great Central Hotel to join the Inner Circle, by which goods traffic could pass to the south and west. Bell was so hostile to this move that in the end the Woodford-Banbury line was built so that traffic could be handed over to the southern companies at Reading.[27] So true is it that on general or economic principles alone it is hopeless to try to understand the past.

Finally, what of the 'East-West dream' I mentioned earlier? This has taken various forms, some of which affected Weedon (was it the barracks again?). For example the Weedon and Leamington line originally formed part of a grandiose scheme for the 'rapid and increasing traffic arising from continuous lines between Lynn and Northampton, (which) demand(s) more direct and expeditious Inland communication than now exists, and this object can only be advantageously accomplished by the line of railway here proposed'. 'The In and Out Northampton traffic is performed upon lines of Railway, that impose distance and expense almost ruinous to industry'. 'One extravagant divergence, at Blisworth, is inadequately relieved by means of omnibuses, vans and various vehicles; at other points no remedy is provided'. This route would also provide railway communication with Leamington 'whose migratory population will necessarily

[25] George Dow, *Great Central*, vol. I, p. 197. (London, Loco. Publishing Co., 1959).
[26] Dow, op. cit., vol. II (1962), p. 67.
[27] Dow, op. cit., vol. II, pp. 288 ff.

prove beneficial to railway interests'. But when the Weedon-Leamington line was built it carried little traffic—passengers from Leamington to London were already catered for. There was nothing from King's Lynn.

The East-West dream also called into being the Stratford-on-Avon and Midland Junction Railway (the chances are that if you see a derelict embankment or cutting in south-west Northamptonshire it belongs to this railway).[28] This imposing title denoted a series of bits and pieces built by different companies, each with a bigger name than the last. The Northampton and Banbury Junction, opened in 1872, reached neither Banbury nor Northampton, but ran from Blisworth to a point near Helmdon, and was meant to convey Blisworth iron ore to the furnaces in South Wales. Then came the East and West Junction Railway, opened by stages until in 1873 it ran from the Northampton and Banbury at Green's Norton on through Moreton Pinkney, Woodford and Byfield to Stratford-on-Avon, whence yet a third company took the line a few miles more to Broom Junction near Evesham on the Midland. Finally in 1879 the Midland Railway, whose Bedford-Northampton branch was really part of the same East-West dream, interested itself in the Stratford-on-Avon, Towcester and Midland Junction Railway which ran from Ravenstone Wood Junction near Olney through Salcey Forest to Towcester, and can never have handled any passenger traffic whatever—who would join the train at Salcey Forest? So from Towcester radiated the four single lines of three railway companies—north to Blisworth, east to Olney, south-west to Banbury and west to Stratford-on-Avon. The little companies amalgamated into the Stratford-on-Avon and Midland Junction in 1908.

But the traffic never came. The Welsh furnaces began to import iron ore from Spain and of late years the main use of the 50-odd miles from Broom Junction to Ravenstone Wood was for banana trains from Avonmouth Docks to St. Pancras. Valiant efforts were made to attract traffic over this line to Stratford. A slip-coach for Woodford was provided off the 6.20 p.m. express from Marylebone to Bradford, whence connection was made to Stratford, and when in 1931 the Welcombe Hotel was opened at Stratford, Birmingham expresses to and from Euston called at Blisworth, whence a special train of one coach took an hour to do the 38 miles to or from Stratford. This service was withdrawn after a year. I travelled over the line a week before its closure to passengers in April 1952, in a raging blizzard, and I shall never forget the white empty expanses between Towcester and Moreton Pinkney.

The pull of London is so strong that none of the cross-country lines—Peterborough to Syston, to Rugby, to Northampton—has ever seemed able to rise above the status of feeder. It is still more convenient to travel from Kettering to Galashiels than to Birmingham, and the 90 miles to Worcester seldom take less than three to four hours by train, longer than the journey to Manchester or Leeds; they usually involve two changes as well, although Worcester and Kettering are on main lines of the same railway company.

I will end by making a confession: that all the things I have mentioned this afternoon are to me but a background for the long pageant, in memory and imagination, of the trains that used them; the little four-wheeled coppernobs of 1840 panting their way along the London and Birmingham, often three or four to a train and in a high wind on one occasion seven; the sparks flying during the races to Scotland in 1888 and 1895; the Silver Jubilee streaking over the Fens at 100 miles an hour; the shining crimson lake of Midland express engines; the engine *Mallard* running down past Tallington and into our county at 126 m.p.h. on a Sunday in 1938, the fastest speed ever attained by a steam locomotive. These are the sights and sounds that bring to life the drier details which have been my theme in this lecture.

NORMAN MARLOW.

This article is based on the lecture delivered to the Northamptonshire Record Society on October 19th 1963.

[28] See an article by D. S. Barrie in the *Railway Magazine* for April 1933, pp. 235-42.

The Northamptonshire Crop Returns for 1801

In 1801 the Home Secretary, Lord Pelham, called for crop acreage returns for every parish in England and Wales. The returns for Northamptonshire are found, with Rutland, in the Peterborough Diocese papers in the Public Record Office (H.O.67/19). They are by no means complete, the 210 returns covering about 75% of the county.

The returns are the first attempt to determine crop acreages by parishes but the figures themselves are not perhaps very valuable. The acre was by no means a regularly standardised measure, and some of the clergy, who collected the figures, doubted the farmers' estimates.

At Boughton the Rector, John Dixon wrote: "No means of ascertaining accuracy, if not quite correct I should judge it under the mark rather than over". At Middleton Cheney, the clergyman noted: "Very improper employment for clergymen as where they draw their maintenance from tithes are unlikely to obtain a true and exact return. Besides clergy need not be degraded by such employment at a time when every ill-disposed person can open a convecticle for sedition at the very easy price of 6d.". At Everdon and Colly Weston, the farmers refused to communicate with the clergymen, and elsewhere as at Staverton it was felt that the figures underestimated the true acreage.

Whilst it is misleading to compare actual figures between parishes or assess the percentage of each parish under the plough, it is reasonable to expect that the proportions of crops in each parish are accurate. From this we can map out the major crops parish by parish. Wheat and barley were the most important major crops. Wheat was particularly important in the south-west and in the east around Oundle. Barley was the main crop in the extreme south-west around Aynho, in an irregular belt around Northampton, and in the Welland Valley where it extended into East Rutland. Oats was most common in pastoral districts, especially in the north-west pastures, extending into south-west Leicestershire. Rye however, was of little significance. The only parishes which grew more than 10 acres lie on the upper lias clays and inferior oolite close to Northampton with Naseby and Ecton most important. The Bramptons grew only 68 acres and yet in medieval times each had a field called Rye Field. At Gayton, marshings, a mixture of rye and wheat was grown, and the same mixture, called mistern, was important at Stow and Heyford, where it brought a price little inferior to wheat. Potatoes were still a garden crop and many parishes did not report any. Duston's 64 acres was the highest.

Turnips appear to be replacing the old staples of open-field England, peas and beans. They were grown in the more progressive farming districts, around Northampton and in the Welland Valley, whereas the open-field and outlying villages still kept to peas and beans, especially in the east and south-west. Some returns include other crops in small acreages like lentils, tares, vetches and colesweed.

Further ideas about crop significance is given in the details of individual farms for Maxey and Woodford. At Maxey, all the farmers grew wheat, barley and beans but few grew anything else. At Woodford no single crop was grown by every farmer though barley was the main crop of most of them.

As in Leicestershire the clergy seemed pleased with the harvest. Good reports were made from all over the county, although the wheat had bunts in it at Maidwell and Weldon. The crops were good at Alderton but for one open-field farmer who neglected his lands. Only at Weston with Sutton is the harvest described as indifferent. We have crop yields for a number of parishes, and they seem to be about the same as the ones quoted for Leicestershire by Hoskins. At Thringdon (Finedon) they harvested 32 bushels of wheat from each acre, and 48 bushels of barley at Crick

and Wootton, but only 24 of barley at Hargrave. Oats gave 48 at Spratton, potatoes 100 at Glaston (Rutland), peas and beans 32 at Crick, turnips 97 at Finedon and rye 38 at Spratton.

There seems to be relation between the geology and the distribution of main crops. The parishes of the lower lias-clays had oats as their main crop,

middle lias—oats and wheat in the north with wheat in the south-west,
upper lias—wheat in the south-west, barley in the east and oats in the north-west,
lower oolite—barley,
upper oolite—wheat with peas and beans,
cornbrash and Oxford clay—wheat.

Amongst the notes several clergymen refer to the changes since enclosure. At Duston, two-thirds arable, 22 acres of heath which had been unproductive before enclosure were now under potatoes, and at Middleton Cheney production had increased since enclosure. At Alderton there had been an increase in grain in the old enclosures but a fall in the open fields. However at Welford much of the parish had been put down to grass since the 1778 enclosure, and Twywell reported less corn since enclosure. At Brixworth and Scaldwell the rector felt that there was too much land under grass.

There were very few parishes, except those of Northampton town, with such little arable land as many East Leicestershire parishes. Where there was little arable it occurred in old enclosed parishes like Fawsley, Stanford and Hothorpe which were parks or sheep-walks. On the other hand large arable acreages generally meant large populations, both as a source of labour and as a market. Preston's 1704 acres being an exception for there were only 55 people in the Census of the same year.

There were a number of rather scathing comments on malpractises of landowners. Thomas Knight, the Rector of Kettering complained that: "Prices kept up by a set of wretches, who destitute of humanity combine together". At Alderton the clergyman noted: "Bad practises of farmers who hold land in several parishes and fail to work lands properly. The middlemen are bad, especially the great farmers, use the County Banks to buy out the small farmers and then hold up corn till high prices, not cheapness just plenty".

William Bartholomew, the Rector of Edgcott, after describing the small estate which supplied London with butter and skimmed milk to porkers says: "Price regulated by the Corn Dealers who make fortunes by speculation. Would not obligation to take out license to deal in corn above a limited quantity remedy this evil?"

However, other clergy blame the Poor Rates. At Corby they were 30s. in the pound, and some of the land could not be sown; at Chacombe the apprentices at a silk mill were badly paid and so burdened the parish, and at Twywell "small farms were abolished and poor rates much increased".

There is much that we would like to know about farming in the Napoleonic Wars that cannot be learnt from the returns. Many parish historians will be dissappointed to find no return for their parish in my list deposited at Delapré, but nevertheless the Returns provide a valuable account, statistically and in notes, and will be more useful when all the country's returns are analysed and the results made available.

DAVID M. CLARK.

Cob Cottages in Northamptonshire

"Cob" is, strictly speaking, a West Country word for a particular method of building in mud. Mud was, of course, very widely used as a vernacular building material and it is necessary to define exactly the technique of building with which this article is concerned. I am here concerned with farmhouses, cottages, barns and garden walls, constructed of solid mud, usually up to 2 feet thick, and always built up on a stone base or plinth, normally about 18 inches high (See, for example, the boundary wall at Nether Heyford illustrated on Plate I). This type of construction is to be distinguished from rubble stone walling on the one hand (where mud plays a subsidiary part in binding the stones together) and mud and stud or wattle and daub construction on the other hand (where mud is the main constituent, but where wood or wattle plays the key part in giving the wall the necessary stability).[1]

C. F. Innocent has suggested—and in this he is followed by I. C. Peate—that cob, or solid mud without wood support, is a comparatively advanced technique which evolved from the more primitive practice of wattle and daub construction.[2] He suggests that the walls of the earliest peasant houses were of wattle work only; later they were strengthened by daubing with mud, and later still, when it was found that the mud remained intact after the wattlework had decayed, mud alone was used. The mud used in the Midlands was the local soil, with certain other ingredients added to improve its adhesive quality. In most of the cob villages in Northamptonshire chopped straw was added, and I have noticed in some places a certain amount of grass and cow-dung in the mix. Frequently, too, small pebbles have either been added or were already present in the natural soil. One also occasionally finds pieces of pottery or broken clay-pipe stems, which no doubt found their way in accidentally. In a few places one finds in the mud small round objects which look like empty hazel-nut shells. I sent some to the Natural History Department of the British Museum and was informed that they were the seeds of the Corn Cockle (*Agrostemma githago*) which was a weed of cornfields, very common until about the end of the last century, modern screening of the corn seed and the introduction of discing having virtually eliminated it in the present century. It seems very probable that these seed heads would have been cut with the corn and survived the winnowing process, to be discarded with the straw and so introduced into the mud walls.

It is also necessary to distinguish between "cob" walling, which is piled up layer by layer in a damp state and building with "pisé", or rammed earth, which is kept dry and can only be built up with the help of shutter-boards, a technique widely used in Asia, Africa and America as well as in Europe since Roman times. I have found no evidence for the use of shutter-boards in Northamptonshire, or indeed in the East Midlands. Although the outer walls are often surprisingly straight, the inside walls are almost always irregular, and I have noticed a number of mud walls (for example at Welford and Teeton), where the courses of mud are clearly visible, resulting from the practice when building in cob of allowing one layer to dry out before adding the next. When the walls had reached the required height, the outer surfaces were trimmed and generally given a protective covering of plaster or limewash. This technique persisted until quite recent times. Mr. E. A. Tippler of Ravensthorpe was recently reported as saying: "It is some years ago since I last did any mud building but it was quite a straightforward job. You dug your soil, usually mixed with light rubble and stones, from out a bank. Then you wet it and mix in straw chopped in lengths of about six inches. It was a slow way of building because you could only add about

[1] The best technical description of the various traditional building materials is contained in Norman Davey, *A History of Building Materials* (Phoenix, 1962).

[2] C. F. Innocent, *The Development of English Building Construction* (Cambridge, 1916), p. 134, and Iorworth C. Peate, *The Welsh House* (Liverpool, 1944), p. 168.

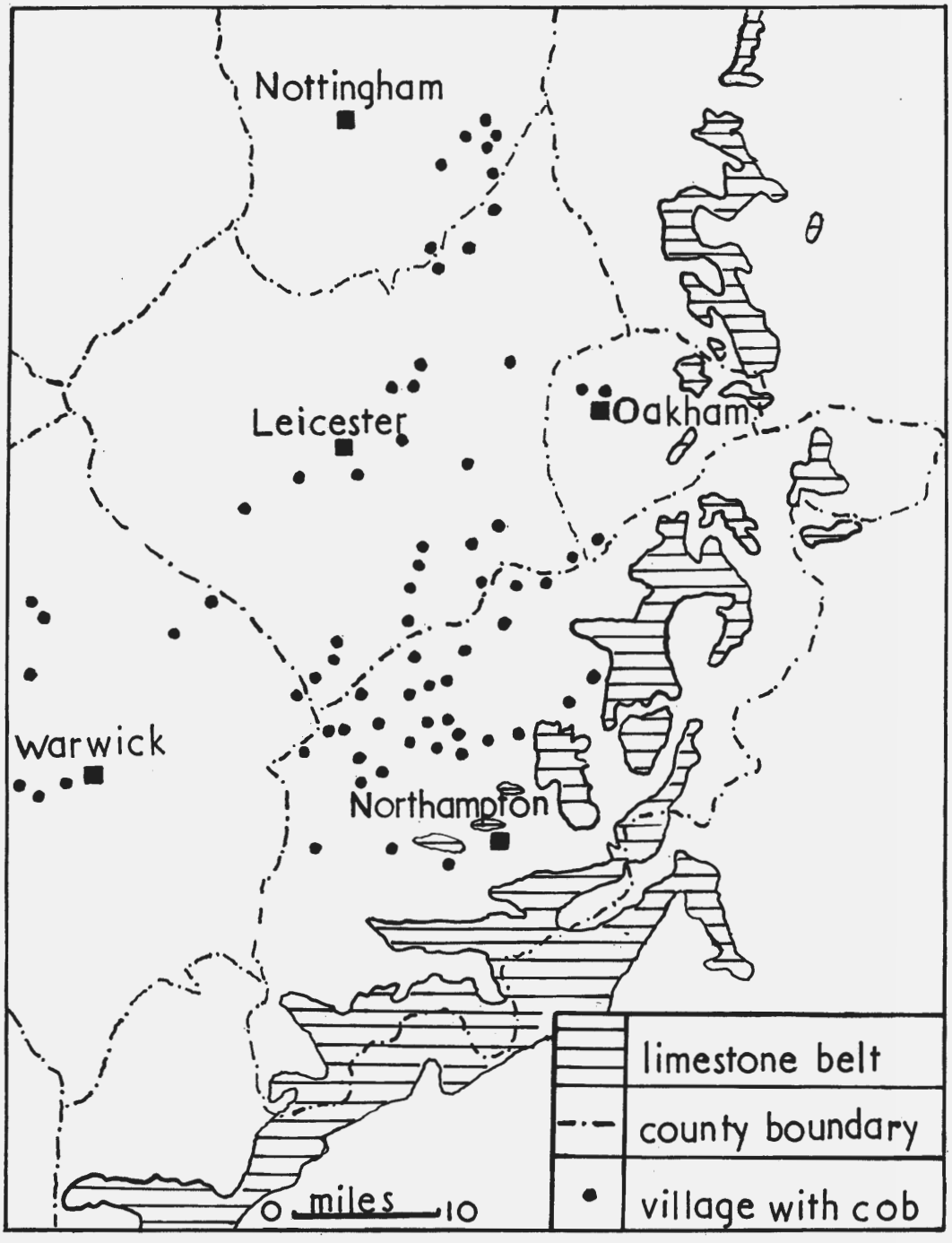


FIG. 1. SKETCH MAP SHOWING DISTRIBUTION OF COB VILLAGES (listed in Appendix)

18 inches every day. Then you had to move on to another section while the first lot dried out. We built our walls about two feet thick. Naturally, to build a cottage it would take a long time—about six months I should think. But you hardly had any cost of materials, the only cost was for labour".[3]

Two other essential characteristics of building in cob must also be mentioned. C. Williams-Ellis quotes an old Devonshire saying concerning cob walls: "Give them a good hat and pair of boots and they'll last for ever",[4] that is, a solid base and some kind of coping, which in Northamptonshire meant a rubble stone plinth and a thatched roof. So long as the mud walling remains dry, it has extraordinarily good lasting properties, and I have heard people who have had to demolish mud walls remark on their rock-like solidity. Most of the ruined mud walls one sees today have become delapidated only through neglect, for once the rain gets in, they soon begin to develop large cracks and rapidly disintegrate. Examples of cob cottages which have survived in virtually their original state down to the present time are shown on Plates III and IV.

The distribution of cob building in this country is very wide.[5] The cob cottages of the West Country are the best known, but the same technique was used in many parts of Wales, and also in the East Riding of Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, East Anglia and several other counties. In Buckinghamshire and Wiltshire the same technique was used with puddled chalk, and this method of building is closely related to the "clod-houses" of Scotland and Ireland and to the more sophisticated "clay-lump" buildings of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

When one looks at the present distribution of cob buildings in Northamptonshire, and in the adjoining counties (see sketch map, Fig. 1), one is faced with a number of interesting questions. It is of course possible that cob buildings were at one time common everywhere in Northamptonshire, and indeed throughout the East Midlands, and that they were swept away first in the Stone Belt when rebuilding in stone became fashionable with the growing prosperity of the Tudor and Stuart periods, and later in other parts with the coming of cheap bricks in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to survive only in the remoter villages and as occasional boundary walls in more built-up areas. It is, I think, clear from the distribution map that cob walling survives mainly along the edge of the belt of good building stone. In the limestone area there are, of course, and for many centuries have been, famous quarries producing excellent stone for superior types of building. But there were also numerous small local quarries which provided the rough stones for the rubble cottages which are still so notable a feature of the limestone belt in Northamptonshire. Between the limestone belt and the area of the lower lias is the brown sandstone formation which again has produced many good buildings. But ironstone has not usually the durable qualities of limestone: it flakes and crumbles more easily and in many places along the western side of Northamptonshire it is little better than shale. It would, therefore, seem reasonable to suppose that the concentration of cob villages in this area is the direct result of the lack of good building stone. At the same time, it can perhaps be argued that cob-building is closely related to the building technique of the adjoining stone area. Cob walls, as mentioned above, need a good stone plinth, and in their general dimensions and characteristics the Northamptonshire mud walls closely resemble rubble-walling. Both types are about two feet thick and easily disintegrate when damp and in neither, of course, is use made of timber for support. There are also several surviving examples of cottages originally built partly of rubble and partly of cob (see for example Plate V), and it is interesting to notice a connection between stone and cob in two medieval churches in this area. P. B. Chatwin wrote in 1927: "When the church at Cold Ashby, near Welford, was restored three years ago, a curious method of constructing the walls of the building was discovered during the progress of the work. The walls in question are of the late 15th century, and were found to be bulging in places in an unaccountable manner. On investigation it was found that the walls were constructed of a rubble facing of stone, filled up in the middle with mud composition used so largely in this part of Northamptonshire".[6] H. T. Traylen reported at

[3] Quoted in the *Mercury and Herald*, Northampton, June 22, 1962, p. 1.

[4] Clough Williams-Ellis, *Cottage Building in Cob, Pisé, Chalk and Clay* (Country Life Publicn., 2nd edn., 1920), p. 34.

[5] The best general treatment of the subject is in the chapter on "The Unbaked Earths" in Alec Clifton-Taylor's fascinating book *The Pattern of English Building* (Batsford, 1963).

[6] *Northamptonshire Notes and Queries*, No. 3, New Series, Vol. 6, 313. (I owe this reference to Mr. P. King).

about the same time that "in repairing the north west buttress and adjacent wall of the north aisle of Ravensthorpe Church it was found that a similar method of construction (to that of Cold Ashby) had been adopted".[7]

The origin of cob building in Northamptonshire must, however, remain a matter of speculation, since we do not know what type of housing existed in these areas before the present cob dwellings, which, as we shall see, date mainly from the 17th and 18th centuries. We can probably assume that either cob building was well established in the Middle Ages, or that medieval peasant housing was of the technically more primitive wattle and daub type which persisted in many parts of England and survives in Northamptonshire in a number of timber-framed houses and in the internal walls of many stone and cob houses. In the former case, the continued lack of local supplies of stone might have obliged the inhabitants to continue to build in cob, while, in the latter case, wattle and daub houses might have been replaced by cob because of lack of suitable timber for framing or because cob buildings were more durable and called for a technique already becoming familiar in the adjoining stone country. It is at least safe to conclude that, for whatever reason, a different tradition of vernacular building was evolved along the borders of Northamptonshire and Leicestershire, allied to but distinct from both the rubble tradition of the Stone Belt and the timber-frame tradition of the West Midlands.

The end of the period of cob building is somewhat easier to explain. There seems no doubt that it was the advent of mass-produced bricks and the development of railways in the 19th century, enabling them to be distributed cheaply, which led to the decline of this form of construction, although as mentioned above, it continued to be practised until quite recently, perhaps mainly for boundary walls and for utilitarian buildings like the coal-store at Guilsborough shown on Plate II. The mass-production of bricks has also led to another feature, which often makes it difficult today to locate mud cottages, and that is the subsequent facing of mud buildings with brick so that they are effectively camouflaged from the outside (see Plate VI and Fig. 4(a)). I am sure that for this reason there are many mud buildings which I have missed in spite of a quite extensive search over a number of years, and, in this connection, I shall always be interested to hear from readers who know of mud buildings, whether masked by brick or not, in villages not noted on the map and in the appendix to this article. One of the remaining puzzles is why cob buildings do not appear to have survived in the south-west of the County, where the broad geological and physical features are the same as further north. C. F. Innocent mentions an example of mud building at Banbury in the last century,[8] but Dr. R. B. Wood-Jones tells me that he has not come across any examples in the region which is the subject of his recent book.[9]

It is known from the manorial records of Southampton and Bridport, Dorset, that cob building was used there in the 14th and 15th centuries,[10] and it is also known that some of the surviving West Country cob buildings are of 16th century date (for example, at Hayes Barton, where Raleigh was born in 1552).[11] But there appears to be no documentary evidence relating to cob building in Northamptonshire before the 18th century. We are, however, fortunate in having some very interesting manuscript and printed material of the 18th and 19th centuries which throws considerable light on cob building in the County at that time.

At Miss Wake's suggestion, and through the courtesy of the Vicar of Spratton, I have been able to examine the Account Books of the Overseers of the Poor at Spratton which run from 1731 to 1749, 1771 to 1802 and 1818 to 1827. In December 1731 there is an entry "for hay for the mortar, 4d.", where "mortar" may well be a reference to cob; again in April 1774 is the entry "Paid John Clark for fetching morter and hay for the poarhoses, 2s.0d.". In July 1800 we find "Pd. Arthur Ceyer for 3 great Days work fetching stones and Morter & Mud stuff, £1.1s.0d." and in December 1821 "Carriage of a load of morter for the parish houses, 1s.0d.".

Mr. King has also drawn my attention to an Agreement with the Overseers of the Poor of Welford for the building of 8 cottages, dated April 1792. The Agreement provides "That the

[7] *Ibid.* No. 4, New Series, Vol. 6, 317.
[8] C. F. Innocent, *op. cit.*, p. 135.
[9] R. B. Wood-Jones, *Traditional Domestic Architecture in the Banbury Region* (Manchester U.P. 1963).
[10] L. F. Salzman, *Building in England down to* 1540 (Oxford, 1952), p. 88.
[11] Cited by C. Williams-Ellis, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

foundation Stones shall be laid in dirt mortar and shall be 18(inches) Deep and Twenty two inches wide, that the back wall and both ends shall be built of mud and shall be two feet thick at the bottom and twenty inches thick at the top, that the front walls shall be nine inches thick to the underside of the Chamber (i.e. bedroom) floors and shall be four inches and a half thick above the Chamber floors". The Agreement excludes from the work to be done by the contractor "the finding of the foundation Stones and getting and laying the Dirt Gravel and Compas for the making of the Mudwalls", which probably implies that this was a comparatively unskilled operation involving the use of purely local materials. The Agreement also provides for partition walls of $4\frac{1}{2}''$ brick, and it is clear from the dimensions given for the front wall that it also was to be of brick. It is also provided "That the roof on the southside shall be covered with good wheat straw and on the Northside with part stubble and part wheat". It is, therefore, apparent that the front of this row of cottages was to be of somewhat superior materials, and it would seem that brick was insisted on for the front elevation of what were, after all, public buildings, on account of its appearance rather than any technical deficiency in the mud walling, which in any case was used for the rear and end walls. There are also surviving examples at Clipston and Scaldwell of stone cottages with original rear walls of mud, while, to judge from the later brick facing of many mud cottages already referred to, it appears that after about 1800 mud came to be regarded as a "plebeian" material to be avoided or disguised wherever possible.

This point of view finds support in the account of the buildings of Naseby published by the Vicar, the Reverend John Mastin in 1792.[12] He tells us that the village consisted of one hundred dwellings and about six hundred inhabitants, and that there was open field farming consisting of about two-thirds pasture and one-third arable. Then follow two very interesting passages about the construction of the local cottages:

> "The village stands nearly in the centre of the lordship . . . . and if we except a few of the modern and best houses, it is built principally with a kind of kealy earth dug near it; excellent in its kind, and the best calculated for building I ever saw; walls built with this earth are exceedingly firm and strong, and, if kept dry, are said to be more durable than if built with soft stone or indifferent bricks. There are walls in some of the houses said to be 200 years old built of this earth; and were they drawn over with lime-mortar, and marked or lined to appear as stonework, which might be done at a moderate expense, their appearance would be respectable (but instead of this, the new coat which they have once a year consists of cowdung spread upon them to dry for firing); but as the present occupiers are only tenants at will, improvements of this kind are hardly to be expected".

The reference to cowdung as a fuel is interesting; no doubt the inhabitants were also aware of the excellent setting properties of this material, which, I noticed, was used to coat the external face of the mud cottages at Braybrooke shown in Fig. 3. The Reverend John Mastin then goes on:

> "I should presume (if I may hazard a conjecture) that this part of the country hath been very woody; for the oldest houses in Naseby are, as to the wood part, mostly oak, and some of them of the most antique architecture, called forked buildings, which forks are all of oak, very rough, strong, uncouth, and put together in a rude manner, and of a magnitude which certainly implies their growing in the neighbourhood; for if we take into consideration the badness of the roads, and the want of proper vehicles for the removal of heavy timber, at the time these houses were built, it must be supposed that the wood grew near the spot".

Here Mastin is clearly referring to the cruck form of construction. It is not absolutely clear, however, whether these crucks were in the cob-walled houses which made up most of the village. It is perfectly possible that this was the case, since I have recorded (Fig. 2) a mud house at Ravensthorpe with substantial raised crucks, and have noted upper crucks in mud cottages at Braybrooke (see Figs. 3 and 4(a)) and elsewhere. On the other hand, these old houses in 18th century Naseby might have been survivals of full cruck wattle and daub dwellings, many examples of which

[12] Revd. John Mastin, *The History and Antiquities of Naseby* (Cambridge, 1792), pp. 6-9.

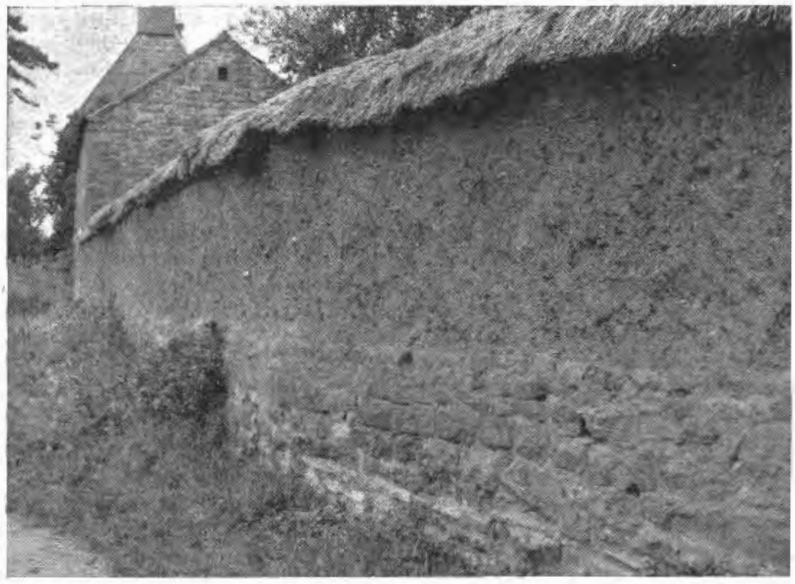


PLATE I. NETHER HEYFORD

Cob boundary wall on stone plinth, with a coping of thatch, which is now a rarity. Most copings have been replaced with tiles or corrugated iron.

PLATE II. GUILSBOROUGH

A small cob building said to have been used to store coal for the poor of the village.

PLATE III. HOLLOWELL
A small cob cottage, recently demolished. The plan of the building is shown in Fig. 4(c).

PLATE IV. SPRATTON
A pair of typical cob cottages in virtually their original state, each with two rooms on the ground floor and two bedrooms above.

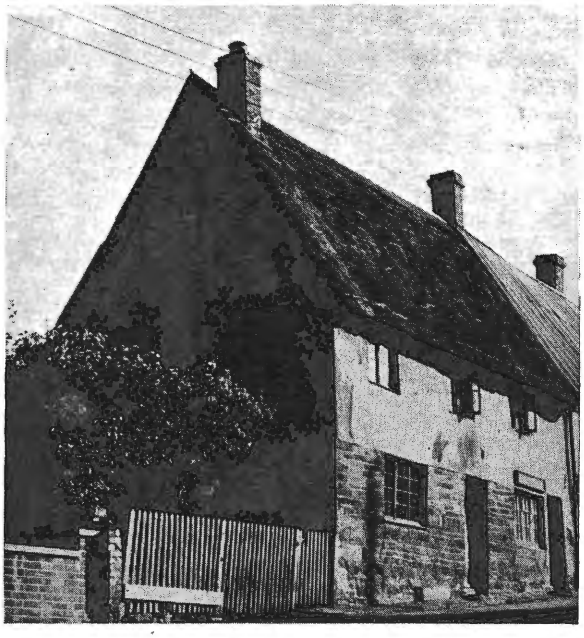


PLATE V. GREAT CREATON
An example of stone walling used for the ground floor walls, with cob walling for the first storey.

PLATE VI. BRAYBROOKE
A pair of cob cottages, the one masked by brickwork and the other by pebble-dash. The original thatch has been covered with sheets of corrugated iron.

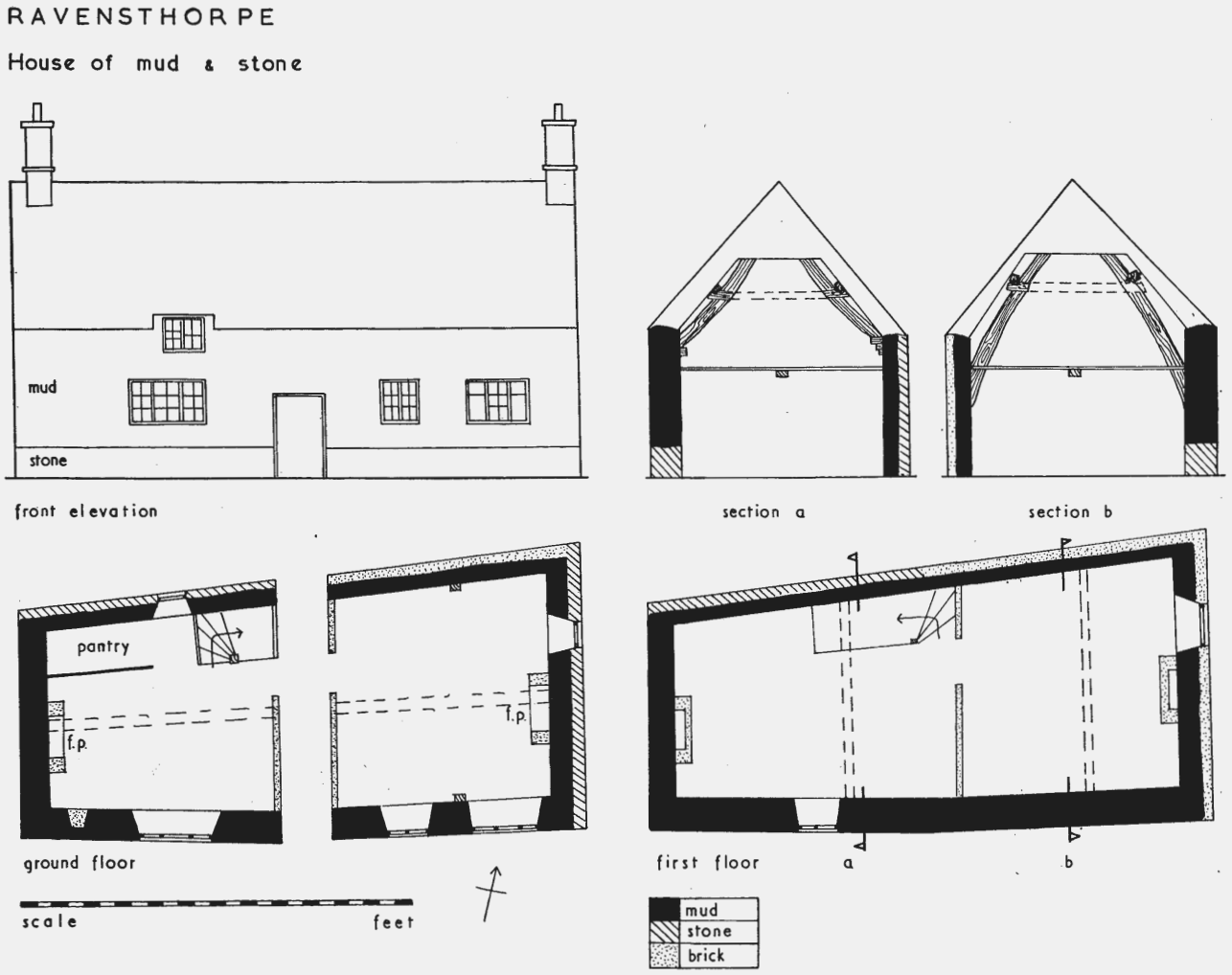


FIG. 2. HOUSE AT RAVENSTHORPE

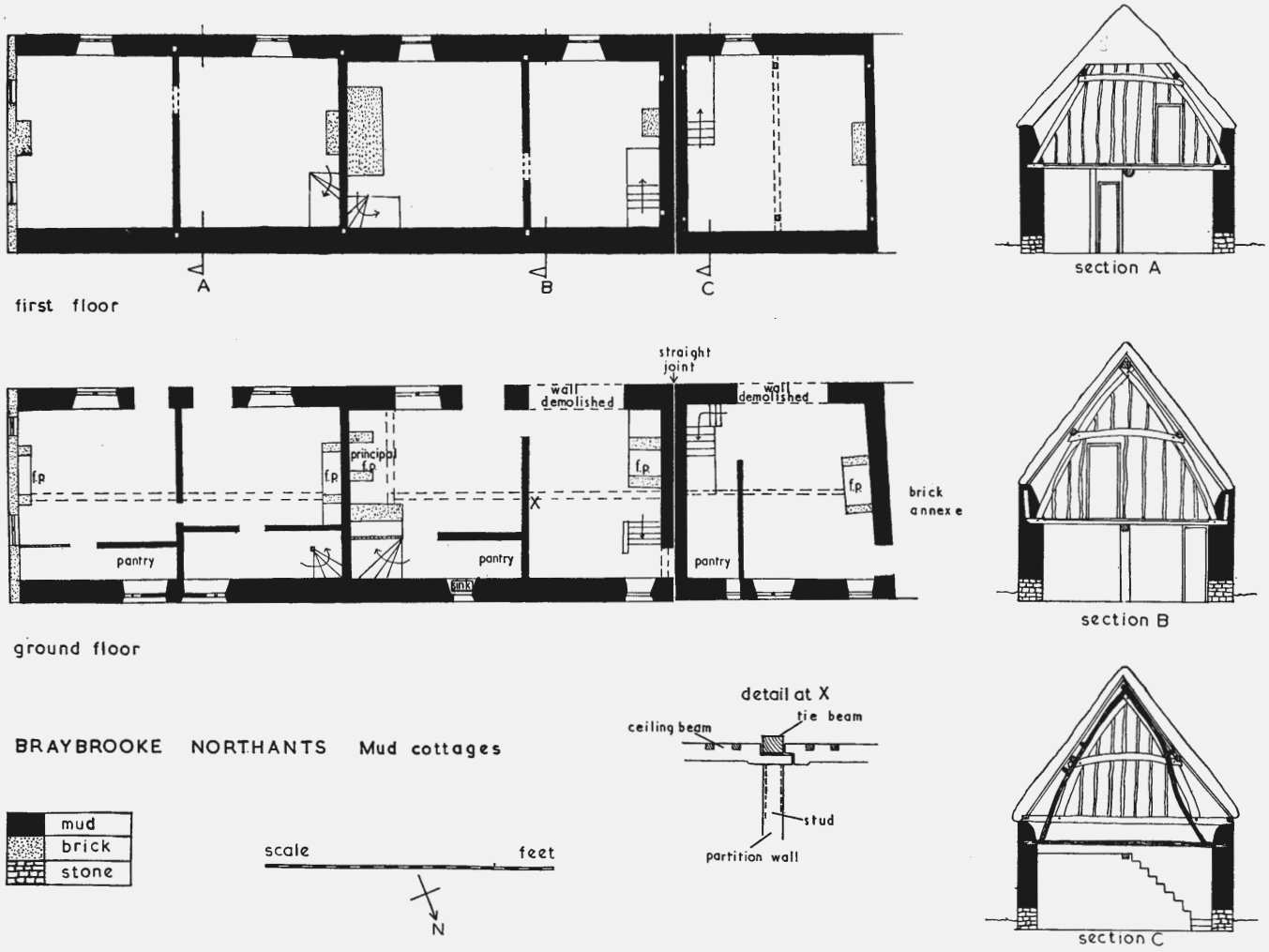


FIG. 3. ROW OF COTTAGES AT BRAYBROOKE

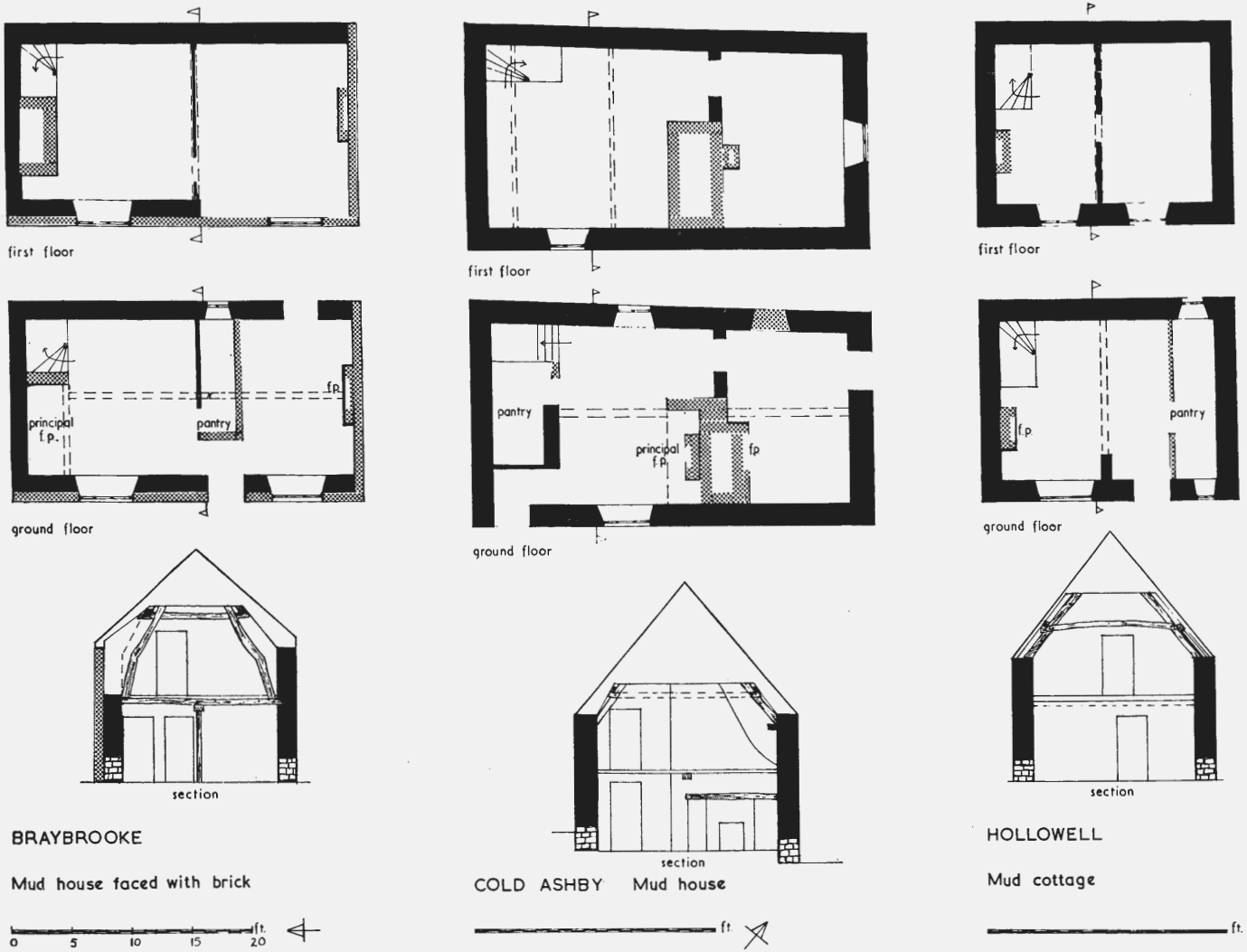


FIG. 4. (a) BRAYBROOKE, (b) COLD ASHBY, (c) HOLLOWELL. Mud buildings all to the same scale

have been discovered in Leicestershire in recent years, though I know of none in Northamptonshire.

Mastin's comments about the lack of incentive for improvement because of the form of tenancy, and his criticism of the appearance of the mud cottages, are further elaborated by W. Pitt who toured Northamptonshire in 1797 and 1806 and published an account in 1813.[13] He writes:

> "It is the practice for the proprietor to furnish materials (except straw for thatch) and the tenant to be at all the expense of other repairs; and therefore considering the uncertainty of the tenure on which he holds them, it is no wonder that he should allow the houses to fall into a ruinous condition".

He then says of the farmhouses, by which he means the dwellings of the more substantial farmers, that they "are built either of stone or brick and covered with slate or straw", but of the labourers' cottages he says:

> "I observed in various parts of the county, particularly in the open parishes, a great number of tenements built with mud and covered with thatch. It is very possible that sufficient shelter and warmth may be afforded by these materials, and that they may afford health and comfort to the humble inhabitants; but they certainly have a miserable appearance and are hardly consistent with the dignity of a rich county".

He goes on to surmise that "The primitive building materials in the Northamptonshire villages were mud-walls and thatch" and comments that "The old cottages seem to have had very little design, respecting either convenience or comfort; shelter from the weather, and room to sit or sleep in, rather in a promiscuous manner, seems to have been the whole extent of the object in view in their construction".

Pitt's phrase "particularly in the open parishes" is interesting and may provide a clue to an economic or social explanation for the existence or at any rate the survival of these cottages. I do not know whether the enclosures in the area of the cob buildings are later than elsewhere but it certainly seems that the usual form of tenancy in this area obliged the poorer inhabitants to use the cheapest possible form of construction for their cottages.

This view is re-inforced by the comments of William Bearn, whose Prize Essay on the farming of Northamptonshire was published in 1852.[14] Bearn also has something to add to Pitt's description in the design of the labourers' cottages. Bearn writes:

> "The dwellings of the agricultural labourers are very diversified in their style, size and accommodation; some of them being built with mud and plaster, very low, having dirt or stone floors, and covered with thatch; others are built with stone or brick, but very small, and thatched; one room on the ground-floor, with a pantry under the stairs, and one room above, are all the accommodation which many of them contain, for the parents and a family of children. In some of the larger villages, where the land is good, and the materials for building nigh at hand, there are some very good comfortable cottages, with two rooms below and two above; but the greater part of the abodes of the farm-labourers throughout the county are in a neglected state . . . . One great barrier to the improvement of them arises from many of the cottages being nominally the property of the occupier. The labourers having been permitted to run up mud cottages on the waste ground, upon paying an annual quit-rent to the lord of the manor, become very tenacious of any interference and . . . . bid defiance to all sanitary measures of improvement. Others again are freeholds, legally belonging to the occupier, but who is frequently saddled with the yearly payment of interest to the mortgagee, equal probably to its annual value, and he therefore cannot keep the property in tenantable repair, still he clings with fondness to . . . . his own 'clayey tenement' ".

The reference to "mud cottages on the waste ground" may be another clue to the apparent persistence of this type of dwelling in the open field villages, while the reference to the freeholder

[13] Wm. Pitt, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Northampton* (London, 1813), pp. 26-30.

[14] William Bearn, *Prize Essay on the Farming of Northamptonshire* (London, 1852), from the *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, Vol. XIII, pt. I, p. 47.

saddled with the repayments of a large mortgage is reminiscent of one of Dr. Hoskins' themes in his book about the peasant economy of Wigston Magna, Leicestershire.[15]

We turn, finally, to a consideration of the buildings themselves. I think it is highly improbable that any of those which survive date from before the late 16th or early 17th century. What I consider to be the earliest I have come across is a cottage at Ravensthorpe shown in Fig. 2. The front wall, which appears to be wholly of mud, is 2′ 2″ thick along most of its length and rests on a stone plinth 2 feet high. One gable wall and part of the rear wall have been faced with stone, with some later brick patching. The main feature suggesting an early date is the raised cruck shown in Section B of the plan. It will be noted that there is no tie-beam, nor were any peg-holes visible to suggest that there originally was one. The cruck is entirely supported by the side walls, and by a short collar (now removed), as in the early stone houses with raised crucks mentioned in my article in the last issue of *Northamptonshire Past and Present*. It will also be noted that the fireplaces are quite modern, and it is highly probable that at least the eastern half of this dwelling was originally a single-storey cottage with a central hearth, in the medieval tradition. The other truss shown in Section A is a later form, but in essence it is a cruck derivative, and is of the same type developed for stone houses, as explained in my previous article.

Next in order of date—probably the second half of the 17th century—come the cottages (recently demolished) at Braybrooke, shown in Fig. 3. Although they appear as a row, they are in fact three separate dwellings, two of two rooms downstairs and one of one room. The central dwelling, shown also in Section B, would appear to be the oldest, since it has slightly thicker walls and roof timbers. However, the eastern pair, shown also in Section A, must be of about the same date, since the walls and roof timbers are of similar dimensions and of essentially the same form of construction. The remaining room, at the western end, is clearly a later addition, since it is separated from the rest by a straight joint, the mud walls are thinner and the roof beams are of much inferior timber, though the form is the same.

As to the date of this row of cottages, at least one of the brick fire-places appears to be original and the brickwork is not inconsistent with a 17th century date, while the stops on the ceiling beams are of a common 17th century type. But the main clue is the form of the roof trusses, which may be called upper crucks. This is a type fairly common in mud houses both in Northamptonshire, where I have noted examples at Ashley, Braybrooke and Clipston, and in Leicestershire, where there are examples at Great Easton and Mowsley. They are also apparently common in timber-framed houses in Leicestershire, where, Mr. V. R. Webster tells me, there is an example dated 1692 at Diseworth. It is important to note that these upper crucks are tenoned into tie-beams and it follows that these cottages were originally designed as two-storeyed dwellings. This form of construction, although clearly derived from the cruck, differs from the cruck derivative roofs of the Stone Belt described in my previous article. In stone houses the lower ends of the blades are supported by the mass of the side walls, without the use of tie-beams. This, however, would not be possible with mud walls since the outward thrust near the top of the walls would almost certainly push the walls outwards. The roof timbers of mud buildings, therefore, usually rest on tie-beams, or have collars near the lower ends, so that the weight of the roof would be taken by the side walls in a downward instead of an outward direction. It is true that not all the roof trusses of mud cottages have tie-beams, although it is of course quite possible that such roofs may be later replacements. In the example from Cold Ashby (Fig. 4(b),) there is a short projecting timber which may be the remains of a tie-beam, and in any case the collar is much nearer than usual to the base of the truss. The cottage at Hollowell (Fig. 4(c)), now demolished, was without a tie-beam but it was an exceptionally small building (also shown in Plate III) where the outward thrust may have been of little consequence.

My examination of mud buildings bears out Bearn's assertion that the ordinary labourers' cottages were frequently only of one or two rooms downstairs with the same upstairs. The cottage at Hollowell with only one ground floor room is a now rare example of a type which was no doubt formerly very common. Many mud cottages with a two-room ground plan still survive, with the main roof truss usually dividing the two rooms upstairs. It is also usual for the fire-place to be

[15] W. G. Hoskins, *Midland Peasant* (Macmillan, 1957), p. 265.

on the end walls, as shown in Figs. 3 and 4 (a) and illustrated from cottages at Spratton on Plate IV. Central fire-places are, however, also fairly common, as in the cottage at Cold Ashby shown in Fig. 4 (b). Fire-places are usually of brick, although an interesting example of a wattle and daub flue in a house built partly of cob recently came to light at Ashley.[16]

While it has been possible only to guess at the origin of cob construction in Northamptonshire, I hope that this article has shown that, at any rate since the 17th century, it has been an important element in vernacular building in the County. Cob as a building material has many virtues, and it is also perfectly possible to keep it in good repair with the judicious use of modern materials.[17] All the occupants of cob cottages with whom I have spoken have been full of praise: "so cool in summer, so cosy in winter". One can, therefore, readily agree with the latest writer on the subject, who suggests that "the steady destruction year by year, of these old clay-built country cottages is indeed something to be deplored".[18]

M. V. J. SEABORNE.

APPENDIX : LIST OF COB VILLAGES

The following list of 71 villages, as marked on the sketch-map, includes those with only very fragmentary mud remains e.g. derelict barns, garden walls etc. The main concentration of existing mud *cottages* is in N.W. Northamptonshire, although even here many are now derelict. In the case of villages where I have not myself seen cob remains, but where they are known to exist or have existed, the name of my informant is added in brackets.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE—Ashley, Badby (local informant), Barby, Braybrooke, Brixworth (T. C. Garland), Broughton, Clipston, Cold Ashby, Crick, Great Creaton, Guilsborough, Hollowell, Kettering (A. MacCormick), Kilsby, Long Buckby (local informant), Naseby, Nether Heyford, Ravensthorpe, Rothersthorpe, Scaldwell, Spratton, Teeton, Thornby, Watford, Welford, Welton, West Haddon, Weston by Welland, Yelvertoft. (29).

LEICESTERSHIRE—Billesdon, Earl Shilton, Great Bowden (local informant), Great Dalby, Great Easton, Hallaton (local informant), Harby, Husbands Bosworth (local informant), Kibworth Beauchamp, Long Clawson, Mowsley, Nether Broughton, Queniborough, Rearsby (V. R. Webster), Saddington (local informant), Scraptoft (G. Barnes), South Kilworth, Swinford, Syston (V. R. Webster), Thurlaston (local informant), Tur Langton, Walcote (A. MacCormick), Wigston Magna (A. Cossons). (23).

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE—Aslockton, Bingham, Cropwell Butler (A. Cossons), Granby (A. Cossons), Scarrington, Upper Broughton, Whatton (A. Cossons). Mr. M. Barley informs me that there may have been a mud cottage at Maplebeck, but I have not been able to confirm this as it has now been demolished. (7).

RUTLAND—Caldecott, Langham, Oakham. (3).

WARWICKSHIRE—I have noted remains of cob buildings at Clifton upon Dunsmore and Wolvey. Mr. S. R. Jones informs me that there are also cob buildings (often fragmentary) at Budbrooke, Claverdon, Great Packington, Little Packington, Norton Curlieu, Temple Balsall and Walsgrave on Sowe. (9).
(These appear to run along the edge of an area of good building stone).

[16] Recorded by Mr. A. MacCormick of Nottingham Castle Museum.

[17] I have had an interesting correspondence on this subject with Mr. T. C. Garland, Corporate Architect and Surveyor of Northampton, who has had considerable experience of restoring cob cottages in the County.

[18] Alec Clifton-Taylor, *The Connoisseur Year Book*, 1962, p. 108.

TIMSONS LIMITED

Known the World over for

ROTARY PRINTING MACHINES

Presses made in

KETTERING

are now working in

FORTY-SIX COUNTRIES

TIMSONS LIMITED, KETTERING AND LONDON

JACKSON-STOPS & STAFF

Estate Agents . Auctioneers . Surveyors . Valuers
Timber & Forestry Consultants

Sales by Auction and Private Treaty of
LANDED ESTATES, FARMS, RESIDENCES AND INDUSTRIAL PROPERTIES
in all parts of the Country

Auction Sales of
ANTIQUE AND MODERN FURNITURE AND VALUATIONS
for Fire Insurance, Probate and other purposes

MANAGEMENTS AND LAND AGENCY
of Estates, Urban and Rural Properties

AGRICULTURAL VALUATIONS
Tenant Right, etc.

STANDING TIMBER
Valuation and Sales including preparation of schemes for Re-afforestation

20 Bridge St., Northampton • 14 Curzon St., Mayfair, W.1
Tel.: 32991/4

YEOVIL YORK CHESTER CHICHESTER CIRENCESTER NEWMARKET

PUBLICATIONS

—o—

THE continued delay in the publication of volumes in our main series, owing to the illness of editors and other unavoidable circumstances, is deeply regretted by the Council of the Society, but they are glad to say that the situation is now improving, and that they are confident that one or two new volumes will be out in 1965.

In the meantime members will be pleased to hear that **Wellingborough Manorial Account Rolls,** which had long been out of print, has now been reprinted with a valuable Note on the Dating of the Rolls by Mr. T. H. Aston, Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, to whom our thanks are due. This volume is now obtainable at the price of £2.10s.0d. (Members' rate: £2) from the Hon. Secretary of the Society.

We are grateful for many appreciative letters received each year about **Northamptonshire Past and Present,** which is sold to the general public at the purely nominal price of 2/6d., and which members receive gratis, thereby, as we venture to hope, getting good value for a great part of their subscriptions.

THE SULGRAVE WASHINGTONS AND THEIR VILLIERS CONNEXION

by GEORGE WASHINGTON

THE three family portraits, photographs of which illustrate this little article,[1] are in the collection of the Earl of Dartmouth, who descends from Elizabeth Washington, the eventual heiress of the Washingtons of Sulgrave Manor, Northants., and wife of the Royalist Col. William Legge (Their son, George, was the first Lord Dartmouth). Elizabeth's parents were Sir William Washington and Anne Villiers; and her grandparents were Laurence Washington (died 1616) of Sulgrave and his wife Margaret Butler,[2] of the Aston-le-Walls family. However, as Sir William's own parents were married in 1588 and he was their third son,[3] he can hardly have been born much before 1593; which means he was several years younger than his wife Anne Villiers, whose mother Audrey, Lady Villiers (the heiress of the Saunderses of Harrington, Northants.) died in 1587. Where and when Sir William and Anne Villiers were married has not hitherto been known; but I have discovered the following entry in the Leicester Marriage Allegation Books, vol. 1, fo. 110:—

> 24 October, 1614. *Licencia (matrimonialis) inter Willus. Washington de Ashby delazouch et Anna Villers de eadem. Ob: Eduardo Blount de Burgo Leic., clerico.*

Also, in the parish register of Ashby de la Zouch is recorded the baptism of their eldest child, Henry Washington (the future Cavalier colonel), on 21 March, 1614/15. The latter is described as aged 3 in the Northamptonshire Visitation of 1618, while his mother is called "sister of the Marquis of Buckingham." Indeed, it was during the summer and autumn of 1614 that George Villiers (Anne's young half-brother) first attracted King James's attention and commenced his meteoric rise at court. Meanwhile, the fact that Henry Washington was baptized only five months after his parents' wedding means that when the marriage took place Anne Villiers herself must have been already with child. Ashby Castle was at this time the seat of Henry Hastings, 5th Earl of Huntingdon, whose wife Lady Elizabeth (*née* Stanley) was the niece of that great patron and kinsman of the Sulgrave Washingtons, Robert, 1st Lord Spencer of Althorp; and doubtless Henry Washington was the earl's godson.

ELIZABETH WASHINGTON, AFTERWARDS MRS. WILLIAM LEGGE

The baptism of Elizabeth Washington, the ancestress of the distinguished Dartmouth

[1] I am much indebted to Lord Dartmouth for his kindness in placing these photographs at my disposal.

[2] Their fifth son, the Rev. Laurence Washington, M.A., B.D., was father of John and Laurence Washington, the Virginia emigrants, from the former of whom President George Washington was descended.

[3] He had two older brothers, Robert who died in youth and Sir John of Thrapston, Northants. (see the present writer's paper, "The Washingtons of Sulgrave Manor", in *Notes and Queries* for June, 1963, pp. 203-10; also *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, 1937, p. 281).

ANNE (VILLIERS), LADY WASHINGTON AND HER DAUGHTER ELIZABETH

family, has not yet come to light; but as she was "aged about 22" at the time of her marriage to Col. William Legge on 2 March, 1641/42, she was presumably born *circa* 1619 (Waters, *Genealogical Gleanings in England*, vol. I, p. 386). The late Rev. H. Isham Longden considered that the Sara Washington buried at Wicken, Northants. on 27 January, 1617/18 was probably also a daughter of Sir William and Anne Villiers; and this was certainly the case with George, son of William and Anne Washington, baptized there 7 April, 1616 (*Notes and Queries*, 8th series, vol. 8, p. 66). The baptisms of two children of theirs are recorded in the parish register of St. Martin's in the Fields, London:—Susanna Washington (later Mrs. Reginald Graham), baptized in November, 1618, and George Washington (second of the name, afterwards a courtier in the service of the Duke of Richmond), baptized 13 January, 1619/20. And I have found two further baptisms of Sir William's children in the parish register of Leckhampstead, Bucks.:—Catherine Washington, baptized 27 July, 1621, and Christopher Washington ("ye Lord Anglesea was one of ye godfathers"), baptized 2 July, 1624. The pretty "Mrs. Washington", who attracted the admiration of King James at the marriage of Lady Lucy Percy with James Hay, 6 November, 1617, was no doubt Sir William's wife (D. Harris Willson, *King James VI & I*, p. 389). Sir William was knighted at Theobalds 17 January, 1621/22; and, since he was only a younger son, his good fortune must be attributed to his wife and her powerful court connexions.

It is of considerable interest to realize that the Washingtons and the Villierses were already distantly related. For in 1564 Robert Washington of Sulgrave (father of the Laurence who died in 1616) had married Elizabeth Light or Lyte, daughter and sole heiress of Walter Lyte of Radway Grange, Warwickshire, whose wife (as shown by the Buckinghamshire Visitation of 1634) was Ursula Woodford,[4] great-granddaughter of Robert Woodford of Wyfordly, Leicestershire, who had espoused a daughter of William Villiers of Brooksby.

COL. HENRY WASHINGTON AS A BOY

[4] Daughter of Thomas Woodford (died 1545) and Elizabeth, sister of Sir Richard Blount of Mapledurham, lieutenant of the Tower.

Northamptonshire in Southern Rhodesia

Soon after my retirement as Hon. Secretary of the Northamptonshire Record Society in the early summer of 1963, I flew out to Southern Rhodesia to stay with my sister and her husband, Major Richard Archdale. The journey of 6,000 miles took only 14 hours, and a drive of 65 miles from the airport at Salisbury brought me to their farm at Vigila in the Umvukwe district, one of the prettiest parts of the whole country. Here my brother, the late Major Godwin Wake, settled in 1923, on 3,000 acres of virgin land, naming the estate after the first word of the family motto: "Vigila et ora". He started life at Vigila in a round "pole and dagga" hut of native type, thatched with grass, in primitive conditions. Eventually, however, he built with the assistance of unskilled native labour, but doing much of the work himself, one of the most charming houses in Rhodesia, of which an account appeared in *Country Life* in 1947. I mention it here because much of it was directly inspired by our old home at Courteenhall, *e.g.* the front entrance doorway, and the panelling and curved end of the parlour (the principal room), while other features are reminiscent of different houses in England. Major Wake died in 1949, bequeathing Vigila to my sister, and the Archdales with their daughter and son-in-law, Mr. Robin von der Heyde, like most of their neighbours are growing tobacco as their main crop.

This part of Southern Rhodesia is nearly 5,000 feet above sea level, a fine rolling country watered by many streams and covered with coarse grass which grows from three to seven foot high, and in the winter months (May to October) is the colour of ripe corn. The landscape is well sprinkled with small native trees of vivid green foliage tinged with bronze and is broken at frequent intervals with outcrops (kopjes) of blue-grey granite, rising occasionally to several hundred feet, their fantastic shapes on the horizon looking like processions of colossal prehistoric animals.

The original settlers two or three generations ago were searching for gold. In this they were disappointed, and eventually turned to tobacco,

Major Godwin Wake (1879-1949)

for which the climate and deep pockets of good soil to be found where the granite is well below the surface are admirably suited; hence tobacco production, which includes the elaborate and highly skilled process of curing as well as growing, has come to be the staple industry of the country, though on most farms cattle and sheep rearing are usually carried on alongside the growing of crops such as maize and monkey-nuts.

Shortly after my arrival at Vigila I had the pleasure of meeting my sister's near neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Linnell and their three sons, the youngest of whom is a member of the Record Society. Both Mr. and Mrs. Linnell are natives of south Northamptonshire, and are now farming on Lord Verulam's Forrester Estate which marches with Vigila. Mr. Linnell

MR. ERIC LINNELL

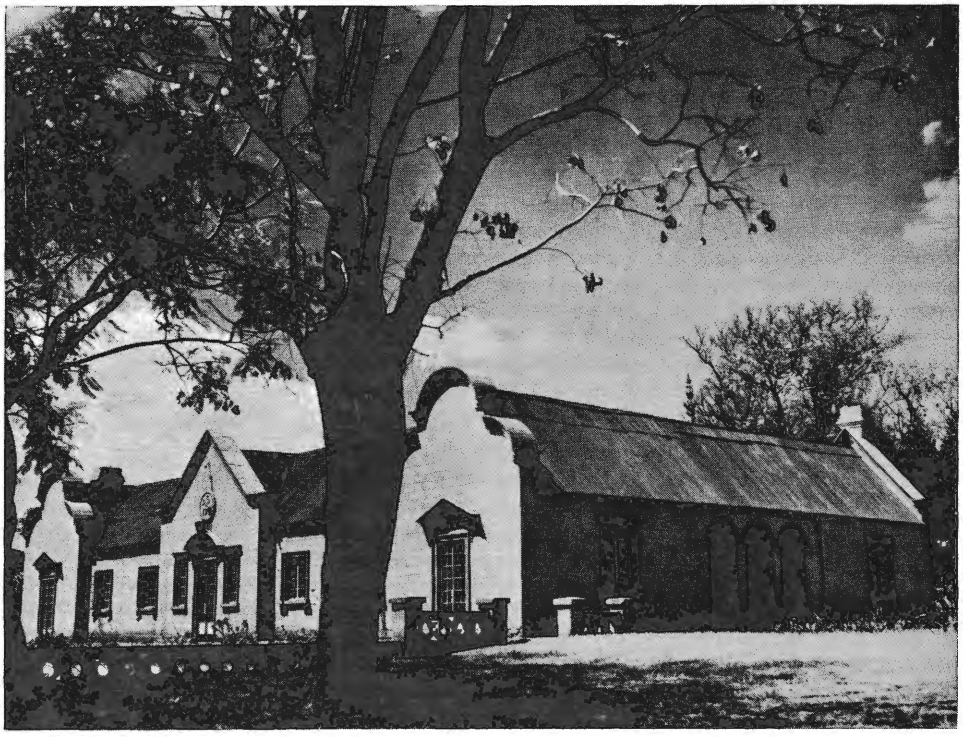
was born at Silverstone where his father farmed, and like so many in the villages of our forest areas, also carried on the business of a timber merchant. Mrs. Linnell, who was born at Eydon, was Miss Eileen Brafield of Towcester, daughter of Linnell Brafield whose mother was a Linnell from Leckhampstead, just over the Bucks border, so both are members by descent of this fine old south Northamptonshire family and have a common ancester with the Linnells of Pavenham in the Rev. John Linnell, author of *Old Oak* (See p. 237).

After starting work with his father at Silverstone and gaining further experience on farms at Whitfield and Brackley and in Hertfordshire, Eric went to Rhodesia with his wife and two sons in 1950, to join his brother Philip G. Linnell at Silverstone, his tobacco farm about 60 miles from Salisbury on the road to Bulawayo. (Mr. Philip Linnell returned to England in 1955; he now lives in Sussex and is another of the many Linnell members of our Society).

Of all the various processes on a mixed farm, the fundamental one of ploughing has always attracted Eric Linnell's greatest interest from his youth upwards. He started ploughing in Northamptonshire as a boy at Silverstone with a pair of horses "ploughing in the grass ley for wheat, producing the high cut or 'oat seed furrow'," but was early introduced to mechanisation, for his father "always used a steam plough in the rotation". When Eric came out to Rhodesia ploughing with oxen was rapidly going out of use and is now nearly extinct except in the native Reserves, but Godwin Wake used oxen to the end of his life.

One of the Eric Linnell's family proudest possessions is a silver cup awarded by the Wellingborough Agricultural Society "FOR PLOUGHING", to Mrs. Linnell's great-uncle, Octavius Brafield, in 1865, and it was in his native County that Eric realised the great value of ploughing competitions as a spur to the better cultivation of the land through an appreciation of the finer points of this primeval art, now as ever the basis of good agriculture in every part of the world. In Southern Rhodesia the first ploughing match was held in 1959. In the following year the challenge was taken up in the Umukwes district, and a ploughing match organised by Mr. and Mrs. Linnell took place. This has since become an annual event and contests are now held in many other parts of the country. Mr. Linnell is also much interested in African native agriculture, and has helped to organise an ox-ploughing competition in the Chiweshe Tribal Trust Area. He is now the first Chairman of the Central African Ploughing Association, and at the time this article was drafted (1963), was on his way to Canada to represent the Association at the World Ploughing Organisation Championship Competitions at Caledon in Ontario, calling at Silverstone, Northants, to see his mother on the way. This year he will attend the World Ploughing Contest which is to be held in Austria. Two ploughmen from Southern Rhodesia will be competing.

Before we leave the Linnells, a word must be said about their three promising sons. The eldest, Richard, is studying geology and physics at the University College of Rhodesia. Timothy and Nicholas, who has a passion for history, are at the High School in Salisbury, S.R.



VIGILA IN 1947

THE PARLOUR AT VIGILA, INSPIRED BY THE LIBRARY AT COURTEENHALL

It may perhaps be mentioned here that Godwin Wake also made a small contribution to the Rhodesian farming and tobacco industry by inventing a system of propagating young eucalyptus trees evolved from the method formerly used with the geraniums which were grown in masses in the garden at Courteenhall before 1914. The eucalyptus or gum tree is a very important factor in Rhodesian tobacco farming, as it provides almost the sole source of fuel for curing the tobacco leaf, besides being used extensively for all domestic purposes. Major Wake's article was published by the Southern Rhodesian Ministry of Agriculture in 1938,[1] and his system is still widely used in the Colony.

Among other interesting neighbours whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Vigila were the Ronald Pages. Mr. Page is the engineer to the Forrester Estate. He was born in Northampton and was employed at Sywell Aerodrome before he emigrated. His wife is a native of Denton. She was Edith Mary Reynolds of a family which has for generations been settled at Earls Barton. Mrs. Page is a very busy woman, and among many other occupations is Hon. Secretary of Umvukwes Church Council (the parish is as large as an English Rural Deanery), and also of the Montgomery Heights Centre of the Hopelands Trust for providing Homes and Occupation for mentally handicapped children. They have two sons and a daughter.

The capital city of Salisbury with its Legislative Assembly Buildings, its Cathedral, its National Archives, its University, its hospital and many fine industrial buildings as the nucleus, covers an area of several square miles over which the pleasant suburbs are gradually spreading. About four or five miles from the city centre live the Dryden family on a twenty acre plot divided into four, three of which are occupied by Peter, John, and Douglas Dryden, while their mother, Mrs. Cecil Dryden lives in the fourth, in the closest touch with her three sons and daughters-in-law, her eight grandsons and one grand-daughter—a most happy family arrangement. I enjoyed very much the kind hospitality I received from them on my visits to Salisbury.

Mrs. Dryden and her sons are collectively the present owners of Canons Ashby, that lovely old place said to have been considered by Queen Mary on her tour of the County in 1937 to be the gem of all the country houses in Northamptonshire. It will interest our readers to know that Mrs. Dryden has been so good as to deposit the family and estate records of Canons Ashby in the Northamptonshire Record Office at Delapre Abbey for the use of students.

My other experiences during my visit to Rhodesia are really outside the limits of this article, but I may be permitted just to mention my visits to the National Archives and to the University of Rhodesia & Nyasaland, as it then was; the debate in the Legislative Assembly to which I listened from the Strangers' Gallery; the wonderful songs and dances by over seventy men, women and children from the native village near by, which we watched from the terrace at Vigila under the brilliant light of a full moon; the perilous clouds of dust along the main roads, few of which are properly tarmacked, and the hair-raising swoops into the ravines to cross the narrow low-level bridges over the rivers with parapets only a few inches high, (one good lady is said to have screamed the whole way down and up the other side of one of the worst of these); the marvellous sunsets, and during the day the glorious perpetual sunshine—only one shower of rain the whole time I was overseas.

As concerns the subject I am writing about, there are other families from Northamptonshire in Southern Rhodesia whom I did not have the opportunity to meet in 1963, but hope to do so on my next trip, when I devoutly trust to find this beautiful country with its lovely climate and rich resources, so full of endless possibilities of happiness and prosperity for all its inhabitants, has passed safely through its present trials and difficulties into smoother waters.

JOAN WAKE.

[1] Rhodesia Agricultural Journal, Vol. XXXV, pp. 800-804. It was re-issued separately in 1947.

OBITUARY

IT is with great regret that we have to record the death at the age of 86, of **Charles Darby Linnell,** of Pavenham, Bedfordshire, which has deprived the Record Society of one of its most devoted members. He will be greatly missed at our meetings, which, with his brother Dr. Jack Linnell, he attended with great regularity during his membership of 27 years. His connection with Northamptonshire was through his father, the Rev. J. E. Linnell, a native of Silverstone and the author of *Old Oak*, that classic account of a south Northamptonshire forest village a century and more ago.

Charles Linnell, eldest of four brothers, was born at Burton-on-Trent, where his father was at the time a curate, and it was owing to his father being presented to the living of Pavenham in 1882 that Charles went as a day-boy to Bedford Modern School—then, as now, one of the two big Public Schools in the town—to become before he left, Head Boy. After taking the B.A. and M.A. degrees at London University at an exceptionally early age, he proceeded to St. John's College, Cambridge as an advanced student in 1903. From 1904 to 1906 he was lecturer in English at Cologne University. His subsequent career as a schoolmaster in England was interrupted by service in the Intelligence Branch of the Army in France from 1917 to 1919. He was then appointed to his old school at Bedford where he taught French and German until his retirement in 1938.

But though he had studied and taught languages, his greatest interests were really history, folk-lore, and archaeology, on which subjects he wrote many articles for local periodicals. He also edited "The Diary of Benjamin Rogers", an 18th century Bedfordshire divine, for the Bedfordshire Record Society.

Northamptonshire folk will be especially grateful to him for inspiring the writing by villagers of Silverstone, Syresham, and Paulerspury of memories of their youthful days which were published in Vols. I and II of *Northamptonshire Past & Present* under the title of "Tales of Whittlebury Forest". Well do I remember our expedition to visit these old people and our merry luncheon with the Misses Atkinson of Paulerspury *en route*. These articles give a vivid and authentic picture of the rough and tumble, the employments and amusements of village life in the forest area of our County in the third quarter of the 19th century. The last article of the series is from the pen of Mr. Linnell himself. It is a most interesting description, mainly from oral tradition, of two famous prize fights, fought before large crowds of spectators on the edges of Whittlebury and Salcey Forests in 1830 and 1845.

In appearance Charles Linnell was very much of the family type. Fair haired with blue eyes and a fresh complexion, short and sturdy, he was a pure-blooded midland Englishman of long Northamptonshire descent. Devoted to his profession, he nevertheless followed his many hobbies with zest. An enthusiastic rugby football player in his youth, in his manhood an ardent patriot, an active defender of the beauties of rural England, a keen gardener, a devout churchman of the old school, he served his generation well and faithfully to the end.

He died on September 25th, 1963, and his ashes were interred in Pavenham churchyard in the presence of a large number of his friends and admirers. He has most kindly bequeathed the sum of £300 to our Society. Much sympathy is felt for his surviving brother, Dr. Jack Linnell, who shared his home for many years.

J.W.

Book Reviews

GREAT OAKLEY CRICKET : The History of a Village Club

by Harold and Edward Bagshaw

(David Green, Kettering, 1964. Price £1)

Mr. Harold Bagshaw died early this year, after he had put the finishing touches to the MS. of this book. Mr. Bagshaw was a great personality, who will be much missed. As Mr. F. W. Sheffield says in his foreword "Summer in England without village cricket would be unthinkable". Great Oakley has a great tradition in this respect, and it is right that this should be so worthily chronicled by those who played such an active part in its history. Mr. Edward Bagshaw now lives in Canada, but, as he says, is still a Great Oakley man at heart.

It is sad to think that much of Great Oakley parish is being submerged by Corby. We can only hope that the cricket will survive, together with the spirit of the old village.

BOWDEN TO HARBOROUGH

The Story of the town of Market Harborough and its two villages, Great Bowden and Little Bowden *by* J. C. Davies

(Wellanside (Photographics) Ltd., Market Harborough, 1964. Price 18/-)

This admirable book is an excellent survey of the history of a town lying just north of the Northamptonshire borders, which has been and still is the Market and shopping town of many villages in the north part of our County.

There is, incidentally, a good deal of interesting information about Northamptonshire. How many people today who speak of Great Oxendon know that there was once a Little Oxendon? Mr. Davies gives the full story of the village, now represented by a single farm, which is about a mile from the site of the old village. Even in Bridges' time, there was only one house on the site (1724), and it appears that the village as such disappeared two hundred years before that date.

The book is very comprehensive, with some details of Harborough's more recent history, and numerous quotations from original documents. It is also very well illustrated. It is interesting to compare the book with Hill's *History of Market Harborough*, that rather portentous production of Victorian clerical scholarship. Mr. Davies' approach is very different, and he was not content, as Mr. Hill was, to rely on Nicholls, the late Eighteenth Century historian of Leicestershire. Mr. Davies pays tribute to Dr. Hoskins, whose work inspired his own.

The Letter Books of Sir Samuel Luke 1644-45

Edited by H. G. Tibbutt

(H.M. Stationery Office, 1963. Price £5) *

Until recently Sir Samuel Luke (1603-70), of Cople, Bedfordshire, was best known as the supposed original of Butler's Hudibras. Since the publication of his *Journal* (Scout Reports 1642/3-4) by the Oxfordshire Record Society in 1950-3, he has become familiar to students of the Civil War as Scoutmaster-General to the Earl of Essex and Governor of Newport Pagnell. Mr. Tibbutt's admirable edition of his *Letter Books* (for which such students cannot be too grate-

* The *Letter Books* also form Vol. XLII of the Bedfordshire Historical Records Society Publications.

ful) now reveals the man himself : forthright, sometimes caustic, but kindly and courteous, too, warmly attached to his family and friends, an amateur of field sports, fine horses, smart clothes, and good food; in short, amusingly unlike the popular idea of a Puritan.

Northamptonshire can claim a close link with Luke for his mother was a Knightley of Fawsley. Northamptonshire can also claim an intimate interest in the *Letter Books:* between fifty and sixty places within her boundaries are listed in the topographical index, some of them being referred to several times, and her County Committee plays a prominent part in the Correspondence. This consists of copies of letters written by, and addressed to, Sir Samuel, contained in five manuscripts in the British Museum: the documents have been calendared and arranged in two main sections of letters 'out' and letters 'in' by the Editor, who has also included some miscellaneous letters etc. and 261 Scout Reports covering the period 1643/4-5, derived from the same source. The importance, particularly from the military aspect, of the wealth of fresh material here made available, cannot be over-estimated.

A large number of letters are concerned with the needs of the garrison of Newport. Luke appealed (not always successfully) for contributions both to individuals and, more especially, to committees: those of Both Kingdoms, the Eastern Association, the constituent counties of the Association, and some counties outside the Association's scope, Northamptonshire being one of these last. There are no fewer than thirty letters addressed by Luke to the Northamptonshire Committee and thirty-two directed by it to him, dealing on both sides with a variety of subjects. The members bear well-known Puritan names such as Nicholls, Mildmay, Farmer, Claypole, and Thornton: but it was a shock to find a devoted Royalist, Lord Southampton, who was unconnected with the Shire and then in the West Country, twice writing in this company and consequently indexed as a Parliamentarian! Reference to the manuscript Letter Books solved the mystery. Mr. Tibbutt has misinterpreted as 'Thomas Wriothesley, Earl of Southampton'. the signatures 'Ryousley' and 'Riousley' which concealed from him the identity of Richard Ousley, the Roundhead owner of Courteenhall, one of the less active Committee men.

The local interest of these Committee communications is very great, but it is by no means confined to them. The letters exchanged between Luke and his old father, Sir Oliver, throw much light on conditions prevailing at Grafton Regis Park after the storming of the house (a Royalist stronghold) in December 1643: the custody of Grafton and Perry (Potterspury) Park had been committed to the elder Luke by the Revenue Committee. Several hands contribute vivid reports of the movements up and down the County of King Charles and his forces before the Battle of Naseby. We are so apt to assume the inevitability of the Royalist debâcle of 14 June 1645 that it is something of a surprise to encounter the previous sense of bewilderment and fear on the part of the Parliamentarians, stunned by the recent loss of Leicester, which this Correspondence conveys. Naseby, however, belongs to the history of England, a salutary reminder that these *Letter Books* are of national as well as of local significance.

MARGARET TOYNBEE.

"TO ONE DESIRING VERSES IN PRAISE OF HIS BOOKS"

I see few bookes, but I'le rather commend
Than to be bid to reade them to the end.

—*Justinian Isham* (*c.* 1670)

Northampton & Midlands BUILDING SOCIETY

ESTABLISHED 1888

HELPFUL ADVICE ON SAVINGS AND HOME LOANS

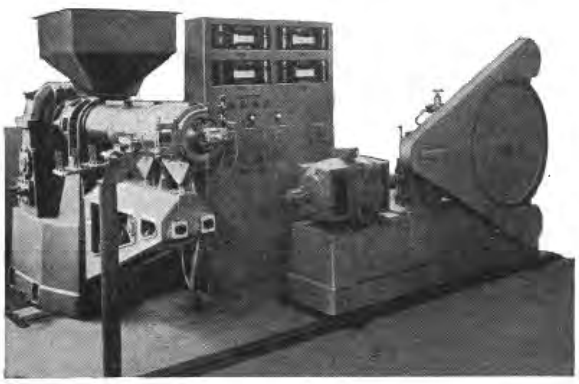
MEMBER OF THE BUILDING SOCIETIES ASSOCIATION
SHARES AND DEPOSITS ARE TRUSTEE INVESTMENTS

60 GOLD STREET, NORTHAMPTON

SUB OFFICE·20.KINGSLEY PK.TER.TEL·No·34565
BRANCH OFFICES AT BLETCHLEY AND CORBY

Northampton Machinery Co. Ltd.

Plastic Extruding Machinery for the Electric Cable Industry is now manufactured in our well-equipped factory



Balfour Road
Northampton

who'd make plastics here?

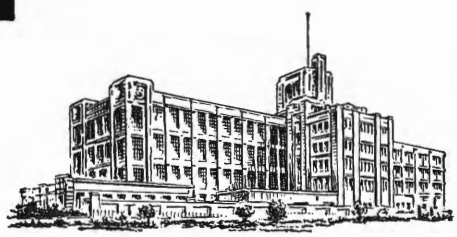
Scott Bader would and do. Wollaston Hall is the old setting of one of Northamptonshire's most lively young industries. Polyester resins, polymer emulsions, PVC pastes and plasticisers are made in these beautiful grounds. A communal ownership company welding past and present in the service of the future.

Scott Bader

SCOTT BADER & CO. LIMITED
Wollaston . Wellingborough
Northants. Tel.: Wollaston 262

TIMPSON

A FINE FACTORY
PRODUCING
FINE SHOES

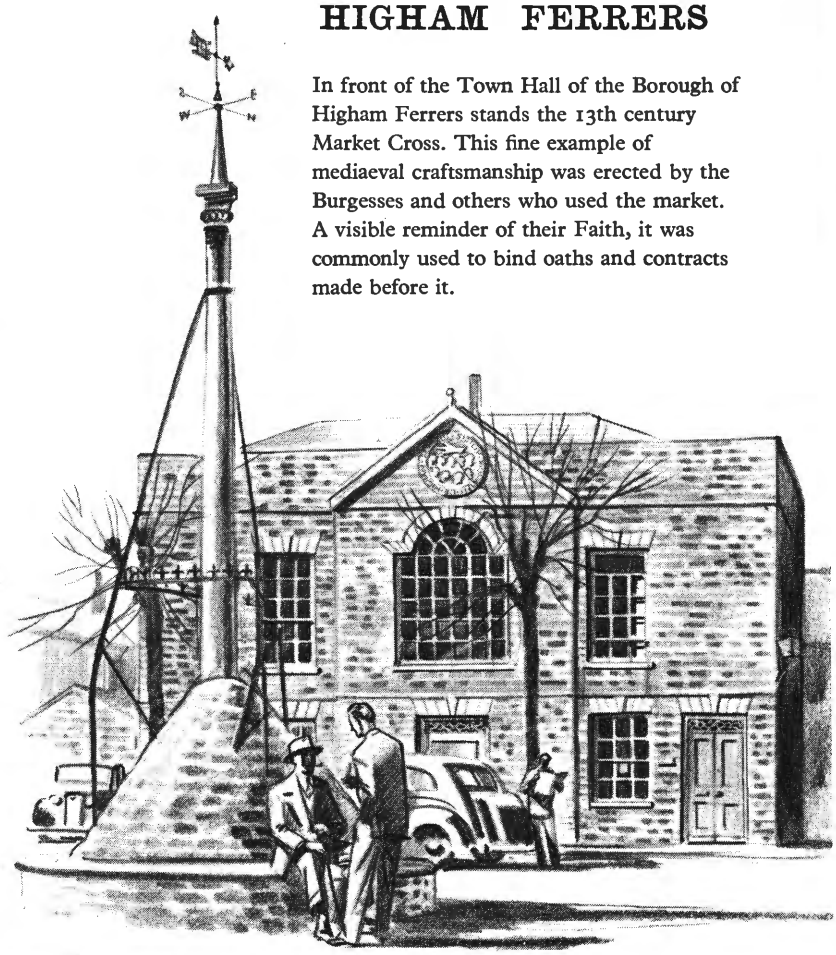


For nearly one hundred years TIMPSONS have designed and made shoes, the reputation of which has carried them into the world market of the present day.
Besides earning valuable dollars, TIMPSON shoes are sold in a network of over two hundred and fifty shops throughout the country.

WILLIAM TIMPSON LIMITED
NORTH PARK . KETTERING . NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

TOWN HALL AND MARKET CROSS
HIGHAM FERRERS

In front of the Town Hall of the Borough of Higham Ferrers stands the 13th century Market Cross. This fine example of mediaeval craftsmanship was erected by the Burgesses and others who used the market. A visible reminder of their Faith, it was commonly used to bind oaths and contracts made before it.



The Craftsmanship of Higham Ferrers thrives in the 20th century. For it is the headquarters of world-famous John White Footwear Ltd., founded by Mr. John White, an Honorary Freeman and former Mayor of Higham Ferrers. Here, where skill and experience are devoted not to stone but to leather, the spirit of service to the community is strong as ever.