

## *Mary Bocking* *1800 - 1865*

**1800** Mary was born, and like her father and grandfather, she was born in Bulmer, now a village of about 400 people. George III was King and The Prime Minister was William Pitt The Younger

**1814** Bulmer had a Sunday school with 26 pupils. It is not known whether Mary attended school.

Mary probably became a domestic servant in the village. There were a small number of big farms which would have employed girls. The duties of a maid included: laundering, sewing, emptying chamber pots, dusting, hauling water for baths, and lighting fires.

**1815** Defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo brought uncertain times with high food prices and low wages. The 1815 Corn Law kept grain prices artificially high adding to the social unrest of the times. And 1816 was the 'Year without summer' - very poor harvests plus a general smallpox epidemic.

**1823** On 7th August, Mary married 26-year-old Charles, and became Mrs Rowe. Charles was an illiterate agricultural labourer and signed his marriage certificate with a cross. The Rowe family was enterprising and supported their family entirely from their own labours.

In common with most of the women of Bulmer, Mary plaited straw for the hat industry. It was a skilled task. The work could be done at home, and children were taught from an early age to help with the process.

**1824** Son Charles was born and named after his father

**1826** Constable's painted 'The Cornfield' (right)

**1827** Son Philip was born

**1832** Daughter Henrietta was born

**1835** Daughter Rosanna born

**1837** Victoria became Queen on the death of William IV.

**1840** Daughter Ruth was born, facing new outbreaks of smallpox, scarlet fever, and cholera



**1841** Census: Mary, Charles and four children are shown on the census living at Upper Houses in Bulmer. Like Charles, Mary's neighbours were also agricultural labourers. At Upper Houses, several residents kept pigs which paid for the rent. Upper Houses still stand and are about a mile from the centre of Bulmer.

**1842** Son David was born.

Mary's aging mother came to live with them, and later they took a lodger.

**1865** Mary died and was buried here at Bulmer