

A PARISH OF MANY PARTS

The fact that Essex was well farmed in Roman times, and the existence of a large Roman site on the boundary with Gestingthorpe, the fact that there were big Saxon and mediaeval landowners and the way in which its farmhouses are scattered throughout the acreage rather than concentrated along one village street, all these suggest, in Morant's words, "enclosure from time immemorial". There was a common field of strips shared by two owners surviving into the 19th century, and in 1808 quite a lot of waste land or common still existed. Bulmer's later enclosures took place on common land at the Tye, when allotments were made from it. Large tracts of woodland have also gone, such as Park Wood and Goldingham Hall Wood.

Goldingham, Smeetham and Butlers are identifiable Domesday Manors. Seven manors shared Bulmer's 2,800 acres in mediaeval times. The Street and the dwellings that grew up around the Tye "waste" are the nearest that it got to village centres. In fact it has always consisted of a number of small hamlets or groups of houses based on the old manor sites, near to later farms or growing up along roads. Thus, working our way from Sudbury, there were sixteen groups, listed with their 1871 populations:

POPULATION IN 1871			
A semi-industrial corner near		Upper Houses	34
Ballington	22	Lower Houses	30
Batt Hall	94	Goldingham Hall	?
A group of houses at Armsea	31	Smeetham Hall	48
The Tye farms and cottages		Finch Hill	52
around a former green	186	The Auberies and Kitchens	51
A group on the Halstead Road	20	Butlers Hall	7
The Haven Ground between		The Brickfields	5
Tye and Church	18		
The group near the Church	31		
The Street	104	Total population	733

We decided, in this History, to deal with these groups separately, as far as possible, to try and show how they developed, when houses were built and who lived in them. We have drawn on local memories and we have tried to produce a picture of Bulmer that would interest the people who live there today. A large number of people have contributed to it. They are listed at the end and Bulmer W.E.A. branch offers its thanks for what has been a community effort. The fact that it has a Post Office, two pubs, a school, a church and a well-supported village hall has helped this situation.

In 1700 there were about 240 people living in Bulmer. Improving the land and prosperous farming during the 18th century brought it to 421 by the year 1800. In 1841 Bulmer had 180 adult males and 150 of them were in agriculture. The population continued to rise until 1851, when a peak of 807 is reached. It was still 780 in 1871 but by then migration to the towns was easier and it went on dropping till it reached 506 in 1961. Since then more motor cars and the idea of "a good life in the country" have turned it in an upward direction again.

This study includes items about the present-day village, so we have called it "Bulmer-Then and Now". We start with the main road.