

10. THE STREET

We now take a stroll down The Street looking at its buildings and some of the people who lived in them.

Approaching The Street from the Gestingthorpe end, the first buildings are those of "Sudan" Poultry Farm, built in 1965. Adjoining this is the 17th Century Griggs Farmhouse, the lands now being farmed as part of Auberis estate. By the latter half of the 18th Century two farms, one north, the other south of The Street, were combined as Griggs and Swains owned by William Jennens of Suffolk. When he died in 1798, aged 98, he was reputed to have been the richest commoner in the country. In his holdings close to two million pounds in value, were also Butlers, Black House, Jenkins, Kitchens and Tye Corner farms. Dickens' novel "Bleak House" was said to have been based on the Jennens Case.

In the 19th Century William Bird farmed Griggs, then Charles Bird who farmed 280 acres with 12 men and 3 boys in 1871 and finally John Burlingham, a great supporter of the chapel. At the turn of century came W.S. Courtnell who farmed it together with Kitchens. Tom Rowe recalls that in 1910, before tractors were generally in use, the chassis of an old motor vehicle was adapted for pulling a self-binder. The barn, dating from the same period as the house, has been converted into a dwelling.

Opposite Griggs are five houses erected over the last ten years on what was once a meadow known as Stackyard pasture, part of Swains Farm. Swains Cottage, built about 1902, replaced three earlier cottages on the site. From 1937-51 the Walkers lived there, a show-business family; Mr. Walker was a musician and acrobat and Mrs. Walker a singer. The two daughters were acrobats and performed with third person as "The Three Garcias". They appeared at the Palladium and other leading theatres. At various times they appeared with many well-known acts and personalities such as The Crazy Gang and Gracie Fields. In 1947 they appeared in a Royal Command Performance. Recently a house (Fylok) and a bungalow in the Roman style (Oatlands) have been built in the grounds of Swains Cottage. Bulmer Rise, the latest of Bulmer's new housing developments, rises from here.

Threshing Contractors

Opposite Swains Cottage is "The Bungalow" built in 1923 by Albert Rowe, who farmed Griggs from 1922-1940. He was also a threshing contractor. Only a few of the local farms had their own threshing tackle. Most therefore relied on contractors. Another contractor in Bulmer Street at this time was Spencer Coe of Brickwall Farm whose big shed to house traction engine still stands in The Street next to Clement Cottage. His father, Joe, owned the business before him, and the grandfather, Abraham, came from Suffolk to farm in Essex. His seven sons, all with Biblical names, elicited the remark "he've come with seven devils" when they arrived because seven sons would do all the work and no local farm workers would be needed.

Albert Rowe's threshing tackle was kept in a yard next to "The Bungalow", now the site of Cornfields, a bungalow with modern pargetting built in 1971 by Peter Rowe who researched this section of our book. Next to this is Inglefield, a bungalow built in the 1930s. The next property is Tintops, a pair of cottages (four cottages in 1871). The tin



Bulmer Street

roof was fixed over the original thatch about 1900, by the estate carpenter of Goldingham Hall. The building itself is probably 16th Century.

Standing next to Tintops is Charlton Cottage, one of two pairs of cottages built of knapped flint with Suffolk White brick. These were built around the middle of the 19th Century by Abraham Mayes who kept the Cock & Blackbirds at that time. He also owned Chapel Cottages, the slate-roofed cottages beside the Chapel, and Cherwell, the Georgian-fronted late 16th Century house beside the Cock & Blackbirds. He lived in Cherwell after retiring from the pub, and died in 1869 aged 84 years. Abraham left a widow, Elizabeth (aged 43 years), who was his second wife. She afterwards married Charles Rowe in 1880. In 1929 the Hawksleys came to live there and the buildings for their horse and trap still stand.

Opposite "Tintops" on what was at one time allotments, six old peoples' bungalows were built by Braintree District Council. Next to these are two bungalows built around 1920 by a Mr. Boggis who plied his trade as a builder from the cottage on Church Meadow.

Beside these bungalows stand a pair of early thatched cottages rebuilt around 1600. They were originally one dwelling called Swains Cottage in 1794. The first cottage is now called Warlin after the P.o.W. Camp in Germany where Hazell Chinery, a previous owner, was interned after being captured in the first World War. Mr. Chinery was a keen cricketer. He recalls: "There had been a team in the 1880's but this folded up. We started again in 1910. W.S. Courtnell of Griggs Farm ran a reading room for young people and we were known as the Bulmer Reading Room Cricket Club. Our first match was against Wickham. I scored 14. I could give them some fireworks in those days. I could bowl them out, too".

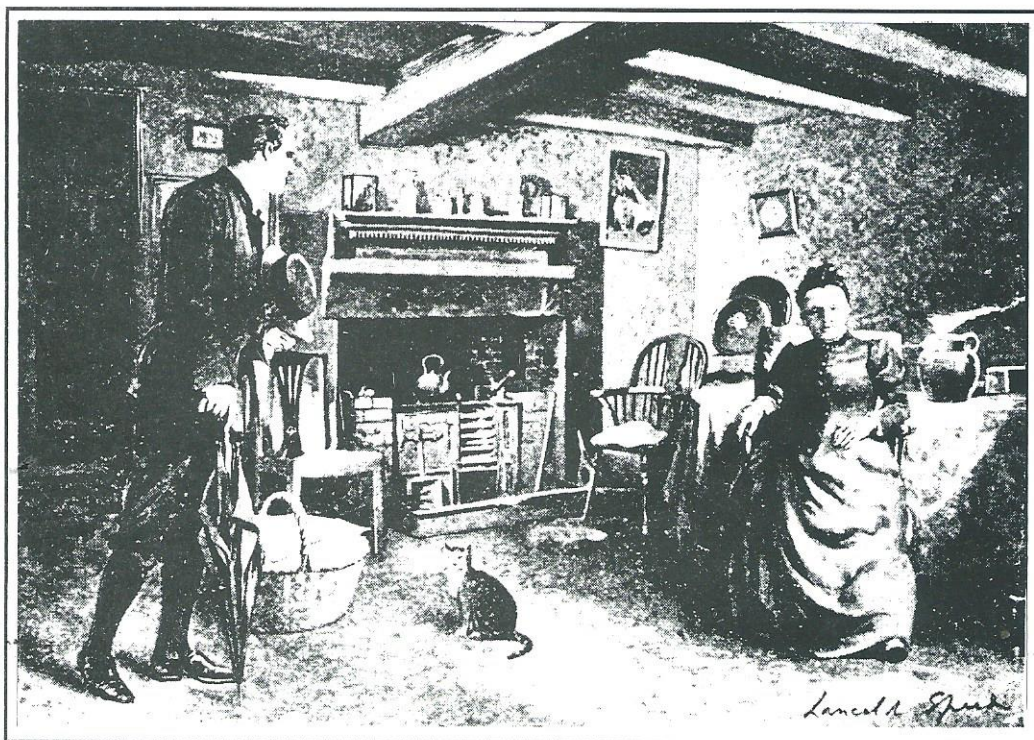
The team for the match was as follows: A. Hayes, Bulmer policeman; Arthur Dixey, coachman at The Cedars; H. Chinery, apprentice to wheelwright and painter; E.C. Hills, school attendance officer (Captain); W.S. Courtnell; Herbert Germany, farmworker; A.T. Simms, army captain; P. Chinery, gardener at The Cedars; S. Hayes, policeman's son; W. Dixey; and T. Brighton, relieving officer. Not many farmworkers played at this time because they had to work on Saturday afternoons. The cricket meadow was opposite Brickwall Farm. Bulmer last played there in 1953. In the early 1960s the club re-formed for a few seasons and played on a small meadow off Smeetham Hall Lane, behind the old vicarage.

A Waterloo Dinner

The other half of Mr. Chinery's cottage is called Langley Cottage. This cottage was

the home of Miss Mary Ann Pryke for most of her life. She was born in 1834, about 20 years after her father, John, had been wounded in the Battle of Waterloo. When she was about six, she injured her leg. In a magazine article of about 1901, she said, "afterwards they took me to Colchester hospital, and the Doctors cut my leg off. There was no chloroform in those days and the Doctors told me I bore the pain well".

Mary took up dressmaking, but her mother became bedridden, "then I had to nurse her and look after Father. It was hard work being so lame." Her father eventually had a pension and he used to say that nobody should take a pension as long as he could work. "He was a strong man - he was still mowing wheat when he was eighty. The local gentry always remembered him on Waterloo Day and sent him his Waterloo Dinner, together with some money. And now," Mary added, "they send me my Waterloo dinner". Several of the older inhabitants still remember Mary.



Mary Ann Pryke

Loss of limb seemed only too common in those days. Tom Rowe recalls, "My grandfather had lost a hand. I remember him, Henry Cook and Frank Marsh together in Grandfather's house one day. Henry Cook had lost both his arms, and Frank Marsh one of his - three men with only two good arms between them!" In fact, Henry Cook worked efficiently with two hooks and was the subject of an early film. These injuries were frequently caused by poorly or unguarded agricultural machinery (chaff cutters particularly).

Hot Gospel

The congregational chapel was built in 1873 at a cost of £243. Prior to this being built a barn standing at Lower Houses was used as a chapel. The original heating in the chapel was provided by a stove built, of all places, underneath the pulpit, which tended to give the occupant a roasting. One preacher from Sudbury is reported to have said that "Going to Bulmer was something like going to Hell!" The chapel was last used in the 1950's. Later it served as a warehouse and now as a design studio. An Edwardian photograph shows tenant farmer Burlingham's wife presiding over a meeting of the female chapel-goers outside Griggs farm house. It is a photograph which is eloquent about hard work and respectability.



Ladies of the Chapel

The land on which the chapel stands was originally part of the garden of "The Cottage" which the chapel adjoins. Hubert Younger, one of The Street's oldest and wisest inhabitants, lived at The Cottage with his wife Rose until 1989. He recalled: "When Rev. Pannell was at The Old Vicarage he would send me to borrow a donkey cart from Mrs. Blyth who lived at the cottage then. I often had to collect pianola rolls from Sudbury station. He used to play these at his house and at the school from time to time. I sometimes had to get him a four and a half gallon barrel of tar which he used to mix with his coal dust to enable him to burn it".

The wheelwright's shop was beside Langley Cottage. In 1900 Albert Corder had his business there. "There was a big old hand lathe where he used to turn the navies of the wheels. It took two of us apprentices to turn it for him. When he was turning a big nave it was as much as we could do to keep the thing turning", said Hazell Chinery.

Brickwall Farm Cottages were built at the end of the 19th Century as part of the Auberis estate and one was used as a reading room. The two new bungalows opposite the Cock & Blackbirds replaced two brick cottages, one of which was a shop in 1861. Isaac Deal was thatcher and grocer there, his wife was a baker and living with them were a boy of 15 described as assistant and a girl of 13 as assistant baker.

The two bigger houses at the Sudbury end of The Street are somewhat confusing as to name, function and ownership. The Pungs owned Brickwall Farm in 1808 and Black House in 1880. The Allens were at the latter for a good deal of the 19th Century. The two families seem to have joined because there are Pung-Allens in the churchyard. The Cedars, a 19th Century house, was the home of Robert Allen in 1882 but before that D.G. Badham of Jenkins had lived there. Black House, now called The Old Vicarage because the parson lived there for many years in our century, is a fine 18th Century house built around a 16th Century chimney stack. It is perhaps the most elegant piece of architecture in Bulmer.

The house now called Black House Farm (all very confusing) was formerly two early Victorian cottages. The Cedars is now called The Dower House. Black House (The Old Vicarage) used to be called The Laurels.

Smeetham Hall Lane

The Street end of this lane has seen considerable development in the last fifteen years.

First a house for the District Nurse, then a house and a bungalow and finally a group of five executive houses as built on a former cricket field. The centre house is called Mid-On.

The first house to be built in the Lane went up in 1903 as the gardener's cottage after the two Miss Burkes came from the Auberies to live at The Cedars. Sallie Dearnley, who lived in it, unravelled the interesting story of its seventy-six years. The first gardener was Philip Chinery. He trained at Kew Gardens and moved in with his wife and four children. Altogether he worked for Miss Alice and Miss Edith for forty-four years and never had a day's holiday. His son, Hazell, lived in the street and his initials scratched as a young boy in a pane of glass are still visible. The first under-gardener, old William Lott, lived at Langley Cottage and frequently remembered the Crimean War. William Dixey occupied the Coachman's house next door.

A Miss Heyworth and her sister took over The Cedars but by 1940 the gardener's house was empty with the doors wide open to the public. Occupation recommenced during the War when the Auberies Estate was requisitioned. Nissen huts went up and the house was occupied by N.C.O.'s of the Queen's Own and London Scottish Regiments. Later it became a NAAFI bakery and a few letters can still be seen in olive green paint on the rear wall of the house. So much use was made of the coal fired oven that the kitchen chimney developed a noticeable curve. Spent ammunition and other military relics still get turned up in the garden.

The house was renovated after the War to become a general stores and post office. The well was sunk in 1950. A water storage tank collected rain which was pumped into the kitchen sink. The general stores brimmed to the full with provisions but supermarkets started in Sudbury and then the Health Department insisted on a wash basin in the shop itself so Mr. Harding kept only the Post Office and the newsagent's business. The Hardings built a new bungalow and the Dearnleys took over the house in 1972. When John Dearnley lifted the floor boards to install central heating beside an upstairs fireplace, he found amongst the ashes the contents of private soldier's pockets: a Services rail pass, a pass to leave the camp signed by the N.C.O., war-time cigarette packets and some cards for racing at the Southampton Stadium dated April 1945. As this book will no doubt be widely read in Southampton, we hope he will get touch.

In a deed of 1700 there is a building belonging to "the townsmen of Bulmer" in The Street, which could be the house marked on the map 1808 as "Poor". This suggests that both The Street and The Tye had their own alms or poor houses. Perhaps it is not too fanciful to suggest that this is a reflection of the rivalry which is said to have existed between the two main parts of the village. Even today it is unlikely that the Parish Council would seriously consider doing anything for The Street which it didn't do for The Tye or vice versa. We hasten to add that the only reason why The Tye precedes The Street in this study is purely one of topographical convenience.

The Tye is higher and it is interesting to compare the effect of this on depth of the wells. The Street had fifteen wells, including three at The Cedars and most of them were fifteen to twenty feet deep. The Tye had only public pump at The Fox, which was 95 feet deep. Another at the end of Blacksmith's Lane was 65 feet deep. The one at Clapps which was used by The Tye dwellers when The Fox one was out of order is nearly sixty feet deep.

Crisp Reply

Has all that talk of wells and water made you thirsty? Maybe there's time for a quick one at The Blackbirds before the uphill walk to the Tye. John Cornell who kept The Blackbirds was also in partnership with George Rowe in a threshing machine business. In setting up the threshing tackle, it was most important to get all the machines correctly lined up so that the various belts would drive correctly without running off. When someone in the pub complained to Landlord Cornell that one packet of crisps had four or five little blue packets of salt in it whereas another customer's had no salt at all, the explanation was, "Ah well, you see, these things are packed by machine and sometimes the belt comes off".