

The Chronicle

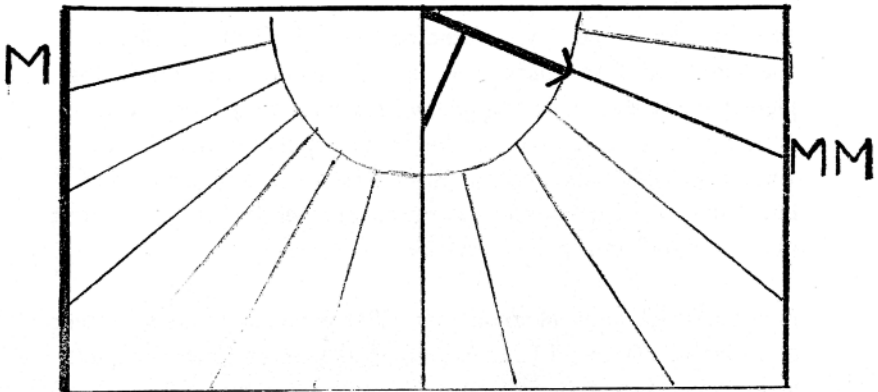


The Journal of the
Long Wittenham Local History Group

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THE MILLENNIUM CHRONICLE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a great pleasure for me, one last time, to edit this the tenth edition of The Chronicle.

I am enormously impressed by all the work that has been put into it by Sybil McGhie, Janet Haylett and Pat Lay, and can only say what a worthwhile Chronicle it has turned out to be for this, the Millennium edition.

Our thanks go to Sybil McGhie for the charming line drawings, to Graham Wiltshire for the inside cover sundial, to Mercy Ward for many of the photos and to everyone else who helped to produce a professional and attractive journal for us to read, cherish and, hopefully sell.

In a few days time I am attending the very first meeting of the 'Henfield Local History Group'. Once again I will have the pleasure of being in on the ground floor of what I hope will turn out to be as exciting and interesting an organisation as the Long Wittenham Local History Group certainly proved to be. I am sure I will find as much to learn and write about here in Sussex as I did in Oxfordshire.

May I wish all my friends in Long Wittenham happy researching and writing-up for all future Chronicles, copies of which I will make sure of getting.

Elizabeth McDougall
Editor

Witta's People

Dawn broke on the morning of the new year, and Richard, a peasant living in the small riverside settlement of Wittanhamm, stepped out of his one-roomed thatched hut, squinted up at the two ancient hills silhouetted against the pink-flecked sky and thought about the day's work.

As a serf, Richard was bound to work for the Lord of the Manor for several days each week in return for the use of strips of land on which he could grow food for his own family. There was always much work to be done, land to be ploughed and sown, hedges to cut, ditches to clear, animals to tend and wood to be cut. The serfs working for the lord were organised by the local reeve and the hayward who oversaw the harvest and the pastures.



Each serf's strips of land were divided by ridges of stone or unploughed earth and one person's strips were frequently scattered around the village, so it made sense to work in co-operation with a neighbour. It was always difficult to obtain sufficient manure

to enrich the strips, as the lord usually regarded all dung in the village as his by right, and the peasant was therefore forced to use old straw from cowsheds as *his* fertiliser.

On his strips Richard grew corn, and on the rough land beside his cottage he grew onions, cabbages, peas or beans, leeks and garlic. There were also fruit trees here and there in the settlement, growing apples, pears, medlars, cherries and damsons, which would enliven the diet.

Richard enjoyed some traditional customary rights such as the use of the common meadows, the Lammas lands, once the crop grown there had been harvested. He could also gather timber from waste land to help repair his cottage and to make household utensils.



Most of the wood he took had already fallen to the ground, but he was allowed also to take as much as he could either knock off or pull down from a tree 'by hook or by crook'.

In return for these privileges there were stringent obligations. As well as being under contract to work for a given number of days on the lord's land, Richard may well have been asked to pay a tax called wood-penny for the right to pick up wood, or, if he had hens, the lord would expect a proportion of the eggs to come to him.

When a peasant died, heriot was required - the giving of the best beast or the most valuable possession to the lord. There was also tallage, a variable tax based on the ability of the serf to pay, however little.

The Lord of the Manor had considerable power over his serfs such as Richard. They could neither leave the manor nor marry without permission, and in many manors, were obliged to have their grain ground by the lord's miller, who invariably extracted a proportion as his due. He was generally resented, but other privileges were accepted without protest. For example, the lord's shepherd was allowed to keep, for his own use, all the dung produced during the twelve nights of Christmas, and the milk from his flock for the first seven days after the equinox.

The lord's authority was extreme and his manor could only be run efficiently by those under his control who were in effect his slaves. Ten per cent of the rural population were 'servi', working full time for the lord. Cereal production was the dominant rural activity and much labour was needed to make viable returns. Occasionally slavery was a form of punishment, for secure prisons were not a feasible possibility, and when famine occurred serfs who could not provide for their families often surrendered themselves voluntarily to the Lord of the Manor, in order to survive.

Richard was fortunate enough to be able to look after his wife and children, though should the King have needed an army, he might well have been one of the men required to follow his lord and fight for the King, leaving his family in the care and protection of a relative or good friend. One man was needed for each five hides of land and each hide had to provide 4 shillings for each two months. If the summons came and the serf disregarded it, his lands were forfeit, and if he had a good reason

for refusing and sent a substitute, he had to pay a fine of 50 shillings. Equally so, if summoned as a beater for game hunting and did not attend, a fine of 50 shillings was levied. Such unrealistic demands ensured compliance!

The tenor of agricultural life was fundamentally determined by the weather. In 1003-1004 there was famine throughout England due to crop failure and Richard would have felt the effects of this. He would also have seen some of the local woodland cut down in order that Oxford could use the timber for its expanding building programme.

Richard had to work hard to provide for his family. Their tenement cottage had a centre hearth on which the cooking was done. Most meals consisted of pottage, a soup of vegetables such as leeks, cabbage, onions and garlic, with herbs and some cereal added. The pottage might be 'running', which was thick, or 'stondyng' which was almost solid enough to slice. Richard's wife would use the embers of the hearth and seethe (boil) her pottage, stirring it with a wooden spurtle.



Frumenty was popular when cereal was plentiful. Green porray, a soup flavoured with parsley was eaten a lot in the summer, as was a soft cheese called spermyse. Bread was a staple, but only

the Lord of the Manor could afford the softer wheat bread. Richard and his peers ate maslin bread, which consisted of mixed wheat and rye bread. If grain was sparse, horse bread was eaten, which included peas and beans to bulk it out. Many people ground their daily grain in a hardwood mortar or on a stone quern, mixing the coarse flour with water and baking the unleavened bread under an upturned pot on the hearth. Meat was a rare luxury, but an occasional poaching foray added illegal variety, as did wild nuts and berries in season. In Wittanham, river fish such as eels, carp and pike were sometimes caught. Often fresh fish and small birds or squirrels were wrapped in clay and baked in the hottest ashes on the hearth. Local herbs and cultivated mustard seeds added flavour.

For those peasants fortunate enough to own a pig, September was a month for killing, salting and preserving, for during the winter there was always anxiety about how long food supplies would last. Richard's wife would make a hard skim-milk cheese which would last all winter and provide some sustenance.

July was a month of real deprivation after the winter stores had been depleted and before the harvest was gathered. Work was physically demanding, yet many peasants were suffering from lack of regular solid food and also from the hallucinatory effects of eating mouldy rye, which formed lysergic acid.....modern LSD!

Home-made ale, from barley and oats, was regularly drunk, it was healthier than frequently polluted water. Pollution and infection were far from rare. Bugs and fleas abounded, and flies in the summer were legion, particularly round the ever-present dung heaps and cess pits.

Richard's life was measured by the seasons and the changing demands of rural life. He ploughed in January, sowed seed, tended the land and joined in shearing the manor's sheep in May. He helped wash the animals, then rinse the sheared fleeces before the wool was teased and finally spun on a hand spindle by the women. This coarse, rough, hand-woven wool was made into undergarments, which were doubtless very itchy, (only the wealthier people could afford linen) and everyday outer garments were simple woollen tunics, dyed with vegetable dyes and fastened with clasps and thongs. Sometimes woollen leggings were worn with simple cobbled hide shoes, but often peasants worked barefoot. When Richard had time, he would use a pole lathe to make ash or alderwood beakers and plates for his family's use. In October each year the Sheriff would visit and every boy over the age of twelve would swear an oath of allegiance to the King.

Even in Witanhamm outside events affected life. In 1006 the feared Danes stormed through the Thames valley, burning Reading and Wallingford, lighting beacons as they went. In 1009 they burnt Oxford and plundered the surrounding area. Such disasters must have caused terror and anxiety locally. In 1013, King Swein took hostages in Oxford, brought them to Wallingford and after his death, his brother Cnut had their hands, ears and noses cut off. This brutality would have been talked of with horror in the area.

In 1018 Cnut and the English counsellors met in Oxford to draw up laws for the conduct of the Danes and the English. They vowed to protect their subjects' rights and promote Christianity. This was dependent upon the obedience of the people, who, it would seem, had little alternative but to obey.

Walter Gifford becomes Lord of the Manor

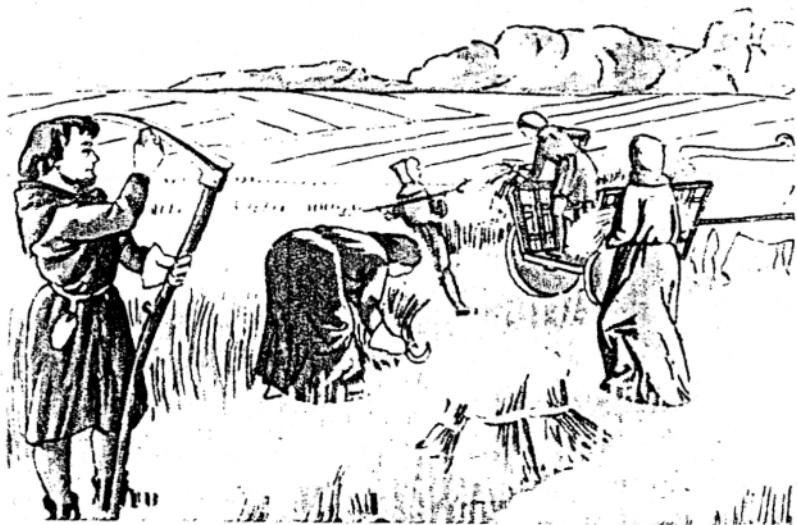
By the time Richard's sons and grandsons were adult, England's fortunes were changing. In 1042 Edward the Confessor had returned to England from his exile in Normandy, and he reigned until his death on Twelfth Night 1066. On the same day Harold was crowned in his stead. Challenging Harold's right to the throne William, Duke of Normandy, invaded England, defeated Harold at Hastings and was duly crowned King. From 1067 until 1070, the French devastated the land on both sides of the Thames, and once again life must have seemed insecure for the inhabitants of Wittenham.

In 1086 this village, together with most others in England, was visited by William's men to investigate his subjects and their property. William wanted to calculate the rents and fees due from each landholder, and to check that none of his barons had seized land unlawfully. Known as Domesday Book, it is a thorough survey of the counties of England, covering the administrative areas called Hundreds and the villages grouped within them.

We learn that Walter Gifford was the Lord of this Manor, which had previously been owned by Queen Edith, the wife of King Edward, and that there were 13 hides (a hide = about 120 acres) and one virgate (about 25 acres). There was land for 16 ploughs and in lordship, 3 ploughs. There were 29 villagers and 16 smallholders with 9 ploughs, also 6 slaves and 163 acres of meadow. In all a value of £20.

Walter, a cousin of King William, was a wealthy man and in 1086 he granted away 51 of his manors, worth £226. After the Norman Conquest the layout of the land was reorganised and the open field system was established. Long Wittenham had two main

large open fields, the Northfield and the Westfield, both names familiar to modern day inhabitants. Each year a manorial court was held when the Lord of the Manor, together with his tenants and farmers, would discuss which crops should be grown where and which land should be set aside for grazing.



In country areas there is always an awareness of natural portents, and so it was in 1100, when folk were awestruck by stories of blood welling from the ground, a sign which heralded the untimely death of William Rufus, and by the sight the following year of a comet, which presaged a huge wind on November 18th, when many trees were uprooted.

Richard's descendants, now adept at working with leather, were saddlers, making harnesses for the lord's horses. With all the other villagers they would have rejoiced and marvelled to see, in 1120, the old wooden Saxon church being replaced by a stone building in which they could worship. They must have wondered at the fact that the stone had been transported all the way from

Caen in France. Even though a village marriage celebration was usually a secular ceremony, the couple would visit the church for a blessing from the priest.

It was a male dominated society. The word wife comes from the Old English word 'wif', to weave, but the gradually changing church started to recognise the importance of the care of children and the proper division of property. One law stated that if a woman left her marriage and took her children, she was entitled to half the property. In 1125, resulting from fraud, there was a fall in the value of money leading to a decree from King Henry that all 'moneyers' should be emasculated and lose their right hands, and one instance of this dire punishment was carried out in Winchester. Similar dreadful tortures were continued under Stephen and, with the Thames as a channel of communication, doubtless word of these atrocities would have filtered through to the villagers of East and West Wittenham.

In 1130 gossip would have been rife over the robust clashes between Abingdon and Wallingford over their respective market rights. Abingdon's thriving market had prospered to the detriment of Wallingford's whose angry townsmen attacked Abingdonians claiming that only beer and grain should be sold there. They were soon sent packing and, despite further protestations, Henry II restored the full market rights to Abingdon. There was some compensation for Wallingford however, for in 1155 a Royal Charter was granted to the town.

In 1164 all Walter Gifford's lands reverted to the Crown, but dues still had to be paid. By 1200 inflation was rife with soaring commodity prices. Things grew worse in 1210 when a virulent sheep disease caused the death of nearly all flocks, with consequent hardship.

Walter of Henley wrote, 'If the sum content of thy barn do answer only three times so much as the seed was, thou gainest nothing by it unless the corn bear a good price'. Generally this was optimistic.

It is not too fanciful to suppose that in 1184 Wittenham was visited by Peter le Porter, a man of substance who had been given, as payment, lands in the village as well as in Milton, Garford and Wootton. As he received an annual allowance from these lands he would doubtless have wished to check on them.

In 1215 two events took place which eventually would filter down to the villagers in Wittenham to affect them to some degree, though having little immediate impact on everyday life.

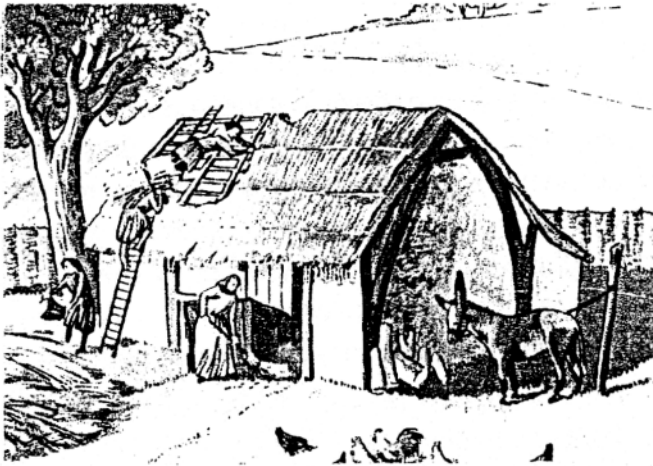
The unpopular King John, who had tried to intimidate the powerful barons by holding their sons hostage and also extracting high taxes, had been forced to sign a list of promises which we now know as Magna Carta. The 39th clause stated that 'no free man shall be arrested, or imprisoned, or exiled or in any way ruined, except by lawful judgement or by the law of the land'. He also ruled that Jews should not be persecuted. At the same time, in Rome, the Fourth Lateran Council was held, at which the doctrine of the Eucharist (transubstantiation) was defined. This Papal legislation would be reflected in all churches after a while.

In 1267 a law was passed fixing bread prices which was meant to be fair to everyone. In 1272 Long Wittenham, with other lands, was acquired by the Clare family. The Clares were Earls of Gloucester and although the village changed hands many times over the next three centuries it was commonly known as Earl's Wittenham.

Earl's Wittenham

By 1300 the Saddler family were able to profit by their skills. An unskilled labourer on average would earn 1d - 1½d a day, a daunting prospect when shoes cost 2d, cloth 1s - 1s 6d a yard and candles 1½d - 2d a pound.

Wittenham was now looking rather different as there were more substantial cottages built on the cruck construction, and we in the year 2000 are still able to appreciate a superb example in the village. The earlier huts had a ridge pole propped up at either end by posts, with sloping poles providing a tent like structure which would be thatched, and these were neither durable nor spacious.



The later box frame and cruck frame methods of building provided a stronger timber framework. The spaces between the main trusses were strengthened with upright oak studs to which woven hazel or blackthorn branches (wattle) could be nailed to carry the plaster-like 'daub' of mud or mud strengthened with straw or animal hair.

It is an interesting point that in monasteries and abbeys, such as the one at Abingdon, monks frequently added their tonsured hair to add bulk to their daub! One hopes that not too many of the monks were bald! Timber was plentiful in this area and often profitable. During the fourteenth century a good oak tree was worth the equivalent of today's £75.

The church would by now have been enlarged to include a north aisle. The north side of a church was considered unlucky, so burials were on the south side and consequently it was easier to build an extension to the north so as not to disturb the graves. However St. Mary's had also the now completed chapel on the south side, which may be a memorial to Gilbert the Red, Lord of the Manor who died in 1295, and which contains the small stone effigy of a Crusader.

In 1309 there was a good harvest, but there was acute famine in 1315-1317 when the harvest was calamitous and cattle perished from a murrain (cattle disease). Life was so difficult at this time that any fines incurred were waived, and for farmers the profits from wool would have seemed enviable. Indeed, one pamphleteer wrote, 'who will maintain husbandry which is the nurse of every county as long as sheep bring so great a gain ... make cheese, carry it to market when one poor soul may by keeping sheep get him a greater profit'.

Local turmoil would again have engaged the attentions of Wittenham folk in 1327 when there was furious rioting in Abingdon, with the townspeople rising up against the Abbey and its market rights (again). In the fighting, buildings were burnt, monks were dragged from the church and others drowned crossing the river. The monastery was looted and deemed to have lost goods to the value of £20 000. The Sheriff finally restored order

and the rebel ringleaders were punished, with twelve hanged at Wallingford.

In 1337 the French posed a threat to the wool trade and Edward III prepared for a campaign with funds from wool. Abingdon was, with Reading, the collecting centre for Berkshire's quota of wool and this would have included an offering from Wittenham.

The population of the country had grown steadily since the estimated one and three quarter million at the time of the Conquest and stood at over five million at the beginning of the fourteenth century. As the population grew, with the attendant problems of feeding, some solution was found from taking clearings from waste or uncultivated land at the edges of village fields, a procedure called 'assarting'. These assarts were of some help. The Lord of the Manor however had mixed feelings about them for even though he appreciated the increased income, he also valued the woodlands. Assarting therefore needed official approval in the form of a charter.



In any village wood was a valuable resource and had to be managed with care. Timber was coppiced, cut at ground level to produce long thin branches, pollarded and felled in ordered rotation. Doubtless the relative merits of witch-hazel, ash or elm as against yew, for making the long bow would have been discussed.

Archery was practised in the countryside and town and the skill of English bowmen led to the victory at Crecy in 1346. Far away as such battles must have seemed, trouble was soon to strike nearer home. Disastrous times lay ahead.

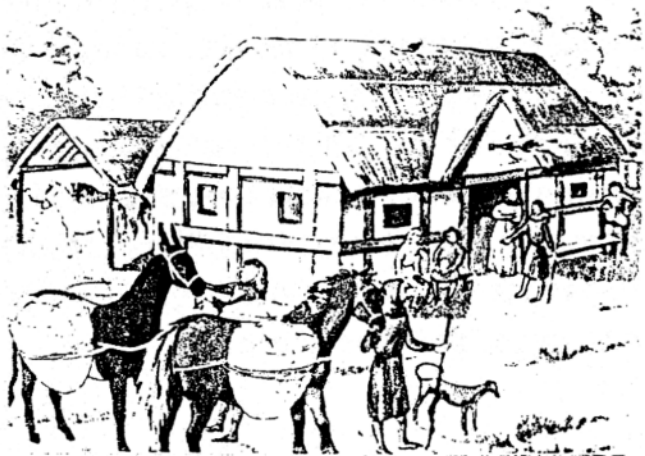
In 1348 Wittenham would have suffered together with Oxford and the countryside around, when there was great mortality from plague and pestilence at the time of the Black Death. These epidemics flourished in the unsanitary conditions of the time, made worse by a mild winter which encouraged the increase of rat fleas and the spread of infection. This devastated the population and as many as one in five died.

Many peasants increased their land holdings when they took over the property of those who had died, and labourers who had escaped disease found that they were in demand and so could ask for higher wages. Landlords were worried that their rents would be greatly reduced and so in Edward III's reign, in 1351, a Statute of Labourers was created in an effort to keep wages down. This stated that workers should be paid the same penny a day as before the plague, and if they left their place of work to look for better paid employment, they would be branded with an F on their forehead as a sign of their falsehood.

Needless to say, this was very unpopular, as was the later Poll Tax of 1377. It was ever thus. Resentment, anger and a sense of unfairness grew in rural communities and Wittenham families would have shared in the general unrest and dissatisfaction. It is doubtful though, whether any local people actually took part in the violent culmination of anger following a third Poll Tax in 1381, the Peasants Revolt. Had anyone been indicted, at least they would have been able to understand the language of the court, for since 1362 Norman French had been replaced by English.

English too, had replaced Latin in the Translation of the Bible, attributed to John Wyclif. His views that the truth lay in the Bible rather than in biased clergy's accounts were regarded as the beginning of a threat to the established order of things. It was surely dangerous if low-born men started to think and judge for themselves. Henry IV was merciless against Wyclif's followers, the Lollards, and in Oxford some colleges built protective walls to shield their students from heretical ideas.

Such upheavals would not greatly alter the life in Wittenham, but probably more impact would have come from the introduction, from Holland, of hopped beer in 1400! At first, when hops were grown and beer made, it was not popular because the taste was bitter compared with the traditional ale, but it kept better and so less frequent brewing was required. Even so its acceptance took many years. Most villages in the 1400s had alewives, often widows, operating from ordinary cottages and selling home-brewed ale. When the beer was ready they would hang an ale-stick outside to advertise the brew. They could be fined if their standards fell below those set by the village ale taster, a much sought-after feudal post!



In 1416 the main road to Gloucester and South Wales was diverted from Wallingford through Abingdon. With more travellers and pedlars the villagers would gradually have heard news of the victory over the French at Agincourt in 1415, and perhaps even rumours of a strange French girl soldier called Joan burnt by the English at the stake several years later.

By the mid 1400s, labour service had largely died out and villages were mostly populated by the families of hired labourers and tenant farmers. The latter was usually a 'copyholder', someone who held a copy of his land title, taken from the manor rolls, and who paid an annual rent to the Lord of the Manor. Unlike his neighbour, a freeholder, the copyholder had no actual security of tenure, but in practice both his labour and the produce from his ploughlands were valuable, and so he was generally safe from eviction.

Wittenham men must have watched with interest the building of two new bridges across the Thames, one at Culham and one at Abingdon. Some more adventurous souls might have seen the completed New College buildings in Oxford and marvelled. Gossip from London would have included mention of Caxton's new fangled printing press in 1476.

Changes were afoot. The manorial lords, bishops and abbots who had been dominant in the pattern of patronage were now joined by colleges and wealthy townsfolk. However some things had a disturbingly familiar ring. A manuscript in the Bodleian Library tells how, after 1475, 'there fell a great disease in England called the 'stych' from which much people died suddenly. Also another disease reigned after that, called the 'fflyx' (flux) that never was-seen in England before, and people died hugely of it for three successive years, in one place or another'.

Despite all these vicissitudes the life of the Wittenham inhabitants, including the descendants of long forgotten Richard, was following much the same pattern as he had known, determined by the seasonal demands of the land. The village would have had a few more cattle and more cows' milk was drunk - it was easier to milk one cow than several sheep! Curds, whey and buttermilk were included in the diet and more root vegetables featured. Manorial groups now encompassed those with peasant and farming backgrounds and table manners were carefully listed for young people. For example, the pupil was told not to drink from a shared cup with his mouth full, nor pick his teeth with his knife nor wipe his mouth with a tablecloth. He should not gnaw bones or scratch his head at table and should clean his spoon properly and not leave it in a shared dish. Some Wittenham residents doubtless benefitted from such good advice!

At least once a week, in accordance with the church's teaching, dishes had to be chosen which excluded meat. Not a difficulty for most villagers. In Lent eggs and other dairy foods were forbidden. A separate menu had to be provided for the priest, for the Rule of St. Benedict forbade the eating of 'the meat of quadrupeds'.

Wittenham happily escaped some of the ravages suffered by other areas of England, where the battles of the Wars of the Roses took place. These resulted in fields trampled, livestock killed or driven off and a depleted agricultural force. Political manoeuvres had little direct impact, but the battle at Bosworth Field in 1485, when the last Plantagenet king, Richard III was killed, heralded the beginning of the Tudor era and of actual recorded history of the descendants of the first Richard, who were still living in Wittenham. But by now the family had the surname Sadler.

Enter Sir Thomas White

On 11th April in the second year of the reign of King Edward VI (1548), there was great excitement in the village when important men arrived from London. They had been sent by the King himself to make a survey of all the lands and tenants of Long Wittenham.

The King had become Lord of the Manor some years earlier when the last Earl to own the Manor died without an heir. Now the King wanted to sell the Manor to raise money. This was not a survey in the sense of measuring and mapping but was a verbal testimony of local witnesses. The King's men gathered their information '....by the oath of the tenants, namely William Goodman, Lawrence Gilbert, Robert Webb, Nicholas Felde, William Mullens, John Fynymore, Thomas Barne, Reginald Childe, John Day and other trustworthy [men] sworn as a body for this purpose'.

There were nine farmers with freehold land, each paying rents of under 9 shillings a year. Robert Webb said that he paid only 1d and one red rose for 'a barn and one close adjoining.....', while William Mullens paid a pound of pepper every year for his 'one virgate of land with appurtenances (barns, sheds and such like) to which belong one close of half an acre and 16 acres of land in the Westefeld and 3 acres of meadow in Stalls mede.....' He did not farm it himself but sub-let to William Stallage.

Fourteen other leaseholders are mentioned including the Churchwardens who paid 1d a year for 'one house called the Churchhouse'.

Richard Sawyer, they told the officials, was the biggest landholder. He held some land by copyhold and some as demesne

land, that is manorial farm land which he managed on behalf of the absentee Lord of the Manor, in this case the King. His annual rents totalled 149s 9d but he would get some of that back from his tenants.

He held the manorial farm called Lowches, the ‘messuage’ or house for which is today called The Manor (previously Willingtons) and also the ‘dwelling house at the mill of Witnam’ which was a water mill, long since demolished. Also the house called Bailiffs and land known as Bradleys, all of which were by the River Thames or on the eyots, closes in the centre of the village plus many acres in the open fields.

The customary tenants or copyholders held the land for a fixed term of one or two named lives, usually the copyholder and his wife or his son or daughter. A fine would be paid when the lease came to an end and had to be renewed.

There were no Sadlers mentioned in the survey. Maybe the family's fortunes were at a low ebb so they had no land of their own but worked for others. They would still have had grazing rights and would have been allowed to collect furzes for firewood on the common lands.

The common land is described in the survey as ‘....a certain common pasture called Long Wittenham Common on which the farmers of Lowches aforesaid and the tenants there, have shares with the whole vill of West Wittenham or Long Wittenham, namely every single one of the tenants of every virgate of land which he holds of the lord, 3 oxen and 40 sheep’. There was also common meadow for 23 horses.



As always farmers needed enough land so that even in years of dearth there was something left over to sell. If there was no surplus, the only thing to do was to sell their land. In the end the only option left may have been to join the bands of vagrants who roamed the Tudor countryside.

Of the land accounted for in the survey made that day, nearly a thousand acres, by far the majority was arable land used for growing crops. there were meadows and cows and sheep were kept, but this was not the main land use.

The sixteenth century saw many changes, but perhaps the one that most affected ordinary people were the religious lurches of Henry VIII and subsequently of his children Mary and Elizabeth. Henry VIII's desperation to have a male heir led to his divorce of Catherine of Aragon so he could marry Anne Boleyn. This forced the break with the Pope's authority and led to the Act of Supremacy which made the English monarch head of the Church of England. Many hundreds, including Sir Thomas More, were executed because they would not accept this change. Four hundred monasteries were dissolved by an Act of Parliament of 1536.

For some however, those for whom the power of Rome was oppressive and distant, the change to the simpler, Protestant ideas,

had not come soon enough. John French of Long Witan, had been persecuted in 1530 because ‘he beleevved not the body of Christ, flesh, blood and bone, to bee in the Sacrament’ ‘that hee was not confessed to any Priest of a long time’ and he believed ‘that Priests had not power to absolve from sinnes’.

Mary, Henry's daughter by Catherine, remained faithful to the Pope and when she succeeded her brother Edward VI in 1553 it was all change again. Mary's ambition was reunion with Rome. To this end she had the Protestant bishops Latimer and Ridley, and the frail Archbishop Cranmer, burnt at the stake in Oxford. Mary reigned for five troubled years but failed to reverse the Reformation.

Locally a big change took place between 1554 and 1556 when Thomas White bought the manors (several smaller manors such as Denhams, Pudseys, de la Pooles and Strangeways which had gradually became one) of Long Wittenham to give to his new foundation of St John's College in Oxford. From then on until quite recently the rents financed the college and even now the President and Scholars of St John's are Lord of what still remains of the Manor of Long Wittenham.

In 1558 Queen Elizabeth I came to the throne and returned England to a Protestant realm. It was not easy as all the bishops and most of the people were still Catholics, but Elizabeth succeeded in reconciling the two sides by encouraging religious tolerance and compromise.

The Rise of the Sadler Family

By the end of the sixteenth century the Sadlers are back, establishing themselves as farmers. Richard Sadler is a husbandman, farming 3 yard lots (about 90 acres), mostly in the Westfelde, held by copyhold.

The fields are still the great open fields divided into furlongs, with each farmer having strips or 'lands' of an 'acre' or perhaps half an 'acre' in the different furlongs. When Richard walked or rode round his farm he visited furlongs called Woleland, Lampas, Bene, Picked Lands, the Hill, High Downe (he kept his sheep here), Grenediche, Little Lake, Greate Lake, Paradise, Midwell, Buttocke, Long Lands, Wethery, Meare, Briony Land and Stales Croft. He also had meadow ground in Stales Mead, Shreddowels and Westmore. Richard was not under any obligation to grow the same crops as his neighbours on all the lands that he farmed. He was free to work out his own rotation. A favourite rotation was wheat, fallow, wheat or barley, with sometimes a crop of peas, beans or vetches sown on some of the strips between the two cereal crops.

The farming year was much as it had been since the millennium. If there is repetition it is because life in Long Wittenham was governed by the seasons and the weather. There had been social, political and religious changes but there were still crops to be sown and harvested, animals to be cared for.

When Richard Sadler died in 1590 the sum total of all his possessions was £86 16s 2d, a typical amount for a husbandman of that time. He had two chests, one of which is later described as a 'great chest' and becomes a family heirloom. In this he kept all his important documents such as his leases and his will. He had not been able to afford one of the newer box-framed houses

and his house was still a typical cruck-framed dwelling with an open hall at one end which served as the living and dining room. But the open hearth had been replaced by a fireplace with a chimney. The other end was divided into an 'inner chamber' and a kitchen with a loft above which could be used as a storeroom for cheeses and bacon. Outside there was a barn, a stable and a malting house where Richard's wife, Alice, would brew ale for the family.

His main assets were his crops: hay, barley and wheat and his animals; 7 kye, 4 bullocks, 5 geldings and mares with a 'yereling colt' and over 100 sheep. His son, William, took over the farm. Later, William's son Richard continued to farm. Richard's brother, John, also leased land, though a rather smaller holding so that Richard was always better off and therefore had to pay more in taxes.

In 1603, Elizabeth I died and the Stuart reign began. The population of England was growing fast. In 1601 it was 4.1 million and by 1641, 5 million. More grain was needed to feed the extra mouths. It was a great opportunity for farmers to grow in wealth and status. Enterprising farmers with enough land experimented with different crop rotations and new fertilisers and more land was taken into cultivation. The Sadlers took advantage of the situation and worked hard. By 1672 both Richard and John were no longer ordinary husbandmen but now called themselves yeomen.

Yeomen often had more land than husbandmen and employed more labourers either living with the family or hired as day labourers. They could dream of more pewter in their cupboards, maybe even silver, of stronger barns and bigger houses, perhaps even university education for their sons and good marriages for their daughters.

Others with less land were not so fortunate. In years of poor harvest they simply did not have enough surplus to sell and could lose their land, ending up as labourers struggling to feed their family. They had to move around to find work and their children left home in their early teens to go into service as resident farm servants. About £11-£12 a year difference in income and out-goings were all it took to keep going on a modest scale. However, many yeomen did far better than this.

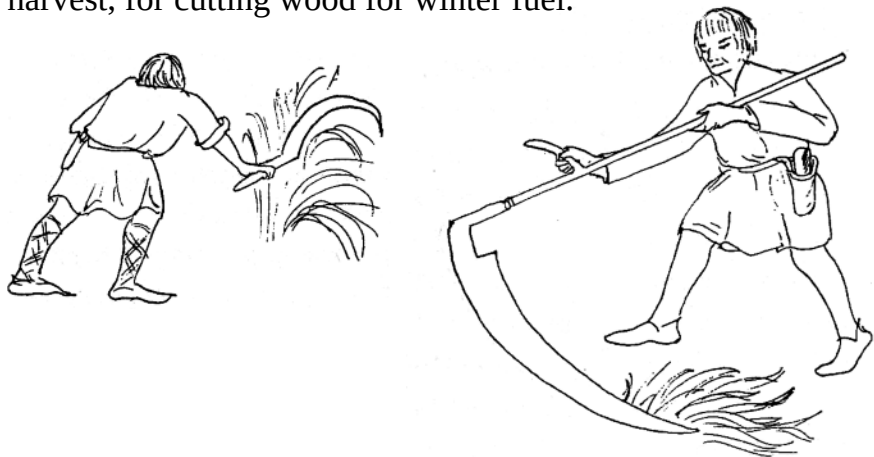
Robert Loder from Harwell, a farming friend of the Sadlers, kept meticulous accounts of his farm from 1610-1620. In 1619 he made his biggest yearly profit of £292 10s 2d, a considerable sum which probably made him a 'wealthy yeoman'.

A yeoman with several sons to help in the fields and daughters to help in the house may not need extra help except at harvest time. If hired help was needed, a live-in servant would have to be paid between 20s and 50s a year, if apparel was provided, 3s-10s more if it were not. Ordinary labourers could be hired between spring and Michaelmas (September 29th) for three to sixpence per day with their meat and drink included, or six or seven pence a day without. From Michaelmas to Lady Day (March 25th) wages were lower still, only two to four pence with food, six to eight pence without.

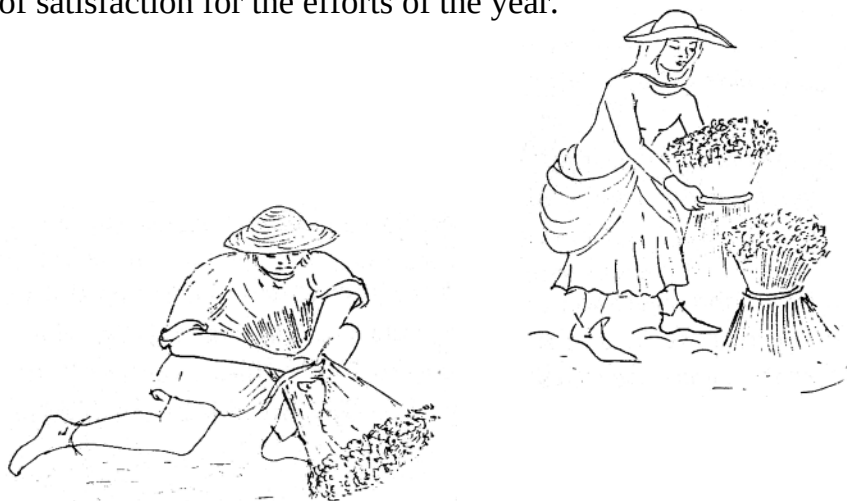
As in earlier times the life of everyone was governed by the seasons and the weather. Each season had its special labours. In January and February there were hedges and trees to set, fruit trees to prune and timber to be lopped. The lands had to be manured, ploughed and harrowed ready for planting the barley, oats, wheat and vetches which were sown in the spring months of March, April and May. Gardens were planted, ditches scoured and coppices cleaned. May was also weaning time for the shepherds and a month when the sheep had to be watched closely

for signs of rot, especially if had been a wet season. In June they were washed and sheared. It was also the time for liming, marling and manuring and for the summer ploughing.

July was haymaking time and if there was a brief lull before harvest, for cutting wood for winter fuel.



August was harvest time, the busiest time of the year. Extra help would be hired and everyone worked long hours in the fields. But it was also a happy time if the harvest was good with a feeling of satisfaction for the efforts of the year.



No sooner was the harvest safely stored before it was time for the rye to be sown and after that the winter wheat, the planting of which was finished by November. Autumn was the time for the fair at Abingdon, a time to buy and sell stock and surplus farm produce and also to hire labourers for the coming year.



There was always threshing to be done and this, plus the spreading of straw as dung, ploughing and planting of beans and repair of tools, kept everyone busy. A few days of respite were taken over Christmas but then it was time to plough, harrow and start all over again.



Peas, beans and pulses were used for forage and building up the soil. There were orchards of cherries, damsons, pears and apples. Bees were kept to pollinate the blossom. In 1609 William Sadler's 'ten flocke of bees' were valued of 26s 8d. Cows were kept but feeding them through the winter was always difficult.

The Archers (in the Radio 4 programme) face the same problem today. In farming some things never change! Horses as well as cows were used as draught animals but only the wealthy kept horses to ride as they were expensive to feed through the winter. Pigs and poultry were kept in the cottage backyards, but the pigs were often slaughtered, smoked and stored as bacon for the winter. No doubt the building of the huge dovecote at the Manor farm caused a stir and a little envy. Fresh pigeons' eggs were much sought after and the pigeons themselves could be turned into a tasty dinner. The manure too, would help keep the fields productive.

The cereal crops were sold and sent down to London where there was a growing market. Between 1540 and 1635 the Thames was gradually made navigable between London and Oxford with convenient wharves at Burcot and Sutton Courtenay.

Newer methods of farming benefited from bigger areas of land and in many parishes the land was gradually enclosed, that is, divided into fields separated by hedges and ditches. There had been minor changes sanctioned by the manorial court. In 1578/9 a licence was granted 'for the tenants to enclose certayne parcells of theyre land in one furlong upon the other syde of the highway called the crofte'.

But in Long Wittenham enclosure on any significant scale was slow in coming and it was not until 1809 that an Act of Parliament allowed the enclosure that was to change Long Wittenham radically not only physically but socially and economically as well.

Civil War

However in 1642 other matters were exercising the minds of Wittenham folk. All men over 18 were required to sign an oath to confirm they would uphold the Protestant faith. John Sadler and William Strange, as Overseers of the Poor, along with David Childe. and William French, the Churchwardens, were charged with getting everyone to sign. Only William Joyner failed to do this 'the reason is his absence before any notice was given him of it'. Of the hundred or so signing, only fifteen, including both Richard and John Sadler, were able to write their own names. The rest put their mark. It would be a long time before the level of literacy improved.

Assuming there were a similar number of women in the village, there were at least 200 adults. So a population of about 300 may be surmised, possibly more. William Prowse was the vicar. He was originally a Devon man but came to Long Wittenham because he was Fellow of Exeter College, which had the advowson of the church. That is, the appointment of vicars. His descendants lived in Church Farm as gentleman farmers right up until the 1880s.

After months of uncertainty and hot debate, the divisions between King and Parliament became irreconcilable and in late August 1642 the King raised his royal standard in Nottingham. This signalled the formal declaration of war against Parliament. It was a miserable time with neighbour set against neighbour and brother against brother.

As ever, Long Wittenham was near the centre of much of the action. Abingdon was sympathetic to the King. The castle at Wallingford was hastily repaired and refurbished as a Royal fortress. It withstood a lengthy siege by the Roundheads before being one of the last Royalist strongholds to fall. In Long

Wittenham it was always best to be as neutral as possible. Best to keep one's opinions to oneself. Both sides needed provisions so it was advisable to keep in with both sides, hoping that the damage to the crops and livestock would not be too great. Best not to tell the King's men, poking about in the church looking for lead, that Oliver Cromwell was sitting under a mulberry tree at the Old Farmhouse. Best just to hope they would not find the lead font which the churchwardens had disguised by encasing it in wood. Best just to keep on with the everyday chores.

War is expensive. The garrison at Wallingford had to be maintained. A tax was collected by the High Collector of Taxes 'towards the mayntenance of the forces rayseed by Authority of Parliament for the service of England, Ireland and Scotland according to the Act of Parliament bearing the date the sixe and twentieth day of November last past'. For the period 25 March - 29 September 1651 Long Wittenham had to pay £10, and Little Wittenham £4, towards the county total of £1,866 13s 4d. This was paid direct to the garrison at Wallingford. There was much discontent when the High Collector was round again, only four months later demanding yet more money.

In January 1649, England became a republic for the first and only time. The monarchy, the House of Lords and the Anglican Church were all abolished. However, the great experiment of republicism did not last. It died with Oliver Cromwell in 1658. Although Cromwell's son, Richard took over it was only eighteen months before the monarchy, in the person of Charles II, was restored.

Changing Times

With the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, there were signs of an emerging democratic system of government. By the end of the century, the first political parties appeared.

But first there were debts to pay. Large sums of money were needed to pay off the Army and the debts incurred by Charles II whilst in exile. Usually it was land and goods that were taxed but now a new, extremely unpopular and short-lived tax was dreamed up by the Cavalier Parliament of 1662. Every householder who owned property worth more than 20s a year or more was liable to an annual payment of 2s a year for every fireplace or stove in his house. Returns were made by the constable who could search the house to count the hearths if he was not satisfied by the householder's declaration.

Such direct taxation and intrusion into people's homes was met by passive non-payment resulting in a far lower sum collected than had been estimated, so that in 1689 the attempt at full collection was abandoned and the tax repealed. Twenty eight people in Long Wittenham are named as paying the tax, with most having only one, two or at most three qualifying hearths. Thirty seven households were too poor to pay.

Richard Sadler had just one taxable fireplace. But on the whole he was feeling content. He had a good house with a malt-house, land in the Northfield and other parts of the village and could graze his cows sheep on the common land.

By far the biggest house with eight taxable hearths belonged to James Jennens. The Jennens family had come from Harwell in the early 1600s and established themselves as the local gentry,

living in Willingtons, now the Manor, for over a century until the house and their position in village society passed to the Haywards.

The wealth of the Jennens family is clear from the will of William Jennens Esq, James' grandson, of 1708. The house had a hall, a great parlour, a little parlour, a study, nursery, three other downstairs rooms and at least five upstairs rooms, plus a kitchen, servant hall and pantry, 'mealehouse' and 'washouse', larder and dairy, servants' bedchamber and cellars. No wonder there were all those fireplaces. Perhaps there were just too many, for that building was severely damaged by fire and the present house is not the one described.

The value of William's possessions is nearly £700 including £64 10s in plate. But that is only the house, contents and his crops. By far the major asset is the lease of his estate which is sold to his brothers and sisters for £4,000. The estate accounts are complicated with monies owed and rents paid over the next ten years or so whilst the executors run the affairs of the late William. Payments are made to a butcher, goldsmith, tailors, a chandler, mercer, hatter, collar maker, wigmaker, to a Mr Freeman of Oxford for wines and a Mr Howell for the children's board. Rents and other monies are collected from leases in Long Wittenham, Harwell, Marsh Baldon, Toot Baldon, and Burcot as well as from the sale of timber and crops. Poignantly, payments are made to doctors and people looking after John Jennens, (probably William's brother) who seems to need full-time care which includes bleeding.

Until the Civil War, the main industry, employing over 80% of the population, had been agriculture. By the second half of the seventeenth century a new industry, coal, was gathering momentum.

Although it did not impinge on the local scene, the long term consequences of coal and industrialisation could not be ignored, even in Long Wittenham.

Queen Anne's accession to the throne in 1702 and the wars in Europe had very little effect on Long Wittenham. Richard Sadler and William Jennens heard news from the travelling pedlars of the Duke of Marlborough's great victories at Blenheim and Ramillies but these scarcely touched village life. Agriculture was improving - yields of wheat and barley were good and the best barley could be used to make the beer that was still the main drink of the population. They heard talk of the new drinks of tea and coffee being popular amongst the lords and ladies of London but it would be many years before they were drunk in Wittenham.

The Church continued to play an important part in the life of the villagers. The churchwardens, who were elected each year, were responsible for the upkeep of the church and paying the workmen for repairs. In 1721 they paid 1s 11d for 'half a hundred tils and a bushel of lim'; in 1723 it was 3s 6d for 'worke, bords and nails'. 5s 6d was paid in 1716 for a 'flagon and platt' and a few years later a rather grand cushion was made for the pulpit costing eleven shillings. The money to cover this expenditure was raised by means of a tythe (tax) levied on the land-holding villagers. In 1716 the tythe was 1s 9d per yard land: William Prowse paid 19s 3d, 'ye widdow Lovegrove' 14s and Richard Sadler £1 0s 11d, the highest bill. During the years 1690 - 1733 for which we have accounts, the rate varied from sixpence to four shillings and in 1711 rose to 11s 6d when the church was probably re-roofed.

The vicar at this time was Thomas Farr, who did not live in the village but in Horspath. A resident of there made very derogatory remarks about his six children being wild and extravagant 'he having not taken good care of their education; The eldest proved

a whore and the other two daughters also proved little better'. The clergy were allowed several livings and were not obliged to live in the parish until the nineteenth century. Often the second son of the local squire took the living but there were many poor clergy with salaries of around £50 per annum. The non-resident (pluralist) vicars often employed a curate to run the parish for well under £50.

A notable Wittenham vicar was Stephen Demaimbray who was of Huguenot descent. He was offered the living in 1794 but it is unlikely he ever came to Wittenham as he was astronomer to George III from 1782 and after resigning this living in 1799 became Chaplain to the King at Kew and at St. James' Palace. He was one of the first promoters of the allotment system and author of 'The Poor Man's Friend'.

The vicar who succeeded Demainbray was probably the most notorious. Thomas Smyth Glubb came to the parish in August 1799 when the living was valued at £80 per annum. He was the first incumbent under the new law that required vicars to live in their parishes, but he still rented a room-at Exeter College. In 1804 he was elected Senior Bursar of Exeter and as well he was managing the Rectorial farm in Wittenham and renting other College land, probably not farming any of it very efficiently. He obviously got into debt both with the college (for meals and wine) and with farm suppliers (for ploughing, thatching, blacksmithing etc) and was using money paid to the bursary by other Fellows and students for their living expenses (known as 'bottels') to pay off some of his own debts. This was eventually discovered by the College authorities and in 1822 Glubb pledged 'not to continue to farm the estate' and resigned the living. He died a year later in Devon.

The villagers meanwhile had continued with their daily task of making a living and feeding themselves. Their diet had not changed much over the centuries. They would grow cabbage, carrots, turnips, sprouts, potatoes and salads on their plots. The average weekly wage of a labourer in Berkshire in 1787 was 8s 6d. With this he could buy flour, yeast, 1lb bacon, sugar, butter or lard, candles and tea. The bacon was boiled up several times with vegetables: the gravy from this with bread or potatoes made a 'mess' for the children. Supper for the adults would be no more than bread and lard. The wife would do seasonal work or sewing to bring in about sixpence a week. A few cottagers would keep fowl or a pig and the sale of any surplus meat would help pay for major expenses such clothes or shoes. The very poor families had to 'make do and mend' as few could afford new clothes.

The eighteenth century had seen a rise in the population from six to ten million. There had been a 400% increase in cotton output and a four fold increase in coal mining. The steam engine had been invented and the Royal Academy started. The first edition of 'The Times' had been printed, Australia had been discovered, the American colonies had been lost, and the French had had a Revolution. In Long Wittenham all these would have been known and commented on. But the impact of these events was not really noticeable.

Troubled Times

In 1793 England went to war with France (yet again). A few young men probably joined the local regiment and went off to fight, but it was the rise in the cost of living that would have affected the residents of Long Wittenham most.

In the previous thirty years the average wage was less than ten shillings a week but the price of a quarten loaf (about 4lbs) was steady at between sixpence and eightpence according to the harvest yields. Between 1795 and 1801 the price jumped from sevenpence to one shilling and threepence farthing as the price of wheat rose from 84 shillings to 136 shillings a quarter due to the lack of imports on which the country had become dependent and the need to feed a growing industrial population. Parliament tried to alleviate the problem by proposing that bread could be made by adding barley to the wheat or using inferior quality grain. People were encouraged to eat more potatoes - easier for the villagers because they could grow their own. The gentry were asked to cut their bread consumption so that there would be more for the poor and many recipes appeared in the press. Jackson's Oxford Journal of 1795 suggests abolishing gravy soups and second courses, not buying starch and destroying all useless dogs. The poor were advised to avoid drink and dog-keeping, go to church and be contented. Soup kitchens were set up in some villages and at Bampton flour was supplied at reduced price to the local bakers so that 8lb loaves could be supplied for one shilling.

However, all these measures did not stop riots in some parts. In Burford a load of corn was seized to stop it being sent out of the parish. In other places mobs, often women, forced farmers to accept their price for the corn. However such attacks were not

common although there was an undercurrent of unrest throughout the war years.

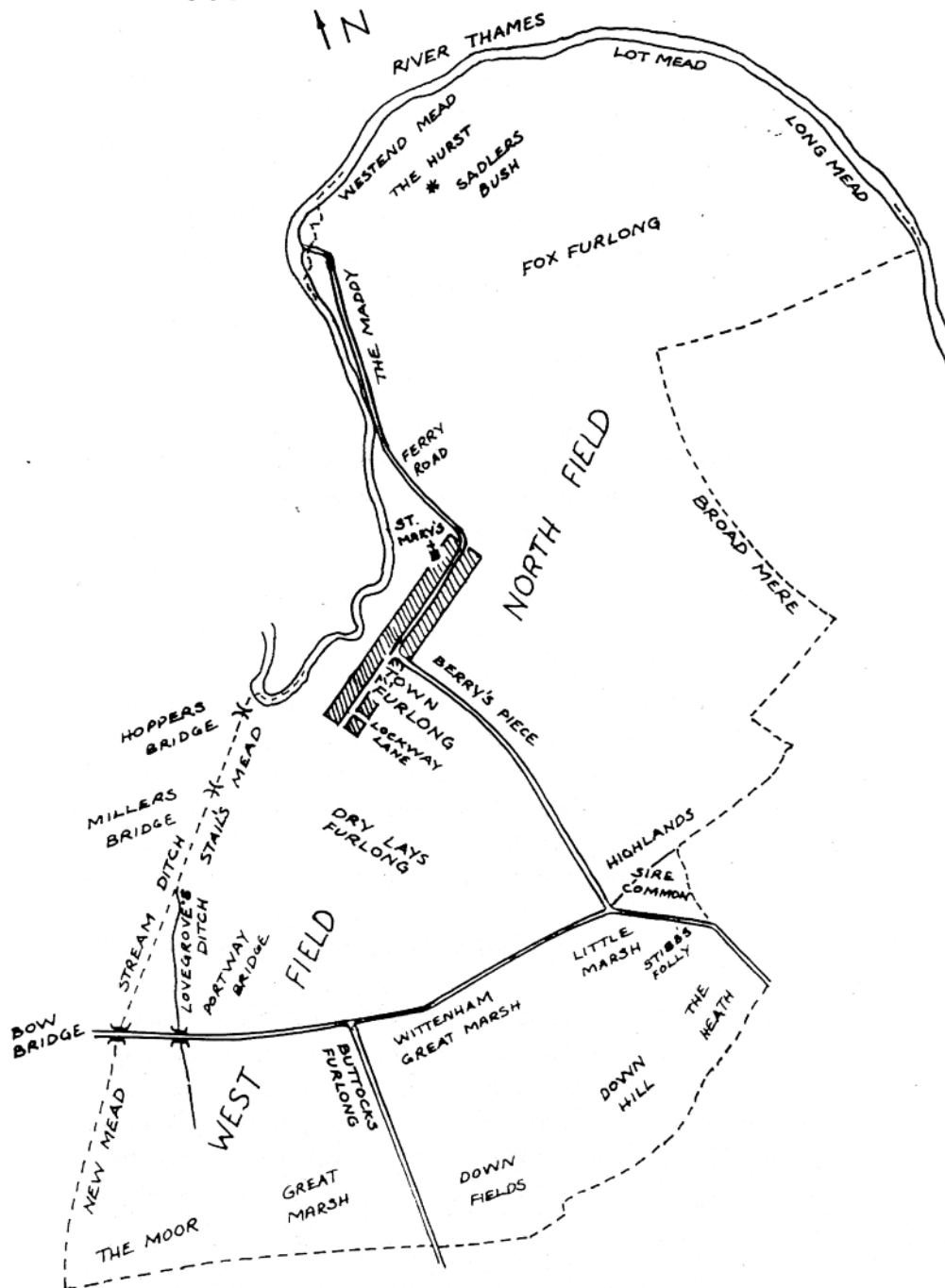
This unrest increased in Long Wittenham in the early 1800s due to talk of land enclosure. The enclosure movement started because of the need to feed the increasing workforce more efficiently, but it brought unequal benefits. It added to the wealth of the landlords and landowners and large tenant farmers but the ordinary labourers and small farmers lost out. Not every villager could prove that he had a legal claim to his strips of land or his right to graze the common. If he could, he often could not afford to fence it in as required by law and so sold it to a neighbour or he was given money in lieu of land which was insufficient to buy new land and so became landless.

As we have heard earlier, the strips worked by the Long Wittenham villagers were spread between the Northfield and the Westfield. Some of the strips were quite small, perhaps only a quarter of an acre, so it was difficult to introduce newfangled ideas. There were also many meadows (Long Mead, Lot Mead, Westend Mead, Stales Mead, for example) and the 25 acres of heath and commons where the villagers were entitled to collect wood and furze and graze their stock. It seems that the impetus for enclosing the Wittenham lands came from St. John's College as Lords of the Manor, Exeter College as the church patron, the current vicar Thomas Smyth Glubb, William Hayward and Thomas Lovegrove who owned or leased considerable amounts of land in the parish.

The 'Act for allotting Lands in the Manor and Parish of Long Wittenham in the County of Berks' was passed on 20 May 1809. Thomas Wyatt of Wargrave, John Davis of Bloxham and John Allen of Great Hendred were appointed commissioners to oversee the valuing and division of the land. Among the other claimants

LONG WITTENHAM PARISH

1800



to enclosed land were James Prowse, Joseph Moulden, John and Richard Sadler, Joseph and James Hewett and some two dozen others including five women, Elizabeth Stevens, Mary Butler, Ann Field, Mary Godfrey and Hannah Surman. The church did very well out of enclosure: the opportunity was taken to convert tithes from kind to land - 190 acres for Exeter College and 164 acres for the Vicar. Every other landowner had to give up a proportion of his land towards these amounts, which was not popular.

After this enclosure, agriculture went into a period of decline. There was a continuing low price for corn and farmers cut both farmworkers' wages and the number of men employed. Big farmers invested money in the new threshing machines to cut the cost of harvest but this led to riots in 1830. Known as the Captain Swing Riots, they started in August in Kent and Sussex, where mobs burnt or broke up machinery, and by November had reached Berkshire. There was rioting in Crowmarsh and Benson. On 23 November between thirty and forty men gathered in Burcot and then moved to Clifton Hampden where Mr Latham's threshing machine was smashed. The next night there was an attempt to create a riot in Appleford and it is hard not to believe that Wittenham boys were not involved in some of these activities, especially against Latham who had a local man, Ben Stevens, sent to prison a few years earlier for poaching. Many of the rioters were caught and severely punished: some were hanged or transported to Australia.

After 1850 life for farmers and agricultural labourers improved. The factories in the big towns were mass-producing machinery and items such as drainage pipes, the use of fertilisers was improved and selective cattle breeding was producing better milkers and beef stock. The gradual introduction of cultivating and harvesting machinery meant more ground could be covered

in the seasons when time was important, though this meant that some workers lost their jobs and there were many ‘freelance’ agricultural labourers roaming the country picking-up casual work where they could. Agriculture fell back into depression in 1875 and by the 1881 census there were 100,000 fewer farm workers than ten years earlier. Some of these displaced men migrated to the towns to find employment in industry and others went to the colonies to start a completely new life. Richard and Caroline Smith (nee Thatcher), both from well-established Long Wittenham families, left England soon after their marriage in 1867 to start a new life in Vermont, USA. Thomas Tame the youngest child of Thomas and Eliza, baptised in 1874, emigrated as a young man and found work in a copper mine in Australia.

The Clutterbuck Years

A study of three Wittenham farming families reflects these times. Our Sadler family's fortunes remained constant. John, a descendant of the seventeenth century John and Richard, and then his son James, farmed 95 acres. They lived in the house called Sadlers from where his sisters, Martha and Naomi, also ran a shop and bakery. The Sadlers ceased to farm after the death of James in 1883 as there was no son to take over. With the death in 1895 of Mary, James' wife, the Sadler name came to an end in the village. But close relatives of the Sadlers, the Woodleys, were to remain here until 1974.

In 1845 George Hayward was the largest farmer in the village - he had 400 acres including some in the West Field, what is now Willington Down farm and land towards Clifton Hampden. In 1861 his son William had 641 acres but the depression forced him to give some up. By 1874 the land had all been relinquished or sold because of the gambling debts of William Stephen Hayward who had turned to writing novels to try to increase his income.

Joseph Hewett had 160 acres in the 1851 census. By 1871 his son Henry was farming 800 acres and employing 28 men and eleven boys. He now farmed most of Westfield Farm, Willington Down Farm and Northfield Farm, a lot of it rented from St John's College. In 1880 he asked St John's for, and was granted, a rent reduction. By 1885 he was again requesting a reduction 'for in consequence of the low price of corn and the great fall in the price of sheep and cattle it is quite impossible to make anything like the amount of rent we now pay'. He threatened to give up the tenancy as well. The College granted a reduction because correspondence between the agent and the bursar revealed that they probably would not get even a £1 on acre from a new tenant,

and Henry was paying slightly more than that. Henry discovered this and demanded that his rent should be lowered again to a £1, once more giving notice to quit! He stayed and Hewetts remained at Northfield well into the twentieth century.

A further depression in the 1890s was caused by a series of wet harvests and even wetter winters when crops were ruined and farmers unable to get on the land to prepare for the next year. Around this time the Prowse family gave up their land and moved away from the village completely. Even on our lighter land this weather would have had a severe impact on village life, with many of the poor being sent to the workhouse. The system had been changed by the 1834 Poor Law Act because parishes had been finding the rates a spiralling burden. We were grouped in the Wallingford Union and one large workhouse was built to which all the poor in the Union were sent- not a happy experience with families separated and frequently badly treated and poorly fed. The Overseers here did their best to keep the poor in cottages they provided and maintained in the village. In the half year to 29 March 1851 there were 30 'out-door poor' requiring assistance because they were 'infirm' like Elizabeth Strange, had 'no work' (Martha Tyrrell), were 'deserted' (Simeon and Jemima Wicks), were sick (Adam Pead) or were 'idiotic'. Only three people from Long Wittenham were 'indoor poor' and in the workhouse.

It is perhaps pertinent to look at the population of the village around these times. In 1851 there were 609 people recorded, 324 males and 285 females. Of these, 129 were agricultural labourers (60% of the total workforce). In 1881 the population had dropped slightly to 563: 280 males and 283 females of whom 120 were agricultural labourers (52% of the workforce). The households

were often made up of extended families plus servants. For example, in the 1861 census John Hopkins Prowse, a widower, lived with his teenage son and daughter, his sister Ann and two servants; in the 1851 census his niece Fanny was also part of the household. In the 1851 census the current vicar, James Clutterbuck, lived in the Vicarage with his wife Louisa, eight children (aged 19 years to six months), governess, cook, maids and nursery nurses. However the norm in rural areas was for a nuclear family of husband, wife and children, occupying one house. The children preferred to wait to marry until they could set up in their own home, and for the less well-off this could mean waiting some time.

But to return to the Vicarage. The Revd James Charles Clutterbuck was the longest-serving nineteenth century vicar of the parish; indeed the longest serving vicar of all. He ministered in the village for fifty-five years, an amazing length of time when most vicars only stayed about three years on average. He took the living in 1830, aged twenty-nine, when he was also senior bursar of Exeter College. The previous incumbent, Robert Bateman Paul, had borrowed from Queen Anne's Bounty, a fund for clergymen, and had a grant from Exeter to extend the Vicarage which was originally a Tudor farmhouse; he added the Georgian section that we can see today (the Tudor part was demolished in the 1960s).

James Clutterbuck was a great scholar and benefactor of the village. He wrote books on Geology and Drainage in the Thames Valley, and founded the Parochial Association for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts in 1839. Subscribers to the latter paid a penny a month or a halfpenny if they had children. In 1839 he was responsible for re-discovering the lead font, hidden since the Civil War. In 1856 he gave the village the land on which the

new school was to be built and in which he and his family were to take a great interest.

There had been a school in the village as early as 1826 but in 1833 a new building, probably on the lane to Northfield Farm, was opened. This was a National School 'for the education of the poor according to the Church of England'. The schoolmaster was Harry Batten Bush and some fifty-seven children attended on the day it opened. In 1855, the village took advantage of the special grant announced two years earlier for helping schools in rural areas. An application was made for help towards building 'schoolrooms to accommodate 100 children', the cost estimated at £370. The school was opened on 27 April 1857 by the Bishop of Oxford on the site of the present school with Harry Batten Bush continuing as headmaster. School attendance was irregular in the early years, being prey to wet weather, hay-making, corn and potato harvesting and the ability to pay twopence a week.

The Long Wittenham log book of 1869 introduces a new headmistress, Miss Mary Ann Wilson. She had up to 120 pupils aged between three and eleven or twelve with one or two assistant mistresses, a pupil teacher and a monitor (a girl who had just left school) to help her. The two most feared events in the school year were the Annual Inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors and the Diocesan Visitation. Under the 1862 act, capitation payments of twelve shillings per child were dependent on the children's performance in the 3Rs; failure in any subject meant a loss of two shillings and eightpence. As the payment was up to half the school's income teachers' salaries could be affected by the result. The report of 1873 was not good: 'the mass of the infants are poorly organised and imperfectly handled and instructed....their teacher....must study in some good school the art of teaching

infants'. The junior department fared little better: 'reading is mumbled'. A year later, however, the infants were graded 'excellent'.

The Diocesan inspectors checked the religious work of the school. We seemed to be well taught in this respect - not surprising with the Revd Clutterbuck in regular attendance! His wife and daughters also visited the school frequently, sometimes to take needlework or singing. There were Vicar's treats at Easter, mid-summer and Christmas, usually drinks, buns and games. The 1870 Education Act provided schooling for all children and ten years later education was made compulsory for all children aged five to ten years and up to fourteen, unless exempted. The 1891 Elementary Education Act meant free education for all thus ending the dreaded 'payment by results' inspectors' visits, though schools were still inspected regularly as they are today.

Alterations were made to the school in 1893 and an extra classroom added. Mr and Mrs Day arrived as Headmaster and assistant teacher in 1894. They worked hard at improving standards and in 1896 the school inspector reported that 'the school has been kindly and carefully taught and the children have made good progress during the past year'. They ran the school until Mr Day's death in 1907.

The school was also used for adult education. In 1886 Mr Buckmaster of the Science and Arts Department lectured to a full house about agricultural night classes and the need for a technical education for those engaged in modern farming (reported in the Abingdon Herald). It can be supposed that this was one of the many lectures and classes attended by villagers. Later classes were organised by the Workers' Education Association founded

in 1903. Sadly few of our important nineteenth century families remained to see to see these improvements but others would take their place.



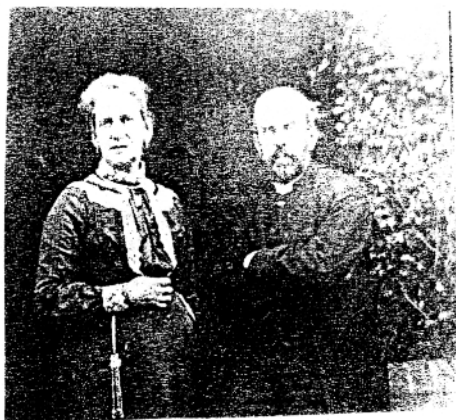
When the Victorian age closed in 1901 the population of England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland was 41 million. Long Wittenham's population, however, was at a low ebb with only 407 people. The last ten years of the nineteenth century had seen the loss of nearly 15% of the population as a series of wet years and poor harvests had forced the young people to go elsewhere to look for work. The Revd Clutterbuck had always noted exceptional weather, a habit continued by his successors. Thus we know that there was severe frost from November 1893 to 20 January in 1894. The river froze over and skating was possible. On Monday 12 November and Wednesday 14 November 1894, the roads at the Cross were covered with water. On the 14th, the water entered all the four cottages in Cross Lane (Didcot Road) and reached as far as the middle of the road opposite the palings of H. Ayres cottage (May Tree Cottage).

The floor of Mrs Martha Wellstood's cottage (Cruck Cottage) was covered with water several inches deep.



Cruck Cottage c 1907

When Victoria died she was not only Queen but Empress of India, and monarch of the most prosperous nation on earth. In Long Wittenham the Clutterbucks were still the ruling force, with Admiral William Robert Clutterbuck living in the manor house and employing most of the men in the village. A new vicar, the Revd T Daniel Hopkyns, arrived in the parish in 1903 and stayed until his retirement in 1925.



Revd T D and Mrs Hopkyns

A moment of glory came in 1907 when the young men of the village football team won the North Berks Cup. Not many years after some of these same men were at the battle front as the nation went through the trauma of the First World War. Fourteen men from the village died as a result and the Revd Hopkyns conducted the memorial services to them.

The first, at 3pm on Sunday 10 September 1916 was for Frank Bird Weston and Ernest Francis Jeffries. Frank, a Lance Corporal in the Royal Berkshire Regiment, was reported 'missing' on 28 September 1915. The Army Council, in a letter dated 4 September 1916, concluded that his death took place on 28 September 1915 at Festubert. He had been baptised in August 1881 and had enlisted in September 1899. Ernest, born in Lambourn was a Private in the Royal Berks Regiment. He was killed on the night of 27/28 August 1916 at the Battle of the Somme.

The second memorial service was held at 6pm on Sunday 6 May 1917 and was for Percy Beckett, William Wybrow Hallwright DSO, and Charles Hugh Bidmead. Percy was a Lance Corporal in the machine gun section of the Royal Berks Regiment. He was seriously wounded and died from pneumonia at the casualty clearing station on 14 April 1917. In June it was officially stated that he was 'buried at Duisans British Cemetery 4 miles WNW of Arras'. William was the highest ranking villager to die. He was a Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy and was killed in action with an enemy submarine on the bridge of HMS Heather off the west coast of Ireland on 21 April 1917. He was buried at Birmingham. Charles was in the Motor Transport Corps but transferred to the Royal Flying Corps and received a commission as Second Lieutenant on 26 October 1916. He was killed in a flying accident in France near Bethune on 10 November 1916.

The third and final service was held at 6pm on Sunday 23 June 1918 for nine more men. Frederick John Lamboll, born in Haslemere. His father was chauffeur and gardener to Mr Hayes who lived at French's. He was a Private in the 2nd Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He was killed in action in France on 4 May 1917. Harry Albert Green, baptised 27 January 1881, married 31 January 1914, and a Private with the Royal Berks Regiment, was killed in action on 19 July 1917 and was buried four and a half miles from Arras. Thomas Gray Hopkyns, MA Oxon., Vicar of Randfontein in the Diocese of Pretoria, born in Chichester, and son of the vicar, joined the South African Medical Corps. He was killed when on stretcher duty near the Menin road on 20 September 1917. Alec Curtis Chambers DCM and bar, son of the family that ran The Plough, was a Sergeant with the 17th Mounted Machine Gun Corps. He died from a wound received in action in Palestine on 22 November 1917 and was buried at Fokka, near Jerusalem.

Alan Eason died in hospital at Dorchester, Dorset on 20 January 1916, while still under training. He was only 18. Kenneth Bumpass, a Private, first in the 31st Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars then in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, was killed in action on 15 June 1918. William Edward Hermon, baptised 15 May 1898, was a private in the Coldstream Guards when he went missing on 13 April 1918. Frank Lamboll, brother of Fred, died while a prisoner in Germany on 21 October 1918. He had been a Private in the 1st Dorset Regiment. Vincent Essex died in hospital in Egypt on 14 March 1919. He was a driver in the 10th Ammunition Corps of the Royal Field Artillery.

Technological Revolution

The 1920s saw unemployment rise to over a million. It was also the decade of votes for women over 21, the Charleston, the first 'talkies' and the number of cars rising from 315,000 to more than a million. It was also the decade of the General Strike (1926) and Stock market Crash (1929), the latter severely affecting farm prices so that many farmers, including Charles Lay, who farmed from Church Farm, were forced to give up some of their land as they could no longer pay the rent.

The death in 1923 of Admiral Clutterbuck, was a sad loss, bringing to an end nearly a century of the family's association with the village. The knighting of Sir Frederick Hallet Esq., OBE, JP and secretary of the Joint Examining Board of the Royal College of Physicians who lived at Point Close was however a cause for celebration.

By the end of the 1920s May Tree Cottage, formerly the house for the cowman at Lovegroves Farm, had become home to A E Coppard, an author of some distinction. He played football and was well liked at The Plough, which he frequented. Robert Gibbings, well-known engraver, painter and author, first made his acquaintance with the village on visits to his friend Coppard. Later, Gibbings came to live at Footbridge Cottage, gaining inspiration for some of his books from the river and the locals. Coppard and his friends were able to enjoy a liberated life style which was a far cry from the everyday life of their fellow villagers.

In vivid contrast Stinking Jack, a previous inhabitant of Footbridge Cottage, never washed and just lay on a mattress

covered with one or two coats when he slept. In many households, Sunday dinner would be suet pudding with gravy from rabbit or shin of beef; father got the meat, children got the gravy. On Monday it was gravy with Yorkshire pudding. Maybe there would be rabbit on Wednesday. Thursday was pudding day with several sorts of pudding. Breakfast was bread and dripping. There was bread and dripping with tea for the morning break, then bread and dripping again in the evening. Sometimes there were fish or eels from the river. The cottages had earth floors and rats came up from the river. Children slept in one room, sometimes two or three in a bed, sometimes on the floor. Shoes and clothes were handed down from one child to the next although each child had one best set of clothes for Sundays. Most families went to church; some as many as five times each Sunday.

The highlights of the year would be Feast Day, when the fair came to the village and the school was closed and Abingdon Fair, when many families walked to Abingdon and back to enjoy the fun.



Stevie West

The Second World War was kinder to the men of the village than the First. Although many men served, none were killed. There were hardships, especially rationing, but in a rural community it is easier to grow vegetables and keep animals to supplement the rations. There was a lot of stress and gloom but also some fun. The 'Merry Marigolds' put on concerts in the village hall and raised money for the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmens' Comfort Fund. Mrs Stack, who was Miss Hayes then, was in charge of the packing station which was built down the Little Wittenham Road. Lorry loads of tools were sent from the Army depot in Didcot and had to be packed as instructed.



There were mock Red Cross casualty practices; the siren would go and everyone rushed to their various places to look after the 'wounded'. On one occasion at the end of the practice one man could not be found. Just a note saying 'Bled to death. Gone home'.

The village prepared for evacuees, boys and girls under eleven. But when they arrived 'they were mothers, they were babies, they were people with broken legs and broken arms, you never saw such an assortment in all your life. Nobody was expecting this. For the first night a lot of them were housed in the old chapel,

which is now the village shop, and in the village hall and we had to go round and get blankets for them. But eventually everyone was housed'. And there were the Americans of the 7th Photo Reconnaissance Group based at Mount Farm, Berinsfield who occasionally cycled over, patronising our local pubs.



In 1965, in the thirteenth year of the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, there was great excitement in the village when the ladies of the Women's Institute decided to make a survey of all the houses and people of Long Wittenham. There were 694 inhabitants, 26.3% of whom had been born in the village. 50 houses were owned by St John's College, 81 by Wallingford Rural District Council, 8 by Berkshire County Council, 38 were owner occupied and 20 more were 'variously owned'. 55 people worked in the village of whom 27 worked in agriculture or gardening, 7 did domestic work, 7 worked in shops, 4 innkeepers, two doctors, two teachers, two cooked the school dinners, one took care of the school, one roadman, one postman and the Vicar. 117 went out of the village to work, 35 to Oxford, 20 to Abingdon, 15 to Culham and one to London. It was a wet summer, with the harvest ruined so that harvest-time continued until October instead of August. There was flooding in December. There were ten farms, mostly 25-100 acres. Farm workers earned £10 2s a week plus overtime.

The 1970s brought Westfield Road to the village, saving the school from possible closure and revitalising the social activities.

By the end of the century only two farmers lived and farmed in the village, the land now being managed by larger, non-resident, enterprises. Much of the land no longer belongs to St John's, some of this being sold to the Northmoor trust in the last few years. Twenty or so people still live and work in the village. The population was nearly a thousand and agricultural workers earned £195 a week.

The twentieth century saw phenomenal changes in technology, medicine and society. Older members of the village grew up with horse drawn transport, an acceptance of untimely death, a class structure based on wealth, with unforgiving, judgmental views and votes for men only.

Now both men and women can drive cars, fly on Concorde, 'surf the net', vote, go off on holidays all over the world, be a student of the Open University, watch endless television and expect to live well into their eighties and nineties in warm, double-glazed, houses.

The New Millennium

2000 and Beyond

There we have it, one thousand years of history of our village. It cannot be honestly claimed that anything very extraordinary happened in Long Wittenham itself during this time. Not for us the signing of the Magna Carta on the Westfield, or burnings at the stake by the Cross- luckily- but the big historical events did have their impact locally, as this millennium edition of The Chronicle clearly shows.

It might have been amusing to be able to write - over the years since The Chronicle started - erudite pieces entitled 'Long Wittenham and the Enlightenment', 'Dadaism in Long Wittenham' or, best of all, 'Long Wittenham and Elizabeth I's Night of Shame', but perhaps the village is altogether better off for not having experienced events like these.

The expansion of Didcot will certainly have an impact on the village. The farms face hard times. As always, people will come and go, a few will stay. Some things will however, hopefully, remain constant; the river, the green fields, the church, the school and the wonderful people.

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We would like to thank everyone who has helped us collect together this miscellany of pictures, facts and stories and who has shared the fruits of their research with us.



Cruck Cottage 1983

Front cover

Long Wittenham farm workers

L To R

Jim Vaisey, Charlie (Dusty) Hermon (in front) Jimmy Didcock,
Tom Stone, Tom Hermon, Luke Carter, Charlie (Hobby)
Welstead, Stan Lester, Will (Besfy) West, Jim (Oxford) Wellsfead,
Dickie or Jim (Snuggle) Tyrell

