The Parish of Long Wittenham 1800-1920

by Kathleen Burk Jewess

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A Brief History

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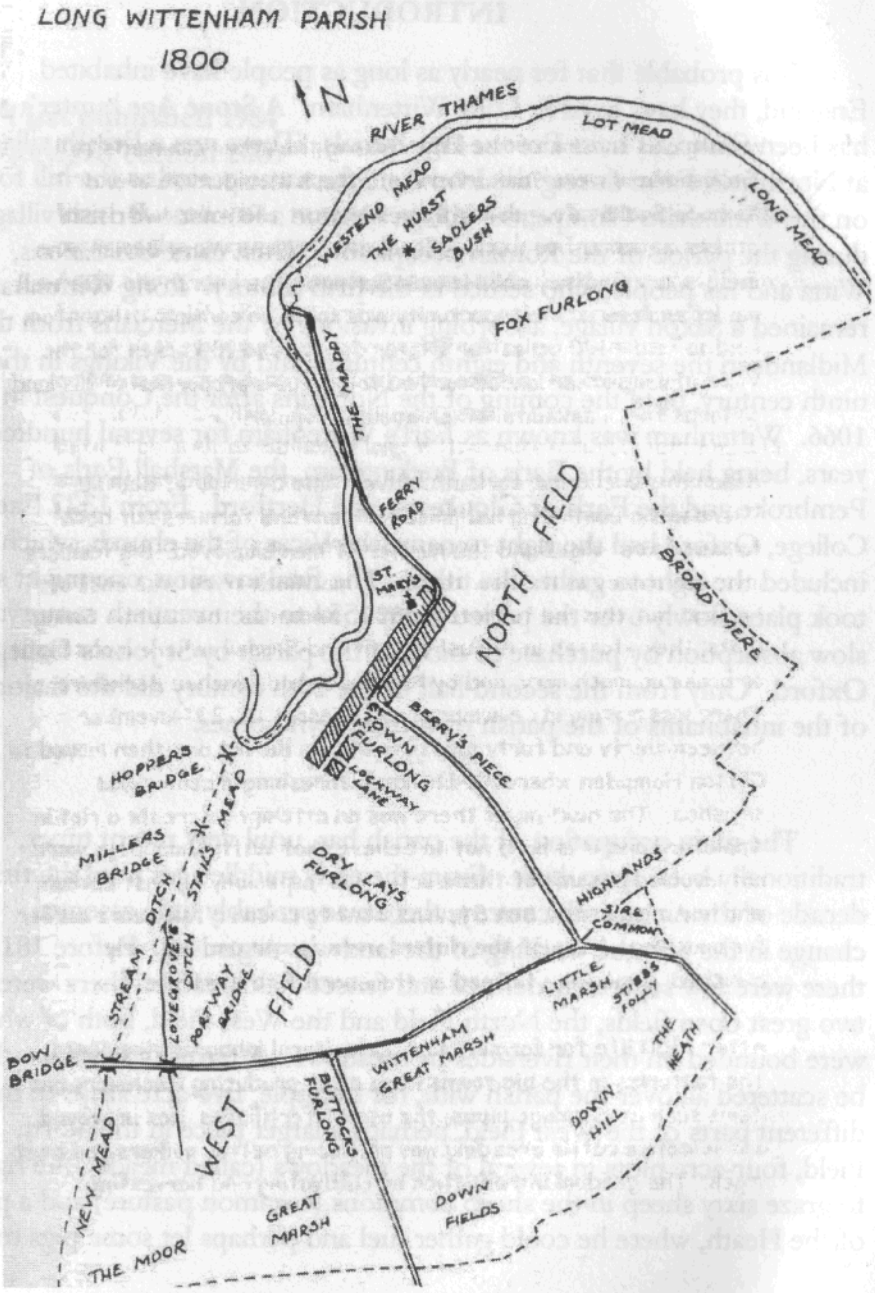
INTRODUCTION

It is probable that for nearly as long as people have inhabited England, they have lived in Long Wittenham. A Stone Age hunter's axe has been found, as have Bronze Age burials. There was a British village at Northfield Farm during the Iron Age, the same period as the hill fort on the Wittenham Clumps; the village became a Romano-British village during the period of the Roman occupation. Then came the Saxons, Witta and his people, who settled in the fifth century. Long Wittenham remained a Saxon village, absorbing invasions by the Mercians from the Midlands in the seventh and eighth centuries and by the Vikings in the ninth century, until the coming of the Normans after the Conquest in 1066. Wittenham was known as Earl's Wittenham for several hundred years, being held by the Earls of Buckingham, the Marshall Earls of Pembroke and the Earls of Gloucester and Hertford. From 1322 Exeter College, Oxford had the right to name the Vicar of the church, which included the right to gather the tithes. The final invasion, one might say, took place slowly over the period from 1554 to the twentieth century: the slow absorption by purchase of most of the parish by St John's College, Oxford. Only from the second half of the 20th century did the majority of the inhabitants of the parish own their own homes.

I

The main occupation of the parish has, until very recent times, traditionally been agriculture. From the early middle ages until the first decade of the nineteenth century, there was probably little essential change in the way the working of the land was organised. Before 1812 there were few separately defined and fenced fields; rather, there were two great open fields, the North Field and the West Field, both of which were bounded on their riversides by meadows. A farmer's lands would be scattered all over the parish with, for example, five-acre strips in three different parts of the West Field, perhaps a larger piece in the North Field, four-acre plots in several of the meadows (called meads), the right to graze sixty sheep in the sheep commons (common pasture) and a part of the Heath, where he could gather fuel and perhaps let some pigs feed.


LONG WITTENHAM PARISH
1800
N
RIVER THAMES
LOT MEAD
LONG MEAD
WESTEND MEAD
THE HURST
SADLERS BUSH
FOX FURLONG
THE MADDY
FERRY ROAD
ST. MARY'S
NORTH FIELD
BROAD MERE
BERRY'S PIECE
TOWN FURLONG
LOCKWAY LANE
HOPPERS BRIDGE
MILLERS BRIDGE
STAILS MEAD
DRY LAYS FURLONG
HIGHLANDS
SIRE COMMON
STREAM DITCH
LOVEGROVE'S DITCH
PORTWAY BRIDGE
WEST FIELD
LITTLE MARSH
STIBBS FOLLY
THE HEATH
BOW BRIDGE
WITTENHAM GREAT MARSH
BUTTOCKS FURLONG
DOWN HILL
NEW MEAD
GREAT MARSH
DOWN FIELDS
THE MOOR

Everyone who farmed any land, whether freehold, copyhold or leasehold, was in the same situation. In Long Wittenham, some grazing lands were chosen each year by lot, and, in general, many agricultural decisions, such as whether to drain part of the Great Marsh, would have been made collectively. Such decisions were taken in the Manor Court. This court, dating back at least to 1603, was held by the Lords of the Manor, St John's College, Oxford, Fellows of which travelled to Willington's (now called the Manor) each October to hold Court. St John's probably found little difficulty in persuading the other landholders in the parish to agree with whatever proposals they might make, since the College was the dominant landholder, but the whole open field system was, by the late 18th century, seen by many as outmoded and inefficient. New farming methods and new crops were being discussed by the agricultural community, but the more experimentally-minded farmers were often held back by those wedded to traditional ways. The solution, then, was to gain control of one's own land, and this was achieved by enclosure.

In its simplest form, the term 'inclosure' (as it was then spelled) referred to enclosing part of the open field or waste land with fences and making a close or field. The procedure had been going on since Tudor times in various parts of the country, with agreements made between landholders to exchange parcels of land in order to consolidate their holdings into compact fields. The period after 1790, however, saw a burst of such enclosures, in particular ones carried through by private Acts of Parliament. These Acts meant that enclosure and reorganisation could be carried out without the consent of all of the landholders involved. The enclosure of Long Wittenham was one of these.

By the Act passed 20 May 1809, legal authority was acquired for the enclosure of the parish. From the Act it is clear that the moving forces were St John's College, Exeter College (which had the right to collect the tithes, charged at 10% of the value of the lands and their yearly produce), William Hayward, the largest landholder, James Prowse, the largest holder of freehold land in the parish and Thomas Lovegrove, a substantial farmer who lived in Benson. Although few in number, they owned the major part of the land and were thereby legally entitled to press for the enclosure Act. Because of the Napoleonic wars, this was a period of high prices for

agricultural products; at the same time rates of interest were below the rate of inflation. St John's and the other landholders clearly wanted to take maximum advantage of the favourable economic climate, but to do so required the reorganisation of the parish in the following three ways: first, the great open fields, the North Field and the West Field, were divided into separate smaller fields, of reasonable size and fenced with hedges; secondly, the common lands, both meadows and waste, were enclosed in the same manner, the latter because the high prices for wheat and other crops justified cultivating the less fertile land; and thirdly, the tithes which had to be paid in money or in kind for all the land in the parish were commuted, which meant that in return for the elimination of tithes, the Vicar and Exeter College would receive land in exchange. Fully one-fifth of the arable land, one-eighth of the commons and heath, and one-ninth of the meadow land in the parish were given to the Vicar and the College, a quite striking redistribution of the land: in 1809 they had controlled 64 acres, while by 1813 the total was 404 acres. In return for the Great Tithes, for example, Exeter received just over 222 acres;[1] this was named Great Tithe Farm, but by the 1880s it had acquired its modern name of Northfield Farm.

Enclosure was spread out over more than three years. The three theoretically impartial Commissioners, who all lived outside the parish, had the legal authority to have the entire parish surveyed both for quality and quantity of land, to consider the claims of all of the landholders, and to decide which land would go to whom upon redistribution. In order that farmers might reach the fields, new roads, bridle paths and footpaths were laid out; the road from the east end of the village to Little Wittenham is an example of an entirely new road laid out by the Commissioners. New drains were dug, and it was required that the newly carved-out fields be bounded by four-foot wide ditches with quickset plants such as hawthorn planted on either side; farmers then further subdivided their fields with hedge boundaries, and it is probable that most of the hedges remaining in the parish date from the period of the enclosure. The making of the roads, the digging of ditches and the fencing of the allotments were all quite expensive, and roads alone absorbing nearly a quarter of the public cost of enclosure, which in total exceeded £5,500.[2]

The whole enclosure procedure was expensive, and it was paid for along the way by the levying of rates, which were set and collected by the Commissioners. It was the cost, in fact, which probably accounted for some of the opposition in the parish, since there is no doubt that some of the smaller landowners found it difficult to pay and had to be repeatedly ordered to do so by the Commissioners and their clerk. But it was also true that a number of landholders objected to their new allotments. It is probable that one such was Robert Bargus. Before enclosure he had held land in West End Mead near Clifton Hampden and in Long Mead near Burcot, arable land in the West Field, an acre of furze or wooded ground on the Heath, and the right to graze forty-five sheep and three cows in various common grazing grounds.[3] After enclosure, he retained his house and land in the village itself (where the school is now), but his allotted land, reduced to 28 acres, lay entirely in the place called Little Marsh, a field clearly subject to excessive dampness, and part of which in fact was drained in the spring of 1984. Whatever the reason, Bargus refused to sign the final Award which set out the allotments in 1812. He was joined in his refusal by James Prowse, one of those who had initially pushed for enclosure, by Thomas Lovegrove the Younger, who was bankrupted by the higher rents and the costs, by John Ballard, who had received a plot in the North Field called Wet Lands - a descriptive name - and a number of others. It was clearly touch and go: in a computation drawn up by Exeter College, the rateable value of the land held by those in favour of enclosure exceeded the rateable value of those against by only £6 (out of a total rateable value of some £1,347).[4] But the enclosure went through, and the first stage in the transformation of the parish was completed by 17 June 1812.

II

The immediate results of enclosure manifested themselves over the next generation; the more long-term results, the condemnation of the agricultural labourers to chronic and grinding poverty, persisted for the remainder of the century. In the first instance a number of landholders gave up their land, not all by choice: Thomas Lovegrove the Younger, as noted above, went bankrupt and was forced off his leasehold land by Exeter College in 1814. The main cause was arrears of rent.[5] This is not

surprising since a usual consequence of enclosure wherever it took place was a substantial increase in rents and in payments, called fines, which were payable upon taking up a lease; in just one example, a farm in the parish which had required the payment of £42 in 1806, and whose lands were re-allotted at enclosure, required a payment of £75 in 1813, an increase of 79%.[6] Another problem was the cost of fencing, of building, say, a barn on one's new allotment far from the house or of paying the charges on money borrowed to pay the rates levied by the enclosure Commissioners. John Greenwood, who had taken on the tenancy of the Vicar's new Glebe Farm, had to assume the costs of the internal fencing, and by 1816 he was forced to give up the tenancy through arrears of rent.[7] His own allotted plot, which is still called Greenwoods and which lies next to the parish of Little Wittenham where the Little Wittenham road swings from south to west, was by 1838 in the hands of William Hayward. Hayward had previously, in 1826, acquired the lands of Robert Bargus; the Richard Bargus in the 1851 Census is merely an agricultural labourer, so on the face of it the family had slipped down the social scale.

These were not isolated instances of land changing hands in the generation after enclosure. The first comprehensive list of owners and occupiers of land in the parish which is dated after enclosure, and which has survived, is the 1838 Rate Book for the Poor Rate, and a comparison of the landowners' names in the Enclosure Award with those in the Rate Book is illuminating. Of the sixteen landholders holding less than 25 acres in 1812, only eight with the same name remain. Now, this is slightly deceptive, since five of them were probably widows of some age, and were thus dispossessed by death rather than by any earthly force. Nevertheless, none of them had heirs of the same name. Another point, however, is that some of them were certainly traders of some sort, and thus did not suffer as much as those who would have had their whole dependence on land. Paradoxically, the group which appears to have suffered more was made up of those farming from 25 to 150 acres. They were more likely to depend wholly on the land, and they would have suffered for a number of reasons. Their holdings might well have become so much smaller from enclosure that they were now uneconomic: the land required for the new roads and paths, the land set aside for gravel to make the roads, the land due to the Lords of the Manor in lieu of their manorial rights, the lands set aside for

Exeter College and for the Vicar in commutation of tithes - all of these claims were satisfied first, and what the Commissioners called the Residue was then divided up amongst the remainder of the landholders. So John Greenwood was left with just over 25 acres, and Bargus with under 28 acres. This was doubly unfortunate, because bad harvests beginning in 1814 and the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 combined to produce a general economic depression that hit the farming community particularly hard: prices fell so low that landholders found it difficult to pay the new higher rents as well as the mortgages which many had taken out to pay for enclosure.

It is perhaps not wholly surprising to learn that the larger landholders gained the most from enclosure. In 1809 there were (besides St John's College, who owned much of the parish, but leased it all out to Hayward and others) two men holding over 150 acres: these were William Hayward with nearly 500 acres, much of it leased, and James Prowse with 251 acres, over 60% of it freehold. By 1837 there were four:

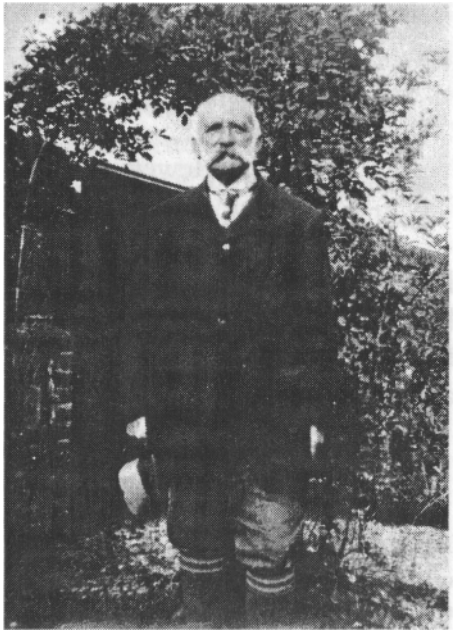
	1812	**1837**
Hayward	498 acres	863 acres
Prowse	251 acres	345 acres
Joseph Hewett	48 acres	339 acres
Exeter College	24 acres	305 acres

Hayward, in the years since enclosure, had acquired (or engrossed) the lands of Thomas Lovegrove the Younger, Moulden's Farm (the farmhouse of which is now called 'The Old Farmhouse'), Bargus' land and Greenwood's land, as well as a number of smaller plots.[8]

III

The story of the Hewetts in an interesting one in this context. Although Joseph Hewett was primarily a farmer, the Hewett family as a whole, which had a large colony in Brightwell as well as in Long Wittenham, practised the trade of wheelwright and carpenter. And although the years from 1815 to about 1850 were on the whole bad for farmers, they were much less bad for traders. Furthermore, the position of

Admiral and Mrs W.R Clutterbuck



Mr Henry Joseph Hewett c. 1915

the Hewetts was such that they received the major share of public contracts, such as the making of repairs to cottages, which housed the poor of the parish. Consequently they had money coming in even during bad times.[9]

James Hewett was the wheelwright, and he lived in 33 High Street as his forebears had done and as his descendants would do until the early 1970s. Even though he was one of the landowners who in 1812 had had less than 25 acres - he had, in fact, just under 5 - his income as a skilled craftsman ensured that he had not lost it by 1838: he retained Town Furlong, later called Free Acre and now containing the Crescent and other houses near the Cross, although it was farmed by his brother Joseph.

Joseph Hewett is termed 'gentleman' in a St John's lease in 1857,[10] and this is perhaps the beginning of the split in the family between the farming Hewetts and the wheelwright Hewetts, a split which was so complete by the mid 20th century that the fact that the branches are related had been forgotten. When Joseph Hewett died in 1868 without descendants, he left most of his lands to his great-nephew Henry Hewett of Brightwell, who came to live in Long Wittenham.

Henry and his son Henry Joseph Hewett continued to expand their farming operations, and by 1880 they were farming Northfield Farm and Lovegrove's Farm, as well as Willington's Down Farm (formerly known as the Upper Farm). Henry Joseph Hewett, who lived in Willington's, was a keen archaeologist, and following the discovery of pieces of pottery while ploughing Scabbs field on Northfield Farm, he set about excavating the Romano-British village found there.

Stephen Pithouse Hewett, who lived in the Grange until his death in 1939, was Henry Joseph's brother, and with their deaths (Stephen and his two sisters all died unmarried) there disappeared the last of the farming Hewetts from Long Wittenham. The wheelwright branch, however, which descends from James Hewett through Emily Hewett and Gertrude Eva Hewett (known as Granny Hewett to most of the village - she only died in 1980), still continues in the village today. The family were adaptable, changing the focus of their trade from the making of wheels to the building

of houses. A number of the houses in the village, such as the Policeman's House, were built by the family.

IV

But the families which survived and prospered either because of or merely after the enclosure were relatively few. What happened to the great majority in the parish, those who lived by manual labour of one sort or another? It seems likely that they suffered a great deal. One fundamental point is that Berkshire, of which Long Wittenham was then a part, was almost wholly agricultural and thus lacked competing industries, which might have forced up wages. The result was that the agricultural wages paid in Berkshire were amongst the lowest in England. Wages for agricultural labourers in the 1830s were only about seven shillings a week, and even by the First World War the average wage in Long Wittenham for a man who worked on the land was 12 shillings and 6 pence a week.[11] The second point is that the period of profound agricultural depression, which lasted from 1813 to about 1850, forced farmers to cut costs, and one of the first costs they tended to cut was labour costs, either by laying men off or by cutting their wages. The situation in the Vale of the White Horse was so bad that for a week in November 1830 the whole area was in an uproar, with rioting in Crowmarsh and Benson, a wages strike in East Hagbourne, a confrontation at Burcot, with fires, horns blowing and forty to fifty men shouting and threatening, and the breaking of a threshing-machine at Clifton Hampden. An attempt to start a riot in Appleford failed,[12] and equally there was no trouble in Long Wittenham itself, but this does not mean that Wittenham men had not participated in neighbouring affrays. This was likely, in particular, because men tramped from one place to another around the home village to find work on different farms.

The situation was particularly desperate because with the enclosure, villagers had lost their rights to the common pasture and to gather fuel on the Heath. The loss of common grazing, which enabled one to keep a pig or cow, was probably crippling for many. Fuel was precious, not only to keep warm but in order to have a cooked meal, be it only a baked rather than a raw potato. In exchange for the rights to common, which had been extinguished by the enclosure, the Commissioners had set out a 25-acre

plot, called the Poors' Heath, which was allotted to the Churchwardens and the Vicar. They were to rent it out and with the proceeds to provide help to the parish poor. For some years after the enclosure the poor continued to gather fuel from this land, which was covered with furze and brushwood, but in 1850-51 it was ploughed up (contrary to the stipulations in his lease) by Ingram Shrimpton, and that was the end of this particular local fuel supply. The Rev.].C. Clutterbuck bought the lease in 1853, after Shrimpton had moved to New Zealand. It was rented by the Clutterbucks until 1921. The rent was used to purchase coal to distribute to the poor, and in 1902, for example, 83 people in the parish were dependent on the four or eight hundredweights of coal which they received as their share at Christmas.[13] In short, enclosure probably turned the majority in the village from being agricultural labourers with access to a bit of land and thus with a little flexibility in the fight to keep body and soul together, to being agricultural labourers even more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of fate.

How did such families survive? For one thing, the men were forced to travel around, looking for work: each of the censuses of 1851 through to 1881 demonstrates that over a third of the population were born elsewhere (and that the 20th century influx of newcomers, while perhaps bigger, is in principle nothing new to the parish). It was also necessary for virtually everyone in the family to work. A boy of fourteen could earn 3 shillings a week, and even children of four could act as scarecrows. Wives followed the men after they scythed, stooking the wheat and later gleaning; one former inhabitant of the parish, Edward Beasley, remembers that his grandfather, Spot Beasley, who was a champion scythe-mower, had his wife working with him in the fields.[14] People did more than one job as well, and might repair shoes, or make lace, or do some other general labouring work along with field work. This was particularly the case in the winter, when a man might be off work for four or five months through lack of agricultural tasks.

The situation was probably little better during the second half of the century. After 1870 the competition from the wheat-growing areas of the US. and Australia again threw the British farming community into profound depression, which was brought to an end only by the First World War. One way in which farmers tried to survive was by substituting

machine power for manpower. Certainly Henry Joseph Hewett was using a 'Machine' on Northfield Farm by 1880,[15] and equally clearly the numbers of men and boys working in agriculture had fallen by the 1881 census. The difficulty for these men was the lack of much alternative work close at hand. There was, of course, the railway in Didcot, but surprisingly few Wittenham men were employed on the railway, although it is not perhaps so surprising when it is realised a man often had to be a member of a railway family in order to gain such employment (Mr Jim Mildenhall has related that one had practically to salute the porter, he was such a personage).[16] Population numbers had only fallen from 609 in 1851 to 563 in 1881, although many of the names had changed; however, there was a growth in service occupations in the parish, which probably absorbed some of the surplus farm labour. The rest walked to neighbouring parishes looking for work.

Given that the economic situation of all those dependent on agriculture could be so very precarious, what means were at hand for providing either for sickness or for old age? Those who had substantial means provided for themselves, but they made up a relatively small proportion of the population. The very poorest depended on the support of the parish, which will be considered below, but those in the middle, the tradesmen and labourers in work, banded together in Friendly Societies to help themselves.

Friendly Societies had been around since the late 17th century, but from 1760 onwards they became increasingly popular. They were pre-eminently an organisation of the industrial North and Midlands, and were ordinarily established by working men themselves, who would meet monthly in public houses to transact business and have a convivial time. Each member would pay a small weekly or monthly contribution, and as the need arose he (Friendly Societies usually did not cover women and children) would draw sick pay or an old age pension, or his family would be given funeral money, depending on the type of society it was. There were many fewer such Societies in rural areas, and (as in Long Wittenham), they usually had a rather different origin and controlling body. They tended to be established by the larger farmers and other landowners and by the clergy, as a means of saving on the poor rates. The

whole movement fitted in very well with the 19th century theme of self-help and the related biblical concept of the Lord helping whose who helped themselves.

On the initiative of William Hayward, George Hayward and John Prowse, (three of the major landholders in the parish), the Rev. Clutterbuck of Long Wittenham and Rev. Gibbs of Clifton Hampden, as well as worthies from neighbouring parishes, the Society was established on 1st January 1836. From the beginning there were two sorts of members: Honorary Members, who paid a single subscription of £5, or a recurring one of 10 shillings a year, but who received no benefits, and Assuring Members, who paid monthly contributions of varying amounts, and received sick pay weekly of 2 shillings to 10 shillings and an old age pension of 1 shilling to 5 shillings a week. After the initial contributions by the Honorary Members, it flourished as a self-supporting insurance scheme. The Honorary Members consisted of the better-off element in the parish, such as the Haywards, Joseph and Henry Hewett, Miss Stibbs, James Prowse and others. The first eleven Assuring Members included the Schoolmaster, John Bush, who later became the Assistant Secretary (a post he held until he died, when it devolved upon his son Harry), William Winkfield, a groom, Alfred Tarry, a baker, and eight labourers, only one of whom, Benjamin Bissell, could write his name. These labourers would be termed the 'deserving poor', those who worked hard and tried to provide for themselves. The Society grew steadily for several years, having forty-seven members by January 1839. However, one rule of the Society was that a member who was four months behind on his monthly payments would be excluded from the Society, and eight members were so excluded in 1842, one of whom, Benjamin Bissell, had been a founding member.

The Society met in the School room until 1913, when the meetings were transferred to the Parish Hall; meeting in a pub was presumably not acceptable in Long Wittenham, although from 1840 onwards there was an annual dinner. The Society had a committee of management established in 1838 to run the affairs of the Society, but in practice the Society was run by the three Trustees, who were all Honorary Members; the Rev J. C. Cluterbuck, for example, was a Trustee for nearly 50 years.

The Society tried to adapt with the changing times. By 1895, when there were sixty members, the Society decided that they would pay a doctor to attend on all sick members within a five-mile radius of Long Wittenham, if it were found that a doctor would do this for a reasonable sum, and by 1896 they had engaged Dr. N. Freeborn. In 1899 it was decided that no one should be allowed to become a member unless he had been vaccinated. This new rule did not discourage new members, and the Society continued to grow, having 107 members by 1918.

The Policeman's House early 1900s

But with the 20th century came changes in state provision, which were bound gradually to eliminate the need for such a society. In 1908 Parliament established the first State old age pensions, and the National Insurance Act of 1911 established the first state-run sickness insurance. But it was the legislation of the 1945-51 Labour Governments, which established benefits of all sorts and set up the National Health Service, that finally dealt a lingering death to the Society, and it was eventually wound up in March 1956. The membership was below fifty, and the value of its

assets was dropping steadily, due to the disastrous state of the securities market (in January 1956 the securities owned by the Society were standing well below cost), and there was no real need for it any longer, with state provision available. But it had played a useful role in keeping the more provident members of the working and middling classes out of the abyss that always threatened in the time before the welfare state.[17]

VI

But what about those who were so poor that they found it difficult to keep body and soul together? When disaster in the form of sickness or an accident struck, the family could be devastated, particularly if it was the major breadwinner who was unable to work. Who made certain that the family had a roof over their heads and food to eat? The answer from 1601 to 1834 was the parish, with the responsibility falling on the Churchwardens and the Overseers of the Poor. After 1834 and the passing of the New Poor Law, it was the Union of parishes, with the headquarters for Long Wittenham at the workhouse in Wallingford. The workhouse remained a terrifying prospect to the poor and the old until the 1930s, when the central government took over the responsibility for maintaining those unable to work.

Within the parish, then, it was the Overseers of the Poor who were responsible for ensuring that no one starved in the parish, and that those who were ill had help. The Overseers were chosen, along with the Churchwardens and other parish officers, by the Vestry, the organisation which served as a parish council before councils as such were established by law in 1894. The Vestry was made up of the Vicar and the more substantial landholders and tradesmen, who controlled their own membership. The same names recur: Hewetts and Haywards, Clutterbucks and Sadlers, later Tames and Bushes. The quality of help for the poor in a parish was very much dependent on the type of men who served as Overseers and Churchwardens, and, on the whole, Long Wittenham seems to have had reasonably generous Overseers. It meant money out of their own pockets, since the Vestry had to levy the Poor Rate to pay for it, and the amount of tax paid increased as the amount of property held increased.

Until the mid-nineteenth century, the parish owned 18 cottages in which those too poor to pay rent lived. Sire Cottage on Sire Common (the three-cornered field on the left of the Wallingford Road, towards Sires Hill), was one and the College, probably the last three cottages on the path to the Lakes (the westernmost cottages in the village, until they were destroyed), were others. One point of the New Poor Law passed in 1834, however, was to eliminate what was called 'outdoor relief', in which those who needed help remained in the parish, and to replace it with 'indoor relief', which simply meant putting them in the workhouse. The Guardians of the Wallingford Union apparently put some pressure on the Vestry in Long Wittenham to sell the cottages, but this was resisted until 1848. In that year, economic conditions were so bad that the Union decided that each parish would have to pay more to support the workhouse, and to pay this supplementary levy it was decided to sell at least six cottages, which was done in 1848 and 1850. It is interesting to see what the Vestry did with the proceeds, after £176 of it was paid to the Wallingford Union (and the remainder invested in government stock). In 1850, just over £18 went to defray *'the cost of the Fire-engine house, lately erected in Long Wittenham'*, while in 1851 a total of just over £57 went to help several poor Wittenham people to emigrate.[18]

As long as the parish owned these cottages, however, they had the responsibility for keeping them in good repair. In November 1843, for example, James Hewett submitted a bill to the Overseers to cover his work for them, which included the following items:[19]

L/W Parish to James Hewett, 11 Nov. 1843

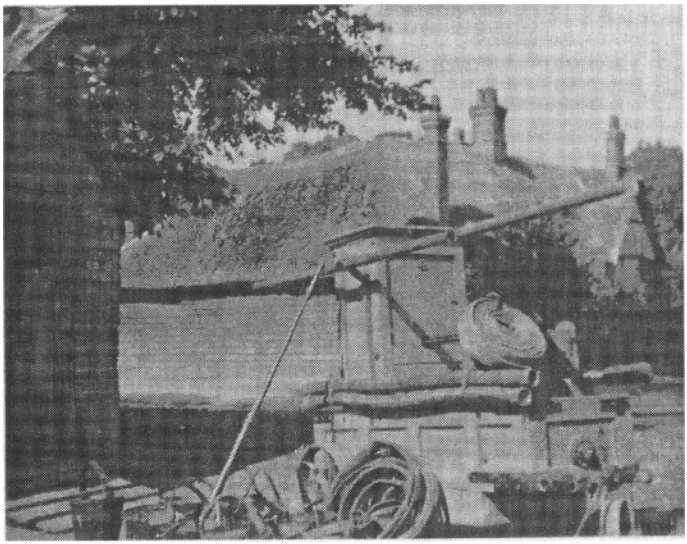
Work, door sill, lining and Nails at Lay's House	*2s 2d*
Three Rafter Tails, eaves and laths and 1½lb nails	*1s 9d*
Mending door, board and nails at Daniel Woodley's	*2s 3d*
Pair crutches for Jacob Carter in Infirmary and crutch for Woodley's girl	*3s 0d*
Pitch by Woodley's, Thatcher's and Carter's to burn in their House - time of the fever	*2s 9d*

The Overseers also supplied food and candles to those who needed them. Martha Sadler, who ran a bakery and grocers in Sadlers, had the contract to provide these goods in the 1830s and 1840s and in November 1849, for example, Henry Hewett paid Martha Sadler for the tea, butter and sugar she had supplied to Mary Woodley. Mary Woodley is one example of those who had long-term aid from the parish. Aged 45 in 1841, with six children at home, she had been first deserted and then widowed, and from 1833, when the parish repaired the window in her cottage, through the next twenty years, she was repeatedly given help.

She was only one example. The farming depression which had lasted from 1813 into the 1850s meant that the poor in the parish became even poorer. By 1850 the parish was maintaining 45 people on outdoor relief, many of whom were old and infirm - there were no old age pensions - and other younger ones who were ill or had suffered injury. The names are familiar as some of their descendants still live in the village: Elizabeth Didcock, Ann Thatcher, Elizabeth Strange, Sarah Beasley and James Belcher. Some cases were pitiful: Simeon and Jemima Wicks were children who had been deserted, and after keeping them for a month or two in the parish, the Overseers sent them to the workhouse, where they spent the next several years. Indeed, the proportion of Wittenham people who were sent to the workhouse rather than maintained in the parish increased over the years. In 1858 there was an entire family living in the workhouse, William Hunt, his wife Elizabeth and their seven children.[20] It should be remembered that a family sent to the workhouse was split up, with the man living in one wing, the woman in another and the children in yet another, and they were allowed to meet for only a few minutes a day.

Another melancholy tale which emerges from the records is that of the Austin family. Thomas Austin was born in Long Wittenham about 1777 and worked as a tin-man. He was clearly something of a tearaway, because he was brought before the courts twice, once for stealing a pewter mug and once (in 1808) for making a girl pregnant. He had married his wife Martha in Wotton, Berks in 1802, and they had had a son Charles in Long Wittenham in 1807. Charles married his wife Ann in 1837 in London, when she was nineteen, and they had a son in 1839, who was named after his grandfather. Charles may well have taken after his father

Thomas, or he might have stolen something out of desperation, but whatever the cause, he was transported to Australia around 1850, leaving his wife and son abandoned in London. They were put in a workhouse in London, and the Clerk of St Giles Without, Cripplegate travelled all the way to Long Wittenham to ascertain whether or not Ann was the responsibility of the parish (those who were born in a parish were said to have a 'settlement' there, and that meant that the parish was responsible for them). He found old Thomas 'bedrid' in the same cottage in which Charles was born in 1807. Ann and her son Thomas were duly sent back to Long Wittenham. The Overseers eventually sent them to the workhouse in Wallingford, and the two of them lived there for at least the next two years.[21] They then disappear from the records.



The 18th century fire engine and engine house c.1900

VII

When the earthly sojourn of so many was fraught with cold, hunger and pain, it was natural for them to turn to the churches for comfort. By 1829 Long Wittenham had two, the parish church of St Mary, the earliest parts of which date from the twelfth century, and a newly-built Methodist chapel. This first chapel was built on land donated by James Prowse and was situated on the High Street somewhere near the Grange. By the 1880s

there was need for a different and perhaps larger chapel which was built on Lockway Lane and opened for worship in December 1883. This Primitive Methodist chapel thrived for some years, with a Mothers' Union Sunday School, but attendance fell off towards the mid-twentieth century. Worship appears to have ceased in October 1955, and the building was eventually sold to Lionel Edwards in 1961. The Chapel served as the village shop and post office for over forty years but the shop closed in 2006 and the post office in 2008.

Primitive Methodist chapel 1955

Relations between the chapel and the church appear to have been unusually friendly. Methodists may have worshipped in the chapel, but most were baptised, married and buried in the church. The fact that the church maintained its position in this manner was probably due to the quality of some of the vicars, and in particular of the Rev. J. C. Clutterbuck, Vicar from 1830 to 1885. Rev. Clutterbuck clearly devoted most of his time and energy to his parish. Besides the usual duties of the parish priest, he was very active in establishing organisations to help the villagers to improve their chances in life. He had helped to initiate the

Friendly Society, composing its rules himself, he was chairman of the Vestry until age made the task too onerous, and he was probably responsible for the school.

Feast Day at the cross c. 1928-29

Education had traditionally been seen as a duty of the church, and the Rev. Clutterbuck no doubt took an interest in its provision from his earliest days in the parish. There was certainly a school of some sort from 1835, since the founding meeting of the Friendly Society met in the School-room: the school building was situated on the left side of School Lane, the road to the sports ground. As well, various ladies in the village at one time or another set up schools in their homes. (The Misses Hayward apparently ran a boarding school in Willington's for a time.) But the question of education for the lower classes was becoming more of a live issue as the century progressed, and in the mid 1850s the Rev. Clutterbuck decided to make more substantial provision. The land in the Village, which Robert Bargus had owned in 1812, was now owned by the Rev. Clutterbuck, and he gave it to the parish as the site for the new school. The new Church of England National School was opened in 1857.

The entire Clutterbuck family for two generations took a close and continuing interest in the school. The school Log Books record at least weekly visits by the Rev. Clutterbuck to inspect pupils' writing, by Miss Clutterbuck to give a singing lesson, and by Mrs Clutterbuck to inspect the girls' needlework. The school was necessarily subject to erratic attendance. The yearly harvests required the help of the children to enable families to earn enough to keep them over the winter, and during the colder months there were often epidemics of colds or measles. The work was not terribly academic and the teachers concentrated on basic reading, writing and sums and the learning of Scripture.[23] People were of two minds about education in the nineteenth century. On the one hand, most agreed that the ability to read and write and do sums was useful, at least for boys; on the other hand, employers and in particular farmers were afraid that if the children learned too much, they would not be docile agricultural labourers when they were older. Many parents resented having to send their children to school after about the age of eight, since children were capable of earning a bit of money towards the family budget.

After 1871, when primary education became compulsory, attendance officers kept an eye on those who often skipped school. Inspectors came regularly to inspect the teaching and to test the children in the basic subjects, but the results were mixed. The schoolchildren showed reasonable proficiency in religious subjects, but the Inspectors were repeatedly severe about the levels attained in regular schoolwork: in July 1870 the inspection *'shows a very low state of education in the Parish'*, while in June 1884 the Inspector felt that '*The quality of the work leaves very much to be desired.'* [24]

VIII

For those who were tired and wished to relax, there was another source of comfort; the public house. Long Wittenham had never lacked for pubs and certainly from the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War there were never less than four and often five from which to choose. There were The Plough and The Vine, as today, and the Barley Mow, which in the early nineteenth century had been called the Ferry House (before

Clifton Hampden bridge was built in 1864, a ferry had carried traffic across the river). There were also pubs called The Wheatsheaf, (later probably called The Machine Man) and the Three Poplars, which served the west end of the village. The Three Poplars was a pub until the mid-twentieth century, when it became a Youth Hostel and then, in 1964, it became the Pendon Museum, a museum of miniature landscape. The Vine, Three Poplars and possibly The Wheatsheaf, had started as 'beer shops' following the 1830 Beer Shop Act which allowed anyone whose name was on the rate books to brew and sell beer in their front parlour.

One product of so many pubs was, not surprisingly, a certain amount of drunkenness, and the newspapers of the period have repeated references to instances of drunk and disorderly behaviour. In November 1869, for example, Charles Tame, landlord of the Vine Cottage, had a handful of his whiskers pulled out by a drunken Charles Hunt. One series of three court appearances demonstrated the family solidarity of the Didcocks, as well as their tendency to display a certain lack of respect towards the law, or at least towards PC Gunning. At half-past twelve on a Sunday morning in 1869, PC Gunning was going about his duties when he heard a great noise in the street. He went to investigate and found William Beckett and several others drunk and using very bad language. He eventually took Beckett into custody, but Jole Didcock assaulted the constable while he was doing so. PC Gunning then tried to arrest Didcock, but Didcock's brother Daniel rushed up and held the constable's arm so that Jole could escape. The constable eventually hauled them all into court, where the magistrate fined them ten shillings and pronounced the whole episode a disgrace to Long Wittenham and the public houses in the village.[25]

Judging from the records over the years, the main duties of a constable in Long Wittenham were keeping order after the pubs closed and searching for poachers. In the days before policemen as such, each parish was responsible for its own policing, and this was the duty of the parish constable (although Long Wittenham had had a watchman as well). By the passing of the County and Borough Police Act of 1856, however, all local authorities were compelled to set up police forces, and Long Wittenham received its first new police constable in 1856, Erastus Beckett.[26] The constables lived in a house on the north side of the west end of the High

Street until about 1900, when the Policeman's House was built. Living in the village, as they did, the constables were well-known to the inhabitants of the parish. On the one hand, this familiarity made the task of the constable easier than it is today, since he would know on whom to keep watch. On the other hand, the villagers would be equally familiar with his weaknesses: more than one police constable was seen to fall off his bike after too long a visit to a pub, and PC Thatcher was reputedly more likely to join in the poaching than to stop it.[27]

Besides drinking and poaching, Wittenham men and boys enjoyed sports, in particular football. The Wittenham team was a 'kicking scramble lot' until Mr Collins organised them into a Junior Football team, giving the team football gear, a goalpost and eventually a Cup for which to compete. This was the North Berks Cup, and the memory of the Wittenham team's victory in the first match for the Cup in 1907 remains strong in the village.[28]

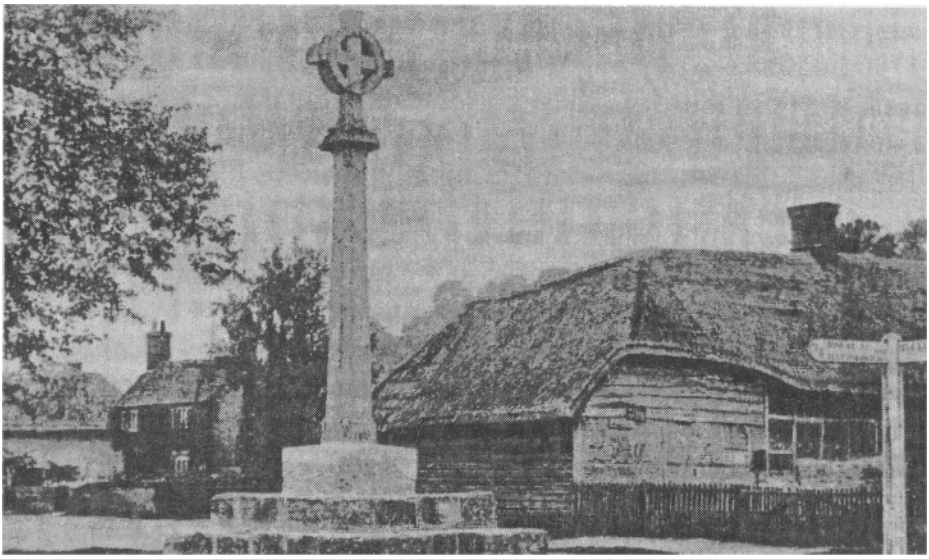
IX

In the time before commuting and the wireless brought outside influences to bear, the families which inhabited the Manor in a rural village always exercised a dominant influence. For Long Wittenham during the period 1800 to the early 1920s, two families were of overriding importance, the Haywards and the Clutterbucks. The Haywards flourished from about 1790 to 1880; the influence of the Clutterbucks dates from the arrival of the Rev. J.C. Clutterbuck in 1830, and was reinforced by that of his son, Capt (later Admiral) W.R. Clutterbuck, who lived in the Manor from the mid-1880s until his death in 1923. Memories of the Clutterbucks are still fresh, but those of the Haywards have faded entirely. This is unfortunate, because there is a certain romance in their rise and fall.

The first Squire Hayward was born plain William in 1745. The family was very poor, and he went to work as a ploughboy, where the farmer took pity on him and gave him some shoes. William clearly found his duties as an agricultural labourer of minimal interest, and he ran away to sea and took up smuggling. With the money he made he went to Paris and bought up a quantity of lace, returned to England and opened a shop in

1907 Wittenham Football team with the Berkshire Cup.

Back row: r. Jim Chambers
third row: l. Tommy Nutt, second from l. Fred Green, 3rd from r. Fred Carter, 2nd from r. Harry Woodley
second row: l. Harry Chambers, 2nd from r. Lance Didcock



French's and the cross 1873

The Plough showing the slaughterhouse on right 1877

Oxford Street, London. The business flourished and he was eventually supplier of lace to the Court. On the death of his brother John in 1790 he returned to Long Wittenham to live. By now a wealthy man, he took the farmhouse which had belonged to the Manor and made it into the new Manor House, and settled down as the parish Squire, dying in 1825.

His two sons, William and George, both lived in the parish, William in the Manor House and George in the old manor house, by now called Willington's. Besides acting at different times as Churchwarden, William was also a Justice of the Peace for Berkshire; his brother George, too, can be found acting as Churchwarden or Overseer. George married Anna Prowse, a member of another important Wittenham family, who lived at Church Farm, and it was he who farmed the Hayward holdings. William had married the forewoman in his business in London, but he and his wife had no children, and the family holdings passed to George's son, William Turner Hayward. This was the beginning of the end, because William Turner had a passion for gambling: he was fond of boasting that one day he had lost £3,000 before breakfast, but that the event had failed to spoil his appetite. He eventually went bankrupt in the early 1870s and his sons bought him out. He died in 1874, and his son George, then took on the lease of the Manor from St John's.

The Hayward saga ended in something of a shambles. The widow of the second William, called Old Madam Hayward, lived until the age of 96 (she died in 1874), long enough to write a will whose terms occupied the courts for some years. One problem was that many of the people to whom she left property had already died; another was that she did not actually have the property to leave, which she thought she had. Things were eventually settled and her great-nephew George, son of William Turner, was vested with the mortgages. However, he died in 1880 and his brother Evan Arthur Hayward (who had taken over the London business), died in 1881. With their deaths, the story of the Long Wittenham Haywards came to an abrupt end.[29]

The sober habits of the Clutterbucks were in marked contrast to those of William Turner Hayward. Two of the Rev. J. C. Clutterbuck's sons, the Rev. Francis and Admiral William, lived for part of their lives in

the village. Admiral Clutterbuck eventually established his position as the largest landholder, and thereby employer, in the parish. Soon after his return to the parish he began to assume the duties of his position, becoming a Trustee of the Friendly Society in 1886 and a Guardian of the Wallingford Union in 1887. His wife, who reputedly owned a silver mine, devoted herself to good works, and memories remain of the parties she arranged for the village children. When she died, it transpired that she had wished to be buried amongst the poor on the west side of the church, rather than amongst the better off on the east side.

Admiral Clutterbuck and his wife, in short, were sterling examples of the best sort of village gentry, who had the welfare of those who depended on them always in mind. However, this type of paternalism had another side. He was the major employer in the parish, with dozens of Wittenham men working on his land and numbers of women in service in the Manor. Villagers were acutely conscious of their dependence on him, on the other large landowners in the parish, on the shopkeepers, who could withhold credit, and on the households which employed many of the girls and women in service. Comments recur as to the danger to employment which threatened if objections were made to the stopping up of footpaths placed inconveniently across the lands of the better-off, or to the lack of elections to the Parish Council (elections were not held until the 1940s). Children were reported to their parents if they failed to curtsey or to touch their caps to the Clutterbuck ladies and others in higher social positions. It was feared that failure to attend church could result in the loss of a tied cottage. There is nothing in this which is unique to Long Wittenham, but it is well to remember that the relations between the social classes were much more tense just three generations ago than they are today.

X

The First World War produced a social revolution analogous to, if not quite so all-embracing as, that produced by the enclosure a century before. Death and the British Government combined to ensure that the old order would pass, and that Long Wittenham as it is today would begin to take recognisable shape.

During the war most of the men in the parish did their duty and went off to war; they were encouraged to do so by Admiral Clutterbuck, who was not averse to going to a man's cottage and asking him why he had not enlisted (until 1916, when conscription came in, joining the Army was purely voluntary). The records of the Friendly Society note that thirty-two of their members were off fighting, and those members who remained at home were surcharged to pay the premiums of the absent members. Over the four years of war fourteen Wittenham men died, a significant proportion of the young and vigorous in such a small parish.

This was not uncommon, and there was political pressure on the British Government to ensure that those who survived would return to better conditions than had existed before 1914. By the Smallholdings Act, local authorities were empowered to acquire land to lease to returning soldiers who wished to farm. The Berkshire County Council naturally turned to St John's College as a possible source of land, and St John's opened negotiations with Admiral Clutterbuck. The College proposed that he give up the leases to the two large farms which he held from St John's, the Manor or Lower Farm of 188 acres, which lay from Crossways to the Thames opposite Clifton Hampden and Burcot, and the combined Challis and Moulden's Farms of 177 acres, which began at Challis' near the Cross and extended to the Moreton border, behind Admiral Clutterbuck's wood. He agreed to do so, 30 and by 1920 a number of new farmers, some of whom were Wittenham men, took up the tenancies. These original tenancies, amalgamated with land later acquired by the County Council, include the contemporary Lower Farm, Home Farm, New Barn Farm, Westfield Farm, Rose Hurst Farm and Woodside Farm.

The purchase of the land from St John's College by the County Council began the long, slow retreat of the College from its centuries-old position as the dominant landowner in the parish. Their replacement as landowner, combined with the death of Admiral Clutterbuck in 1923, opened up the social structure of the parish. No institution or family has established a comparable position, and with the 1920s the contemporary history of the parish of Long Wittenham begins.

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