

The Story of
Little Clacton
—an Essex Village

By KENNETH WALKER

LITTLE CLACTON PARISH COUNCIL

Price Two Shillings and Sixpence

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1958

Acknowledgment

This account is based on material collected by the author from many sources, and with the assistance of numerous people over a long period. In particular he would acknowledge the ever ready help accorded him by Mr. F. G. Emmison, F.S.A., the County Archivist, and his staff at the Essex Record Office, and also by those older residents of Little Clacton who delighted in recounting their reminiscences of the village in former days.

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* Now retired, Mr. Mudd was Postmaster of the village from 1907 to 1948. His father before him was Postmaster from 1876 to 1907.

Preface

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IN commending this story of Little Clacton to readers, my Council wish to express their sincere thanks to Mr. Kenneth Walker, historian of the district, for his enthusiastic labours in its preparation.

Nothing stands still. Our village, which has so long presented a settled picture, is changing with the times. So when Mr. Charles Jarvis moved in Council that the possibility of preparing a village history be investigated, he found ready support for the project, and here, for your enjoyment, is the result.

It is, we believe, the first village history to be printed in the locality, and we have every confidence that it will find a welcome and provide, now and in the future, a real source of that local pride without which a village is little more than a group of houses.

The introduction of advertisements from local traders is, I feel, an added interest. Books cost money to make and we are grateful to our friends for their co-operation in financing the project. Our shops and services are at the heart of village life and they, too, represent local history, whilst the advertisements constitute a record for all time of trades in the village at the time of writing.

Our grateful thanks are also due to past and present members of the Council and other inhabitants for their interest and help in expanding the record from their own memories and from material in their possession. The names of those villagers who contributed voluntarily to the cost of publication are listed on the previous page.

May I end on a personal note? It is a matter of pride to me that the book has been produced during my term of office. Having read it I am confident that it will give great pleasure and arouse endless reminiscences now and in the years to come.

B. A. SAYER

*Chairman, Little Clacton
Parish Council.*

The Story of

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—an Essex Village

TO most people Clacton means the seaside, and as in thousands they make their summer pilgrimage by road to the coast they may scarcely notice its smaller namesake as they speed through its main street on the last lap of their journey. The mellow roofs and ancient church of Little Clacton thus briefly glimpsed are in fact silent witnesses to centuries of proud independence, and it is with a feeling of pride in their native village that its people have caused this brief history to be written.

Off the Beaten Track

LONG ago this part of Essex was heath and woodland, and there is no evidence that the site of Little Clacton was ever occupied by the primitive tribes who then wandered across our land. Even to-day there are still heaths and woods close upon its borders, in St. Osyth, Weeley and Great Holland, that have never come under the plough.

As time passed, however, a great centre became established at Colchester, and its successive occupiers, the Celts and Romans, the Saxons and the Danes, thrust out into the surrounding countryside. To the east two early trackways penetrated into the Clacton peninsula, linking their scattered settlements; the one, following the present main road, extended through Weeley to the Naze, and the other, following the left bank of the River Colne, turned at St. Osyth, and passing through Great Clacton and Little Holland, ended its course at an inlet of the sea. This was the sheltered estuary of the Gun-fleet, where ships once found refuge, but it is now only

a modest stream called Holland Brook that nevertheless drains a large part of the peninsula.

The three thousand acres which were to form the parish of Little Clacton lay between these two trackways, and their site sloped gently towards the Brook which forms the eastern boundary. Thus remote from the beaten track the area did not immediately attract the early settlers who sought well watered clearings and richer soil. Nearer the shore, however, one little community had become firmly established on the site of Great Clacton village, and here we believe came an early Saxon chieftain, Clacc, who, gathering round him his followers, or *inga*, called the place *Clacc-inga-ton*, whence its present name derives.

The First Settlers

IN Saxon times the site of Little Clacton formed part of a vast maritime estate which belonged to St. Paul's Church (the future Cathedral) in London. Stretching from St. Osyth to the Naze, its value lay in the rich pasture of the marshlands and its ready access by sea from the capital.

Early in the eleventh century the area round Clacton and St. Osyth had been allocated to the office of Bishop of London, and the successive bishops enjoyed the revenue as part of their stipend. They built a palace at (Great) Clacton, and as this village expanded, so more and more of the surrounding wastes were brought under cultivation. From a point on the old St. Osyth Road, indicated by a landmark to become known as Bocking's Elm, its people thrust northward and so penetrated into the present parish of Little Clacton. Here the land was watered by a tributary of Holland Brook, and a small area of rich glacial gravel provided the first attraction to the early farmers.

It is probable that right from the beginning the land thus opened up was divided into two estates and that shortly after the Conquest they were held by two of the leading Anglo-Norman families who flourished in Essex, the Bovills and the Engaines. For centuries these farmsteads have stood in close proximity, astride the ancient road to Little Clacton, and though Engaines is now Gidea Hall, Bovills has preserved its old name, a direct link with these earliest settlers. Nor is this the only evidence of its antiquity, for part of the original homestead moat may still be seen, a moat which once encircled the farm buildings so that at night both men and cattle could find protection when the surrounding woods were the haunt of wild animals or marauding bands.

When Domesday Book was compiled in 1086 it is recorded that parts of the Manor of *Clackintune* had been allocated to five knights whom the bishops supplied for the defence of the realm, and it is likely that Bovills and Engaines were two of the estates so held.

The Bishops and Their Park

EARLY in the twelfth century the manor came into the hands of Bishop Richard de Belmeis who took a personal interest in his local property. Closely associated with the rebuilding of Old St. Paul's, he turned with equal

enthusiasm to the founding of the famous priory at St. Osyth. By this time the land beyond the two earliest farmsteads appears to have been parcelled out among a group of settlers who had established themselves on the site of Little Clacton village, and the need of a chapel to serve them must have been immediately apparent to the enterprising Belmeis. As the oldest parts of the present Parish Church of St. James are believed to date from this period there seems little doubt that its foundation was due to the Bishop, and an early chronicler records that he granted the rectory to his newly established Priory.

It was Belmeis's hope to resign the bishopric and retire to the seclusion of St. Osyth, and with a view to enjoying his leisure hours he enclosed as a park an area of waste land lying between the new village and Thorpe. Forming a rough square a thousand acres in extent it was crossed diagonally by Holland Brook. Unfortunately, in his enthusiasm, Belmeis incorporated a wood near Thorpe that still belonged to the Cathedral, and there exists a charter of about 1127 whereby he restores it to its rightful owners.

Although the energetic Belmeis died that same year, without seeing his hopes fulfilled, there is little doubt that the succeeding bishops, who frequently stayed at Great Clacton or St. Osyth, enjoyed the pleasures of hunting in Clacton Park. A century later their right for ever to free warren in the Manor of *Clackinton* was confirmed, with full liberty to take stags, hinds, and all sorts of wild animals.

While this ancient park has long since disappeared the name of the hunting lodge is still preserved in Little Clacton Lodge Farm now standing on its site, and at Parkgate Farm is a broad chaiseway up which the bishops must have cantered in pursuit of pleasure. It was near the Lodge in 1711 that two golden rods were discovered, relics no doubt of its former owners, and the manorial court meeting at the time recorded "wee find it to be Treasure Trove as wee are informed does belong to the Lord of the said manor of little Clackton."

The Lords of the Manor

THE first record we have of the name *Little Clacton* dates from 1321, but *Great Clacton* is noted thirty-five years previously. The manor therefore became known as the Manor of Great and Little Clacton, and its authority extended over the greater part of the two parishes. Its business was transacted by the court which met once or twice a year, probably at Great Clacton. Presided over by the Steward, who represented the Lord of the Manor, its judicial powers gradually waned with the passing of time, and during the last three hundred years (the period covered by the surviving records) it was concerned almost solely with the descent of the various copyhold properties. These survivals of ancient feudal tenure were lands held of the lord by a copy of the court roll and for services later commuted to quit rents. They were quite extensive at Clacton and provided the lord of the manor with a regular income.

Great and Little Clacton continued in possession of the successive bishops until 1545, six years after the dissolution of St. Osyth's, when the

Manor, Park, and various farms were exchanged with King Henry VIII for other property. They passed on his death to his daughter, Princess Mary, and in 1553 were obtained by Sir Thomas, Baron Darcy, the new owner of St. Osyth Priory.

For over three hundred years the Darcys and their descendants were lords of the manor, which passed by marriage through the families of Savage, Earls Rivers, and Nassau, Earls of Rochford. The fourth Earl of Rochford was a distinguished diplomat, and was succeeded in 1781 by a natural son, Frederick Nassau. This gentleman was followed by his son, W. F. Nassau of St. Osyth Priory, the last lord, for when he died in 1857 the manor came into the hands of trustees and so remained until its diminishing rights were finally extinguished.

The Parish Church

FOR more than eight hundred years the ancient Parish Church of St. James has served the spiritual needs of the villagers, as enduring as the Faith which has gathered them within its walls ever since the Norman bishops first came to Little Clacton. Part of the fabric, and the north window of the chancel, are said to date from these early times, but for some reason the monks of St. Osyth carried out extensive alterations in the fourteenth century, and the pointed windows, the north and south doors, and the attractive timber porch, make it to all appearances a building of that period. Then, somewhat later, they added the bell turret supported on a massive timber framework at the western end of the nave. Its five bells have long been reduced to three, but one of them is as old as the belfry that contains it. Inscribed *Sancta Margareta Ora Pro Nobis* (St. Margaret pray for us) it has pealed across the Essex countryside ever since 1437, summoning the parishioners to worship. The other two bells were cast by noted founders of their day, Miles Graye (1652) and Thomas Gardiner (1748).

Within the Church is a Norman font fashioned from Purbeck marble, and though recently re-set on new pillars it has served the parish for twenty-five generations. Its poor condition is probably due to vandalism in Cromwell's time.

Of particular interest are two early brasses, one of them, commemorating old William Hubbard of Bovills Hall, who died in 1596, having been removed from his tombstone, has now been placed on the north wall of the nave. The other, restored to its original setting, records two Bagehott brothers "att the time of their death, servants to the Right Honorable John Lorde Darcy of Chiche."

At the Restoration of King Charles II the placing of royal arms in churches was made compulsory, and Little Clacton still possesses a fine example which is dated 1726. For long obscured by varnish and dirt, its present condition is due to expert cleaning undertaken in 1956. The artist has given the face of the lion an almost human if ferocious expression, perhaps portraying some unpopular figure of the time.

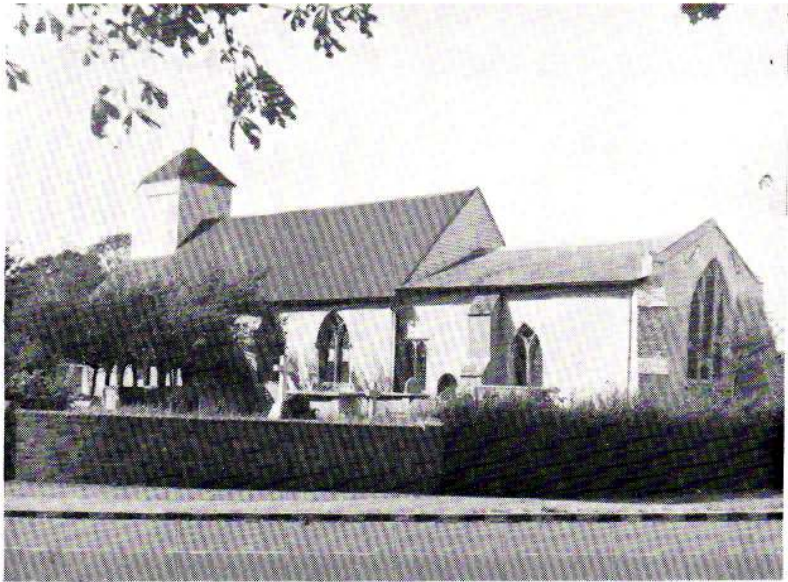
Over the vestry at the western end of the Church there was formerly a singers' gallery containing a small organ, but this was removed when the present large organ was installed in 1937. The communion table, now in



BOVILLS HALL



THE VICARAGE



THE PARISH CHURCH



THE BLACKSMITH'S ARMS

the vestry, and chairs in the sanctuary, date from the seventeenth century. Extensive restoration work was carried out to the Church fabric in the 1950's.

The parish registers commence in 1538, and though incomplete, form an interesting record of those who have lived in the village during times past.

The Patronage

ALSO within the Church will be seen a board commemorating most of the known incumbents from as far back as 1321. One rather suspects that many of the early names (they total twenty in the fifteenth century) are those of priests supplied by the monks of St. Osyth from among their brethren. The rectory having been appropriated to them they collected the great tithes, but about 1450 it was recorded that "the vicarage of Little Claketon scarcely suffices for itself" and they granted a pension of 40s. a year to the incumbent.

The tithes, together with the patronage, passed to the Darcys shortly after the Dissolution, and thus the lords of the manor were also the patrons right up to the present century when the living was transferred to the bishops of the diocese. Due to the misfortunes of the manorial family during the Civil War the great tithes had to be sold, and with the remaining demesne lands were held successively by Judge Atkyns, his daughter Frances Longe, Sir John Percival, and the Schutzes and Harding Newmans of Great Clacton Hall. It was the duty of these lay rectors to maintain the fabric of the chancel, and when the tithes were finally disposed of it appears that this liability passed to the owners of the Lodge Farm who still pay an annual sum for that purpose.

In times of superstition and illiteracy the parish priest would have been the only scholar in the village, and thus assisted his flock in lay matters as well as being their spiritual leader. Of the early vicars we know little, but in later times there seems to have been a close link with the nearby and small parish of Frinton, and a frequent interchange of duties.

Some Recent Vicars

THE Rev. Maurice Gough had been chaplain to Lord Rochford who presented him to the living in 1749. When his elder brother, the vicar of Thorpe, had announced his intention of marrying the vivacious Kitty Canham, he had cautioned him: "Don't do it brother. She is a beautiful creature who will play you a trick." His advice was unheeded, however, and the tragic story that followed will be found in most histories of this part of Essex.

It is recalled that the Rev. W. R. Brown, who became vicar in 1811, never argued with his parishioners, but literally hit out with the result that at least one man was the recipient of a black eye from his spiritual leader. It is said that he built the present vicarage and that a hook in one of the ceilings was provided for hanging up the cradle so the vicar might rock his latest offspring while he composed his sermons.

His successor, the Rev. J. L. Kirby, was the son of a former curate, and in his younger days had been an officer in the Marine Service, and then a captain in the East Essex Militia. He came to Little Clacton in 1831, serving at the same time as curate of Frinton. Writing of the vicarage his son

afterwards recalled: "The house was a very poor one, but my father set to work and added some rooms, and made it a very comfortable and pretty house with a capital garden," so that ten years later it was officially described as "very good: a large part of the house lately built."

Mr. Kirby lost two of his daughters in a typhoid fever epidemic, the second dying while he was burying the first. Little more than a year later he too died, a victim of cancer, and was laid to rest within the Church, both he and other members of his family being commemorated by a stained-glass window.

Kirby's descendants have included the well-known artist, Edward Ardizzone; Iris Morley the novelist; Sir Roland Braddell, a barrister and colonial administrator; and D'Arcy Braddell, a noted architect. One of his sons was an ardent sailor, voyaging across the world in the last great days of sail. He married a daughter of W. F. Nassau, the last lord of the manor, and lived for a time at St. Osyth Priory.

Nassau's other daughter was mother of Margaret Brandreth who left considerable investments, the Brandreth Bequest, to the Churches of St. Osyth and Little Clacton, from which they derive an income of some £550 a year.

Kirby was succeeded in 1850 by the Rev. William Green who remained vicar for fifty-one years. For some time he, too, was priest-in-charge at Frinton, driving over there in a pony and trap to conduct the Sunday morning service at nine, returning to officiate at Little Clacton two hours later.

The Rev. M. S. Wontner, vicar from 1932 until 1949, and sometime Rural Dean, was an author and playwright. He left a legacy divided between Little Clacton and his native Church at Little Oakley, and the choir stalls were provided to his memory.

The Village Elders

THE Parish Church was not only the spiritual centre of Little Clacton but in course of time virtually replaced the manor courts as the guardian of local affairs. Every year, usually on Easter Monday, the village elders assembled for their Vestry Meeting which was in effect the present District Council, Parish Council, and Parochial Church Council rolled into one. On these occasions they appointed from their number the officers for the ensuing year, the Churchwardens, the Overseers of the Poor, the Surveyors of Highways, and the Parish Constables, receiving their accounts, confirming their rates, and dealing with other local business.

It is perhaps difficult, in these days of the welfare state, to appreciate what poverty and disease really meant in the days of our forefathers, and the heaviest responsibilities rested upon the overseers, assisted by the churchwardens, who had to levy a rate and expend it impartially in assisting and maintaining the poor. Each year some £700 or £800 was collected and carefully dispensed in food and clothing, and in providing medical attention. Every item was meticulously recorded, for the accounts had to be endorsed by the magistrates, and we have such items as (1809):

| | | | | | |
|---|----|----|----|----|-----|
| <i>Briches & Buscems boy Batmans</i> | .. | .. | .. | .. | £1 |
| <i>2 pair Stocking little boy Bateman</i> | .. | .. | .. | .. | 3s. |

| | |
|---|---------|
| <i>Baize for Ann Jordan</i> | 5s. |
| <i>Cloath for the Workhouse</i> | 12s. |
| <i>A Bonnet Ann Jordan</i> | 1s. 6d. |
| <i>Making a Gown</i> | 2s. |

There was no doctor in Little Clacton until quite recently, and it was necessary to employ one from a neighbouring village. There is an agreement of 1780 whereby the poor of the parish were attended for five guineas for the year, and in 1796 this had risen to six guineas, "Broken Bones Small Pox & Amputations excepted," with an extra for "Midwifery at One Pound 1s." In 1836 Dr. Manthorp of Thorpe received an annual salary of £15 "which shall include fractures, dislocations and all cases of Surgery and Vaccination. Midwifery to be paid for as usual where an order is given."

The Workhouse

THE Parish once maintained a small workhouse which stood just beyond the Methodist Chapel and was not demolished until quite recently. Here some of the paupers were lodged and employed on menial tasks. In 1815, the year of Waterloo:

Samuel Marsh Agrees to Board and Lodge all people put into the Workhouse that are Able to Work, at three Shillings per Week Each whilst the Flour is at 2s. 9d. per Peck and all Decrepid lame people that cannot Work at 4s. per Week Each . . . and to be allowed two pound for Carting firing for one year.

The functions of the overseers were gradually transferred to the Tending Board of Guardians when this body was formed in 1835, and the Union Workhouse (now Heath Hospital) supplanted the parish workhouses.

The surveyors were responsible for maintaining the highways and bridges, levying a toll for the purpose, and apportioning the work among the farmers and their men.

Public Health

DISEASE and infant mortality were problems as serious as poverty, but they could not be so readily tackled with the limited medical knowledge of the day and had to be accepted as the will of God. When sanitation was lacking, and every ditch was a public sewer, typhoid fever made its periodic incursion. At the time of the Great Plague a Little Clacton yeoman referred in his will to "this present sickness," and exactly a hundred years ago the epidemic was particularly severe with upwards of sixty victims in the village. "Prayers have been offered up in several churches and chapels in the neighbourhood for the removal of the scourge."

A sudden accident could also bring distress to a family. About 1810, Henry Tills of Little Clacton

being busily employed in the act of threshing Beans with the Engine which of late has been frequently used for such purpose, the said Engine was by some obstruction prevented working with that degree of ease and celerity which it usually did . . . with a view to remove the obstruction

and accelerate its motion (he) step'd to the Cog-wheels which of themselves and unexpectedly instantaneously set to work and in an unhappy moment his right hand was unfortunately drawn between the wheels and so extremely lacerated that amputation was deemed necessary . . . having a Wife and three small children he humbly entreats the assistance and charitable contributions of the compassionate, benevolent, generous and humane, to enable him to discharge the expence of his Doctor's Bills.

There must have been many such heart-rending appeals in those hard times.

The Victorians, however, were deeply concerned with this distressing situation, and in that enlightened age numerous public health authorities were set up, forerunners of our district councils. The Tendring Rural Sanitary Authority, operating conjointly with the Board of Guardians, came into being in 1872, and under the Local Government Act of twenty-two years later was reconstituted as the Tendring Rural District Council. By virtue of this same Act the Little Clacton Parish Council also came into existence.

Gidea Hall

THE two ancient farmsteads of Engaines and Bovills both became recognised in due course as independent manors. Sir John Engaine is recorded as a benefactor to Thremhall Priory at Stanstead Mountfichet in Essex about 1280, and perhaps it was he who gave Engaines to that monastery. After the Dissolution King Henry VIII granted *Engayneshall* and other lands in the area to Sir John Cary and Joyce Walsingham, and since that time the estate has passed through several hands. In 1589 we see its later name making an appearance when there is record of *Gyddyhall alias Eynegaynehall*, but apart from the common and not too complimentary adjective its derivation remains a mystery. A century later the old name had entirely lapsed, and one occupier rejoiced in the name of Giddy Baker.

In 1818 the Hall is referred to as "a modern-built house" but being destroyed by fire was replaced some years ago by the present farmhouse, now called Gidea Hall.

The Hubbards of Bovills Hall

ALTHOUGH the Bovill family flourished for some time we do not know how long they were associated with the Hall that bears their name. A number of owners are recorded in the middle of the sixteenth century, and then we come to that great stalwart, William Hubbard.

William came of a local yeoman family and was probably a grandson of John Hubbard whose memorial brass, recording also his four wives, is in Great Bromley Church. William likewise had four wives although only three of them are mentioned on his own brass at Little Clacton.

The Hubbards were in the village in 1551, possibly at Bovills Hall which they subsequently owned. We do not know very much of William, but tend to picture him in his later years like a patriarch among his kinsmen, although he himself had only one child, a daughter. One of the family, William Haymer, was baptised in 1595, and "was so named by ould William

Hubbard of Bovells hall then lyvinge, & was baptised in his parlour." A year later we find his own epitaph in the parish registers, viz.:

Olde Wm Hubbard of Bovell's Hall dyed on Midsomer daye on the morninge and was buried on Saturdaye the xxvith daye of June 1596, who gave in his last will and testam. nt the summe of one hundred poundes for the purchase of lands and the same to be and remayne to the use and behoffe of the poore people of this parish of Lt. Clacton for ever and wch summ together w. th more summes thereto added by a chieff inhab here howe afore wrytinge anew of this psent boke been disbursed and layed out to the same intent accordinglie.

The money thus bequeathed went to the purchase of a farm of twenty-two acres at St. Osyth Heath which was administered by trustees on behalf of the poor. Some of the rent went in the purchase of blankets, coals, clothes and meat, while the remainder was disbursed by the parish officers in sums varying from 2s. 6d. to 10s. 6d. to poor sick parishioners. Due to the increasing cost of maintenance, the farm was sold in 1944 and the proceeds were invested for the benefit of the poor.

William's memorial brass records in crude verse:

*Here lyeth William Hubbard of Bovelle Hall
and his three wyves Rose, Jayne, and Joice,
and yet againe I have to rejoice,
in Jesus Christ that all me sente & lente
in all this worlde present,
and the best thing yt we coulde finde,
was to serve Jesus Christ in hart and mynde,
and while we did on the earth dwell,
to followe Christ and his holy gossell*

He was survived by his fourth wife, Margaret.

William Hubbard left the "Manor called Bovells in Little Clacton" to his great-nephew, a second William, who had been baptised in the Parish Church only seven years previously. This young lad later moved to another part of the county and then, in 1635, he sold the Hall to Lord Darcy (Earl Rivers) and emigrated to New England. He was thus one of the early English settlers in America, but still retained certain property in this district for when he died thirty-five years later he desired that "my eldest son, William Hubbard, shall enjoy all my lands in Old England, situated in Tendring."

This third William distinguished himself as one of America's earliest historians, and was the ancestor of a number of prominent Americans, among them Graham Greene Hubbard, Founder and First President of the National Geographical Society, and father of Mabel, the deaf and dumb wife of Dr. Alexander Graham Bell, inventor of the telephone.

The Naval Knights of Windsor

FOUR years after purchasing Bovills Hall, Earl Rivers gave it, together with Woodrows adjoining and other properties, to his daughter Elizabeth, widow of Lord Savage. This lady, one of the wealthiest in the country, was created Countess Rivers in her own right, but as an ardent Roman Catholic she suffered at the hands of the Roundheads during the Civil War.

Although she appears to have conveyed her estates to trustees so as to avoid confiscation, many of them had to be sold, and about 1659 Bovills Hall and Woodrows, and Alton Park in Great Clacton, were conveyed to a Daniel Taylor. They descended in due course to his son William, and grandson Daniel, and were eventually purchased for Samuel Travers' Naval Knights of Windsor.

Samuel Travers, M.P., was a barrister and sometime Surveyor-General of the Land Revenues of the Crown and Auditor General to the Prince of Wales (George II). He died in 1725 and among his legacies was money to erect the equestrian statue of King William III in London, and £500 to Prince William Augustus for a George should he be made a Knight of the Garter. It had been his intention to establish at Chelsea a school for young gentlemen, but being advised that "his age was not disposed to receive so great a benefit" he left the money to his executors to purchase an estate in Essex sufficient to produce £500 a year as pensions to seven gentlemen to be added to the Poor Knights of Windsor, they being superannuated or disabled "Lieutenants of Englishmen of Warr."

Although Travers made no reference to Bovills Hall in his will it does appear that he had acquired it in his lifetime, that it passed to his nephew, and that there was considerable delay in settling his benefactions. In due course, however, the Hall, together with Woodrows, Alton Park, and Great Holland Hall, were allocated to his Naval Knights of Windsor as they became known. This body was made into a separate corporation in 1798, and dissolved in 1892. The Travers' Pension took their place, and the Hall became the property of the Lords of the Admiralty being administered in conjunction with the Naval Training College at Holbrook, Suffolk.

Throughout this time Bovills Hall has been occupied by various tenant farmers, and about 1762 it was taken over by John Fisher whose family remained there more than a hundred years and were among the leading yeomen in the parish during last century. William Fisher, who left the year after Waterloo, was a diligent farmer according to the account book he has left us. In spite of the agricultural depression of his time he appears to have flourished, and there are records of his expenditure on manuring with chalk, on drainage works, and on mole ploughing.

A later farmer, Mr. A. McBain, is notable for his contributions to mechanical farming, his machines, now used all over the world, being designed at Bovills Hall. He was joined by Mr. C. Mayes Jarvis, who represents the County of Essex on the National Farmers' Union Council.

The present farmhouse is said to date from the sixteenth century, but may well incorporate the earlier home of William Hubbard. The timbers of the old barn are reputed to have come from the rotten hulk of the *Royal George* which sank off Portsmouth in 1782, the subject of Cowper's immortal poem "Toll for the Brave."

The Lodge

THE ancient hunting park of the bishops, divided by Holland Brook, became two estates known as Little Clacton Lodge and Thorpe Park in the respective parishes. They came to the Darcys, and the former was sold by the second

lord in 1589 to the Kempes of Spaynes Hall "for a competent sume of money."

About this time the Lodge was leased by a certain George Goring who came from Sussex to enjoy a season of sport. His wife accompanied him, and also, no doubt, his son George, a lad of seven years who, as a distinguished general and Earl of Norwich, was destined long afterwards to play a leading part in the Siege of Colchester. Did his mind go back during those gruelling weeks to that carefree holiday with his parents in Clacton Park only a few miles distant? Here must have been born his sister Mary, for we read in the parish registers in 1590:

Marie Goring, the daughter of Georg Goring Esquire (now lyving in litle Clacton lodge, by reason he had the same in lease together wt all the parke groundes, of the demise of Mr. Kempe) was baptised (here) on Saturdaye the xxxth day of Maye

The following year he had installed a bailiff, and the next year, 1592, died "Nicholas Lambert of Clacton lodge." Only two months later we read:

Clement ffenn singleman, and Prudence the late wyfe of Nycholas Lambert, wch dwelt in litle Clacton Lodge; were maryed uppon Tewsdaye, the xvth day of August; but she (most accursed creature), did the verye next morning, desperatelie hang her selfe, to the intollerable grieffe of her new maryed husband, & the dreadfull horror & astonishment of all the Countye . . . was buried out of the compas of Christian buriall; in ye furthest syde of the Churchyard northward; uppon the xviith daye of August; for that shee most accursedlie hanged her selfe.

No wonder the building by the north end of the churchyard was once supposed to be haunted! Not so the Lodge, however, although in its isolated position more than half a mile from any public highway (the centre of the old Park) one might well expect to see the shade of that "most accursed creature." Her sorrowing husband shortly afterwards re-married, and continued to live at the Lodge in spite of its tragic associations.

In 1612 the landholders of Clacton and Thorpe Parks were presented at Quarter Sessions for want of a bridge (Risbridge) in the way from Little Clacton to Thorpe, and were directed to make the same. The landholder of Clacton Park was Henry Sherman, clothier of Dedham, who would have come of the family that emigrated to America and produced the famous General Sherman, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army. There were a number of Shermans at Little Clacton about this time.

The Park became opened up for cultivation, or "disparked" as the old historians tell us, and early in the eighteenth century the Lodge was owned and occupied by Thomas Hallam who lies buried under the chancel of the Parish Church, "A Tender Husband An Indulgent Father and a true Friend." It descended by marriage to the Bennett family and more recently was owned by Mr. Thomas Lilley of Clacton whose son, Mr. Harold Lilley, lived at the Lodge. It is now held by Messrs. Blyth & Sons who farm extensively in the district.

The meadows adjoining the Brook were at one time frequently flooded, and in 1703 twenty-one acres of Lodge Farm, as well as other lands in the parish, were rendered unprofitable "by a breach at or near Gun-Fleet Haven in the County of Essex." The old anchorage had silted up, and the old

river reduced to a meandering stream (Holland Brook) by the erection of a wall across the estuary which kept at bay the encroaching sea. Built by the Tendring Level Commissioners, it is now maintained by the Essex River Board, to whom certain farmers have to pay a drainage rate.

Clactongrove House

STANDING modestly by Tan Lane is Clactongrove House, another farm with a long and interesting history. Called *Cokks* in 1490, it appears as *Cockes* (occupied by Jo. Stubbes), together with *Bouyll's hall* and *Engaynes* in Norden's famous map and description of Essex in 1594. It was then part of the large estates of the Lords Bayning, the Dedham family who rose to short-lived eminence. After the last lord died in 1638 their property became divided among a multitude of titled co-heirs, among them Barbara, Lady Castlemaine, mistress of King Charles II. The complicated apportionment and disputes concerning these lands must have been a joy to the lawyers. Cocks Hall was eventually sold by them in 1719 to John Freeman of Colchester, in whose family it remained for over a century.

There is an interesting record of this farm in 1628 which reveals that a number of groves had been planted twenty years previously, thus accounting for its present name.

Tan Lane may have been so called because hides were tanned nearby, for in 1634 there were complaints by users of the highway that "ill sentes" were caused by John Clifton of Little Clacton at his tan pit. At the southern end of the lane was Reeden Hatch suggesting a gateway to woodland (Towns Wood?).

Some Old Estates

MOST of the farmsteads of Little Clacton have a long history, the fields having been tilled for centuries. As time passed, however, the early farm-houses were rebuilt or refashioned and now date from varying periods.

A small estate adjoining Sladburys Lane was purchased in 1616 by the Charity Trustees of Dedham, and for many years the rent was applied to the repair and ornamentation of the Parish Church there.

A lane at the northern end of the Village Green still leads to Clapgate Farm, but the delightful sixteenth century house was destroyed by fire some years ago. Almost as old must be Swain's Farm farther up the Street, perhaps associated with John Sweyn living more than six centuries ago. Reedlands (Reedens) straddling the Holland Road bears the date 1746 when the house was rebuilt, and it was long owned by the lay rectors as part of the old demesne lands. Other farms recalling ancient names are Fandown (Willow Farm), Amerell's (and Feveril's), Bateman's (now Ideal Nurseries), Turner's, Foot's, and Woodrows.

Woodlands was once called Risbridge Farm (Agnes de Risbregge lived in 1319) after the nearby crossing of the Brook, which was evidently a brushwood bridge. Another ancient bridge was the Fan (or Marsh) Bridge which links the Holland Road with Great Holland Common, while the St. Osyth Road crosses Pickers Ditch at a spot known as Broccles Bridge, meaning brook-leas or water-meadows.

Every field has its name, some of them being of great antiquity, for example Lyatts at Bovills Hall which can probably be associated with the Lyards living at Little Clacton early in the fourteenth century. Delightful old names there are too, such as Parsley Pightle, Fuddles, Awkwards, and Long Swipes, while one farm had by chance both a Little Dans and a Quench which have a distinctly modern flavour! The Dan-lands were, however, a corruption of Dam-lands, and the lane leading northward from the railway bridge in Holland Road was "a way to carry and recarry towards the Dam." This suggests that an embankment once spanned the Brook at the lower end of the Park, thus protecting it long before the seawall was built. It would, indeed, have been a suitable site for a watermill, where corn might be taken by the villagers before the days of windmills. Later the old lane passing Shelley Lodge to the fields beyond probably gave access to a windmill, standing back off the Thorpe Road near the boundary with Great Clacton.

While there is little evidence of the great fields which were tilled on a communal basis under the feudal system, there was at one time a Towns Wood, for we read about 1696:

Spent at Colchester when we carried Robert Smyth Robert Howard and John Haward before the Justices for felling the timbers in the Towns wood without order of the Trustees or Officers 4s.

This might, of course, have been on Hubbard's Charity Farm.

It has been suggested that Plough Corner was so named because the road takes the shape of a plough. Presumably here in 1685 stood a cottage "commonly called Masons and now called the Plow," while four years later was buried "Cocks wife at ye Plough."

Wayside Greens

THE ancient manor of Skyrmans Fee (Frinton) had some scattered fields in Little Clacton adjoining the Holland Road, one of them "abutting on a pasture called Skyrmys Teye alias Cookes grene" (1612). Roadside wastes or commons were frequently called Greens and they usually became absorbed into adjoining fields or had little cottages built upon them. Near Blairmont on the Thorpe Road was Batts Green, while farther along was Tabbs (or Talbots) Green on which there existed about two hundred years ago a small alehouse called the Pig, hence the modern name of Pig Street.

The Village Green was formerly much more extensive, reaching out to Swain's Farm, and its southern end was overlooked by the little thatched cottages grouped around the Church, which together formed the nucleus of Little Clacton from its earliest days. The Green was crossed by a lane which only within living memory has been transformed into the main traffic route to the sea, while on its west side was a footpath still known locally as the Carnser. The origin of this name is doubtful, but it may be a corruption of causey or causeway, meaning a raised footway at a place liable to flood, for this part of the Green was low lying. Alternatively it might have been the corpse-path along which the parishioners were borne to their last resting-place in the churchyard.

Close by this path is Galloway Cottage, held by a family of this name some three hundred years ago. In 1575 one, Nicholas Galloway, was

licensed to exercise the science of baking, brewing and victualling, perhaps at this very spot, and he was afterwards parish sexton.

Elm Road was anciently Calves Lane, and more recently Back Lane or Dead Lane.

Orchard Lea was once the spacious farmhouse of Street Farm, and no doubt replaced an older building some two hundred years ago. Like most local farms it has had a variety of names being also called Brockmans, Woodrows or Whitehouse. For over a century it belonged to the Fox family who were Roman Catholics. Joseph Fox was branded as a papist at the time of the Jacobite Rebellion and refused to take the Oath of Allegiance to King George I.

The Village Fair

THE Blacksmith's Arms must be of old foundation, though unfortunately early records are lacking. For at least two hundred years it must have borne its present sign after the nearby smithy, and often in the old days an innkeeper was a blacksmith by trade. Throughout this time the villagers have gathered here and over their tankards of ale have discussed the latest news or local gossip.

The open space in front of the Inn was once the scene of the fair which was held each year at the Parish Church's patronal festival, St. James's Day, July 25th, until abolished by order in 1872. Stalls, swingboats and roundabouts no doubt extended nearly across the Street on this great occasion, while pedlars with their gaudy wares would have been a popular attraction.

Subterranean passages are romantically associated with many villages, and there is a legend that one commences under a large slab in the Church porch, while another is reputed to run from the Blacksmith's Arms. Some years ago a dowser claimed to trace a passage from Great Clacton Church across open country to the south-east corner of Little Clacton Church. Turning under the nave it was said to proceed in the direction of Bovills Hall. If it exists then one is tempted to associate it with those far-off days when the whole area belonged to the bishops, and as a means of concealment, but a more practical solution is that it was part of a medieval drainage system.

A Smuggling Incident

DURING the eighteenth century many of the local people were engaged directly or indirectly in smuggling which was carried on extensively along the Clacton shore. Having evaded the revenue cutters, the smugglers landed their contraband on the beach where it was unloaded by a force of local labourers. It would then be temporarily concealed at a spot nearby, or at once conveyed by the "gentlemen" on donkeys or horses to their centres of disposal. One can well imagine these cavalcades trotting in the darkness along Little Clacton Street, their hoof-beats heard no doubt by the villagers in their cottages by the roadside.

One April day in 1791 the local Officers of Customs and Excise received information that the smugglers were that night to pass through the village,

and they therefore laid in wait, perhaps at the Church Corner. Just after midnight the smugglers passed by, and were immediately pursued by the revenue men who managed to seize $9\frac{1}{2}$ ankers (about 95 gallons) of foreign spirits and the two donkeys carrying them. Most of the smugglers had hurried away into the darkness, but a few of them returned in an attempt to recover the contraband. There was a short scuffle during which an officer had the pan of his pistol broken by a blow, but there appear to have been no other casualties. One of the smugglers, however, one William Draper of Tendring, was taken and sent for trial.

This solitary incident was no doubt typical of many that occurred on the Clacton road in those stirring times. Occasionally indeed the villagers themselves must have suffered at the hands of lawbreakers, and in common with several Essex places at this time they formed the

Little Clacton and Adjacent Parishes' Association

For apprehending, prosecuting and bringing to justice thieves and depredators of every kind.

At a general meeting of this Association, held at the Blacksmith's Arms, Little Clacton, aforesaid, on Whitsun Tuesday, May 26th, 1795.

It was unanimously resolved:—

That the following rewards (over and above the rewards given by Act of Parliament) should be paid to any person or persons apprehending and convicting any person or persons committing any of the crimes undernamed, on the persons, premises and properties of the subscribers to this Association:—

| | £ | s. | d. |
|--|---|----|----|
| For housebreaking | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Stealing of horses, or any cattle | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Highway or footpad robbery | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Breaking open barns, stables or outhouses .. | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Stealing poultry, turnips, beans, peas, apples, and other fruit; damaging hedges, or other fences; taking and destroying any fowl, or committing any other theft or depredation or trespass .. | 1 | 1 | 0 |

And as further encouragement,

The Association will pay to any person or persons aiding and assisting in, and apprehending and convicting any offender or offenders, all reasonable expenses and charges he or they may be at in or about the same; and if any person or persons, in apprehending any offender or offenders, shall receive any wound or hurt, he or they shall be paid the necessary expenses of cure.

John Sparling, president; Peter Bromley, treasurer.

The subscribers for Little Clacton were Edward Baker, John Bines, William Bond, Peter Bromley, Joseph Cole, Thomas Draper, Edward Goodwin, Arthur May, John Sparling, John Talmash, Thomas Tidman, Susanna Tills, and Elizabeth Tungatt.

Evidently the Association was still active eleven years later when the following riders were appointed: Peter Bromley, James Buckenham, John Funnell, John Sparling, John Tills, and John Tungatt.

Murder Most Foul

DURING the Napoleonic Wars, Clacton Beach was regarded as a most likely place of attack by the enemy, and to meet such an eventuality troops were stationed in extensive barracks erected for the purpose at Weeley. The soldiers, when off duty, no doubt frequented the local taverns, and took a lively part in the activities of the villages around.

In 1806 the Cameron Highlanders were at Weeley, and on July 25th a party of them visited the annual fair at Little Clacton. The events that lead up to the tragedy that followed are not on record, but it appears that some of the Scotsmen spent the night at the Blacksmith's Arms, during which time a great deal of liquor was no doubt consumed. Rumour has it that their behaviour towards certain members of the fair sex roused the animosity of a party of villagers, and feelings ran high. The soldiers, to escape their onslaught, leapt from an upper window of the inn and made off up the Street. One of them, however, Alexander McDonald by name, hurt his foot in the fall, and unable to elude his pursuers was overtaken near Amerell's Farm.

According to the indictment when they later appeared at the Assizes, Thomas Butler, aided and abetted by William Ward, Daniel James, Daniel Baram, and Samuel Bird, all labourers of Little Clacton, "not having the fear of God before their Eyes but being seduced by the Instigation of the Devil," seized a thick stick (reputed to be a grindstone handle), and

then and there feloniously wilfully and of their malice aforethought did strike and beat Giving to him the said Alexander McDonald then and there by such striking and beating of him the said Alexander McDonald with the Wooden Staff aforesaid one Mortal bruise and contusion in and upon the left side of the head of him the said Alexander McDonald of which Mortal Bruise and contusion he the said Alexander McDonald then and there died.

Where his head had struck the roadside it was alleged that a depression appeared, and for long it was a local legend that any effort made to fill it proved in vain.

The soldier's body had been carried into a cartlodge which stood on the other side of the road, and while he lay there his boots are said to have been removed and stolen.

A coroner's inquest was held two days afterwards and the five men concerned were committed to prison. It was not until the following March that they appeared at the County Assizes at Chelmsford, and there must have been very extenuating circumstances, for all five were acquitted by the jury.

In a shady corner of Weeley Churchyard is a plain altar tomb enscribed:

*Under this Stone lie the
remains of*

ALEXANDER McDONALD

*Late Soldier in the First Battalion
79th Regt who in the Prime of Life
was Inhumanly Murdered near
Little Clacton on the Morning of
the 26th July 1806*

A tablet below records that the stone was renovated by the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders in 1923.

This tragic affair was recalled when, during the celebration of New Year in the Second World War, there was a clash between Americans billeted in the village and some men of the Royal Artillery. Fortunately no casualties resulted.

Riots

MOST of the people of Little Clacton were farm workers, and their lot was not always a happy one, for their wages were often insufficient for their simple needs. When harvests were bad, or prices were high, there was considerable discontent, and it is unfortunate that these occasions are often remembered while their long years of devoted toil pass almost unnoticed.

In April 1772, due to the high price of bread and scarcity of provisions, a crowd of malcontents from Colchester were reported to be rambling over the Tendring Hundred intent on doing mischief. The last we hear of them, however, is that they were proceeding from Thorpe to St. Osyth, so that evidently they dispersed near Little Clacton.

In December 1830 there was trouble at a number of places in the county as the result of agricultural depression, and the introduction of farm machinery was regarded by many as a threat to their livelihood. On the 7th a mob of about 150 had caused damage at Great Clacton and had riotously assembled in the village street there. Two days later, in the early hours of the morning, a similar crowd collected at Little Clacton, and marched to the Lodge where a thrashing machine was known to be in use. Being refused the key of the barn where the machine was housed, the men broke down the door, dragged the machine into the yard, and smashed it up.

They then turned to a group of farmers who were standing helplessly by, and demanded an increase in their wages to 2s. 3d. a day. The farmers themselves, however, could ill afford such a rise, so the rioters said "that in order to enable them to pay that sum, they would go to the tithe feast, and force the gentleman who received the tithe to give the farmers back half their money. The farmers told them they would give them 2s. a day."

The high feelings eventually subsided, but some of the leaders were arrested, and having been brought to justice, three of them, William Curtis, William Cole and John Pudney, were sentenced to seven years transportation, while three more, Thomas Linnett, Daniel Bareham, and Benjamin Hackshall, were sentenced to twelve months hard labour.

Hackshall had evidently made a brave attempt to escape arrest, hiding for several days in a neighbour's chimney, and then making his way to

London. He was taken, however, on New Year's Day, by a Bow Street Runner, and having served his sentence, returned to his family at Little Clacton. He then composed and published in the form of the popular penny ballads of the day "A Few Verses Composed on Account of a Riot which happened at Little Clacton." Commencing

*It was on the eight'h of last December
Which many of us well remember;
When Little Clacton mob did rise,
Which put the people in surprise.
For higher wages was their scheme.
Likewise to break the Lodge machine.*

The doggeral lines read like a calypso, and record the writer's adventures. He ends on a note of caution:

*Others may rise and they may scheme
I'll mob no more, nor break machines.
But, as the school boy's copy say,
Avoid all lying company.*

Was it the same Hackshall who it is recalled played a cruel joke on some unfortunate parishioners. The story is told that one Christmastide the village waits went to Cooks Green Farm, and there, by one Hackshall, were enticed into the barn and locked in. Throughout the cold winter's night they were imprisoned in that veritable Black Hole of Calcutta, and when released next morning one of their number was found to be dead.

The Methodists

EARLY in the nineteenth century a small group of parishioners formed themselves into a Wesleyan Methodist congregation, and by 1838 were holding regular services in a cottage on the Green. In those days, however, nonconformity was regarded with alarm by the Established Church, and two months after the riot the vicar and churchwardens issued a statement that every new parish clerk must

promise faithfully that if I shall by my presence or otherwise encourage the Conventicle and thus become guilty of schism to the prejudice of the Church of England, I will immediately resign the office of parish clerk to which I am now about to be elected.

In 1841 there were reported to be in Little Clacton "Wesleyans and a very few Baptists. The Roman Catholic Family has left the Parish," and there was "one large cottage where Wesleyans attend every Sunday morning and occasionally on Sunday evening," there being about forty members.

Ten years later, through the devoted efforts of this growing community, the present Methodist Chapel was opened, so that for more than a century it has served as a place of worship in the village. The schoolroom was added in 1898.

Education

IN the olden days there was no school at Little Clacton, and the majority of the inhabitants, like those throughout the country, were illiterate. No doubt some of the local gentry sent their children to the monks of St. Osyth

for tuition, and afterwards to the vicar, whose duties usually included teaching the rudiments of education to those who could afford his small fee. In the eighteenth century a few private schools appeared in the neighbouring villages, but it is doubtful whether there were any at Little Clacton.

In 1841 it is recorded that there were three dames' schools which children attended five days a week at 9 and 2, and there was also a Sunday School, supported by voluntary contributions, that had seventy-eight scholars on its books. Nevertheless when the Rev. William Green came as a young man to the parish nine years later, he was very concerned at the lack of educational facilities, and within twelve months he was not only accommodating at the vicarage six pupils from adjoining villages, but had erected a small school in what is now the northern part of the churchyard.

Principally due to Mr. Green's efforts in raising the necessary funds, the Parochial School, accommodating 150 children, was opened in Clacton Road in 1868. Controlled by the Little Clacton School Managers, it is remembered with affection by many of the villagers who attended it in the old days. It is now used as the Church Hall.

In 1914 the present School was opened by the County Education Authority in St. Osyth Road, and it was enlarged in 1935. It is now known as the Engaines County Primary School, thus preserving the old name of the nearby manor.

A Rural Community

A HUNDRED years ago Little Clacton was still a small rural community, and Clacton-on-Sea was unknown. The Vestry Meeting was the local authority, the Blacksmith's Arms was the social centre, and the annual fair was the great day in the calendar. There was no post office, no public transport, and none of the modern conveniences we now enjoy.

At that time the chief village shop, a grocery and drapery by the churchyard, was occupied by Abraham Fisher who had followed the Buckenham. Small traders nearby were James Bines, shoemaker; Mary Ann Bevan, dressmaker; and Stephen Bareham, pig dealer. At the top of the Green, by then reduced to its present size, were the James's, wheelwrights, and farther on, James Moore and William Bines, coal carters, and James Funnell, the blind basket maker. Opposite, near the site of the Apple Tree, Joseph Gould kept a beerhouse, and closer to the Blacksmith's Arms (Ray Rashbrook) were Charles Bareham, butcher, and William Thorrington, grocer. Where the Old Forge Garage now stands was the local smithy, kept by Henry Nevill and afterwards by Henry Eldred, while nearby was the village saw-pit.

There were old timber and thatched cottages near the Church Gate which have now gone. One of them had once been the wheelwright's; another, known sometime as Church House, was anciently the butcher's premises; and a third may have been a house known as the Harrow, all suggesting that at one time the village huddled closely around the Church, and was not spread as it is to-day along the Street.

This then was the Little Clacton known to our grandfathers, with its lanes and scattered farmsteads, its fields and its hedgerows stretching away

on every hand. Pig Street, Plough Corner, Calves Lane, the Harrow, names typical of rural life, bore witness to centuries of husbandry.

Ever since the Napoleonic Wars, however, the district was losing its isolation, and already the rising watering place of Walton was attracting increasing numbers of visitors during the summer months.

About 1860 James Moore began the first regular carrier service in Little Clacton, going to the Castle Inn at Colchester each Wednesday and Saturday. He was followed by James Bennett who provided a similar service to the Angel in High Street, and whose stables opposite the Church suffered a fate shared with many of the older buildings in the village, being destroyed in a disastrous fire.

In 1866 the railway from Colchester was extended as far as Kirby, and Thorpe station was built close to the parish boundary. About this time the village had its first post office, for long under the direction of the Mudd family. Letters were once brought from Weeley by a lady on foot, and the local people afterwards provided her with a bicycle.

Clacton-on-Sea

IN 1867 when Cooks Green Farm was offered for sale its proximity to "the village and attractive sea beach of Great Clacton" was proclaimed, for the speculators were now drawing up their plans for the future Clacton-on-Sea. In the 1870's the Pier, the Royal Hotel, and the first villas began to appear, and since that time its story has been one of continual progress. Many of those who came there in the early days travelled by rail as far as Weeley, and during the summer season all trains were met by horse buses which rattled through Little Clacton Street on their way to the sea.

In 1882 the branch line from Thorpe to Clacton-on-Sea was opened, and it extended through the eastern part of the parish. The villagers, however, often used to walk the few miles into the new town, attracted by the various events then taking place, and viewing with curiosity the transformation in progress. Conversely the holiday-makers enjoyed excursions into the surrounding countryside, travelling in landaus, and then in charabancs, to places of interest such as the "charming rustic village" of Little Clacton with its "interesting old Church."

During this period of expansion new villas began to appear in the village, and at the close of the century one speculator launched an ambitious scheme to develop a large part of the parish. Bateman's and Amerell's Farms were acquired and laid out with roads, and a sale of building plots took place with the usual fanfare of publicity, but the scheme was a failure and only a few houses were ever built at the time. Further development was envisaged around the Lodge, re-named Cavendish Park, but little ever materialised.

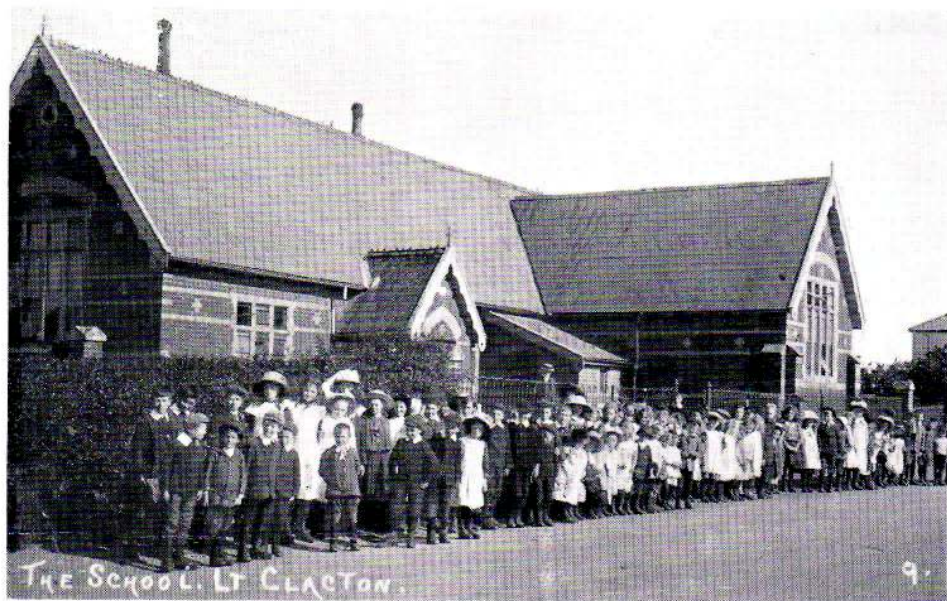
"A considerable amount of development has taken place in the last year or two," announced a guide book of the day with the usual air of optimism, "and a project is on foot for connecting it by means of a light railway with the Great Eastern Railway at Thorpe-le-Soken Station." Needless to say this scheme also never materialised.



LOOKING TOWARDS PLOUGH CORNER FROM OUTSIDE THE APPLE TREE c.1900



LOOKING TOWARDS PLOUGH CORNER FROM OUTSIDE THE APPLE TREE 1958



THE OLD SCHOOL LITTLE CLACTON ABOUT 1908



UNVEILING OF WAR MEMORIAL BY LORD BYNG OF VIMY APRIL 11 1920

The village has gradually expanded, however, spreading along the Clacton and Harwich Roads. Its population, which had fluctuated between 443 and 630 during last century, rose steadily from 664 in 1901 to 799 in 1921. By 1931 it had jumped to 1,132, and in 1951 was 1,621.

The Rural District Council are the housing authority, erecting 32 dwellings between the wars, and 16 to date since, in addition to the many provided by private enterprise.

The Latest Age

THE Village Green was tidied up at the end of the century. The pound was removed, and the stacks of timber that once adorned it were taken away. To celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887 an oak tree was planted near the Church, a spot sometimes called Jubilee Oak. A number of trees were also planted on the main Green up to 1911 when they were named King George Avenue to commemorate the Coronation of King George V.

During the First Great War there was considerable activity in the village. Cavalry horses were stabled on each side of the Street, and a Brigade of the Essex Regiment made it their headquarters for guarding this section of the coast. Although invasion was never so much feared as in the days of Napoleon or Hitler, an Emergency Committee to meet such an event was formed under the chairmanship of Mr. W. H. Harvey of Bovills Hall. The signal of an enemy landing was to be a police warning and "dispatch riders, each carrying a red flag, will be sent to every portion of the Parish." Local transport, which included two motor cars and one motor cycle, was then to evacuate the villagers to Bures, each of them with his bag of food, two blankets, and "such money as they possess."

Lord Byng, of Thorpe Hall, one of the greatest military leaders of his day, unveiled both the war memorial in the Church, and the village memorial by the Methodist Chapel, in April 1920.

In 1934 part of the civil parish was transferred to the Urban District of Clacton, reducing its total area by some 780 acres.

That same year saw the building of the Rifle Club Hall, which was a unique achievement in the annals of village life. The Club, which had flourished since the beginning of the century, was in need of new premises, and initiated by Mr. S. Spooner of the Leys, the Hall was built almost entirely by the voluntary efforts of its members. The land had been given by Mr. Harold Lilley, and the adjoining field was later, for a nominal sum, conveyed by his daughter to trustees so that it might for ever be enjoyed as a playing field. The Harold Lilley Playing Field and the Rifle Club Hall have become, in effect, the venue for outdoor and indoor social functions in the village.

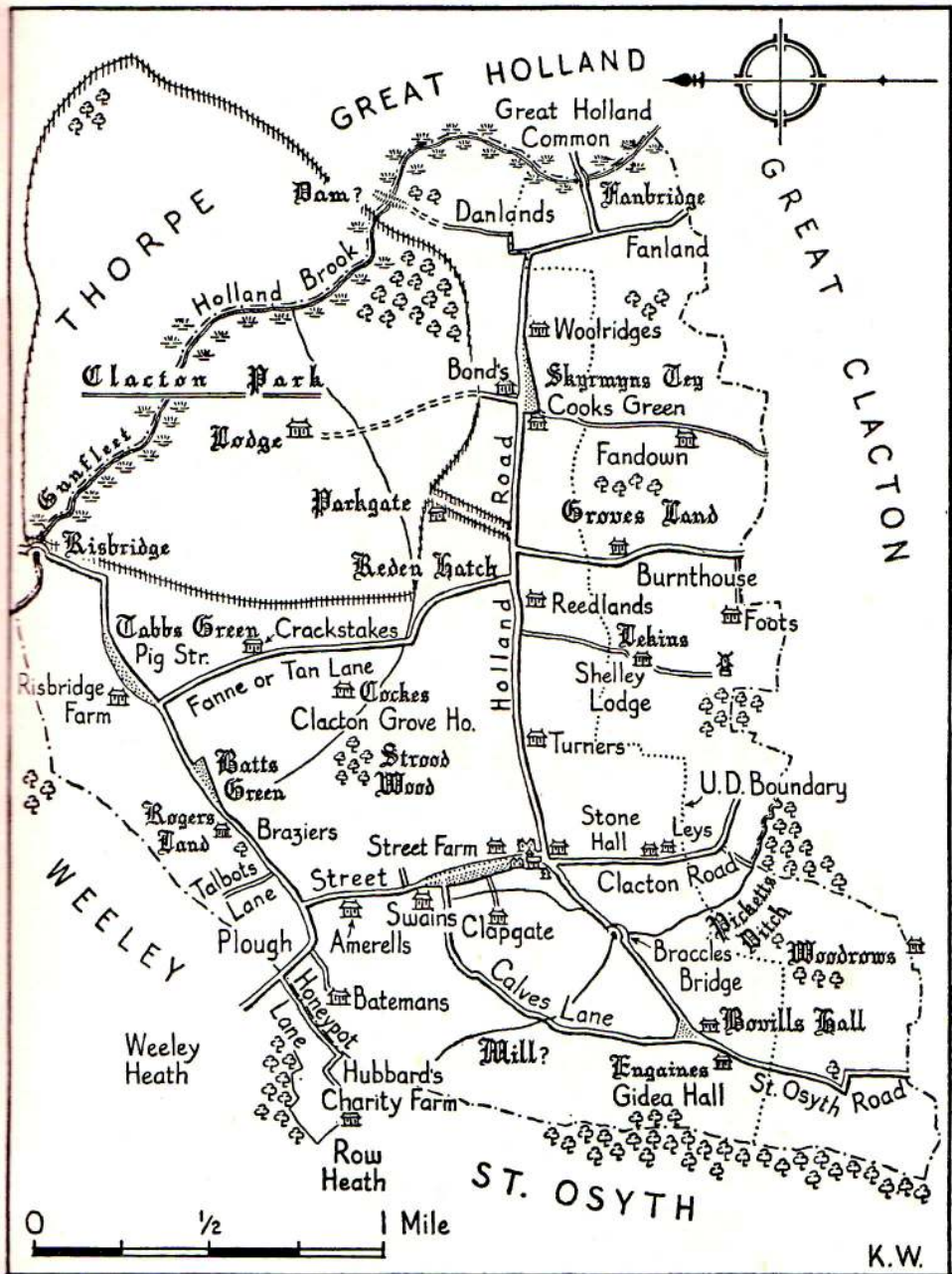
The Second World War is still too close to require any elaboration. Restrictions virtually closed the coastal area to all visitors, and air raids brought occasional bombing, though fortunately without any serious incidents, so that the village emerged unscathed from its trying ordeal, although many of its fields carry scars from bombs jettisoned by returning enemy bombers.

To-day Little Clacton has been provided with main water to replace the old shallow wells; electricity has brought its benefits; and main drainage is taking the place of cesspools; so that without losing its pleasant rural atmosphere it enjoys every modern amenity. The latest innovations, the caravan sites, have also found their place in the village, and, looking ahead, mention should be made of the by-pass road which is planned to divert the steady stream of holiday traffic away from the Street. When this has been achieved no doubt Little Clacton will regain some of the peace and tranquillity of former days.

In the meantime, apart from the wider activities of the County Authority, local interests are upheld by two representatives on the Rural District Council, while the Parish Council, consisting entirely of village men—traders, craftsmen, and farmers—continues enthusiastically to serve its people. Many, indeed, now find employment in other places, some as far away as London, but all can look back with pride at Little Clacton's long associations with the past, and recall with pleasure its history, modest though it may be, which has been briefly recounted in these pages.

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REV. L. B. MCCARTHY
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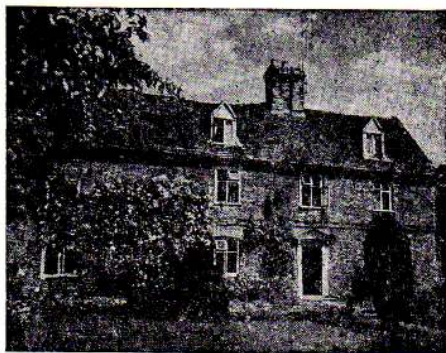
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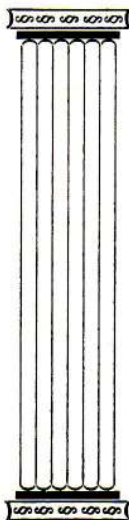
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