

The
DITCHINGHAM
that I knew

by

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The DITCHINGHAM that I knew.

Chapter 1.

The North Eastern Boundary.

For more than half a century the River Waveney has passed below the Falcon Bridge on it's boundary journey looping in many fertile acres into the County of Suffolk since I called Ditchingham "home". My stay in the village was not truly long compared with the galloping years between then and now, but those early years of infancy and teenage animation, about 15 of them, are perhaps the most impressionable in many a span and the older one gets the more vivid this period becomes.

The passing of time has brought so many changes and my recollections of Ditchingham may, I trust, find interest to both those who can recall these years and also the many whose life embraces a latter period.

In my early years the motor car was a rarity, but as the years unfold James "Jocky" Lambert introduced the Ford to his fleet of horse carriages, and also another vehicle of higher merit was seen at the Hall, the dignified home of the Squire, William Carr.

The combustible engine had yet to find common place in this parish at this period, but now are eyes were riveted on the coming and going of those two rare vehicles with wonderment and curiosity.

The mention of the Hall brings to mind that beautiful lake in the park, visible from the main Norwich road and admired by visitors. The Hall itself not of great age and was occupied prior to the Carrs by the Bedingfields. More information about this is given under the heading " The manor at Pirnhow".

Over this course of the Roman road where centuries earlier nomadic hordes had passed, travelled the daily carrier between Bungay and Norwich, a one horse cab owned by Gardiner of Bungay, carrying parcels and an odd passenger or two. By an occasional trot broken by periodic walks this unfortunate animal would cover the route, a distance of 14 miles in two or three hours, with the occupants being almost "frozen" with cold in wintry weather. This conveyance was later replaced by a motor propelled vehicle on solid rubber tyres, and although a great improvement on the former transporter, had a shattering effect on one's body as these solid tyres bounced over every pothole in this rough road.

As one travels south on the same highway, known earlier as Bungay Waye, a word should be mentioned of that great blind farmer known to many in my day, that of Mr. Clifford, who enlisted the eyes and ability of a very capable son in the business of dairy farming. From this spot the great perpendicular steeple of ST. Mary's Church can be seen reminding one of the many years that the Reverend John Scudamore held the living, being the second of two generations to do so – as far back as 1840 his father, the Reverend William Edward Scudamore, held this illustrious position.

In the early years of the family of Scudamore was purported to be financially well off and apart from owning the Living with the land at Ditchingham, a large portion of tithe was owned in the adjoining parish of Broome. A considerable part of these riches were conferred upon the Parish,

one great contribution being the building of All Hallows Church. He was also founder of All Hallows House of Mercy.

The story goes, that as a result of these public spirited financial ventures John never enjoyed the riches of his forebears, and finally retired to live in Bungay, the last gracious endowment being the Living itself which he placed into the hands of the Bishop of Norwich. A cycle was his only means of transport and in his younger days was often seen riding down Hollow Hill without touching the handlebars.

Beyond the imposing monument of St. Mary's Church and to the east of the cemetery is an enclosure, now very much overgrown with tree and bush, which was a gravel pit, it's purpose to supply material for local roads before the advent of tarmacadam to give the luxurious finish we have today. Roads were very rough in those days, often with intervening potholes. Local areas were under the jurisdiction of the Rural Council who employed roadmen to attend to given stretches of his highway. The council would budget for a given number of loads of stone and gravel for each parish and the Roadman would decide where the material was needed, marking the spot by removing a neat spit of turf for each load of material required.

Beyond the pit is a very long lane leading over a footbridge to continue its trail to Tindall Wood (known in 1615 as Tehdal Wood) of about 100 acres in the ownership of the "Squire" at the Hall. This lane, like so many in the Parish, creates a most pleasant walk. A journey about half a mile eastward along this road brings one to Belsey Bridge, a carriage way over that small stream which was earlier spanned by only a wooden footbridge.

Belsey Bridge is a well known landmark leading to Thwaite St. Mary, a small village renowned for its characteristic size and isolation. In the vicinity of Belsey Bridge the Community House of All Hallows is situated, founded as already stated by the late Reverend William Edward Scudamore in the year 1858. it was situated at Shipmeadow and one of the primary objects was to provide an orphanage for girls of the better classes whose parents had fallen into reduced circumstances.

In 1887 a new wing was added as a memorial to the Reverend Scudamore and since it has grown out of its early proportions to cover many acres with its fine buildings accommodating many enterprises, giving shelter for much good work.

Among the forgotten activities was a laundry and I remember the bearded Mr. Codling with pony and cart doing the collecting and delivering of laundry to many parts of the Parish.

As boys we were interested in the occupants of this Community, the black and brown nuns seen in the village, the "black" and "brown" denoting the colour of their gowns. This residential gathering helped to boost the population of the Parish to some eleven hundred.

My memories carry my mind along the Thwaite road towards Ditchingham village by the way of Brickal Hill, known earlier as Brickiln Hill, where a brick kiln existed many years back. At the foot of the hill and eastward walk would take one along Tunney's Lane past Tunney's Farm, named after the Reverend John Robert Tunney. The farm was occupied by John Beales, a bearded man who lived in a cottage situated in a pit, adjacent but on the opposite road to the farm.

The delightful farmhouse known as The Little House was occupied by the Tunney's, doubtlessly the descendants of the Reverend. However, John went into the thrashing business and turned his back on active farming to become the owner of a complete thrashing tackle, steam

engine, thrashing drum with straw elevator. This vehicle with its trailing appliances going from farm to farm reducing neat corn Ricks into untidy stacks of straw was always of great interest.

How farming has changed over the years. The scythe was very much the implement for the severance of corn. It was a usual and pleasant sight to see a row of men with these implements trailing across the fields bringing the strawed corn to fall in rows with the ears so placed that the sheaves could be tied with the least effort, accomplished by a handful of straw being drawn from the mown corn. This laborious method of cutting the corn was followed by what was considered at the time a miraculous invention, a machine known as a "Sailor" harvester. This machine took its name from the sailing windmill which with its counterpart the watermill provided the flour from which the daily "loaf" emerged. A pair of horses would draw the implement, bringing into operation by propulsion a cutting knife resulting in the cut corn coming to rest upon a platform to be brushed to the ground at intervals by the revolving sails provided with rake-like teeth. The corned straw was brushed off in small lots to provide the correct quantity to form a sheaf which would then be tied by hand in the same manner as the scythe cut material. Later years brought about the self binder which removed much hard work from man to machine and which today the combine harvester has played a much greater part.

The horse drawn harvester machines brought excitement. They would invariably from the perimeter of the field, slowly closing to their centre, so that the area of uncut corn became smaller and smaller with each cut. When the area of uncut corn became less of a concealment for the wild rabbit they would breakaway from their hideout and run into the open, when the fun would start in an endeavour to catch them, mostly with rewarding results, as some fields would yield up to 100 rabbits and there would be a good handout for all to even the smallest boy. We also enjoyed riding on the horses' backs during the period of carting the corn from the field to the rickyard. Harvest was always an exciting time for us.

Loddon Road reveals itself after an eastward journey of a few hundred yards, known as Sun or Heath Road, the names derived from the public house "The Sun" and Broome Heath. Broome Heath extending over many acres is a valuable asset to both the parishes of Broome and Ditchingham with each having some claim as the boundary of the two parishes drives its way through it.

It used to be a wonderful haven for the wild rabbit, and the skylark dives its way from the skies to the bracken and fine grass during its season.

Later years has brought the mechanical shovel to one part of this nature's paradise in the quest for building material, leaving a reservoir of water as a result, but generally the area is very unspoiled although some building has taken place more recently in the Broome area, and in my earlier time a group of council houses were erected at the Ditchingham end. I well remember these being built, among the first ever undertaken by a Local Authority, and at that time the question was asked how one would be able to find as much as six shillings per week for rent.

A south-easterly stroll over this fine grass and moss carpeted heath, bunched with bracken and broken occasionally with rabbit burrowings, brings one to Yarmouth road and upon turning towards the Railway Station, Crowfort's Brewery looms to the right. It reminds one of "the good old days" when it was possible to buy a bottle of real locally brewed ale. It is many years since this fine but small brewery perfected this beverage, the malt for which having been fomented from local barley from premises almost adjoining owned by Charles Cuddon. Both the maltings and the brewery have now disappeared as demolition seems to be the modern term for improvement.

However, one very old building that has been spared is a very long barn opposite belonging to what I knew as Station Farm. During the 1914-18 war, as a cadet, a junior section of the Local Defence Volunteers, I was taught the art of handling the rifle and actually had target practice in miniature in the long loft of that barn.

Ditchingham Railway Station was the next attraction; unfortunately like the others on this Waveney Valley it is now closed, but to my young mind this was really great. We youngsters loved the steam trains and the steam road wagons using the railway goods yard, before the motor lorry as we now know them came into use. I well remember the road steam engine of Woods, Sadd & Moore of Loddon towing its trailer laden with sacks of com, and we children would run behind it eventually taking a ride on the timbers supporting the back axle.

Near the station was a small stream, we used to call it "the Beck", which has been bridged for a great number of years, but my grandfather remembered it when there was no bridge and horse vehicles had to take to the water as the foundation of the road ran under the stream. He told a tale that when passing with his horse and tumbrel along the highway, he was perpetually pestered with schoolchildren from the local school by their clambering on to his tumbrel and he settled this aggravation by releasing the trapstick as the road entered the stream and the saturated invaders were of no more trouble.

Quite near this spot is the memorial to the late Reverend William Edward Scudamore in the architectival splendour of All Hallows Church. It was he who presented this place of worship to the Parish as this neighbourhood was becoming populous partly due to the large number employed at the nearby silk factory, and it was a mile or so to the Parish Church. This church is proportionally of great height with the result that the preacher's voice is often lost in the vacuous space overhead. Pirnow Street emerges from this locality, the church often known as Pirnow Church, and although the street with this name of Pirnow is not regarded as significant today, the name echoes into the distant past, as revealed in the next chapter.

A journey of about half a mile brings one to a beer house known in the past as The Broome Tunns, it being situated on the boundary with the Parish of Broome. I remember that the proprietor was a giant of a man with voluminous proportions who merited the name of "Jumbo Leeks" and an order for half a pint of ale would entail the movement of this large figure to and from the cellar where the brew was stored. If more than one drink was requested, the corresponding number of journeys would be taken.

A little further a field brings one to Wangford Maltings, the name Wangford often used when referring to Pirnow Street. The name comes from the Wangford Hundred which embraces part of the maltings into that area, in fact the situation of these premises is most unusual as they intrude into the bounds of four parishes of two counties, Ditchingham, Broome, Mettingham and Bungay. The Mann family were the proprietors in my earlier days but they were later taken over by Barclay Perkins.

There are two streams that make their way by the maltings which in bygone days enabled wherries to be used for supplies, but in later years horse and even later still motor transport took over.

Chapter II

The Manor of Pirnhow

Pirnhow, prior to 1541 (estimated date) was not part of the town of Ditchingham as it was then called, but detached as there were two manors, one of Pirnhow and one of Ditchingham. (In much of the earlier spelling the "t" was omitted in Ditchingham.)

The earliest information I have concerning the Lordship of Pirnhow Manor is that Roger Bigot, ancestor to the Earls of Norfolk deprived a freeman of it by the name of Algar who held it under Stigand the Archbishop of Canterbury about the year 1050 and William de Pirnhow held it under Bigot in the reign of Henry I, 1100 to 1135.

About the year 1180 a fine was levied before the King's Justices at Westminster between William de Pirnhow and William de Brom in respect of a water course in the town of Pirnhow whereby it was agreed that "William de Pirnhow and William de Brom should destroy their two mills and erect one on the water course belonging to both and to have equal right in the new one". This suggests that mills existed before 1180 on the water course where the maltings now stand. These would probably have been water mills used for storage and the grinding of corn and the convenience of water transportation in the early days made them important, so much so that the dispute had to be dealt with at Westminster.

In 1178 William de Pirnhow released to Roger, Earl of Norfolk by fine his right of fishery from the mill to the bridge at Bungey and in return the Earl granted him a fishery right from Bungey bridge to the Earl's vineyard. This vineyard is believed to have been on land of late occupied by the late Miss Lilius Rider Haggard which falls to the river beyond Bath Hills.

In the year 1251, it appears that after the death of William de Pirnhow, his daughter Sara, a minor, was placed under the custody of Roger Bigot, the Earl of Norfolk. This Sara married James de Creke in 1257 and a son, William de Creke, resulted and in the year 1286 this son granted the Manor of Pirnhow to Robert de Swillington, son of Helewise de Pernhow.

A succession of Swillington's and their kin held the Manor for a great number of years, it being passed from one to another with Lordships of various "Towns" and eventually Pirnhow came into the hands of Gregory Calver who was Lord in 1627 and his son Richard sold it to Philip Bedingfield of Ditchingham Hall who was also Lord of Hedenham.

It is probable that Pirnhow ceased to exist as a separate Manor from this time and the Parish became part of Ditchingham. Bloomfield's History of Norfolk states that "the town of Pirnhow has been demolished time immemorial, the lands belonging to it lie now in Ditchingham and Pirnhow Hall is therein ", which I now would suggest has suffered the same fate.

Chapter III

The Dam, Common & Bath Hills

After leaving All Hallows Church in the direction of Bungay along Lizzards Lane, one cannot but give a brief glance at the old silk factory which is now used as a malting. The factory was built about the year 1833 by Messrs. Grout & Co. as a subsidiary of the Norwich factory. They also owned factories in London and Great Yarmouth. The manufacture of artificial silk was then a new enterprise and was becoming an important industry. In their heyday at Ditchingham they employed as many as 500 workers, a great boost to the population of Ditchingham and Broome which brought Ditchingham into the forefront in importance. However, as the silk trade declined about the turn of the century the workers fell to about 100 and it appears that during the management of Robert Smith the silk business ceased and the building passed to Rutter & Co., Malsters of Pulham. Since then it has become more than double its original size and many hundred tons of barley has been fermented there. Part of one of the buildings was used as a bakery during the 1914-18 war. It is now owned and directed by Watney, Mann & Co. and continued to be used for the production of malt.

On the opposite side of the highway is a row of houses known as the Factory Cottages which housed factory workers and behind these was the Gas Works which doubtless provided the heat necessary for the production of artificial silk, but when Rutter & Co. entered into possession and turned to other forms of heating the area of land occupied by the gas works was used for the erection of houses for their employees. Hence the name Gas Lane.

A journey over Ditchingham Dam reminds me of the floods of 1912 when the whole area was under water, the marshes being but a "sea" of water and the downstairs rooms of the houses near the approach to Bungay completely waterlogged.

I recall a number of the trades people who lived this side of the Suffolk border a few yards from the Falcon Bridge, and among them were the Hoods, a family of them, true to the bold notice displayed on their house, "Painters & Decorators" and while the sons were active with their brushes, mother was no less so with her opinions on the Loddon Rural District Council of which she was a member.

The ring of the anvil reminded one of Mr. Thrower with the red hot horseshoe at the Smithy, while W. & S. Green, the coachbuilders, added a professional touch to the horse carriage, High the wheelwright made good the wheels and Bertie Brothers the harness man waxed the last thread for the horses collar.

The road to Norwich near the maltings crosses the railway line; the Gate Keeper was a man named Fisk and I well remember those railway gates being smashed at least on two occasions by an oncoming train.

A few yards more and the entrance to Common Lane emerges, adjacent to a disused public house known earlier as the Anchor of Hope. This was one of the very old beer houses possibly dating from the sixteenth century, the oldest of the four licensed houses in the Parish which include The Duke of York, The Falcon Inn and The Black Horse.

During its earlier days The Hope as it was generally known was one of the houses that brewed its own beer for sale, almost unknown today. As far as I can trace, the last occupier was George J. Betts in 1908. This very old house has now been demolished and is replaced by new private dwellings.

The Common Lane stretches for something up to a mile with the right of way eventually spanning the Waveney and its breakaway by two wooden footbridges where beyond is- Bungay Common in the County of Suffolk.

This large expanse of marsh land was let in grazing rights for cattle and I well remember two Ditchingham dairymen taking the advantage of this lush cattle feed for the sustenance of their cows, one was William Underwood, known as "Billy" or sometimes as "Peter", the nickname he inherited from his father, and the other was "Shiner" Wolterton. As the cows needed regular milking their owners would negotiate the Common Lane with the necessary milk carts, flat racked affairs, the milk cans being suspended beneath supported by hooks, the whole weight falling upon two stout iron rimmed wood wheels. It was surprising how the cows would congregate at a spot near the wooden bridges at the hour of milking when at other times they might be almost miles distant in this large open space. The milk, can by can, would be carried over the two bridges to be hooked on, the cart, which laden eventually with many gallons would be pushed by their owners for about two miles, mostly uphill to their respective dairies. These milk carts by proceeding up and down the Common Lane had the beneficial effect of trimming the growth of the verges for some part of the way, their iron wheels cutting the growth on either side in a most remarkable way. The lane was so narrow that the wheels perpetually repeated their cutting action over the same ground and by this trimming the pathway was kept clear. In those days we knew nothing of milk bottles, the milk being collected from the dairy in a jug or can and as youngsters this task invariably fell to us.

Near the bridges leading to the common was a very old cottage known earlier as Mill House, the name possibly derived from a water mill that existed many years back. It was occupied by an old man named John Baldry who kept cows and was ably assisted by his son George. George was a bit of an inventor and worked on a machine for perpetual motion, but like many before him and since his invention came to nothing. He is mentioned a number of times in Miss Lilia Rider Haggard's work of local history. George also attended to a small boatyard adjacent to the cottage from which a living was earned by the letting of rowing boats and as boys we enjoyed this rowing on the Waveney.

There are miles of water that almost circle Bungay Common and apart from rowing in boats we often fished and also bathed in two or three available places which were named by some name of our making, one I remember as "Sandy Hole".

Beyond the river to the north east lies the famous Bath Hills, known so many years past for possessing a health-giving cold water bath. The spring water rises at the foot of a very steep roof like hill where the late William Wyndham of Earsham fitted the bath house with handsome painted glass and furniture which has now long disappeared.

The hills provide a wonderful walk among the pines stretching about a mile or so, the pathway breaking at a junction with one passageway leading to Earsham immediately past the home of the late Miss Rider Haggard, while the other leads to Free Lane which eventually links up with the Norwich Road.

I do not think that there is any parish that provides more pleasurable walks than Ditchingham.

Below the Bath Hills and between them and the river is Ditchingham Lodge, a unique residence overlooking the river and beyond it Bungay Common, which was occupied by Robert White in the seventeenth century, but has had many occupants since. It had a very nice walled-in garden where many tropical fruits were grown.

Also below Bath Hills in this area was a vineyard, already mentioned under "The Manor of Pirnhow". This fruit was enormously popular in the very early years and contrary to general belief can be grown successfully in this country.

This was not the only area in the parish where this fruit was grown as I understand Holly Hill Lodge, the late home of Doctor Bright, also possessed a vineyard.

Chapter IV

The Four Cross Ways

Returning to the highway, almost opposite to the old Anchor of Hope was a row of cottages in alignment with the road, their doorsteps extending on the pathway and beyond these with their gable in view were a further three. All these have long been demolished and the three away from the road converted into one single dwelling and the existing wall by the road incorporates part of the other cottage structure.

Earlier at the beginning of the 19th century this was possibly the centre of the village and when the Silk Factory came into swing later in that century, employing about 500 people this was an important area of habitation.

A few yards further towards Norwich brings one to the Duke of York public house, a building dating back to these earlier days and what is perhaps not generally known is that a house existed in front of the public house at the fork junction of the road and we children had fun amongst its ruins. The field to the west of the Duke of York was farmed by Henry Rider Haggard and I remember that this was one of the first in this country to be sown with sugar beet, possibly about the year 1912, and when the time for harvest arrived it was necessary, upon the introduction of this new crop, to import Dutch workers who were conversant with the art of lifting the roots. We youngsters were interested in the arrival of the Dutchmen and were amused to listen to their chat as a foreign language was an unknown factor in our young lives.

In an easterly direction is a very nice residence known as The Grove, then occupied by the Long family. On this site were three cottages according to the enclosure map of 1816 and this residence was brought about by conversion and additive means.

Mr. Maynard Long with his sister Miss Lizzie Long and their aged mother occupied this house in the early part of this century. Miss Long was a rather eccentric lady of gentle birth who enjoyed this acknowledgement by bribing us boys with a penny coin to touch our caps upon her arrival. This we would readily do and the moment she was gone, as fast as our legs would carry us made for John Pigney's shop where the rewarding penny would be broken down to four for a selected assortment of sweets.

Not far from this spot was a Mission House, now private accommodation, which was run by All Hallows Sisters of Mercy. Sister Laura was the occupier and apart from supervising a Sunday School did much good work in the village.

A little higher up the road is a small garage with a petrol filling station which was brought about initially by Albert Pigney in the form of a wooden cycle shed in his grandmother's front garden.

Opposite to the garage is a driveway known as The Loke where there was a blacksmith's shop in the occupation of John Hunting, the father of the blacksmith sons George and Will. The cottage at the bottom of The Loke is where John and his family made their home.

Next to The Lake was a builder's yard owned by Robert Morris which has been discontinued as such for many years now. Charlie Beevor, a man of good proportions, resided near this spot. I can today visualize him leaning over the wall by his gate smoking ever repeating pipes of tobacco. He was a greengrocer and used to push an iron rimmed handcart to and from Bungay in pursuit of his trade. Charlie's neighbour was the District Nurse, a German lady who accepted the health and wellbeing of a very large section of the poorer inhabitants and many a child was brought safely into

this world by her skill, ability and her genuine desire to help the poor where doctor's bills were beyond their meagre resources. Great grief was felt when she was interned at the offset of the 1914-18 war.

The "Four Cross Ways" Ditchingham is known to many but we boys knew the spot better than most. A low wall existed on one corner, just the right height to be used as a seat where we boys at all ages from infancy to adulthood assembled. The small boys liked the company of the young men and they in turn made fun of the younger ones. At the outset of the 1914-18 war a touch of khaki added interest to our gathering as so many of our lads joined the army at the very young age of sixteen years. Many interesting hours were spent on this corner much to the annoyance of the owner of the wall, who from time to time would give it a fresh coat of tar which had some restraining influence until it was again dry.

A journey towards Loddon takes one past Quantrill's shoe repairing shop to the adjoining cottage occupied by the dairyman "Billy" Underwood. How strange it is that a casual remark of his lingers in my mind stronger than the more important happenings. An important happening was my responsibility in putting fire to "Billy's" haystack and burning thereby the much needed fodder for his cows. I set fire to it alright, but my very young years were lacking in wisdom as I was so completely unaware that a small fire at the foot of the stack would grow to envelope the whole thing in flames. My young friends and I were not permitted into that yard again for many a month. The casual remark by "Billy" being more vivid in my memory after some sixty years than the burning of the stack is, "you know boy that it is just as far from Ditchingham to Loddon as it is from Loddon to Ditchingham".

A little higher up the road brings one to the home of our local barber, a Mr. Charlish, who exercised his barbering "short top and sides" skill in Earsham Street, Bungay. Higher still was the mill, a lofty circuitous structure that carried enormous sails that when revolving seemed to almost touch the ground at the downward swing, in the act of crushing the wheat into flour between those enormous stones. When there was no wind to power the sails, a steam engine was there as an alternative means of power. After the wheat was ground into flour, this was taken across the yard to a bakery adjoining the house. I well remember this place with the inevitable flour dust everywhere, and the hot loaves of bread coming from the oven of such good quality, a rarity today.

The business was owned by Wilfred Barber, who like his father Charles who had then retired, was proportionately of good stature. There were as I remember three horse drawn vehicles leaving the yard daily distributing bread, flour and animal foods over a large area.

Near the mill was a field known appropriately as Mill Field where there was a common right of way leading to Thwaite Road. This was a route often taken by Sir Rider Haggard, who when on these walks, never appeared to notice anyone which as a youngster I could never understand, but since I have felt that much of his literary work was being prepared mentally on these occasions.

By crossing the road to return to the Four Cross Roads again, the old blacksmith's shop at the corner of Green Lane brings back memories of shoeing days when many a horseshoe was moulded by George Hunting, brother of Will who had a similar establishment north of Hollow Hill. George and Will were both sons of John at the Cross Roads. Charles and Eliza Bird who served the pint at the Black Horse were respected and endeared by many.

There was a meadow at the back of the Inn, used on one occasion for accommodating stacks of strawed corn for the convenience of thrashing which was a complete failure, as the availability of the brew brought disaster when the work was needed.

Next to this is "The Pit", an enclosure of two to three acres of uncontrolled gorse and scrub, broken by minor valleys where sand could be dug. About 150 years earlier this was owned by the Highway Surveyors, but as the material derived from it was of little value for road making, the area became neglected so much to our benefit as this was always a spot for youngsters to have fun without harming anyone. November the fifth was the day when we really set the pit on fire. Almost weeks before us boys would collect all burning material and erect a mountainous heap of it on a mound in the centre of the pit. The resulting fire could be seen for miles and this was followed by the burning of the gorse bushes until the whole area was ablaze. The breaks brought about by the sandy gaps created a passage between the blazing bushes where we ran to and fro adding fire to anything that would burn. The fireworks available to us at that time were mild and almost harmless and I do not remember any casualty during this tremendous celebration. Today the pit has been tidied up and levelled off and provides a turf playing field to much credit, but I doubt if it gives more pleasure than in those far off days.

Adjoining the pit was the elementary school, which for most of us was comprehensive and final, where I spent some ten years from the age of three to thirteen. There were about 160 children who were given this early instruction by four female teachers and a good, but strict Master, Robert James Hamilton, who boasted that his pupils attained the highest educational grade this side of Norwich. He was a small man who wore dark glasses in order to cover a damaged eye, which was frequently seen when the glasses needed cleaning. A strict disciplinarian was he who acquired canes by the bundles to replenish the many breakages. I can picture him testing the elasticity of these by bringing the ends together in his hands. The possible use acted as a strong deterrent and although I had witnessed their use, I never experienced the result. The matter of discipline was never in question.

A small area of garden land was allotted to the school and after we had attained the age of about ten years, we had to accept practical instruction on this garden which was divided into a number of small plots with two boys being allotted to each. Our instructor ensured that the work on each plot was identical with the end result. of all plots producing the same crops.

Absenteeism from school was never prevalent, the Attendance Officer seeing to this, which had a tendency towards better use being made of the lesser years of schooling.

The school was built as long ago as 1840 and was enlarged in 1892 and again in 1897 to meet with the increasing population. Next to the school is All Hallows Hospital and although only a wall divides the hospital grounds from the school playground, I knew very little of what happened on the other side of that wall. We used to see the Doctors from Bungay arrive and depart in the horse carriages and later in the motor cars, but beyond this the place was outside our lives until the 1914-18 war reminded one of that terrible tragedy. A young soldier, not much older than we boys, used to join us by manipulating a hand propelled wheel chair, having lost both legs, and I remember the song he used to sing which went thus:

"My mother told me that she would buy me
A rubber dolly with a rubber belly
But when I told her I'd become a soldier
She would not buy me that rubber dolly".

Perhaps readers may recall this unfortunate, but cheerful young man.

Lower down this Station Road on the other side is the site where Pirnhow Hall stood, now an area of new bungalows. Higher up is Lamberts, the Coach Proprietors, a business that has emerged from the horse and cart days. James Lambert had a carting business which embraced horse

carriages and waggonettes and many a party was conveyed to the seaside in these horse-drawn vehicles. A picture on another page shows this type of vehicle loaded for such a journey. The stabling which formed part of the groom's cottage at Pirnhow Hall, illustrated on another page, was used to stable horses owned by the Lamberts at the early part of this century.

My next point of interest as one moves higher up Station Road is a rather eccentric but loveable individual, Edward William "Ben" James, who lived opposite to the school. A real funny character this man, who with the aid of a donkey cart did a greengrocery round in Bungay. I can picture him now trailing by the side of the cart, carrying a stout stick, the tip of which would be falling to the ground with every pace he took while advertising his wares thus: "Apple O, Pear O, Plum O", and in the same breath: "Go on old dicky O", and at the last remark the stub of the stick would be raised from the ground to find its way to the loins of the unfortunate animal. Apart from the hawking business "Ben" would repair boots and shoes, the rivets falling from his mouth in rapid sequence into a clump of leather to be permanently fixed with the drop of the hammer. It used to be said that Ben was a good clumper, but if one wanted a better job there was Walter Boulter a little higher up the street. Poor Walter was afflicted by some lameness and had to wear a boot with a very high sole on the afflicted foot. However, he scratched a living by repairs to boots and shoes and an occasional repair to an odd piece of furniture and like many cottagers of that day preserved a shilling or two in a few pigs at the bottom of his garden.

John Pigney next door at the general store was also a part time pig man as while Beatrice his daughter attended to the shop, John would be feeding and cleaning out the pigs. John did, however, like many others have one bad stroke of luck by losing some of his pigs and a kindly neighbour took it upon himself to journey around to collect sufficient money to enable John to make another start. A fine example of neighbourliness.

Just past the Post Office which was under the capable direction of Arthur Woods was an old lady by the name of Hannah Pipe. In those days there was very little financial help for the unfortunate old people with no monetary means and Hannah survived by taking in washing. She lived in a very old and small bungalow and was physically bent over by perpetually stooping over the wash tub. I had often seen her at a giant mangle far too large for her frame to operate attempting to squeeze water from linen owned by the more fortunate. Much is often written about those in higher places, but I feel that Hannah Pipe was one of the really true characters worthy of a place in the history of Ditchingham.

Chapter V

Hollow Hill and The Parish Church

A short walk brings one to the junction at the foot of Hollow Hill where an old cottage possibly more than 200 years old still remains. It used to be occupied by a Mr. Abbot, a retired gamekeeper.

At the top of Hollow Hill on the north side is the approach to Holly Hill Lodge, which now raises the question as to which is the corruption, Hollow or Holly?

Holly Hill Lodge at the turn of the eighteenth century was owned by William Stanford who farmed quite an area of land in the vicinity, the farm buildings being at the rear of the house on the opposite side of Baker's Lane. It is probable that the lane was named after Samuel Baker who owned land south of here in 1816. About 1840 it appears that the house known as Holly Hill Lodge together with the garden and orchard became detached from the farm and was occupied by William Dowson. Many high quality fruits were grown here of which area included a vineyard.

It later passed to Dr. Bright and later still to General Dale.

Higher still where Drapers Lane forks to the right, stood the blacksmith's shop in the occupation of Will Hunting, a son of John and a brother of George, all of whom followed this skilful occupation. Drapers Lane takes its name from John Draper who farmed there at the turn of the century. The farm is now known as All Hallows and when John Draper farmed it included land upon which the Community House of All Hallows now stands. It possesses a Tudor period farmhouse of great charm but like many of that period has partly been bricked over and re-roofed.

By turning towards Norwich one cannot but observe the square built residence now known as Ditchingham House. In the first half of the nineteenth century it was occupied by James Taylor Margitson, a solicitor. It later passed to the Haggards by marriage, the last occupant of that family being Lady Haggard, wife of the late Sir. Henry Rider Haggard. Sir Rider undertook farming with tremendous pride, his steward being John Dixon Longrigg who carried on in his own right after Sir Rider gave it up. I think that it was about the year 1916 that an auction of the dead and live farming stock took place, and although my memory invariably fails me in the matter of figures, I remember that his high class shire horses made outstanding prices for that period, with one mare and foal fetching £150.

Free Lane which connects the home of Sir Rider's daughter Miss Lilius Haggard abuts the Norwich Road at this point from which emerges an interesting pair of less fortunate folk - old man Everet with his son who was afflicted with complete deafness and dumbness. Father Everet was a small man, his eyes appeared to possess a squint, a half closed expression, while the son who was of much larger proportions also appeared to have inherited this eye infirmity. This unfortunate man became very frightening to passers-by due to his gruesome appearance and the fact that he carried a stick in those powerful hands. However, the father, in spite of his inferior size seemed to have control over this large son. On occasions a journey to Bungay would be arranged but how this was done with no verbal exchanges was most remarkable, but off they would go, the old man setting out in front with his large son following some 5 to 10 feet behind. Whenever these two were seen it was always a single file walk like a dog following his master though the distance between them would be greater.

Now the Parish Church is in view again doubtless one of the finest for a country parish in the whole of England. It was rebuilt between 1540 and 1580 and possibly had more than one

predecessor as there was a church on this site before 1066. As stated earlier, it is of perpendicular style, one prominent feature being the high steeple of 82 feet which creates a landmark to be seen for many miles. There are six bells, the oldest of which dates back to 1620. It has a very attractive interior and possesses a most beautiful chancel ceiling thanks to the work of Mrs. Scudamore the wife of the Rector of that day. I understand that this work was done by hand, the painter being suspended by a net attached to the ceiling. The whole interior of the church echoes with reminders of the great families who resided in the Parish and worshipped in the church, their names being recorded on brass, glass and stone throughout the building. Among those revered are the late occupants of The Hall, the Bostards, Bedingfields and Carrs, and others mentioned were Robert Davy, a Recorder of Norwich, Samuel Ives Sutton, Colonel George Wilson, Samuel Pycroft, Richard Pell and Thomas Pyr, Rector of St. Cross in Suffolk. From a chancel window is this request

"May their names be written in the Book of Life"

Rev. Ralph Bell	1635
Rev. Matthew Barton	1653
Rev. Samuel Pycroft	1709
Rev. Charles Buchanan	1718 Rector of Earsham
Rev. Abraham Baker	1751
Rev. William Massey	1802
Rev. John Newling	1802

Another inscription reads:

"Pray for William Edward Scudamore M.A. of St. John's College, Cambridge, Rector 1839-1881, founder and First Warden of All Hallows House of Mercy, Builder of All Hallows Church, author of various works, died 31st January 1881, 67 years"

Also one is reminded of James Franck Bright D. D. (of Holly Hill Lodge), Arthur John Rider Haggard 1892, Mark Haggard (war) 1914, Charles James Newman 1931, Sir William Geoffrey Hanson Salmon KCB, KCMG, DSO 1933 and Pilot Officer John Geoffrey Carr Salmon (action) 1940, 20 years.

There is also a reminder that a devoted servant of the church, an Arthur Henry Jenny, Churchwarden, died in 1894.

The list of incumbents dates from the thirteenth century when William de Breccles was Rector, to be followed by:

William Ball	1300
John Martell	1304
John de Langecumb	1334
Robert Swan	1348
Roger de Halesworth	1349
Henry de Glaston	1382
John Hervey	1393
Richard Clerk	1397
John Syleby	1398
Richard Hoo	1417
Richard Hadeley	1445
Edmund Hadilsey	1446
John Bennet	1454

William Ballys	1473
John Dey A.B.	1501
George Mawer	1514
Richard Bakon	1519
William Bayly	1538
John Sewell	1550
Thomas Dancher	1572
Gabriel Poynt	1580
Nicholas Forster	1585
Robert Lynaker	1587
John Curteis	1605
Ralph Pell	1609
Mathew Barton S.T.B.	1635
Samuel Pycroft	1654
Charles Buchanan A.M.	1709
Abraham Baker M.A.	1718
William Massey M.A.	1752
John Newling B.D.	1802
William E. Scudamore M.A.	1839
John C. Scudamore M.A.	1881
Harry Thorns M.A.	1929

A Roll of Honour gives a long list following these words:

"From this Parish, died for England in defence of Liberty & Justice"

A.G. Attoe	A.V. Gorbell	W.J. Sampson
H.H. Bird	H.A. Haile	E. W . Seeley
S. Bird	K.R. Hamilton	P.C. Summons
R.R. Butcher	G. Hansy	G.A. Smith
R.H.V. Dobbie	B. Johnson	H.G. Strowger
H.C. Edmunds	E.J. Kent	A.G. William
PD. Fairhead	W.H. Norman	G.C. Williams
H. Fiske	H. Prior	
A.L. Garrould	E.A. Reynolds	
A.Gillingwater	H. Runicles	Nurse M.A. Rodwell

The 1939-45 War added five more names to the list:

SD. Fairhead	J.C. Lambert	W. Reeve	F.A. Plumb	J.E.O. Treherne
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This appears to be a very long list for a single country parish. In the churchyard is a massive tomb of the Margitson Family. Among the oldest residents buried in the churchyard was Mrs. Hannah Want in her 106th year in 1805. The cemetery near the church which was opened in 1879. contains the remains of many notable personalities.

The Reverend John Scudamore was incumbent during my young years and once a year he would entertain the boys from the two choirs of both churches by a trip to the seaside at Great Yarmouth. Numbering fifty to sixty the boys would be hustled on to a train at Ditchingham railway station, and an adventurous day on the beach and funfair would culminate with a meal at Hill's restaurant in Regent Road. Many a present day Incumbent of a country village would appreciate a choir of fifty or so.

In the year 1603 when the population was much smaller, The Reverend Robert Lynaker returned 220 communicants at Ditchingham Parish Church. How times have changed! The Reverend John employed a Curate to assist him in his work as Rector of Ditchingham, but today the Reverend Wood has to administer to three such parishes single handed.

Over the years Ditchingham has been a parish of change. Gone is the silk factory, the railway station, the country brewery, the home bakery and many of the good things of my time, but some of the most valuable remain - the splendid recreational areas, the fine walks, the bathing and boating facilities and perhaps the greatest gem of all when one is in need, All Hallows Country Hospital.