

# Glemsford Local History Society

*from the archives*



## Society Newsletters: 1994

### Issue No. 6 - Autumn 1994

#### Spring 1995 Edition

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#### In this edition:

- [A tribute to Richard Deeks](#)
- [From the Editor - the Woolpit visit](#)
- [Private Enterprise - Potato Sacks](#)
- [Glemsford Fair](#) (with some recent annotations)
- [Treasurer's note](#)
- [A Glemsford Cottage](#)
- [Glemsford Records on show](#)
- [Touching for the Kings Evil](#)
- [Build or rebuild?](#)

#### From the Vice Chairman:

As you will all be aware Richard Deeks passed away on 15th May. He will be sadly missed, not only as our Founder Chairman, but as a friend to all of us.

I first met Richard two weeks after moving to Glemsford, and it was then that I had my first, of what was to be many, history lessons of Glemsford. It seems strange to me that people who had known Richard all his life referred to him as 'Dick', whereas most newcomers called him Richard. Perhaps it was because we held him slightly in awe that we felt we could never be allowed to call him 'Dick'.

*He was the first person to ever receive the Glemsford Parish Council's*

*Award for 'outstanding service to the community' and a more worthy recipient I cannot think of.*

It was because of Richard's dedication as Chairman of the History Society that our numbers have grown each year, and with the contacts that he had we were always assured of good speakers.

Whenever I visited other parts of Suffolk and mentioned that I was from Glemsford, I was asked 'how is Richard Deeks'. I once compared Richard to a mighty oak tree with the branches reaching out and touching all of our lives and, although that oak tree has now been felled, the seeds that were planted from it will continue to grow and flourish for years to come.

*His Memorial Service was held in St Mary's Church, Glemsford and tributes were paid to him in between the singing of his favourite hymns and songs. John Suttle, a life long friend of Richard's, recounted their exploits as youngsters up to recent times, and when John had finished paying tribute to Richard he surprised the whole congregation by singing 'Danny Boy', and I am sure that we all had a lump in our throats when he had finished.*

After the service, we made our way to the top of Churchgate where the recently installed seat was dedicated by the Rev Adrian Mason in memory of Richard, and a plaque is on the seat as a constant reminder of Richard to all of us.

*I can think of no finer tribute to Richard than these few words:*

**'The ultimate secret of life is the sure knowledge of death for without it man would not strive to leave his mark upon this earth'**

*Richard has left his mark!*

Chris Britton

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From the Editor

**'Greetings, and a happy New History Year!'**

**Sadly, we shall very much miss our Chairman but Richard was adamant that 'his' Local History Society must continue, and its continuance and expansion would be one of his finest memorials. He discussed with the Committee the programme for the year commencing September 1994, and we have been able to put together an interesting and varied selection of speakers.**

Some of the activities we had hoped to be engaged on during the summer months had to be curtailed owing to involvement with other Societies and clashing of dates.

However, 16 members spent a very happy and encouraging outing to Woolpit on July 7. We toured the village starting from the market area, which has many beautiful timbered houses, walked by the disused brick kilns, past the deep and fascinating lake, coming finally to the lovely old

church with its splendid roof. Some intrepid members went to see the Lady Well and surrounding area.

The visit concluded with refreshments in the Village Institute but nowhere, no matter how hard we looked, were any 'green children' to be seen. On enquiry we were informed by the leader, a Doctor's wife, that the green colour was probably caused by a dietary deficiency of medieval days: not a romantic notion, but probably correct.

*Thanks to Eileen Lynch who organised the trip and whose idea it was.*

Next year we look forward to conducting members of Woolpit History Society around Glemsford to see our historic timbered houses and our ancient church. Another item to be considered is an outing to the Victoria & Albert Museum which should make a popular and interesting day out. I would like to thank all those who have contributed articles so far, and will be pleased to receive your further ideas, articles, quotations, etc., in readiness for publication in early January.

Mary Chapple

### **Private Enterprise**

by Gillman Game

I now understand that the site of the chapel used as a potato store and mentioned in the Spring number of the Newsletter under 'Sheep Stealing', is now the location of the house known as 'Ranters' in Greyhound Road.

At that time potatoes could be bought by the bag, the price included a deposit on the jute bag which could be reclaimed when the empty bag was returned to Mr Cutting's shop.

One year some of the potatoes caught the frost and deteriorated into a smelly, soggy mess, eventually to be dumped, bags and all, in the Place Farm pit on Church Hill. They were soon spotted by the lads of the village who kept an eagle eye on the local pits to retrieve any discarded treasures. The bags were emptied, taken down to the river and washed, dried on the bank and eventually returned to the shop and the 'deposits' claimed.

### **Glemsford Fair**

also by Gillman

*Glemsford Fair was held annually on the 24th June on Tilney Green (sometimes known as Tilletts or Tillings Green).*

*It gives some indication of the importance of the fair in the Glemsford calendar that the green eventually became known as Fair Green, or possibly the name was deliberately changed.*

The bulk of the fair would be on the present green with various other stalls on the greensward leading up to the present bus shelter. A regular stall-holder was a respected lady known as the Rock Queen (nothing to do with music.)

She used to buy her sugar to make the rock at the Post Office and pay for it when she returned next year - not bad - a year's credit. On one occasion

there was a somewhat mangy lion or tiger in a cage.

*Apparently one year the fair did not appear and so the right to hold it was lost. My grandfather, from whom my knowledge of the fair stems, maintained that if a single stall had been put on Fair Green the right to hold the fair would have continued.*

*Coupled to the fact that on 2nd June 1776 there was a meeting in the vestry to try and stop the fair leads me to wonder if there was ever a charter authorising Glemsford Fair.*

Cavendish Fair was held on the 11th June and at both Cavendish and Glemsford the Sunday before the fair was known as "The Key of the Fair". I have heard Glemsford people tell of going to Cavendish for the "key of the fair". I imagine there was probably some ceremony but of what kind I have no idea.

It was said that when walking home to Glemsford across the fields from Cavendish fair it was always possible to pick a freshly emerged ear of wheat. This was, of course, before the advent of the much earlier winter barley.

*I suspect that the final fair on Fair Green was probably held about 1910. If so I cannot think that there is anyone alive who would remember the fair, but there is probably some 'second hand knowledge' in the village and it would be interesting if it could be collected before it is all forgotten.*

### **Gillman Game**

*(This would make a very interesting project to discover the authenticity of a charter for Glemsford Fair. If anyone has any further information on the date of the last Fair in Glemsford, I would be very pleased to know and to make notes for them if this would assist.)*

### **An update**

Having scanned these pages for the web site, Gillman's challenge was accepted, looking for "Glemsford Fair" on the Web.

An obvious place to start was the searchable Index to Andrew Clarke's brilliant Foxearth site..

In particular [this early reference from 1787](#) is worthy of note, as is [this passing one from the 1860s](#).

However, pride of place, for the moment goes to the [Suffolk Free Press of 1868](#) which stated:

July 2nd 1868

The pleasure fair at Glemsford passed off orderly, *perhaps an unusual thing to say about Glemsford*. The Green was completely full of stalls etc. (My italics)

The other reference I found - [from the Haverhill Echo](#) - indicates that a Fair was still being held in the village in 1911:

June 29th 1911

The annual fair was held at Glemsford and was as usual freely patronised. On Tuesday afternoon the old custom of climbing for a leg of mutton was revived at the Cock Inn, after one or two preliminary attempts the prize

was obtained by a man named A. Wordley. Whilst alighting from the swing boats a young lad named Suttle was accidentally hit by another boat, Suttle sustained nasty cut on his head.

There are, naturally, also many references to Cavendish Fair.

In July 2009, [this description of "climbing for a leg of mutton"](#), came from Bernie Allen in New Zealand!

### **From the Treasurer**

**Dee Hamilton would like to thank all those who contributed to the Memorial Fund for Richard Deeks. This money paid for the Plaque in his memory on the seat at the top of Church Hill.**

**There is a considerable sum unused and discussion is going on as to the best use for this money.**

### **Dee Hamilton**

#### **Glemsford's Domestic Gems**

*There are many small, interesting properties in this village which, were they able, could tell some stories of bygone days and their owners. If you are the fortunate owner of such a property, please feel free to write up what you know of your home. Research is a fascinating hobby and Glemsford is fortunate in possessing some wonderful beamed and timber built mansions, but the little cottages also have their place in village life, one such is the following:*

On a walk around the outskirts of Glemsford I had occasion to call in at one of Glemsford's attractive cottages. I had never been inside before and, in common with most members of my sex, I cast a surreptitious glance around. Then my historian's eye was caught by a delightful little window, some 14" x 22", with leaded panes, which appeared to look nowhere. My hostess then explained that this cottage had been built sometime in the mid 1700's (Deeds with details are in the bank) and, from the window, it had originally been possible to look across fields.

*An addition, in keeping with the original, has enlarged the cottage and, up steep and curved stairs, are two bedrooms in which it is possible to see the original beams, shaped as the branches of the living trees which once they were.*

*My hostess explained the fun they had when they started to renovate the cottage to bring it back nearer, in decorative style, to how a Suffolk cottage should look.*

*Layer upon layer of highly coloured wallpaper, of all styles and descriptions, had to be stripped away and now, were it possible for the original tenants to see these rooms, they would have no difficulty in recognising them.*

*Having been a Farm Labourer's cottage, it is not a listed building but has its own attractions including the unchanging view and I trust will remain so for many years to come.*

## **History Brought to Life**

Early in June, an Exhibition was held in the Church of St Mary the Virgin, Glemsford. It began with a remark by one of the Churchwardens that there were so few records of Church restoration available. This prompted your Editor to contact the Diocesan Registrar at Ely; I received a reply from Huntingdon and a further letter from the University at Cambridge offering assistance. Lover of history and of writing as I am, I am no archivist so I turned the whole thing over to Eileen Lynch (as you know Eileen is a retired archivist from Hertfordshire) and together we spent a delightful day in the University Library at Cambridge. The information we required had been gathered together and we were able to make copious notes.

*By the time of the Exhibition, Eileen had spent many hours gathering together such items as the Vestry Book-, of 1857/69; Parish Register dated 1551/1719 (this one showed that an earthquake had taken place in Glemsford on September 8, 1692). Burial Registers dated 1875/1900 and a Marriage Register of 1754/1773, together with assorted Vestry Books; a miscellaneous entry showing that Mary, the daughter of Martha Twine, has a Certificate from the Minister and Churchwardens stating that she has been touched by His Majesty for the Kings Evil in 1684 (King Charles II - did the Merry Monarch come to Glemsford after, perhaps, a good days racing at Newmarket? - an interesting speculation!*

Various other Vestry Books, records and letters were also on display, together with a copy of the estimate and specifications for restoring the chancel by Arthur Blomfield; a copy of part of a Terrier of the Rectory of Glemsford dated 1678. Wills had not been forgotten either and a copy of the Will of John Golding, Clothmaker, of Glemsford 1495, proved 1497, and of John Mondes 1533, proved 1540, were on display, together with notes of the Church from the Davy Manuscript 1831 (Note: David Davy 1769 to 1851 lived at Yoxford and collected material for the History of Suffolk which was never published).

*Included in the display were plans and drawings of Coldhams, kindly loaned by Mr Donald Rodger Brown, Coldhams having been the Rectory at one time and named after the Rev George Coldham (Rector: 1833/1887).*

This delightful Exhibition was well presented and enhanced by assorted artefacts and a collection of as many photographs of Rectors of Glemsford as we could obtain.

*Incidentally, research brought to light the name of another Rector of Glemsford, not included in former lists of Rectors. He was 'Thomas Pelles, Doctor of Law and Parson of Glemsford' and his name and style appears in the Will of John Mondes - 1533.*

## **Mary Chapple**

### **TOUCHING FOR THE KING'S EVIL**

When Mary Twine was granted a certificate by the Churchwardens of Glemsford on 20th October, 1684 allowing her to be "touched by His Majesty for the Kings Evil" (Scrofula), she probably went to London (paid for the overseers of the poor) and queued with hundreds of others to be

"touched".

*This curious custom dates back to at least 996-1031 A.D. when it was recorded in France; it was reputedly brought to England by Edward the Confessor and is based on the doctrine of the king being the Lord's anointed. It was regularly established by Henry II in 1163, and at this time each sufferer was given one penny dole. The ceremony continued until the late 13th century, then lapsed until being revived by Henry VI (1422/1460). Henry VII developed it and established a set ceremonial. It was he who introduced the custom of touching the sore with a gold angel noble which was afterwards given to the sufferer and worn on a ribbon round his/her neck. The ceremony had become very popular by the time of Elizabeth I, but James I was not so keen until late in his reign.*

A proclamation of 1626 fixed the healing times and demanded the certificate such as that given to Mary Twine. Between 1660 & 1683 it is recorded that 90,798 people were "touched", and Charles II used a gold medallion worth 10 shillings and engraved "Soli Deo Gloria" (Glory be to God Alone); he also decided to touch not more than 200 people every Friday. The custom eventually lapsed after Queen Anne's death in the early 18th century.

*In George Cavendish's "Life of Wolsey" there is a reference to 'Wolsey's presence at a ceremony in France in 1527; there are also references in Macbeth and Pepys' Diary, and Evelyn states that in 1684 "There was so great a concourse of people with their children to be touch'd for the Evil that six or seven were crush'd to death by pressing at the Chirurgeon's (surgeon's) doore for tickets" (I do hope that our Mary. was not hurt in this crush!) It is thought that one of the last persons to be touched was Samuel Johnson who was touched by Queen Anne in 1712 in his infancy. Macaulay thought the whole business a fraud, and William III had no time for it. "Give the poor creatures some money and send them away" he said, and on one occasion when he was persuaded to lay his hand on a patient "God give you better health and more sense".*

How many cures were there, one wonders and did all the patients really have scrofula?

We will never know, but let us hope that Mary Twine was cured of whatever disease she had.

### **Eileen Lynch**

*(information from W.E. Tate's "Parish Chest")*

### **To build or not to build ?**

*I am no historian, but I have a healthy interest, if not fascination, with the past. I am particularly fond of old buildings and am trying to picture their original inhabitants and their lives.*

As a family, we enjoy visiting old castles and churches when time permits. We have had a good look around most of the locals - our favourite is probably Framlingham Castle

*Recently we went to France (our first venture to foreign parts for many years) and were thrilled to find many castles, churches and monasteries*

*readily open to the public at very reasonable prices. The castles in particular were a joy to behold - especially Beynac, closely followed by everything at Rocamadour and the small Chateau Puymartin.*

What a difference between our ancient, his-toric buildings and theirs. We visit castle in Britain and they are largely "ruins". The National Trust, English Heritage and others do what they can to prevent further decay, but what we now see is a shadow of their former glory. In France many castles are not only being restored, but even com-pletely rebuilt. We came across one castle a little north of Beynac where a total rebuild had recently taken place where there had previously been nothing more than a large pile of stones further down the hillside.

*For the "imager" and lover of atmosphere like me the rebuilds are a joy, but are they what we should be doing for history now?*

**Adrian Mason viii.94**

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Produced by the Glemsford Local History Society, September 1994

Edited by Mary Chapple.

(All views expressed are those of the contributor and do not necessarily represent the view of the society as a whole.)