

224 is the newsletter of the Deddington & District History Society. During our season we meet at 7.30 on the second Wednesday of the month, normally at Deddington's Windmill Centre. Membership is £10/18 pa singles/ couples or £2.50 at the door for visitors, who are equally welcome. The editor actively encourages contributions to be sent to 1 South Newington Road, Barford St Michael OX15 0RJ. Email history@deddington.net

From the Chair

We are now into our second decade, which is something of which we can be proud. We continue with our basic activity of arranging what we hope are instructive and entertaining talks on a wide range of historical topics, but we have also ventured into new areas which I hope will bear fruit in a way that will leave a permanent legacy. Colin Cohen and his hard-working assistants continue to make steady progress with the digitisation of Deddington Primary School's records, which are unusual in having survived so completely from their beginning in 1870. Once completed, we hope that digital copies will be deposited at the school for use by the children, and in Deddington library where they can be consulted by everyone. Moira Byast's team is making progress in transcribing local wills and inventories of the 17th and 18th centuries, and having a lot of fun on the way. If anyone would like to have a go (and it really is not as difficult as people think, besides being hugely interesting), please get in touch with Moira on 01869 338637.

We shall mark the 75th anniversary of Mary Vane Turner's *The Story of Deddington*, now completely unobtainable, by offering for sale a facsimile edition with a new introduction and the illustrations enhanced. This will be a limited print run and will quickly become a collector's item, so please make sure to let us know that you want to buy a copy. Society members will be first in the queue but when they're gone, they're gone. We don't have the capital or the storage space for a large print run.

This issue of 224 is devoted largely to the Deddington and Barford Enclosure Award of 1808, whose bicentenary it is this year. We have put together an illustrated article on the award, which brought about arguably the greatest change in farming practice and in the very landscape of this area in many centuries. I am sure that there is more work to be done on the impact of enclosure on local people. Was it, for instance, responsible for the migration of families away from the area? It would make an interesting project if anyone fancies undertaking some historical research. We shall be happy to publish any results here in 224.

Finally, I boasted above about our success in surviving into a second decade. If we are to continue our activities into a third decade we shall need a constant infusion of new members. If you enjoy the Society and think that it enhances the life of our local communities, please encourage friends to join us and take part.

Chris Day

The 1808 enclosure

This year is the 200th anniversary of the enclosure of the two parishes of Deddington and Barford St Michael, under the joint Act of Parliament of 1808.

The first Parliamentary enclosure in England was as early as 1604 but the overwhelming majority occurred in the period 1760-1830, continuing in some areas (eg Oxfordshire) into the 1850s. Some 4,000 Acts were passed enclosing perhaps 7,000,000 acres, some 20% of the total area of the country. Parliamentary enclosure was most widespread on the heavy arable soils of the south and east midlands.

How was farming carried out before enclosure?

In the Middle Ages Oxfordshire formed part of a midland region characterized by nucleated villages set in the middle of what we would consider a somewhat bleak landscape of two or three large open fields for purposes of crop rotation. The system is in evidence before the Norman Conquest. What seems to have happened is that in late Saxon times formerly scattered farms were thrown together to make two or three very large fields. Villages were created by setting out house plots¹, more or less regularly, often in association with the building or rebuilding of local churches, for this is also the period in which parishes

were created. In short, settlement coalesced. The new arrangements were tenurially and legally more orderly and they gave us what we think of today as the manorial system.

Deddington seems to have followed the two-field system usual in this area. The landscape was utterly different from that to which we are accustomed. The traveller passing through would have seen few hedges, other than at Ilbury² and to the east of Barford St Michael around Rignell and Buttermilk Farms, and no outlying farmhouses since farming was carried out from houses within the village. Since farms comprised strips of land scattered across the fields it made good sense for the farmhouses to be centrally placed within the settlement.

In a two-field system only half the land was cultivated each year—at least theoretically. In fact, flexibility of crop rotation was achieved by dividing the two great fields into separate furlongs. But who grew what, and when, and above all when land was opened up to grazing was a communal matter, decided in the

manor court. It was not a common system in the sense that land was communally owned; land was privately owned, but it was communally controlled.

Location of the fields

The exact location of Deddington's **open** fields is unknown. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there seem to have been not one but two sets of paired fields within the parish, managed separately. One set seems to have lain east, the other west of the Oxford-Banbury road. The east and west fields were each divided north and south by the Clifton-Hempton road.

Clifton was farmed separately, its fields divided north and south. Hempton, interestingly, shared a field system with Barford St Michael. The two fields (of 500-600 acres each) were divided east and west, the boundary running from the east end of Barford village through the east end of Hempton township to the Duns Tew boundary. Ilbury men shared the Barford-Hempton fields, although a separate enclosed farm of

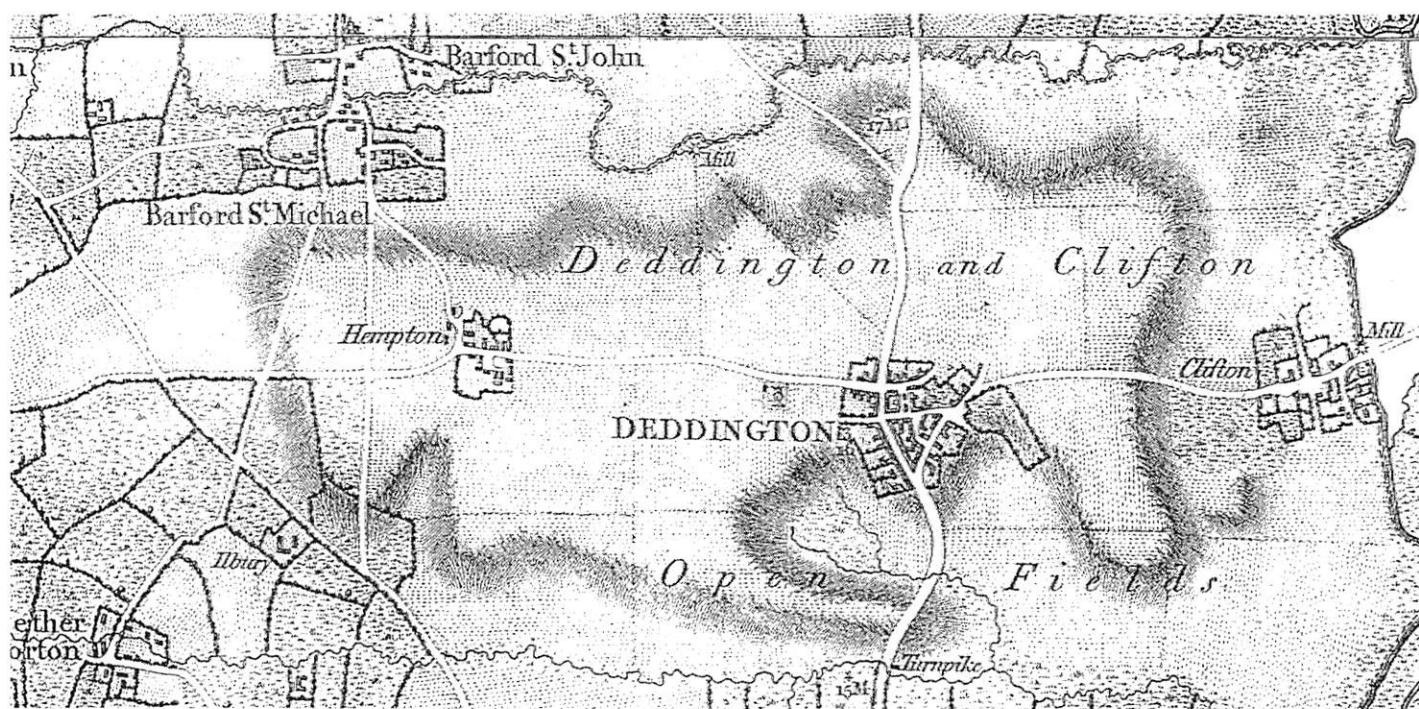
c 200 acres was created at Ilbury, probably in the 14th century.

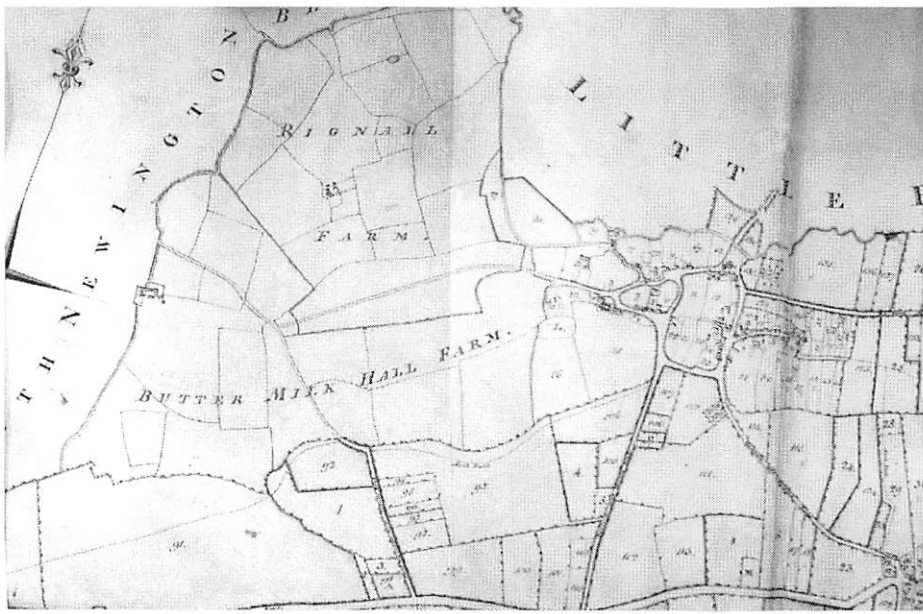
How was enclosure carried out?

A petition was made to Parliament, advertised by a notice on the church door and in the local newspaper. If there were no counter-petitions (and in Deddington and Barford it seems there weren't) commissioners would be appointed to supervise the enclosure. There were usually three, representing the lord of manor, the tithes owner, and the freeholders. The poor were rarely represented. The commissioners appointed a surveyor, who was supposed to be impartial. Meetings were held to hear claims, especially from those claiming land in lieu of their rights of common. The surveyor and his assistants, known as qualitymen, went out round parish to make their survey. Occasionally their notebooks, correspondence and working maps have survived, providing an invaluable before-and-after view of the process. Unfortunately none have been found for the 1808 survey.

When the enclosure award was finally published it itemized what

An extract from Richard Davis' map of the County of Oxford (published in 1797) showing the landscape as it was before enclosure. Barford St John had been enclosed with Adderbury by an act of 1793, but the surveyors must already have passed by! It clearly shows the old enclosures of Barford and Ilbury.





A section of the 1808 map of fields from Hempton to Barford. The numbers are in a different series for Deddington ad Barford fields. The un-numbered fields are the old enclosures.

each recipient had owned before, and what it was being exchanged for. Three copies of the award were made: one for the parish (often now missing or in private hands), one for the Clerk of Peace for the County (now usually in the county record office) and the commissioners' copy (now usually in the National Archives). In theory all three copies might retain their maps, but they rarely do and sometimes no map survives at all. For Deddington the enclosure award and map survive in the County Record Office and in the Bodleian Library but, sadly, there is no pre-enclosure map—how we would dearly love to find one—nor do the working papers survive.

The impact on the landscape

Fields produced by the enclosure process are likely to be rigidly geometrical and bounded by hawthorn hedges. It has given the Midlands its characteristic appearance of straight hedge lines, interspersed with trees, and small coppices and woods planted later as game coverts. They are botanically obvious since the hedges rarely contain more than two species of shrub. The hedges cut across ridge

and furrow instead of following the outline of the strips. Nowhere is the pattern of Parliamentary enclosure fields more obvious than south of the Swere in Barford St John³. It is interesting to note how different is the irregular and densely hedged fieldscape around Ilbury, which is unique in the parish in being ancient enclosure.

The enclosure commissioners had the task of defining what would be public rights of way. Some roads followed ancient highways, others followed field paths that had always crossed the open fields, and some new routes were created. Newly created enclosure roads can often be readily identified: they tend to have a standard width of 30' or 40' and to be long and straight. They are sometimes mistaken for Roman roads, but enclosure roads have much wider verges, used for driving animals from field to field; Roman roads are generally narrower. Because the roads and tracks set out in the enclosure award have the force of an Act of Parliament they are legally protected, indeed today's dog walkers and ramblers can thank the enclosure acts, and the footpaths that they defined just so that workers could get to the fields, for their

freedom to cross farming land for recreation.

The enclosure commissioners tried so far as possible to create integrated farms that could be worked conveniently from existing farmhouses within the villages. Compared to some other places, relatively few new farmhouses were built in the middle of what had once been open fields. Hazelhedge Farm, Tomwell Farm, Blackingrove, Iron-down and Coombe Hill are exceptions. More outlying farmhouses followed later in the century.

and on people

Smaller farmers and landholders were less considerately treated and were awarded less convenient holdings. Worst off as always were the poor, who were entitled to small amounts of land to compensate them for the loss of common rights (grazing, collecting fuel, etc) in the open fields. The poor of Hempton, for example, received an allocation of land more than a mile distant from the hamlet.

Historians have argued ever since about the effects of enclosure. The best-known critics are probably J L and B Hammond, who as early as 1911 in their book *The Village Labourer* stated that 'enclosure was fatal to three classes: the small farmer, the cottager, and the squatter. To all three classes their common rights were worth more than anything they received in return'. They couldn't afford to hedge and ditch their small enclosure allotments; higher rents meant they couldn't afford to improve rented land. The result was surplus labour and rural depopulation. A pyramidal society resulted with large farmers at the top and a large base of landless labourers. In short, according to the Hammonds enclosure was a vast fraud perpetrated on small farmers and smallholders. A contrary view was (of course!) brought forward by other historians claiming that

enclosure brought with it an increased demand for labour that helped secure regular employment in hedging, ditching etc. It helped alleviate the pauperism and miserable standards of living in most open villages like Deddington.

The debate continues to this day, with one undisputed result: additional employment for historians. I feel a History Society working party coming on!⁴ As for Deddington and the surrounding villages, there is some evidence of the difficulties faced by many families in this area. The parish vestry made repeated efforts to find work for labourers: 60 men were unemployed during the winter months of 1832. Perhaps significantly, the almshouses (1822) date from this period, as did the setting up of a number of charities. Population in the area stagnated (in reality a sharp fall when natural increase is taken into account) as families migrated to industrial towns in England or to the colonies and America. Yet economic distress is known to have pre-dated enclosure in 1808, and the number of small landholders did not fall in the years immediately following. The evidence does not enable us to say with certainty one way or the other, but a slightly clearer picture might emerge if all the scattered pieces of evidence were brought together for intensive scrutiny.

We can be sure that the changes effected in farming and the landscape 200 years ago were the most far-reaching since the creation of villages and open fields a thousand or so years before. Change has, of course, come thick and fast since then, led by mechanisation and 'scientific' farm-ing, but there is no reason for us to feel that the last generation or two have been the only ones to feel that their world has been turned upside down.

Chris Day



Above: Typical straight enclosure hedges, with the old ridge and furrow of Barford in the foreground seen from the Hempton to Barford Road. In the centre is the ruin of Little Barford Mill.

Below: Coombe Hill Farm [Barford St John] set among its fields, typical of post enclosure farms. It has been empty since the 1950s, but with its barn is now being restored. It is here seen from the Deddington to Hempton Road.



1 These plots are clearly shown in the 1808 map of Deddington township made for the Cartwrights and reproduced in 224: 9, December 2001.

2 The hedges of Ilbury were described in detail in Walter Meagher's article in 224: 14, March 2003.

3 Barford St John was a chapelry within Adderbury at the time of its enclosure in 1793, but no map survives. It did not join with Barford St Michael to form one parish until the twentieth century.

4 A detailed study has yet to be done, but because the enclosure map shows what was meant to happen and the two-inch to the mile drawings made for the first

edition of the Ordnance Survey for the area in 1814 show what actually happened it would be possible to identify by name those who could not afford to enclose them.

