

The Elsworth Chronicle



Holy Trinity Church

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ELSWORTH CHRONICLE

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RAT RUN THROUGH ELSWORTH

In the last issue of the Chronicle there was a short article on congestion at the Caxton Gibbet roundabout leading to a car 'rat-run' through Elsworth during the morning rush-hour. Some, I know, contacted those in authority on the matter - thank you for that.

The situation has moved on slightly. The problem is recognised by the Highways Authority and the County Council. It would seem that present thinking is in favour of a three level approach. [a] Initially, line markings will be painted at the roundabout designed to separate eastbound traffic on the A1198 road from the north. [b] If that fails to bring benefit, the road beyond the motel on the A1198 near the roundabout would be widened to form a lane for eastbound traffic. [c] If the problem remains, traffic lights operative at peak times would be installed or seriously come under consideration.

As the principal reason for the hold-up is the requirement of traffic to give way to vehicles from the west - which at the morning rush hour would seem to be the problem - it is difficult to be optimistic re. [a] and [b], but time will tell, of course.

Alan Farrow

ELSWORTH, KNAPWELL & CONINGTON W.I.

By Isobel Farrow

On Wednesday 13th March we held our Annual Meeting in Elsworth School. This is an occasion to look back over the year's activities and to elect [or re-elect] the President and committee members.

Lyn Hogan has been our very able President for the last three years and now Margaret Stevenson is the new office holder. Our long-standing committee member and most efficient secretary Betty Simcock resigned and we have one new committee member, Julia Hyde. We welcome both our new officers.

This year's meeting was special - our 90th birthday! Once business was out of the way we enjoyed birthday cake, wine and cheese. And we also celebrate that our membership stands at 33 - several new members having joined during the year.

Since March 2012 we have had a wide variety of talks ranging from hearing how our local surgery at Papworth is run to stories of a lorry driver and removal man - very entertaining! Last month our speaker was James Martin - son of one of our members - who told us of the work done for the homeless in Cambridge through the charity 'Winter Comfort', of which he is the manager. Great efforts are made to offer workshops and activities as well as a safe environment, food and laundry facilities. Last year 750 homeless people in Cambridge were helped - a great achievement. For more information call Isobel on 01954 267472.

ELSWORTH BUS SERVICE - A PLEDGE FROM THE COUNTY COUNCIL

Is a cloud of doom and gloom soon to descend on Elsworth with the news that our existing bus service is to come to an end? The County Council is markedly reducing its subsidy for public transport and it is felt the somewhat meagre use of the buses serving the parish can no longer justify a grant. Is the axe about to descend?

The forecast might seem dire for those who rely on public transport, but as the proverb of old notes “Every cloud has a silver lining”. Even though the proposal is to be regretted, and the County must be pressed to justify it, the outcome needn't be disastrous. In fact it could be turned to our advantage and made quite acceptable with focus on needs now identified by parishioners.

Before the matter became public I had been in touch with the County **and been assured in writing that Elsworth will not be left without a transport service**. Various options will be put to us for consideration - volunteer car schemes, car share schemes, dial-a-ride service. There is a possibility, too, that ‘Demand Responsive Transport’ [DRT] could be an option, which to my mind is the most suitable. It is a system in operation in various parts of the country and would seem to be particularly suited to rural areas. It is a scheme being promoted seriously by the County. A brief description would seem required, as unlike the other possibilities it is not self-explanatory.

In essence DRT [Demand Responsive Transport] is provided by mini-buses run by independent transport providers. Tickets are prior booked so that the burden of running empty vehicles is eliminated. DRT can offer a more personalised service than provided by the traditional bus company, and passengers may be collected from their homes. If required, it could also be arranged for customers to be picked up or dropped off at a stop along a scheduled bus stop or park and ride site.

What would passengers pay for DRT? Fares will be in line with the Cambridgeshire County Council fare structure. Passengers would be able to use their concessionary passes as per the current regulations, i.e. after 9.30 am. The form noted above is to be regarded as an off-peak service.

Discussions of our needs and how they are to be met are scheduled to commence in June. The parish council will be briefed and we are promised

there will be full engagement with the community. The County wishes to gain a precise view of our travel needs, with priority given to those requiring access to places of employment, education, training, public services [medical centres for example] and essential shopping.

Consultation is often regarded as merely a public relations exercise, with the outcome pre-determined. In my experience, though, the Public Transport section of the County has proved an exception, being prepared to listen. Some will remember the outcry a few years back when a threat to the bus service to St. Ives was successfully resisted. On an earlier occasion when as chairman of the parish council I was promoting a scheme linking Elsworth and neighbouring villages to the bus hub at Bar Hill, the proposal was given a 3 years trial. Unfortunately this service proved not to be viable. The views of consumers are, to judge from these experiences, not only heard but taken into account. Between now and the consultation period it would seem very important that views are discussed fully so that meaningful propositions may be put to transport officers when the views of parishioners are sought.

Alan Farrow

JUBILEE CLUB

By Betty Simcock

The club is open to everyone either living in or visiting Elsworth and surrounding villages. We meet on the first Thursday of most months from 2.30 to 4.30 pm and have a speaker or entertainment, afternoon tea and a raffle.

We are having two outings in the summer, namely:

Felixtowe - 30th May

Aldeburgh - 25th July

both leaving Elsworth bus shelter at 9 am and starting for home at 4.30 pm. Seats are still available at only £10 per person, £5 for children.

Please come along if you can, you will certainly know people there - and you may want to come back! For more information call Betty on 01954 267470.



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Obituary

BETTY EVANS



A tribute to Betty has already appeared in the Elsworth Times and it is not proposed here to reiterate what has been written. Even so, it would be wrong not to focus on Betty on these pages as in addition to having given so much to the village she was a very good friend to the Elsworth Chronicle and contributed articles to many editions dating from the first publication back in 1990. Rather than repeat her accomplishments it is proposed, then, to focus on Betty the person.

Firstly as a wife and partner, she and Robert enjoyed a delightfully complementary loving relationship over some 50 years - he, a rather taciturn, somewhat shy academic while she was more loquacious and outward looking. This combination was well illustrated on the occasions when she and Robert gave lunch parties in Robert's set of rooms for members of Robert's tutorial group at St. Catherine's College, where he was a Fellow and Tutor. John Bridgwater - who in due course was to become a Fellow of St. Catherine's, Professor of Chemical Engineering and a resident in Elsworth at Turner's Cottage - was a student under Robert's guidance and remembers the occasions well. Betty would put people at their ease, taking a keen interest in all present. In his turn, Robert could offer much to Betty, as is clear from the Preface in her book on Elsworth.

Reference to Betty's publication takes us to the success of her booklet

'The Church and Village of Elsworth', which has been reprinted three times, with revisions, since first published. The standing of this work becomes clear when it is seen that reference is made to it in Volume 9 of the scholarly Victorian County History. Other examples of her ability to present historical facts in a meaningful and easy to read style is brought out in her history of Elsworth School, which appeared over six editions of this magazine, and on another occasion in her account of the establishment of the W.I. in Elsworth. Extracts from her W.I. account are noted elsewhere in the current magazine.

Betty had a strong affinity with children. This comes out in her article in this magazine of December 1990 in which she wrote of how the Beaver Club - a gathering for the young folk of Elsworth - came into being, and the varied activities which often spontaneously developed. No doubt quite a number in the parish will remember it well. Her understanding, and interest in, children was reflected also in her role as a magistrate on the Juvenile Board, and her positions as Governor of Elsworth School and Swavesey Village, where she was chairman for a number of years. And as those who have been in the village for some time will testify, the annual play Betty produced for Elsworth School was always a noteworthy event.

Empathy and warmth of character characterised Betty in all her endeavours. But more than that, she was a person of action on whom complete reliance could be put, as is shown by all the responsibilities she successfully undertook, and already chronicled by Paul Harding.

Betty was interested in the past - witness her writings; interested in the present - witness her activities relating to children and young people in particular; and in the future, witnessed by her donation of woodland in the County of her birth to the Herefordshire Nature Trust, and the coppice she and Robert planted at the northern end of their land in Elsworth. Her span of interests and activities was wide, which made her such a delightful companion. Even the world of sporting achievement was within her compass - while at Oxford she was cox of the University Women's Eight boat. Over half of Betty's life was spent in Elsworth, that is some 58 years in the village. She was a friend to so many and gave so much to the parish, becoming the acknowledged authority on its heritage. A true Elsworthian, by deed and knowledge if not by birth.



Enclosure Map
[If required, the editor has a clearer map]

ELSWORTH LAND ENCLOSURE

The map, probably of 1801, shown on the page opposite names the occupants of land in our parish all those years ago, and many might be interested in matching their present land holding with the name of the person who, back over 200 years, acquired the land.

The map came into being as a result of the Land Enclosure Act of 1800 which brought to an end the Open Field system of agriculture which had persisted for centuries. Prior to the Act all those working on the land cultivated the same crop at one time. The second map reproduced on page 14 reminds us that in Elsworth the arable land was divided into three huge fields [a] Low Field, [b] Middle Field and [c] Pittdean Field; with in addition common pasture and meadowland. In 1800 wheat, the principal crop, was rotated triennially with peas and a year when the field would remain fallow, such a pattern moving from field to field in the rotation.

In essence, before the Enclosure Act landholders would hold strips in each of the large fields under cultivation so that each would have a share in the good and less good land. Cattle could be grazed on the fallow land, thus providing some manure, and on the common land and meadowland.

With the redistribution of land from 1800, note was taken in the variation of the soil within the parish, and parcels of land reflect this in part, and it will be seen a patchwork of holdings resulted with many acquiring scattered land for enclosing. Those with a high entitlement to strips were awarded accordingly with the redistribution. This new method of land holding would seem to make sense and The Victoria County History notes that there was but little objection in Elsworth. Consolidation meant that land could meaningfully be improved and drained in the knowledge that it would not revert to another. Drainage was an important factor, for although the ridge and furrow system allowed water to drain off along the furrows, it did so at the cost of soil erosion. On enclosure, levelling the land surface and putting drains un-

der the ground became realistic. Such improvement was to the advantage of large landholders, but for those with small allocations and wealth, it was but a dream, for often they could not afford the additional cost of such work together with the considerable expense of enclosure with hedgerows or fence. Small landholders, therefore, were inclined to sell their new allocation to neighbours. Consolidation was also sought among those with larger holdings and there followed much buying and selling, as is witnessed by announcements in the Cambridge Chronicle of the time of land being offered for sale by auction.

By far the largest landholder after enclosure was the Rector who was awarded 948 acres for his manorial holding - he was Lord of the Manor as well as the incumbent - and 655 acres in lieu of glebes and tithes. Some land on the borders of the parish went to apparent outsiders, while of the resident farmers only three would seem to have received awards of notable size - viz. Richard Papworth with 242 acres, Richard Whitechurch with 147 acres and Jeremiah Fardell - after whose family the lane was named - with 133 acres. With the consolidation noted above, it would seem that several farms emerged in the middle of the nineteenth century with between 220 and 330 acres, with James Parsons of Broad End higher with 560 acres by 1861, to which later his holding was increased further.

On the Enclosure Map several names still prominent in the village or surrounds are noted - Allgood, Brand, Papworth. Perhaps family records could throw light on such land exchanges. Others interested in the history of their plot of land could well find that the Public Records Office in Cambridge has useful information. The auction notices referred to above in the Cambridge Chronicle give further insight, and useful extracts from this source are also given in booklet published by the Swavesey & District History Society. Even prior to enclosure there was land speculation. Three years before the Enclosure Act a Mrs. Ann Bricheno was offering for sale a plot within the village area which had been enclosed at an earlier date - "A close of rich pasture land called Roger's Close* with a fine thriving spinney". The advertisement, which included two other Lots for sale, notes that "superior advantages must derive to the purchasers of the above Estates should an inclosure

[sic] take place”, as there was upwards of 1,000 acres of common grazing land. Presumably a sale was not completed for the land is in her name at the time of the 1800 enclosure. It will be seen from the Enclosure Map that a certain R. Brown was allocated land to the east of the village to add to an earlier enclosed parcel of land. Brown’s Farm is to-day recognised as being on the southerly side of Boxworth Road - perhaps he was the successful bidder when Thomas Moore put his holding on the market; certainly Moore was selling land off in 1812.

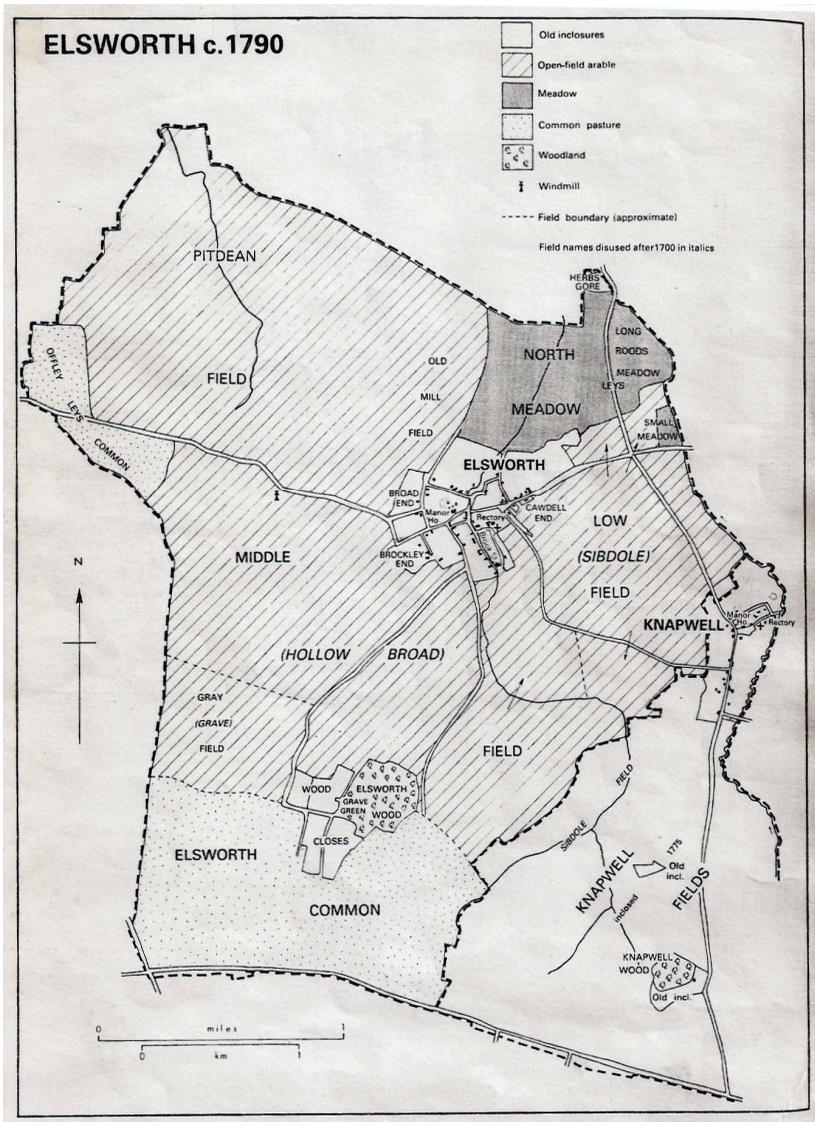
The Enclosure Acts transformed the English rural scene from one characterised by large open fields to one of a patchwork of hedgerows in the areas of arable land in lowland Britain. The change was dramatic. Its advent in Cambridgeshire was later than in most counties, which possibly led William Cobett to note in his ‘Rural Rides’ in the 1820s - sometime after enclosure in our area - when entering Cambridgeshire from the Royston area

“those very ugly things common fields that have all the nakedness without any of the smoothness of the Downs”.

Although the second part of the 20th century in areas such as ours witnessed the removal of many hedgerows, consequent on the development of large combine harvesters and the like, and the creation of mini prairie fields, it could be that now in the 21st century we are about to witness another marked transformation of the countryside with the current demand for more and more houses beyond town boundaries. It is to be hoped that Elsworth will remain in the rural scene, surrounded by farmland and farmers, to whom we owe so much. It is to them and their like elsewhere that our lives depend.

*It is interesting that ‘Close’ refers to ‘enclosure’ not to a person concerned with the present 20th century house estate.

Alan Farrow



Open Fields Map

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ELSWORTH SPORTS CLUB

Delivering a report at this time is convenient in the local sporting calendar as the football season is reaching its climax, the table tennis season has recently finished, and the cricket season is due to commence shortly.

After a successful season last year the football team was promoted to the NMC Cambs Junior League Division 3B this season, and again has enjoyed success. Two cup competitions were also entered, the team reaching the semi-final of the John Ablett Cup and retaining the Lower Junior Cup which was won at the Histon Football Club ground by defeating Ely Crusaders by 3 – 2 after extra time in a very entertaining final. The demands of cup matches and losing a few Saturdays earlier in the season due to the weather resulted in a need to play three matches per week for the last few weeks of the season, proving to be a strain for the players, making it likely that promotion again this season might just be out of reach. However, finishing in the top three of the division is an excellent achievement. Anyone interested in, or seeking more information on football should contact David Triggs on 0789 1011055.

The table tennis teams have enjoyed success during this past season in the Ely League, the first team finishing runners-up in Division 1, with the second team finishing third in Division 3, just missing second spot by virtue of games won. Anyone interested in table tennis should contact Bill Knibbs on 01954 267266.

After a dismal season in 2012 and an obvious lack of players, it was decided to enter one cricket team only in the Cambs League for this season and our team will play in the Junior League Division 4. The home fixtures for the coming season are:

1 st June	v.	Milton 3 rd X1
8 th June	v.	Camden 3 rd X1
15 th June	v.	Linton 2 nd X1
22 nd June	v.	Wilbraham 2 nd X1
3 rd August	v.	Bassingbourn
10 th August	v.	Sawston 4 th X1
24 th August	v.	Dullingham 2 nd X1
31 st August	v.	Cambourne 2 nd X1

A number of mid-week matches in the Business Houses League and a few friendlies will also be played. Anyone interested in cricket should contact Bill Knibbs on 01954 267266.

Carpet bowls continues to be played throughout the year on Wednesday afternoons in the Pavilion, and whist drives are held monthly on Friday evenings commencing at 7.30pm.

Roger Fensom [tel. 01954 267534]



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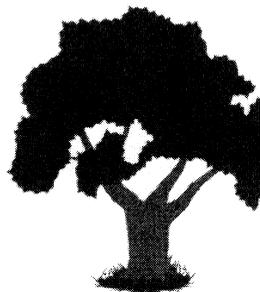
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