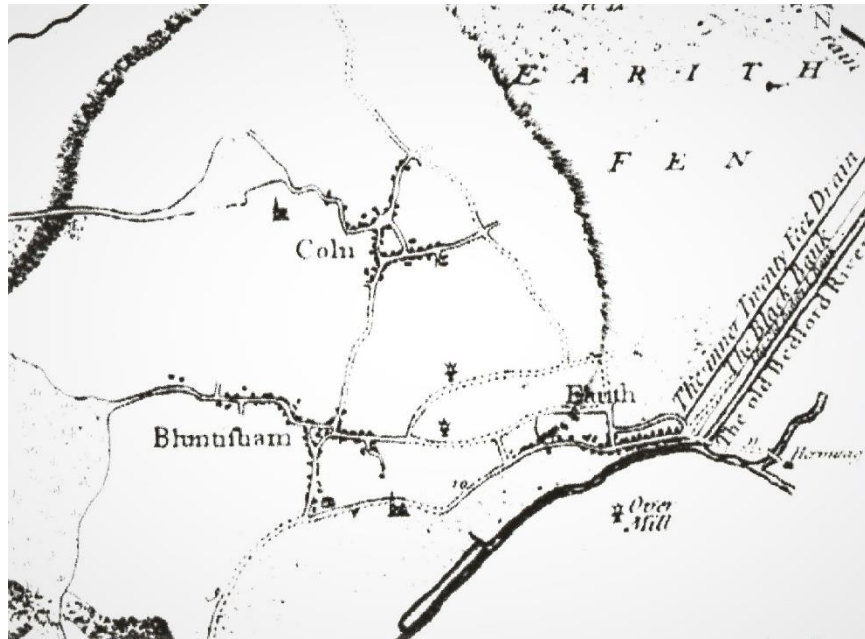


200 Years of One Road's History

Colne Road, Bluntisham, from 1800 - 2000

Compiled from maps, deeds and other records

UP TO 1800



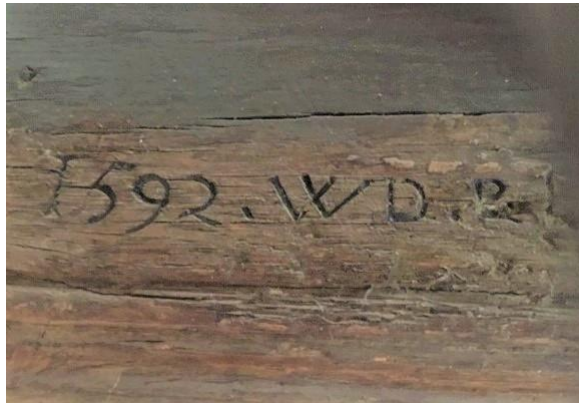
Jeffrey's map of Huntingdonshire 1768

Jeffrey's map of 1768, one of the earliest maps of the region, shows Bluntisham with the roads from St Ives, Woodhurst, Colne and Earith, feeding into a circle of village streets commonly known as 'the little ring', a circle defined by the top end of the High Street, Short Lane, Colne Road and part of East Street and Block Hill. The majority of village properties lined Woodend, High Street and East Street. Holliday's Road, which along with Rectory Road, High Street and East Street would eventually form the big ring, was still a relatively undefined track with a smattering of properties at its East Street end. The causeway that would become Colne Road ran through open fields.

The small number of Colne Road properties shown on Jeffrey's map equate to the current Nos. 1, 3, 5 & 7 on the right hand side of the road as you head to Colne, and Nos. 2 and 4 on the left hand side. There were no further properties along the road until you reached the edge of Colne village.

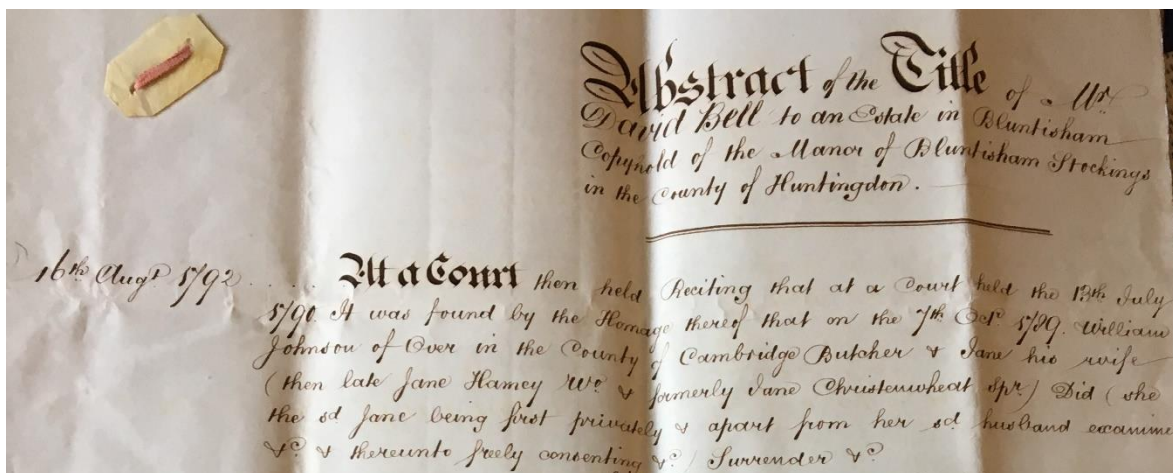
Over the years the majority of the Colne Road properties shown on Jeffrey's map have undergone significant alteration, principally demolition and replacement, but Nos. 2, 4 and 7 have survived with their original timber framed wattle and daub walls and thatched roofs intact. Elmers End (No. 1 Colne Road), is the only pre-eighteenth century brick built property on the road. Collectively, these are the oldest properties on the road. In fact No. 2, which has a

main beam running the length of the property with the date 1592 carved into it, is thought to be the oldest surviving property in the village, with parts of it dating back to the 16th century.



The date 1592 & the initials WD carved into a beam at No.2 Colne Road provide an indication of the building's age.

No.2 was given listed building status in March 1976.



One of many title papers relating to the ownership of Elmers End - Being an abstract of the title of Mr David Bell to an estate in Bluntisham copyhold of the manor of Bluntisham Stockings in the County of Huntingdon

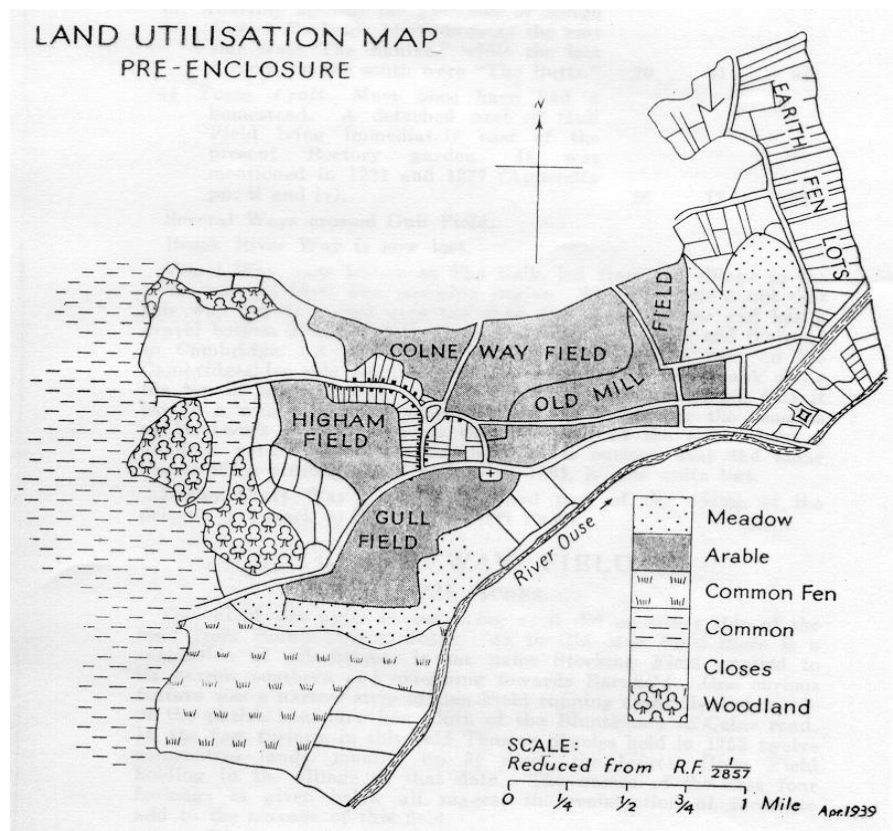
Dated 16th August 1792 the abstracts reads- At a Court then held reciting that at a court held the 13th July 1790 it was found by the Homage thereof that on the 7th Oct 1789 William Johnson of Over in the County of Cambridge butcher & Jane his wife (then late Jane Hamey w^d & formerly Jane Christenwheat sp^r) did she the said Jane being first privately & apart from her s^d (said) husband examined & c^e (etc.) hereunto freely consenting & c^e (etc.) surrender & c^e (etc.) A messe or tenement in Bluntisham held by the yearly rent of 4^d to the use of William Cole of Boxworth in the said County of Cambridge farmer his heirs and assigns forever etc..... (Also see pages 8 & 9)



The bottom of Colne Road (circa 1920) with its three surviving thatched properties and a brick Victorian new-build at No 3. No. 7 (Horseshoe Cottage) was still three separate properties, each with their own front door. A water pump sits against the wall on the left side of the road and the gas lamp can be made out against the pitched roof extension on No. 3

1800 - 1900

The nineteenth century Land Enclosures Act



Pre-enclosure land utilisation map of Bluntisham
Source "A history of Bluntisham" by Tebbutt

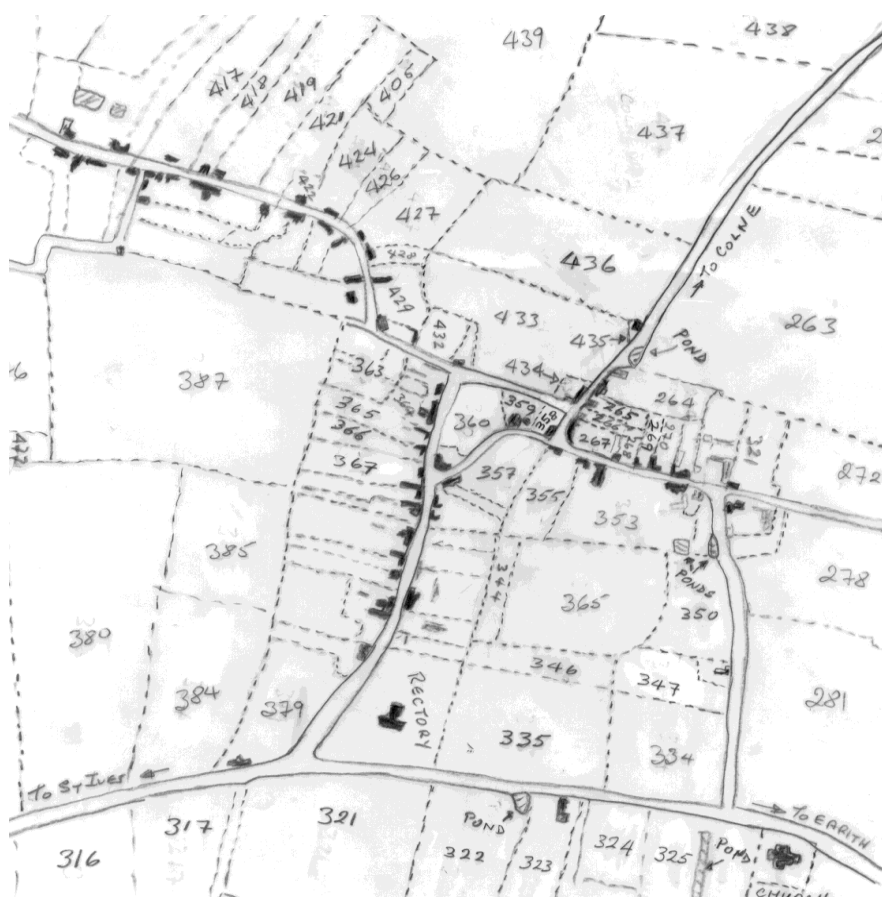
The parish of Bluntisham cum Earith extended to 3,155 acres 3 roods and 9 perches made up of 1,783 acres of arable land for cropping, 1,274 acres of pasture land for grazing, 68 acres of woodland for timber, fencing and charcoal, 8 acres of ozier grounds for making baskets and 20 acres of orchards and gardens for fruit and vegetables. In fact, all that was required to for a community to be self-sufficient. The pre-enclosure map shows properties with gardens lining the High Street, up Woodend and filling the horseshoe created by the High Street, East Street and Holliday's Road loop. There were four tracts of common land, Gull Field, Higham Field, Colne Way Field and Old Mill. All were open fields, farmed under a system that divided the land into furlong strips of varying widths but always approximately 200 yards long. 220 yards (*one furlong*) was considered the distance an ox team could plough a furrow without pausing. The route that would eventually become Colne Road passed across Colne Way Field.

Prior to the enclosure acts, the common land was owned by the crown and managed by the Lord of the Manor who had the right to mete it out to the locals. Farmers farmed strips wherever they could rent them, which might involve working land in all quarters of the parish and in neighbouring parishes as well. When the land you farmed was spread around the parishes it didn't matter where you lived, especially if the plots you rented this year might be

different from the land you farmed next year. But that would all change with the enclosure of the common land.

Across the country inclosure (*sic*) was enacted through a numerous individual acts exercised at a local level. The acts removed the right to graze animals across communal land and farmers were invited to lay claim to the land they tilled. A successful claim defined the areas a farmer owned and where he could graze animals. The certainty that the land you farmed today would be the land you farmed tomorrow resulted in many rural villages becoming a collection of farmyards along the length of a street.

The intention to enclose Bluntisham, Earith and Colne's common land was enacted in 1813. The commissioners announced they would walk the boundaries on the 18th of June and hold a meeting at the George Inn, Earith, to hear claims. They were also obliged to register all public and private roads and footpaths. They published their formal definitions of many of the roads and footpaths we use today on 6th January 1815. Colne Road was a forty foot wide route leading from the north east end of Bluntisham to the village of Colne. It became the highway along which those, who at a meeting called by the commissioners on 30th June 1820, were advised they had lodged successful claims over the common land.



Traced copy of the 1844 Tithe Map
Source - Huntingdon Record office

In 1843 a register and accompanying tithe map were created as a record of who owned the land and houses. The seven inhabited Colne Road locations shown on the 1843 tithe map

covered eleven habitable properties and can be related to today's properties as follows:- (Page numbers eg (p18) listed after each entry below is the 1843 register page where you find the entry for the owner of the areas of land marked on the 1844 tithe map).

Map ref. 358 equates to No. 2 Colne Road. It was known as the Rose & Crown Public House (p18) and was owned by Richard Hopkins and occupied by William Beldam who was both a farmer - in the 1861 census he was recorded farming 33 acres - and the publican. He ceased being the publican when, on 29th September 1877, an advertisement in the Peterborough Advertiser announced he was leaving the Crown and selling his furniture, effects and a first class spring cart and harness.

Map ref. 434 equates to No. 4 Colne Road and was described as a house and yard (p27) It was owned by Prentice Tebbutt and occupied by John Blackley Jnr.

Map ref. 435 equates to Nos. 8 & 10 Colne Road and was described to as a house and garden (p17) It was owned by John Godfrey and occupied by Reason Day.

Map ref. 267 equates to No. 1 Colne Road (Elmers End) and was listed as three cottages Yard and garden (p9). It was owned by James Butcher.

Map ref. 266 equates to No. 3 Colne Road and was described to as The George Public House and blacksmiths shop (p22) It was owned by Martin Robert Osborne and Alpress Osborne of St. Ives and occupied by Mary Butcher, the wife of James Butcher the registered occupant of the adjacent map ref 267, Elmers End.

Map ref. 265 equates to No. 5 Colne Road. It was a cottage yard and garden (p25) which was owned by William Smith and occupied by Joshua Beldam, who would go on to build No. 12 Colne Road.

Map ref. 264 equates to No. 7 Colne Road and was a house, close and two cottages (p15). It was owned by Stephen Feary who was also listed as owning lot 263, an area adjacent to his property which extended to 194 acres nil roods and 22 poles, at a tithe of seventy two pounds thirteen shillings and three pence.

The road was a boozy busy corner of the village, two of the properties were public houses and No. 3 Colne Road was home to the village blacksmiths shop. Apart from Elmers End, which was built with bricks, the properties were timber framed, thatched, wattle and daub, buildings, the majority of which were destined to disappear to make way for better built properties. There were cottage gardens along the road but, as yet, no farm yards, though that was about to change.

Victorian residential development 1837 - 1901

The 1844 tithe map confirmed that at the start of Victoria's reign in 1837 the only development along Colne Road was the cluster of properties already described.

In the absence of clear address information, no street numbers in the village in 1841, it can be difficult to verify who lived where in the village, especially when many of the properties have now been demolished and replaced. However, on the presumption that census returns were normally carried out by an enumerator walking along a road knocking on doors, a reasonable estimate of who lived where can be deduced. In the 1841 Bluntisham census the enumerator

recorded a sequence of five family groups living on Colne End but in the census there were a further three “*out-of-sinc*” references (*marked ?*) to residents residing at Colne End. Assuming these “*out-of-sinc*” listings arose because the enumerator came across the heads of household in other parts of the village and listed their families as he came across them, hence their reason for being “*out-of-sinc*”, we have a potential thirty-four residents living at seven locations along the road. All were local - that is born in the county. The number after each name is the individual’s given age. I have attempted, very tongue in cheek, to match the occupants to properties as we currently know them.

Colne Road residents in 1841 were:

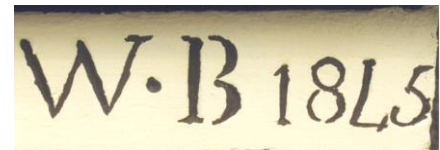
- No.2 Ann Gregory (69) head
 - Susan Gregory (45)
 - Ann Gregory (31) dress maker
- No. 4 John Wheatley (29) wheelwright
 - Elizabeth Wheatley (27)
- No. 1 John Butcher ((80) blacksmith
 - Mary Butcher (60)
 - Stephen Butcher (35)
- No. 3 John Baxter (30) smith’s apprentice
 - Mary Dockwra (30) dress maker
- ? Robert Tebbott (50) agricultural labourer
 - Elizabeth Tebbott (50)
- ? Phebe Herrington (49) agricultural labourer
 - Edward Herrington (13)
 - Phebe Herrington (10)
 - Mary Herrington (6)
 - James Herrington (5)
- No.5? Joshua Beldam (35) farmer
 - Catherine Beldam (45)
 - John Beldam (17)
 - Richard Beldam (11)
 - James Beldham (10)
 - Catherine Beldam (8)
 - Robert Beldam (60)
 - Thomas Webb (65) agricultural labourer
 - Thomas Webb (30) agricultural labourer
 - Mary Webb (20)
 - Ann Webb (9 mths)
- No. 7 James Butcher (30) blacksmith
 - Mary Butcher (30)
 - John Butcher (7)
 - Stephen Butcher (5)
 - Ann Butcher (3)
 - Charlotte Butcher (2)

Their absence from the census and tithe records, suggests Nos. 8 and 10 and No. 16, which sit in fields 435 and 437 on the tithe map, are contenders for the next properties to be built along the road, but which was built first?

Nos 8 and 10 remain an enigma. The tithe map shows a property existed on the site by 1843, but with only a single resident, so was it a single property. There was no evidence in the 1841 census that there were any residents on that part of Colne End, suggesting the site was either occupied by an empty property or it wasn't yet built. The exact date of construction for Nos. 8 and 10 and when they became two, rather than one property, is unknown. As they are of similar style to No. 16, which was built in 1845, it fits in that all three may have been built at around the same time, Nos. 8 and 10 circa 1842, to fit in with the tithe register entry, and No. 16 in 1845. For many years there was an outbuilding, also Victorian in style, alongside No 8. It was demolished in 2010 to provide off road car parking space.

The build date for Nos. 8 and 10 may be debatable, there is no doubt about the build date for number 16. In 1841, William Barrett, described as a gardener, lived with his 20 year old Bluntisham born wife Ann, in a property on Bluntisham East End (*East Street*). Field 437 known as Colne Way Pasture (p20) was owned by Edward and Henry Leeds and occupied, presumably rented, by Coxe the butcher. Coxe also rented lot 422, a house and garden on Woodend, and land at lots 421 and 439, which were located within the village boundary, and lot 551, a field located on Bluntisham Fen. The total land area farmed by Mr Coxe came to 41 acres 1 rood and 39 poles with a tithe rent of £15.16.03. The area farmed by William Barratt in 1843 was 13 acres 4 roods and 93 poles at a tithe of six pounds two shillings and a penny (£6.10 in today's money).

We can only imagine what it must have meant to William Barrett to be successful enough to be able to afford to purchase field 437 from Edward and Henry Leeds and build a home for his family.



Build date on a brick at No 16 Colne Road



Engraved bricks set into the front of No. 12 Colne Road

Suitably proud of his achievement, William marked the year he built his house by carving his initials and the date, 1845, into one of its bricks. He completed the creation of his farm by building a barn behind the house and thus a farmyard was born.

It was nearly thirty years before the next Colne Road property, Neasden House (No. 12 Colne Road) was built in field 436. In the tithe register the field was classified as garden and arable (p26), and was owned by Joseph Squires and tenanted by William Giles. A pair of bricks, inset into the front wall, each dated 28.5.1872, confirm the date of build. The initials JB and CB, confirm the home was built for Joshua and Catherine Beldam.

A long term resident of Colne Road, in 1844 Joshua Beldam was registered as the occupant of No. 5 Colne Road (plot 265 on the tithe map). In the 1871 census he was living in Horseshoe Cottage (No. 7) and was listed as a farmer of 200 acres, employing nine men and three boys. It was

probably Joshua who built the barn (*now demolished*) adjacent to Horseshoe cottage which, in a 1959 aerial shot of the village, was still present in the front garden of No. 9. Joshua was aged seventy when he built Neasden House and lived there until his death in 1883, after which the house was sold to James Lincoln, a retired metropolitan police officer, and his wife Elizabeth who, in turn, sold it to Mr Duggins, the village schoolmaster. In their minutes dated July 30th 1910, the school managers agreed to allow Mr Duggins to change his residence from the present teacher's house to the house he had recently purchased on Clone Road.

Despite the expansion in property numbers between 1841 and 1851, there was no proportionate increase in families living on Colne Road. Both censuses recorded ten families in residence. Exactly where they all lived was as unclear in the 1851 census as it was in the 1841 census, but it seems that in 1851 No. 1 had three habitable properties on the plot, No. 7, Horseshoe Cottage, was a row of three terraced thatched properties with an adjacent barn and No. 2 had two families registered at it. Nos. 8, 10 and 16 were the 'new' additions to the road. Two other properties were listed as uninhabited.

It would take a fire to introduce the next change to the road.

No. 1 Colne Road (*Elmers End*) has a Victorian frontage but some of the rear wall brickwork may date back to as early as sixteenth century Tudor. Originally a large plot, Elmers End garden was reduced in size in 1986 when two thirds of the garden was sold for building land. Two new build properties, facing onto East Street, were erected on the site.

Documents dated 23rd May 1821, detailing one of Elmers End's many changes of ownership, provides a history of previous ownership and an indication of how the plot would have looked in the early nineteenth century. In 1821 Bluntisham was known as the Manor of Bluntisham Stockings. In the document it was stated: *Francis Southwell of Bluntisham in the County of Huntingdon, cordwainer, a customary tenant of the said Manor, did surrender out of his hands into the hands of the Lords of the Manor, aforesaid, by the rod according to the custom of the said Manor, by the hand and acceptance of William Asplan the younger & Thomas Fisher two like customary tenants of the said Manor, all that messuage cottage or tenement situate standing and being in Bluntisham, aforesaid, with the barns, stables, yards, garden and appurtenances thereto belonging, now in the occupation of the said Francis Southwell and which said messuage or tenement and premises were formerly William Coles, since that, Samuel Thorpe who surrendered the same to Edward Fowler who, in and by his last will and testament, gave the same to his wife Sarah Fowler for the term of her natural life and from and after her decease he gave and devised the same unto his son James Fowler and his heirs, and to which said premises the said Francis Southwell has at a court held this day in and for the said Manor been admitted tenant in fee on the surrender of the said James Fowler'.*

Translated, Elmers End was under the copyhold ownership of the Diocese of Ely Cathedral who were the Lords of the Manor of Bluntisham Stockings until the copyhold ownership was transferred to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England in 1869. The above document confirmed that Frances Southwell, cordwainer (*the village shoemaker or cobbler*) took over the occupancy of the property from James Fowler who had come by it through inheritance from his father, but only after the death of his mother, who had a lifetime right to live in the property.

Over its life, Elmers End had many changes of owner, all of whom had to come before a duly convened court to be admitted as the tenant (owner) of the property, at an annual copyhold rent of four pence payable to the Diocese of Ely. In 1837, James Butcher, the village blacksmith, underwent a similar investigation and paid the then owner, David Bell, £180 for outhouse, outbuildings, barns, stables, orchards, yards and gardens '*which had, at some time, been divided into or used as several tenements and in 1837 was lately occupied by Thomas Webb, William Beldam, Robert Beldam and James Ivatt*'. The plot was a busy site and throughout most of the nineteenth century it must have been a noisy hive of industry, all of which came to an end in 1879 when a fire destroyed the majority of the buildings.



New Victorian bricks on the gable end wall, versus old original bricks for the rear wall at No.1 (Elmers End)

Following the fire, James Butcher was faced with the need to rebuild his family's home. He used the opportunity to clear away the barns, stables and other outbuildings and expand the house's footprint with the addition of a 'modern' Victorian extension, built onto the front, while retaining much of the rear section brickwork that survived the fire. He also took the opportunity to relocate his blacksmiths shop, previously housed behind No. 3 Colne Road, into a new building on the Elmers End plot (See 1888 OS map page 11).

To finance the rebuild, James arranged a mortgage of £200 with a lady called Ann Mann who, on James' death in 1885 became the beneficial owner of the property. Ann, whose father was Somersham's Relieving Officer (*responsible for assessing your needs if you were applying for parish poor relief*) lived out her life in London and never lived at Elmers End. Papers among the deeds on the property confirm that following James Butcher's death, the responsibility for Ann's mortgage passed from owner to owner, each in turn paying Ann interest at the rate of 5% on her capital sum until, eventually, one of the owners bought Ann out by re-mortgaging the property to Barclay's Bank in St Ives, after which Elmers End entered the main stream as a property that would, in future, change hands through conventional sale and purchase arrangements. In the interim, in 1918, Ann exercised her right under the 1892 Copyhold Act. She paid the Lords of the Manor £35 and bought them out of her need to pay them their annual copyhold rent of four pence. Thus ended the involvement of the Lords of the Manor in the ownership of Elmers End.

The next build, or more correctly, rebuild, appears to be No. 3. Nineteenth century census returns confirm that the plot occupied by No.3 was originally occupied by a collection of buildings which included the George Inn and the original blacksmith's forge. The inn was run by Mary Butcher while her husband James was the blacksmith. By 1881 Daniel Ward was the publican at the George, James Butcher was still the general smith. In 1891 there is no mention of either the George Inn, the Butchers, who had both died by 1890, or Daniel Ward.

The 1901 census is of little help in determining who lived in which properties on Colne Road. The Rose and Crown (*No. 2 Colne Road*) and Elmers End (*No. 1 Colne Road*) are listed as properties on East End (*East Street*) and it is difficult to establish if No. 3 existed as a habitable property, though other evidence suggests it was.

With the death of James and Mary Butcher, it has to be assumed that the buildings that comprised No. 3 Colne Road fell into disrepair and were cleared away. Two possible clues exist as to the year of build of the house that now sits on the site. The current number 3 was built using Warboys whites (*As were No. 10 on East Street and No. 7 on the High Street*). Records indicated Warboys brickworks originated in 1891 when Alfred Fuller procured the land, the source of the clay to make the bricks, and opened his brickworks in 1893. This suggests No. 3 was built after 1893. However, the 1888 OS map indicated there was a trig mark associated with the property. Currently carved into one of the bricks at the front of the house, it would



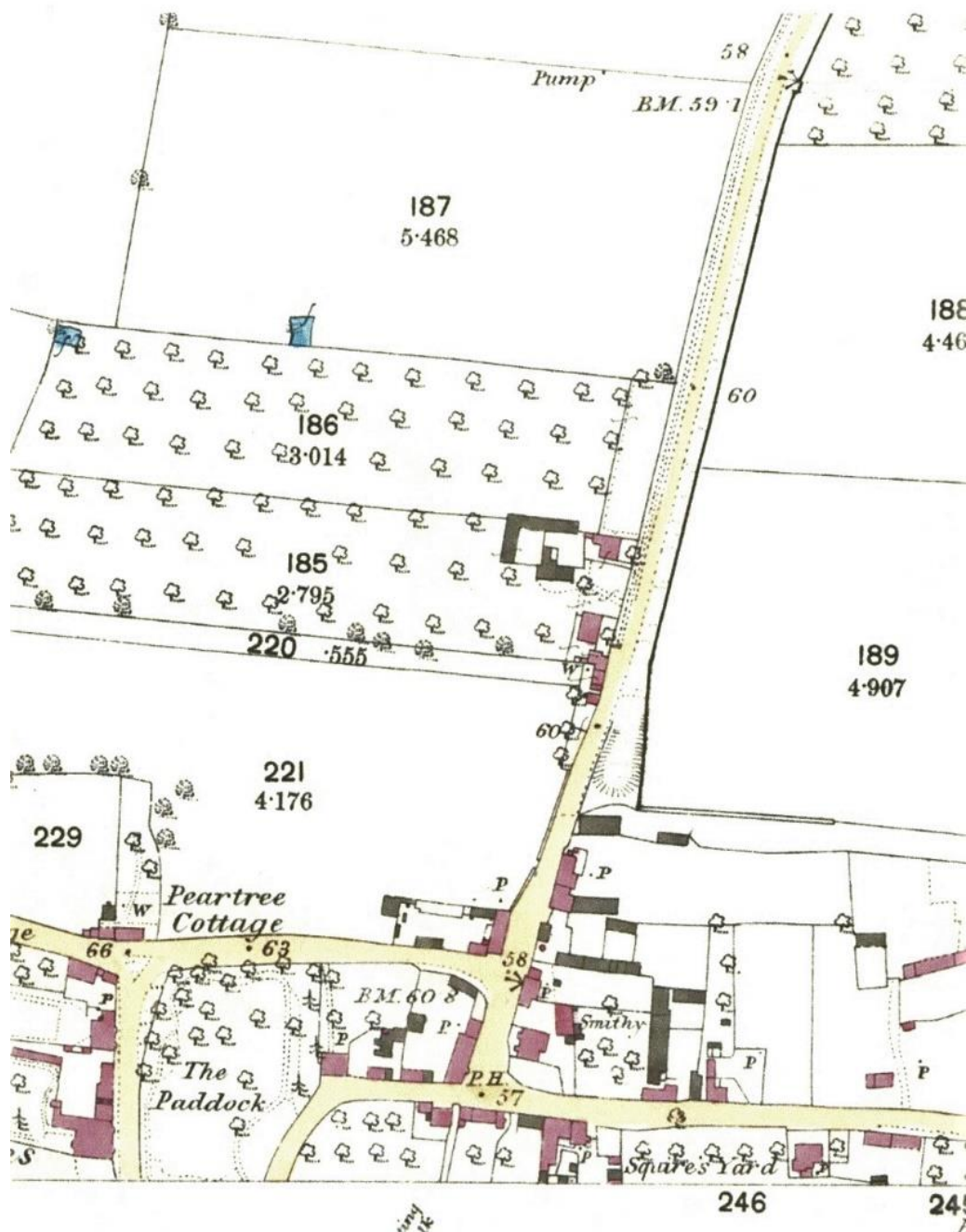
*The 58 feet above sea level trig mark on the wall of
No. 3 Colne Road*

be an odd thing to place a trig mark on a property that looked in need of renovation, which suggests the house had been built by 1888 and bricks were being produced at Warboys before Alfred Fuller procured the land and created the company. A more logical explanation may be that the trig mark on the 1888 OS map was secured in some other form and transferred, post 1893, to the new build.

Around 1920 No. 3 Colne Road became the village post office when Charles Searle, who had run the village's first village post office from a now demolished building on Block Hill (*where Sayers Court sits*) retired and Stanley Bitten was appointed postmaster. Winnifred Bitten, Stanley's daughter, married Jasper Purchas. When Stanley retired as postmaster (*circa 1955*), Jasper took over and relocated the post office to his house on the High Street, where it remained until its closure in 2002.

An Ordnance Survey map of 1888, detailing habitable properties in pink, and outbuildings in grey, provided a clear picture of the growth in property numbers along Colne Road. Starting at the junction with East Street and heading to Colne, on the left-hand side of the road were:

- No. 2, on the Colne Road East Street corner was The Rose and Crown public house.
- No. 4, at the junction with Short Lane. The home of John Wheatley, after whom Wheatley Crescent is named.
- Nos. 8 & 10. The semi-detached cottages we think were built in the 1840s. The freestanding pink rectangle at the village end of the properties, suggesting it was habitable, was the outbuilding knocked down in 2010. Could this have been the original habitable property that appeared for the first time on the 1844 tithe map?
- No. 12. Built in 1872 by Joshua & Catherine Beldham and originally known as Neasden House. In 1888 it was occupied by James and Elizabeth Lincoln. By 1911 the house had changed hands and was owned by Edward James Duggins, the local school master, and his wife Alice.



1888 OS Map – The Bluntisham end of Colne Road

- No. 16. Built in 1845. By 1888 William Barrett had built several outbuildings around his farmyard. The barn at the furthest end of the plot from Colne Road, with its original structural timbers and tile roof but renovated externally, is still in use, the others which were cattle sheds are all now demolished. The building on the Bluntisham side of the yard was the village abattoir which has also been demolished.

The right hand side of Colne Road, again beginning at East Street, was occupied by:

- No. 1 Elmers End. The new smithy is clearly marked.

- No. 3, with its frontage set tight on the road, with its trig mark indicating 58 feet above sea level, as it does today. There are several outbuildings, now all demolished, on the land between it and number seven.
- No. 7, Horseshoe Cottage has a now demolished outbuilding protruding out behind it.
- Beyond Horseshoe Cottage is a large barn, the remains of which were still there in 1959 but was removed in the 1960s. Cranford, which now occupies the plot was built behind the barn in 1950.

The last 19th century Victorian property to be built Colne Road, built just before Victoria's death in 1901, was No. 15, better known as Fairview. The house was built for William Pomfret who moved his family into their new home in time to be recorded in the 1901 census. William built the house to provide a family home adjacent to the orchard garden where his descendants were still caring for their fruit trees over a hundred years later.

If we include properties that we consider as being on Colne Road, but which in the 1901 census were listed as East End, then, despite four new builds and two rebuilds, there were still only 11 habitable properties and 11 families living along the Road. Just one more than at the start of the 19th century. At least they lived in larger less overcrowded properties than had been the experience of the road's earlier inhabitants.

1901 - 1914: Pre the First World War

Today we take piped water and sewage sanitation for granted, but that wasn't how village life always was. An OS map published in 1902 and peppered with the letter 'P.' and occasionally the letter 'W', tells us something about the village water supply at the start of the 20th century. In the absence of a piped supply, pumps and wells provided village residents with their domestic water. If you were lucky enough you had your pump or well by your back door, otherwise you accessed water at a communal village pump, such as the example that still exists by the Reading Room on the High Street.

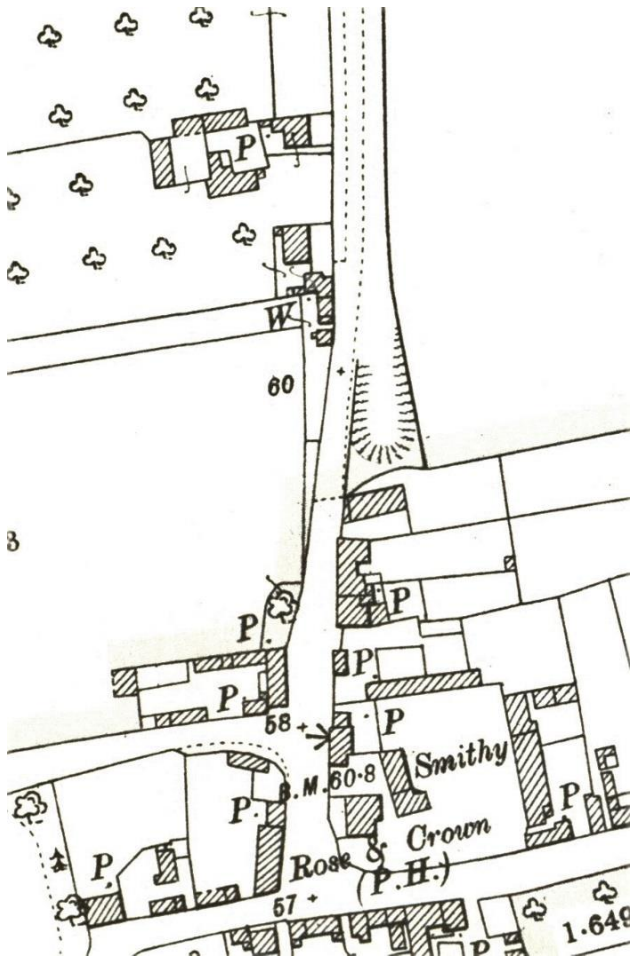
The village also lacked centralised sewage sanitation. Properties had privies, serviced by self-contained septic tanks. At No. 16 Colne Road the privy was in one of the farmyard outbuildings and the associated septic tank is still present under an area of lawn at the side of the house.



The water pump at the rear of No. 1 Colne Road

In the 19th century many Bluntisham properties had their own pumps.

Old photographs show a public pump was located on the side of Colne Road where No. 5 is built. Another of the village's public pumps is preserved on the High Street.



A comparison between the 1901 and 1911 census returns confirmed that while there had been a near 100% change in property occupation, there were no new builds during this era. The next new builds along the road wouldn't arrive until after the end of the First World War.

OS map of village end of Colne Road in 1902. With the exception of Fairview all of the properties on Colne Road were concentrated at its lower end. Many had their own water pump (letter P on the map.)

1918 - 1939: Between the wars



Circa 1930 - AD Godfrey at Wood Lodge

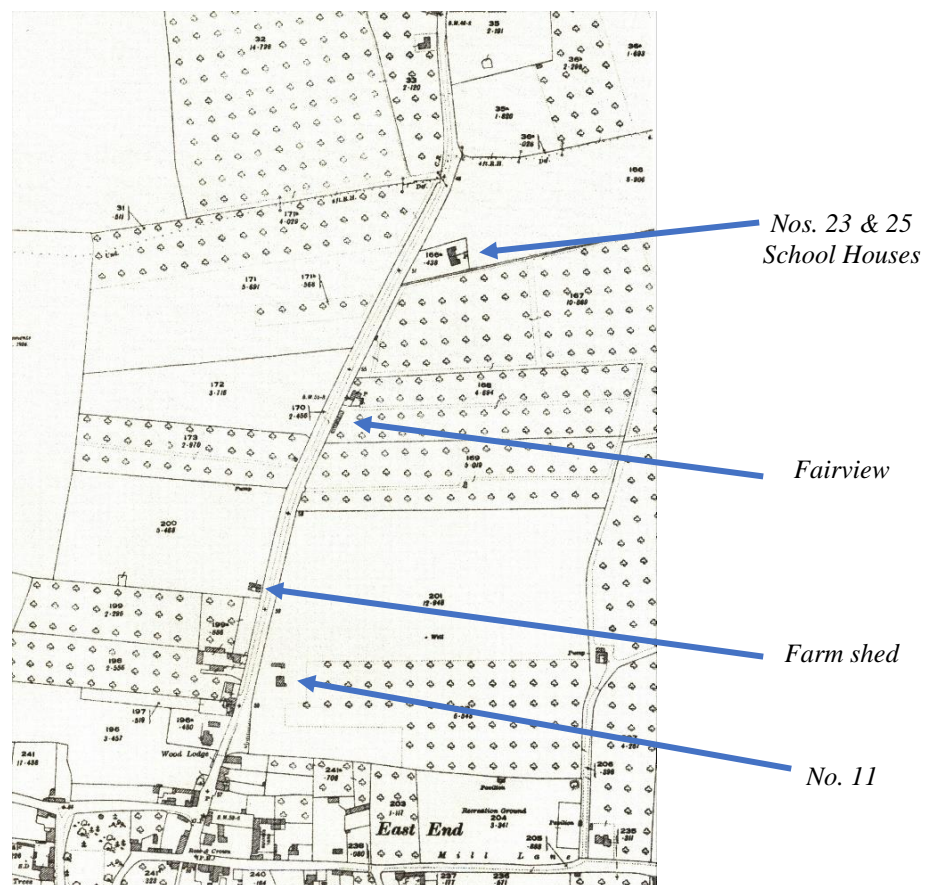
Following the cessation of hostilities in 1918, the next new property to appear on Colne Road was No. 6, Wood Lodge which wasn't so much a new build as a rebuild. Around 1920, Arthur D Godfrey, who farmed Wood Farm on Bluntisham Heath, handed over the day to day management of the farm to his son who lived in the Manor (No. 59 Woodend). Rather than live in isolation at the farm, Arthur decided to move into the village. Due to a shortage of building bricks, he demolished Wood Farm farmhouse and used the reclaimed bricks to rebuild his

home in its less isolated location.

In the School Managers' minutes' book an entry dated 8th November 1920 stated: *'The chairman had written to the Education Committee and it was understood that one of the two houses built by the*

Education Committee in this parish on the Colne Road would be available for a teacher if required'. The entry was preceded by reference to sale of a rented house (location unspecified) which had been rented by the education committee for use by a school master. Notice to quit had been served on the school managers and, as an answer to the headmaster's housing need, Huntingdonshire County Council decided to build a house for the teacher. The Council's original intention had been to purchase a plot of land in Colne but that was dropped in favour of a half-acre plot in Bluntisham which they purchased for £60 in June 1920 from a local farmer, James Bidwell Wright. By November 1920, Mr Wright's solicitors were writing to the Council complaining that the house had been built and their client hadn't yet received the conveyancing documents, let alone payment for his land, which was finally conveyed and paid for in February 1921.

Though always referred to in letters in the singular, the council actually built two houses, the semi-detached properties Nos 23 and 25 Colne Road. The school managers' minutes' record one of the properties was rented to Mr A Aspinall of Colne on the understanding he would vacate it if it was needed by a Bluntisham teacher, though that need never arose as Bluntisham's headmaster already lived at No.12 Colne Road and his successor, Mrs Christmas, lived at Longacres, No. 30 Colne Road, until her death in 1949. There is no evidence any teachers ever lived in the properties which became council houses until their sale to private owners in 1986.



OS map Colne Road (revised in 1924 published 1927)

New buildings to appear since the OS map of 1888 was published were: on the right hand side of the road No. 11, Fairview and. Nos. 23 and 25 which sit on the boundary with Colne and, on the left hand side of the road, a farm shed



1959 Aerial shot across Colne Road. Nos. 5, 6 (Wood Lodge), 9 (Cranford), & 11 Colne Road are the 20th century new builds. The old barn at No. 9 is still in place. Trees, recently planted by the parish, can be seen on the open green area opposite Wood Lodge. The area is now also occupied by a gas transfer station.

The farmhouse at No. 11 (*shown clearly in an aerial shot of the road taken in 1959*) was built pre 1924 to service a County Council smallholding. It has since been demolished and replaced with a 21st century new-build. Half of its orchard is now overbuilt with Sumerling Way with the balance gifted to the village to provide the land on which the village hall, football pitch and children's play area now stand. Nos 11, 23 and 25 Colne Road were first recorded on the Huntingdonshire OS map revised in 1924 (*but not printed until 1927*). The map also showed a significant increase in fruit orchards along the road. Travelling between Bluntisham and Colne must have been a picture when the blossom was on the trees.



*Indicating the year of build, a brick on the chimney of No. 28 has the initials **RG 1929** carved into it*

These developments were quickly followed by No. 30, Longacres, built in 1927, then another pair of semi-detached properties, Nos. 19 & 21, built in 1928 near to the parish boundary with Colne on farmland that had once belonged to William Beldam, former resident of No. 2 Colne Road (*the Rose and Crown*). The bungalow at No. 28 Colne Road was added in 1929. In 1939 this bungalow was known as Sunnymede, in contrast to No. 10 East Street known as Sunnymede (*without an 'a'*). Two phonetically similar house names in the same village would have been a challenge. Finally, in 1935, No. 17 Colne Road was built by the senior Pomfrets who had previously built Fairview. They had handed the management of the family orchard over to their son and were in need of a retirement home.

In anticipation of the dark warnings coming out of Europe, the 1941 census was brought forwards to 1939. This emergency census provided a snapshot of the road's residents, where they lived and their occupations and allowed the

Government to redirect people's skills to where they could be of greatest benefit in the war effort. In contrast to the 1841 census, which listed 16 residents and five occupied locations, there were now 67 people occupying 18 out of the 19 properties along the road. At the time of writing (*April 2021*) information for nine of the individuals living on Colne Road in 1939 was still redacted (*closed to public access*). To be un-redacted the individual has to be dead or at least 100 years of age.

The principal male occupations were associated with farming or building, though there were also a butcher, a builder who doubled up as the village undertaker (a not unusual relationship as many carpentry businesses combined coffin making with the task of being the undertaker) and the sub-postmaster, Stanley Bitten, living at No. 3.

The majority of women were categorised as doing "unpaid domestic duties", in short, ladies running the family home, but some had other careers such as Grace Christmas, village school headmistress, Winifred Bitten, a school teacher, Ethel Prior, a teaching assistant. There was also a shorthand typist and a news girl. The oldest resident along the road was retired builder Harry Hedley, born in 1851, and the youngest, schoolboy Graham Telfer, born 1924. The residents along Colne Road in 1939 were:

Left hand side

No. 2 formerly The Rose and Crown Empty

No. 4 Harry Headley (b.1851) builder retired

Emily Headley (b.1852) unpaid domestic duties

Herbert Headley (b.1880) building contractor & undertaker

No. 6 Wood Lodge David Arthur Godfrey (b.1860) farmer retired

Jane Emily Godfrey (b.1857) unpaid domestic duties

Margaret Boe (b.1899) nurse (private)

Irene L Laud née Chapman (b.1907) domestic servant

No.8 & 10 James Neal (b.1866) gardener

Alice Neal (b.1871) unpaid domestic duties

Margaret Telfer (b. ?) unpaid domestic duties

Winifred Cooper née Neal (b.1905) unpaid domestic duties

Graham F Telfer (b.1934) at school

John J Benton (b.1870) labourer in fruit orchard

Mary A Benton (b.1875) unpaid domestic duties

Frederick Pedley (b.1876) smallholder

+2 redacted

No. 12 Neasden House Harry Purchas (b.1886) Butcher shop keeper

Minnie R Purchas (b.1888) unpaid domestic duties

Jessie Purchas (b.1904) news agent

Geoffrey Purchas (b.1929) at school

+ 2 redacted

No. 16 The Hawthorns John William Laud (b.1876) farmer dairyman

Frances Elizabeth Laud (b.1877) unpaid domestic duties

Francis Laud (1909) management of farm tractor driver and cowman

Edward J Laud (b.1914) cowman

George Laud (b.1916) tractor [farm] driver

Thomas Laud (b.1919) manager fruit grower to widowed sister [Consuello

Squires]

David Laud (b.1922) cowman

No. 28 Sunnymead Hardingham R Goode (b.1900) fruit grower

Lilian M Goode (b.1899) unpaid domestic duties

No. 30 Longacres Thomas S Christmas (b.1888) farmer
Grace A Christmas (b.1891) headmistress of school
Amy E Wilson (b.1878) housekeeper
+ 1 redacted

Right hand side

No. 1 George James Ellwood (b.1883) blacksmith (heavy worker)
Elsie Georgina Ellwood (b.1889) unpaid domestic duties
No. 3 Stanley Bitten (b.1890) sub-postmaster
Ethel Bitten (b.1890) unpaid domestic duties
Winifred D Purchas née Bitten (b.1911) school teacher
Reginald S Bitten (1921) junior local government clerk
No. 7 Horseshoe Cottage Alfred Lewin (b.1876) retired farmer
George H Dawson (b.1873) retired farmer
No. 11 Consuello W Squires (b.1900) private means
No. 15 Fairview Louisa Pomfret (b.1863) private means
No. 17 Horace E Pomfret (b.1900) fruit and poultry farmer
Muriel Pomfret (b.1909) unpaid domestic duties
+ 1 redacted
No. 19 Ethel Prior (b.1906) supplementary schoolteacher
+ 2 redacted
Edgar H Small (b.1924) at school
No. 21 Arthur Aspinall (b.1874) farm labourer (heavy worker)
Edith C Aspinall (b.1879) unpaid domestic duties
Arthur R Aspinall (b.1912) builder carpenter
Edith Williams née Apinall (b.1916) domestic help
Daisy Jonson née Aspinall (b.1918) news girl
No. 23 Marjorie E Ely (b.1914) unpaid domestic duties
Arthur W Ely (b.1911) general foreman builder
No. 25 Ruth A Wells (b.1872) unpaid domestic duties
Arthur J Wells (b.1862) grocer retired
Percy Wells (b.1900) driller (ironworks for ladders and buildings)
Matilda K Kilby née Wells (b.1906) unpaid domestic duties
Gwendoline Dunning née Martin (b.1916) shorthand typist
Rosina Chandler (b.1862) unpaid domestic duties
+ 1 redacted

As the 1939 road's residents were either too old or young to take up arms, or were mainly in essential reserve occupations, none of Colne Road's residents went to war.

A post-war photograph taken circa 1945/46 at the junction of Short Lane and Colne Road shows a quiet village road. No. 3 was the village post office, the street lamp was still a gas lamp though, due to the blackout it probably hadn't been used for a long time. The various poles confirm that domestic telephones and electricity had reached the village, as had piped running water supplied from the first of the Bluntisham Heath water towers erected in 1937. With piped water on tap many of the wells were filled in and no-longer-needed water pumps, one of which can be seen behind the right hand derestriction sign, fell into disrepair. There were twenty-one habitable properties along Colne Road which was slowly being modernised.



Colne Road circa 1946: The water pump (behind the derestriction sign) and the gas street lamp are still in situ in front of a high wall, the remains of the now derelict property that had occupied the site. The young lad standing in front of the post box beside the door into the old post office was Norman (Joe) Gill. Born in the village in 1939, Joe guesses he was aged five/six when the photo was taken which helps date the photo to 1945/46. It was said Joe was waiting for the weekly delivery of Stapleton's ice cream to arrive to restock the ice cream freezer that sat just inside the entrance door.

1945 - 2000: After the Second World War

The end of the war and the need to house an expanding population was the trigger for more rapid change. One of the first was a simple, but revolutionary addition to the village, the arrival of the telephone kiosk outside the Rose and Crown. Not everybody could afford to have a phone in their home and the kiosk, located near the village post office at No. 3, put a rural community in contact with the outside world. The exact year the kiosk arrived is unknown, but the design is a K6 which was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott in 1935 to celebrate the coming coronation of George VI in 1936. The box remained in use for about fifty years before universal ownership of mobile phones spelt its death knell. Following its decommissioning around 2010 it was taken over by the parish council and was used to house a self-help village book exchange.



Colne Road circa early 1950s

Telephone kiosks didn't start appearing in rural locations until the development of the K6 model, designed to celebrate the 1936 coronation of George VI. The gas lamp, water pump and high wall beyond no. 3 are all gone.

Colne Road development continued with the addition of the first of Bluntisham's "feeder" estates, Presses Close, built circa 1950, and infill properties - Cranford, No. 9 Colne Road, built in 1950, followed by a bungalow known as Windy Ridge (No. 5 Colne Road) built by John A Searle for his sister Harriet Amy Searle. John also owned No. 3 Colne Road. The high brick wall, water pump and gas street lamp were removed to make way for Windyridge, while the speed derestriction signs, present in the 1945 photograph, have been moved further up the road to encompass the expanded village boundary. These changes help to date the photograph above to sometime in the early 1950s.

Further building along the road added No. 24, built in the early 1960s by the Tilbrooks, who had previously lived on the High Street. No. 24 changed hands for the first time in 2019 when its owner, Cicely Gathercole née Tilbrook had to go into care. The new owners converted it into a modern dormer bungalow and moved into their renovated property in 2021. No. 26 was added in 1967, the same year that the most significant addition to the road scene, the new village school, St Helen's, was opened. St Helen's replaced the old day school on the High Street, which had served the village since its opening in 1842.

Taken in 1971, an aerial photograph of Colne Road showed that the barn at No. 9 had been demolished. The trees by the gas station, planted some twelve years previously, were well established, No. 14 hadn't yet been built and the abattoir, presumably used by Coxe the butcher in 1844, had been turned into a storage shed. No. 16 had received the first of several makeovers that would change its internal layout and footprint. The chimneys hadn't yet gone but the front door had been moved from the front to its current location at the side of the house. Several fields, some of which had been William Barratt's farmland adjacent to 16 Colne Road, had been sold to provide land for The Poplars and Wheatley Crescent development which had been planned, but building work had not yet started.



1971 aerial shot across Colne Road.

In 1971 Colne Road was still a relatively rural route bordered by fields and orchards, but change was never far away. Main sewers had been laid onto parts of the village in the 1950s but the impending arrival of the Poplars estate and the St. Mary's Road housing estate with its access onto East Street, brought with it the need to further modernise how sewage was handled. The whole village moved from a system based on septic tanks to a centrally organised mains sewage system. One of the main sewage drains was laid along the centre of Colne Road.



Nos 10, 12, 14 and 16 Colne Road (June 1985)

Meanwhile, individual development continued to appear along the road with three new properties, Nos. 20 & 22 Colne Road and No. 2 The Poplars, which, although it doesn't front onto Colne Road, infills along the road between Nos. 22 and 24. Interestingly, there is no No. 18 Colne Road. It exists only as a possible infill gap between No. 16 and No. 20. No. 14, built

by 1972, replaced the village abattoir, and No. 6A, completed in 1976, was built by John and Pauline Anderson on land sold off by Wood Lodge. Other properties to appear on the right hand side of the road were the bungalows known as Gardenia, built in 1984 by Geoffrey and Rosemary Prior on the gooseberry farm land they owned adjacent to their former home No. 19, and Orchardside, also built in 1984. They filled in gaps between No. 17 and No.19. These new properties along with the extension of the Poplars/Wheatley Crescent estate with the addition of Maple Close (1987) followed in by The Sycamores (1993) increased the volume of traffic using the road.

At the end of the First World War the land on the right hand side of the road, the infill between No 9, Cranford and St Helens school, had been taken over to provide two County Council smallholdings run as two separately managed orchards until, in 1982, the smallholding with No. 11 built on it, was sold to the Latta family. Their daughter Jessica used the house to run her hairdressing and beauty salon business, while her father (*he farmed Bridge Farm on Holme Fen Drove, Colne*) cleared the orchard and farmed the land before eventually selling it on to the building company Wimpey Homes in 1994.

Wimpey Homes built Sumerling Way on the top half of the field and gifted the balance to the village. In 1997 they began to market their houses as Higham Field but, as shown on the earlier enclosure map, Higham Field related to a different part of the Parish. After suitable protest Wimpey Homes renamed their development Sumerling Way. One of the Sumerling Way properties was built to face onto Colne Road. Theoretically either No. 12a or possibly even No.13 Colne Road, though in theory the school held that privilege, the house has never formally been given a number and is known as Hartsfield. No.11 wasn't part of the original sale to Wimpey and Jessica Latta continued to run her business for a few more years before the house, with its large garden, was sold to Lumleys, a local Somersham building firm. Lumley demolished the old No. 11 and replaced it with two properties, the current No. 11, fronting onto Colne Road, and No. 60 Sumerling Way.



The demolition of the old farm house (No. 11 Colne Road) January 2006



*Erection of the two replacement houses
(The new No. 11 Colne Road and behind it No. Sumerling Way) September 2006*

The second County Council smallholding, adjacent to the school, was run as an orchard by Owen Abbot who lived elsewhere in the village. Owen's retirement as a fruit grower coincided with Latta's disposal of the land to Wimpey Homes and his smallholding reverted to the County Council. The parish took a lease on the land and, with Owen's orchard cleared, it was used to extend the park, providing the village with additional football pitches and dog recreation facilities.



Colne Road 2001 - St Helens School to Nos. 23 & 25

In 2001, Foxhollow and Ashmead were built creating further infill between the school and Fairview and No. 15, Greengables, built by the Pomfrets in 2015, has continued to erode the rural divide between Bluntisham and Colne. These additions add to the ribbon of property development that links Bluntisham and Colne, so that a stranger might be forgiven for wondering where one village ends and the other begins.

In 2019 a request to build a further feeder estate in the field opposite St Helen's School was turned down, though doubtless, it will only be a matter of time before the pressure for new homes will bring further estate

infill along the road (See Hunt's Post March 4th 2019). Whether or not the villages of Bluntisham Colne and Earith eventually become one "new town" is for future planners to decide.

Anomolies

Colne Road Bluntisham - Bluntisham Road Colne

For the purpose of this article, Colne Road was defined as the road beginning at the junction with East Street in Bluntisham up to, and stopping at, the village sign adjacent to the entrance drives into Nos. 23 & 25 which marks where you leave Bluntisham and enter Colne. It would be logical to think this marked the parish boundary between the villages. However, the parish boundary is within the bounds of Colne village (*See Appendix 4*). The parish boundary runs down the footpath adjacent to The Hollies where it crosses Bluntisham Road, Colne, and continues down the left hand side of Long Close farm Bungalow. This means there are three anomalous properties, Rosedale, Laurel Bungalow and Long Close Farm, that are in Bluntisham Parish but whose postal addresses are Bluntisham Road, Colne. One further confusion is a fourth property, Harvest House. The postal address transition between Bluntisham and Colne occurs at the village signs. However, Harvest House, whose entrance drive is located on Bluntisham Road, Colne, has a postal address, Colne Road Bluntisham.

Author

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16 Colne Road

November 2021

Appendix 1: Colne Road properties dating from pre 1800



No.2 Colne Road – Formerly the Rose and Crown - beam date 1592
(Renovated 1970s and given listed building status March 1976)



No.4 Colne Road – The Gables
(Given listed building status November 1982)



No.9 Colne Road – Horseshoe Cottage
(Given listed building status November 1982)

Appendix 2: Victorian Colne Road 1837 - 1901



Nos.8 & 10 – built circa 1840s



No.16 – built in 1845, extensions added 1987 & 1998



No.12 – built in 1872 rear extension added 1989



No.1 Elmers End - *Victorian front built 1880 onto a possible part Tudor rear*



No.3 formerly The George Inn and one time post office -
built circa 1886



No.15 Fairview - *built 1900, extended 2019*

Appendix 3: COLNE ROAD PROPERTIES - August 2021

Direction of travel – Bluntisham to Colne

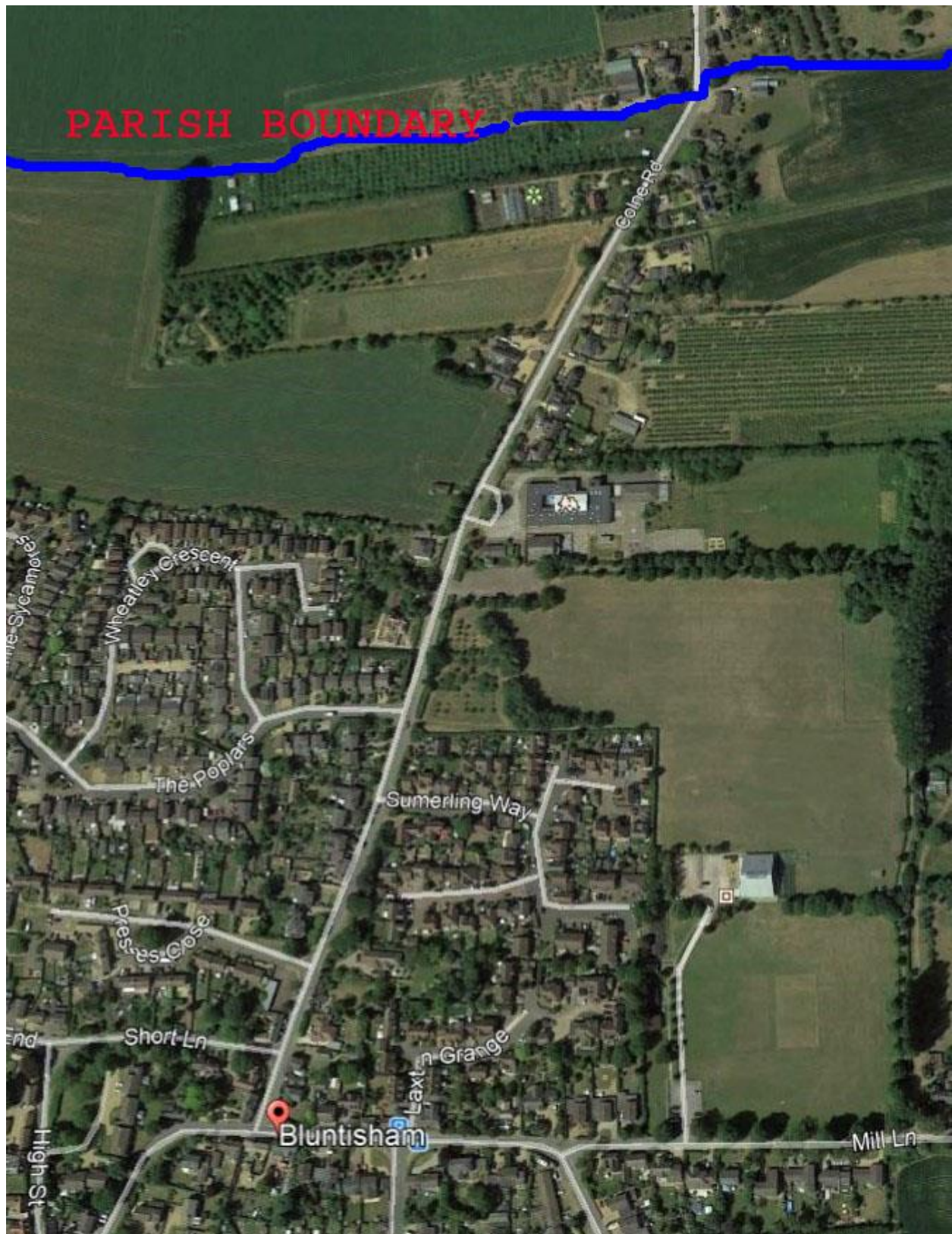
LEFT HAND SIDE OF ROAD

- No.2 Formerly The Rose and Crown, parts date from the 16th century
- No.4 The Gables 16th century
- No.6 Woodlodge erected 1925, previously Wood farm farmhouse on Bluntisham Heath
- No.6a Built 1976
- No.8 Built pre 1844
- No.10 Built pre 1844
- No.12 Formerly Neasden House built 1872
- No.14 Built 1974
- No.16 Hawthorn House variously also The Hawthorns and The Laburnums built 1845
- No.18 (There is no No. 18)
- No.20 Built 1974
- No.22 Built 1974
- No.24 Built circa 1960. Remodelled from a single story to a two story bungalow in 2020
- No.26 Built circa 1967
- No.28 Sunnymede built 1929
- No.30 Longacres built 1928
- Harvest House, Boundary Nursery built 2005

RIGHT HAND SIDE OF ROAD

- No.1 Elmers End dates from 16th century. Enlarged with a Victorian front in 1890
- No.3 Formerly the George Inn then the Post office built circa 1885
- No.5 Built circa 1950 formerly Windy Ridge)
- No.7 Horseshoe Cottage dates from 16th century
- No.9 Cranford built 1950
- No.11 Built 2009
- Hartsfield built 1994
- No.13 St. Helen's School opened 1967
- No.13a Foxhollow built 2001
- No.13b Ashmead built 2001
- No.15 Fairview built 1900 extended in 2019
- No.15a Greengables built 2015
- No.17 Built 1937
- No.17a Orchardside built 1983
- No. 17b Gardenia built 1984
- No.19 Built 1928
- No.21 Built 1928
- No.23 Built as a Local Education Authority school house 1920
- No.25 Built as an LEA school house 1920
- Rosedale Built 1970*
- Laurel Bungalow Built 1930s*
- Long Close Farm Built circa 1970*
- (These last three properties are all within Bluntisham parish, but have their postal address as Colne)*

Appendix 4: COLNE ROAD (Google Earth map 2021)



The parish and house address (postal) boundaries between Bluntisham and Colne don't coincide. Rosedale, Laurel Bungalow and Long Close Farm on the right-hand side of the road as you enter Colne lie within Bluntisham parish but their postal address is Colne. Harvest House on the left is in Bluntisham parish, has its entrance on the Colne side of the village sign but has a Bluntisham postal address.

