

## WEST HARLING: A VILLAGE AND ITS DISAPPEARANCE

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### *Summary*

*West Harling, Middle Harling and Harling Thorpe are deserted settlements close to the eastern edge of Breckland. By the time of Domesday they appear to have been in separate existence and they continued to thrive for most of the Medieval period. West Harling itself contained several streets and there were other streets, including Thorpe, which were detached. Manorial consolidation, by the sixteenth century, diminished the significance of the smaller settlements though they survived in some form until the final destruction of the main village. Though there may well have been some earlier decline, the settlements had disappeared, after changes of ownership, by about 1735.*

In the western part of the Civil Parish of Harling, in the remains of a small park and closely bordered by a plantation of conifers, stands All Saints' Church, West Harling. It is now almost entirely isolated; apart from a few cottages, the remnants of a former estate, there is no sign of the community which the church served. Of subsidiary settlements, a farm and cottages still bear the name of Middle Harling, while a few buildings at Thorpe Farm seem to represent Harling Thorpe. It is the design of this paper to attempt to determine the location of the settlements within the old parish of West Harling, and to ascertain the time and cause of their disappearance.

All the Harlings are situated on the gently sloping southern side of the valley of the Thet. West Harling church stands very close to the edge of the poorly drained valley floor, while the site of the vanished Middle Harling church is similar. The scant remains of a small building said to be a church<sup>1</sup> are on the very edge of a low terrace above the flood plain near Thorpe Farm. If these buildings were close to the former settlements, then these must have been on low terraces only just above what is still very wet ground.

There are some signs of early settlement in West Harling; the early Iron Age site at Micklemoor Hill has been excavated,<sup>2</sup> while Peddars Way forms the western boundary of the parish and another Roman road enters the area from Gasthorpe after crossing the Little Ouse and must have passed very close to the site of East Harling. A length of the Devil's Ditch still forms part of the eastern parish boundary and once served as a section of the boundary between East and West Harling.

The 'ingas' place names, though a subject of some controversy,<sup>3</sup> may be taken to signify relatively early Anglo-Saxon settlement, and there is mention of Harling in two wills of the eleventh century,<sup>4</sup> but the first full reference to these settlements is in Domesday<sup>5</sup> where they were all simply named 'Herlinga'. There are five separate entries; on the basis of information in Feudal Aids<sup>6</sup> two of these have been assigned to East Harling, one, an outlying berewick of Kenninghall, refers to West Harling, one to Middle Harling and the remaining one probably to Harling Thorpe. The western Harlings thus were distinct by 1086; it is tempting to see this group of places with a name in common as an example of the growth of daughter settlements from a parent.

By 1254 the Harlings were distinguished by name when in the Norwich Taxation<sup>7</sup> they were listed as East Harling, West Harling and Harling Media and from 1302 West and Middle Harling appeared in the lists of Feudal Aids up to and including that of 1428. Although the portion of West Harling held from the Abbot of St. Edmund is to be traced in all the lists it is not named (as Thorpe). The Thorpe site has been listed as a Deserted Medieval Village.<sup>8</sup>

West and Middle Harling appear in the taxation lists for 1334 and 1449.<sup>9</sup> In 1334 West Harling was assessed at 70/- and shared a position with Kenninghall just below the median value for the Hundred of Guiltcross while Middle Harling paid 40/- which was the lowest sum for the Hundred. In 1449 the two settlements had reduced assessments of 58/- and 35s. 8d. respectively, West Harling then being two places below the median, and Middle Harling paying the second smallest sum of the Hundred. Both reductions were substantial, West Harling's being one of 17.2%, the fourth largest of the Hundred, while that for Middle Harling was seventh largest. By comparison with the rest of the Hundred West Harling was of moderate size or prosperity only, but Guiltcross Hundred was one of environmental contrasts. The western portion lay in Breckland where the soils are light and less fertile, whilst the eastern part has heavier, richer soils and had been much enclosed by the end of the seventeenth century at least.<sup>10</sup> West Harling lies in the western part and thus, for Breckland, could well have been of average size. It compared favourably in these assessments with other Breckland villages in this and the neighbouring Hundred of Shropham.

Gradually the separate manors within West and Middle Harling came into the hands of one family. Feudal Aids show the families of de Furneaux, de Snitterton, de Hakeford (later de Sekford) and de Berdewell as holding lands there. The Berdewells, as outlined by Blomefield, eventually acquired all the manors save one. Middle Harling came to them through marriage with the Furneaux heiress. In the Frere MSS.<sup>11</sup> there are three charters which refer to Middle Harling at this time and which refer to the church of St. Andrew; in one of them a fold-course is also mentioned. The same collection<sup>12</sup> also contains notes of references to this church or its clergy, beginning in the year 1353 and ending in 1511-12. Its site lies to the south of the track leading from modern Middle Harling to West Harling church and is shown on the 1:25000 Ordnance Survey map; the site was still glebe land in the early eighteenth century.<sup>13</sup> When Sir Bassingbourn Gawdy purchased the remaining manor of Seckfords,<sup>14</sup> the consolidation of ownership was complete; administration of the whole would be from the hall which the Berdewells had built and which stood to the south-east of West Harling church. It is possible that this centralisation contributed to the decline of Middle Harling and other distinct settlement groups; it may be significant that Middle Harling church was abandoned in the sixteenth century.

Some impressions of these settlements at the close of the Medieval period can be gleaned from the Court Rolls of Berdewell's Manor<sup>15</sup> (included are some for Middle Harling) for the years 1483-1510; the entries contain references to crofts and tenements, streets and place-names, field names and other details of the landscape of those times.

Street names appear quite frequently in the Court Rolls: in 1497 John Catton 'de vico vocato Thrussemer' was fined for allowing his cows to stray into the demesne corn. This name appears elsewhere but it is only on this occasion that it was specifically called a street. The first reference to it was in 1483 when it was written Thursemer; all the other entries show it as Thrussemer except for two

later ones for 1508 and 1510 when it was written Thursmore. Similarly in 1491 mention was made of a cottage and an acre of land in the street called Churchsgate; later, in 1495, the name was written as Churchstrete. As 'gate' meant street these seem to be one and the same, yet in 1502 both Churchgate and 'Le Churchstrete in West Harling' appeared virtually together. A street called Upgate was mentioned in a Court Roll for West Harling of 1510; in 1501 in a Court Roll of Middle Harling mention was made of a rood of enclosed land in 'Uppegate Strete' which abutted southwards upon the King's highway in West Harling. It is possible that this street may have been the one which connected the two settlements, while Churchstreet must have been close to All Saints', West Harling. In an entry for Middle Harling in 1502 a man from East Harling was presented for trespass on the common of Middle Harling called Waterhouse Lane. Two other places within West Harling were called 'vicus' in the Rolls; Thorpe was described in this way in 1489, but there are also other occurrences of the name including Thorpefeld and Thorpecross (apparently also a field), various holdings stated to be in Thorpe and persons described as being from Thorpe. In 1495 a messuage and four pieces of land containing 5½ acres of arable lying in Thorpe were the subject of court proceedings; the bounds of this messuage were an enclosure to the west, the common stream to the east, some lands to the south and, towards the north, the common called Thorpe Fen. In an extract from a Court Roll of 1549<sup>16</sup> an acre of land was described as lying in Thorpe field in Harling abutting upon the street of Thorpe to the north. The other 'street' was Storkyse or Storkisey so described in 1495 when John Wattison of Thorpe was summoned for driving his cows unlawfully across demesne land to the common marsh in 'Storkisey Strete' suggesting the likely proximity of Thorpe and Storkisey. Several entries prove that Storkisey was not simply a road; in 1488 John Catton 'of Storkisey' was mentioned, in 1499 damage to a house called 'le Bakehouse' in Storkisey was recorded, while on other occasions a building called 'le Barne' and a grange or barn were said to be in Storkisey. Of the two, Thorpe is likely to have been on or close to the site of the present Thorpe Farm with Thorpe Fen representing the low-lying flood plain of the river. Blomefield, however, does record that an alternative name for one of the manors was East Thorpe because it lay east of the church and associated with it was a West Fen Common at Thorpe End, but the Thorpe name was also applied to West Thorpe and this name has been retained as Harling Thorpe. Storkisey, on evidence already noted, may have been close to Thorpe as named in the Rolls. As it seems likely that the various manorial holdings were thoroughly intermingled, it is not improbable that Berdewell's manor included lands at Thorpe which was the site of Seckford manor, still separate at that time. Blomefield himself suggested this when he stated that Seckford manor extended into all the Harlings.

A few field names or names of parts of fields occur in the Court Rolls — Stapilgate furlong, Shortlond, Costywong, Gyrlingflede, Gyteacrehyll, Gaase, Alysyerd, Cattyshyll, Upgate Close, Thorpecrosse, Hethes Medowe, le Brakes, le Doole, Butcloos, Maryotts Close, Whitecrosse, 'le ii Howes', Pykerell Close, and Tunstall, where rye was being grown in 1494. Hay and corn were otherwise the most frequently recorded crops though hemp was being grown since, in 1508, Peter Byby was before the court for placing his crop in the common stream to the detriment of many fish, and an acre of hempland was mentioned in 1503. The names Madercroft (1484) and Maderyerd (1486) may be of some significance, while references to 'Conyngcroft' and 'le Conynger Ende' indicate that rabbits may have been important in the economy. Animals featured in numerous

proceedings concerning trespass and damage; cows, oxen, cattle, pigs and horses being mentioned frequently. In addition the manorial dovehouse was referred to on one occasion and the manorial sheep flocks twice – on both occasions when the shepherds (John Lylley of Middle Harling and John Mortimer of Berdewell's) allowed their flocks to stray into the open fields.

Other features of the landscape of late Medieval times are also apparent; there are many references to enclosures with presentments for breaking down or for not mending or repairing fences or hedges. As these are named enclosures such as Pykerell Close, Yongmanne's Close or Frosts Yerd, they must have been permanent features. One meadow had a ditch or bank at its head, whilst another entry concerns a hedge and ditch or bank. Court appearances included those for cutting down or stripping trees, ashes, elms and 'popyll' (probably *Populus nigra*)<sup>17</sup> being named; some ashes cut down were growing between two tenements. Clearly this part of Breckland was far from being entirely treeless or hedgeless. There was a claypit and there are two references to a mill at Bridgham as various persons including a man from Lopham made illegal roads across demesne land to reach it. The improper removal of animals from the pound or pinfold is featured twice in the Court Rolls.

Some effort was being made to drain the marshy valley floor. In 1508 it was stipulated that all tenants of Berdewelles in West Harling, whether free or copyhold, were to join in cleaning out 'le Drayne' called 'a common lode' in the Westend which extended to Shadwell Lode as far as 'West close mydlest corner'. Shadwell lies to the west of Thorpe Farm outside the parish and these terms indicate a man-made cut rather than a natural stream.

The impression obtained from a study of these entries is that of normal village life and activity with no sign of decay; the ordered existence of an agricultural community continued with nothing more serious than the appearance of John Manning in 1549<sup>18</sup> for using malicious and slanderous language in accusing the lord's bailiff of corruption.

The Court Rolls and other documents show the persistence of many family names in West and Middle Harling; these include Canceler, Jeffrey, Watts, Catton, Hawen (or Haughyn), Lovell, Ederich (or Etheridge), Lulpecke, Sparke, Margerum Levold and Candeler. Various lists survive; for 1549 there is a rental<sup>19</sup> which gives eighteen names for West Harling and fourteen for Middle Harling besides the name of the rector, and Court Roll extracts provide four more. (It is this rental which makes mention of an enclosure called Mill Close suggesting that there was a mill somewhere in Middle Harling or, possibly, West Harling. A reference in a Court Roll for Berdewell's of 1486 makes indirect mention of a mill which may not have been the one stated elsewhere to be in Bridgham.) The Muster Returns for 1574 and 1577<sup>20</sup> show twenty-five and nineteen names respectively, Middle Harling not being treated separately; in comparison East Harling had forty-four and twenty-five names, and Attleborough seventy-nine and seventy-two. A Subsidy List of 1581<sup>21</sup> also exists with twelve names (four assessed for lands for the total sum of £3 and eight for goods for the total of £35.10s.) for West Harling and five for Middle Harling (four for lands for the total of £5.10s. and one for goods for £3). It is difficult to compare West and Middle Harling with other villages assessed for this subsidy because, although Sir Bassingbourn Gawdy's name appears in the list, no sum is entered against it. East Harling had six persons assessed for lands for the sum of £58 and five for goods at £25, Garboldisham had fourteen persons assessed for lands for £48.8s.4d. and thirteen for goods

for £63.10s., while Rushford with Shadwell, inside Breckland like West Harling, had only three persons listed for lands at £8 and none for goods. This suggests that West Harling was a place less prosperous than other settlements to the east of it but still retaining a fairly numerous population. Living at West Harling at this time was the parson William Nashe who, after some years at Lowestoft, had been presented to the living in 1573;<sup>22</sup> he was the father of Thomas Nashe<sup>23</sup> the pamphleteer, one of seven children by William's second wife Margaret, of whom three had died while the family was still at Lowestoft. Nashe's first wife, also named Margaret, had borne him a daughter, Mary. The Parish Register<sup>24</sup> of West Harling records the baptism of Elizabeth Nashe on the 3rd of May 1576, her burial on the 21st of November 1579, the baptism of John Atkynson, son of Thomas Atkynson and Mary (Nashe) his wife on the 5th of August 1582, the burial of Rebecka Nashe on the 17th of July 1583, and, finally, the burial of William Nashe, parson of West Harling, on the 24th of January 1587. Thomas must have spent some years in West Harling with his family, but there is no mention of the village in his writings.

It is notable that Middle Harling, despite the amalgamation of the parishes, the closing of its church and a common lordship, still retained something of a separate identity. The Court Rolls refer to the common of Middle Harling and entries mention individuals who were stated to hold lands in the fields of West Harling and Middle Harling. This situation persisted for some time. Blomefield<sup>25</sup> said of West Harling 'in 1603 there were 132 communicants in this parish and now there are about six or seven houses and sixty inhabitants'. This figure for 1603 was derived from the Norfolk Archdeaconry returns.<sup>26</sup> Of Middle Harling Blomefield recorded 'valued now with West Harling to the Land Tax, there being four houses and about thirty inhabitants'. The settlements could still be thought distinct; however, it is clear that the decline and virtual disappearance of the two places must have occurred between the beginning of the seventeenth century and 1739.

Fortunately, a substantial quantity of evidence survives for this interval. There is an Abstract of Court Books<sup>27</sup> for the years 1625-1733 for the Manor of Seckfords and Bardwell which gives information for these years and confirms details from the earliest documents. Street names occur throughout the Abstract and persist until the early years of the eighteenth century: Thursmore Street was recorded in 1625 and was mentioned in other entries, some of them concerning messuages, until 1719. A Town Street was also entered in 1625; it did not occur in the Court Rolls but it was probably in existence then. An entry for 1633 gives a holding called Burgeys in Town Street; this holding also appears in Court Roll entries as early as the 1490s. Town Street may then have had no name or been omitted from the entries. Less probably, this may even indicate a growth of the settlement by the seventeenth century. Other names common to the Rolls and the Abstract include Church Street in West Harling mentioned in 1631, also Churchgate (1706); however a Churchgate Street also appears for Middle Harling in 1726, adding a further complication to the picture. Thorpe Street figures frequently from 1650 onwards, while references to Storkisey were fairly evenly distributed in the years between 1627 and 1719. The name is in differing forms becoming variously Stockys, Storcy's, Storcy Street and Stocsy Way in the later years. The Abstract entries convey an impression of continued activity within the community: they include details of gardens, orchards and hemplands. Middle Harling common was still treated separately in 1649 when half an acre of pasture meadow and marsh on this common appeared in an entry.

A probate of a will (1619) of Robert Watts of Middle Harling<sup>28</sup> throws useful light on the community in the seventeenth century. Watts had two sons Levold and Robert, a daughter, Agnes, and a wife who was expecting another child. To this family he left his possessions; Levold was to receive his lands and tenements, freehold and copyhold, lying in the fields of West and Middle Harling; Robert was to have the lands and tenements in the town and fields of Hopton in Suffolk. Agnes was to receive £100 at £20 per annum, while another £100 was for the unborn child at £20 per annum after the age of six years. Levold was left a long table with two forms and the posted bedstead which furnished the parlour, Robert, a livery bedstead with turned pillars, and Agnes, also, a livery bedstead. The wife was to retain use of all these lands and goods until the children were of age. There were minor bequests to god-children and to servants, and a sum left to yield interest to maintain 'the gates of the streets of Middle Harling'. A Robert Watts of Middle Harling was assessed for £3 in goods in 1581, so this would appear to be typical of the wealthier established inhabitants.

Churchwardens' Accounts<sup>29</sup> for the earlier part of the seventeenth century give much other information about the village. Repairs to the church figure prominently in some and show the trade linkages of the parish. Extensive repairs made in 1626 involved the use of materials including lead, bricks, tiles, lime, sand, stones, wax, ochre, lampblack, resin and staging poles. The lead, bricks and lime came from Thetford,<sup>30</sup> staging poles from Bridgham and Banham and sand from Wretham. Other items in the Accounts give social, economic and topographical details. Rent was received for a number of lands; these included a piece called Pottbrigge, a piece by Sackford Hall Close (at Thorpe), and another plot at Thorpe. Another recurring item was a payment 'from Mr. Buxton for washing his sheep at Brydgham Bridge', Rent was also obtained from a piece called the Prangle which was meadow since, in 1625-6, Goodmen Reeve and Gylby paid for mowing it without licence. In 1622-3 money was received for the tops of some ash trees. Money was laid out for the repair of a bridge at Micklemorehill (or Michaelmere), the renewal of fencing for lands, the repair of a gate at Rosegate Lane and a sum was given to the brief for Virginia (1617-18); in the same year a small amount was spent on 'damming of the hempytt' and in 1625-6 'for the hempytt repaying'. Entries in the Abstract for the years between 1627 and 1636 contain references to hemplands and, indeed, these occur as late as 1719. The existence of a communal pit for the soaking of the hemp must mean that the crop was being cultivated, at least in the early seventeenth century, and that it was not just an obsolete field name. A communal hemp pit was in use in the 1570s in the nearby parish of Snetterton and hemplands are recorded in other villages in the area in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>31</sup> In the earlier years the Accounts showed receipts from 'the town of Myddle Harling for their charge towards the church' — another sign of the continuing identity of the smaller community. In these many and varied items the village is shown as a living place, its people engaged in harvesting, maintaining and repairing.

There survives a rate list for 1665<sup>32</sup> which shows items paid out of Sir William Gawdy's estate to the Royal Aid indicating, besides lands and stock, the charges payable on a number of tenements — Clarke's, Townsende on the Green, Shepherds at Thorpe; Mags, Ring by the Pound, 'the tenement by Sanders', and Potte tenement at Middle Harling. A similar rate was made by the chief inhabitants in 1666,<sup>33</sup> and besides those of Sir William, Bassingbourn and Charles Gawdy, it shows thirty names.

The Hearth Tax list<sup>34</sup> reveals twenty-eight households with a total of eighty hearths (twenty of them Sir John Gawdy's at Berdewell Hall) while there were three households with six hearths apiece. There were also four others with a total of six hearths shown as discharged. This list gives sixteen names which appeared on the 1666 rate list.

As late as 1695 a rate list<sup>35</sup> showed twenty-five names including that of Sir John Gawdy who was Assessed at £29, and Henry Cressener, the Rector, for £6.14s.; among a few other substantial payers was Levold Watts, almost certainly a descendant of Robert Watts. Although some new surnames appeared in this list, almost two-thirds are familiar and there seems to be no significant diminution of the community.

Some supporting documents give a glimpse of the manorial economy of West Harling; in 1698<sup>36</sup> the Gawdys were holding the manors of West Harling, Middle Harling, Sackfords and Bridgham with their appurtenances and six messuages, two gardens, two orchards, 1000 acres of land, 90 acres of meadow, 150 acres of pasture, ten acres of wood, 400 acres of heath and furze and the liberty of four foldages, but these included some holdings in East Harling, Roudham, Brettenham Rushford, Riddlesworth and Quidenham. A particular account<sup>37</sup> of the estates of the Gawdys shows that in West Harling they had over 47 acres of meadow, over 49 acres of pasture and over 93 acres of arable. The account included a woodyard, an orchard, a dove house, a garden house, barns, stables and outhouses with a hempland. Two farms, one valued at £14, the other at £70, were also listed, as well as Thorpe Shepherds house, Maggs tenement, Saunders tenement, Ashyard tenement and Middle Harling Shepherds house and a lime kiln. Significantly, there were three flocks of sheep; one of 406 at Thorpe, the Middle flock of 600 and the Middle Harling flock of 360.<sup>38</sup> (Some outlying farms in Bridgham and Gasthorpe, let to tenants, also carried substantial flocks.) The Parish Register<sup>39</sup> has entries up to about 1709 which include the word 'spinster' in a way which suggests an actual employment and not a mere convention: this was probably one economic support for the community, in keeping with the observation of Celia Fiennes who noted spinners and knitters in this area in 1698.<sup>40</sup> Although sheep had been part of the economy in earlier times, the seventeenth century had seen a real commitment to the keeping of flocks; in 1655 the Gawdys had three totalling 1585, and, in 1665, five flocks totalling 3112,<sup>41</sup> so that the 1366 sheep of the particular account, maintained entirely within West and Middle Harling, though a smaller number, can still be seen as an impressive quantity.

However, the Gawdy family was in some financial difficulty in their later years at West Harling;<sup>42</sup> wealth had been squandered in the pursuit of offices in County and Parliament, and the untimely death of Sir William Gawdy's heir meant that he was succeeded by Sir John who suffered from hereditary deafness and was incapable of speech. He was not in a position to conduct business as actively and profitably as his forbears. A decline in the profits from sheep in the last decades of the seventeenth century accentuated the financial troubles and these may well have prepared the way for the later disappearance of the settlement.

There are some signs of changes in the agricultural landscape revealed in the particular account already mentioned; the list of arable fields in the demesne shows that all save one were enclosed. The exception was a piece in the fields of Middle Harling called 'the Old Lays'. Of the two farms, the one valued least, which had been occupied by Woolledge, was said to be 'together with some lands late Silses'. A John Syll was in the 1695 list of rate payers. The other farm was in

the hands of Woolledge and was let. Certainly some enclosure and re-grouping of lands seems to have occurred. At some time, too, a deer park had been made as in 1704 venison from the park was sent to Witchingham,<sup>43</sup> emparking could have meant some alteration of the village landscape.

Sir Bassingbourn Gawdy died in 1723<sup>44</sup> and the estate was purchased by Joshua Draper, and he, in turn, soon sold it to Richard Gipps. It seems to have been these changes which brought an end to West and Middle Harling as they had been; even if the decay had begun in the last years of the Gawdys, now it was certainly accelerated. Draper demolished Berdewell Hall and began a replacement and this was still under construction when Gipps purchased the estate, afterwards completing the building. The documents relating to these events mention the Hall and other buildings and tenements in the same terms as the earlier ones. An Abstract of Title of Richard Croftes<sup>46</sup> makes reference to messuages or tenements with abuttals giving names of persons holding neighbouring lands, an entry detailing a transaction of 1729 concerns a messuage with a piece of garden lying opposite the churchyard with ground in the possession of John Margoram and J. Draper at its sides, thus showing that at least one and possibly two houses still stood near the church. Details are also given of the sale of copyhold by Elizabeth Cressener to Draper. This is an event associated with desertion of settlements – buying-in of copyhold by the lord of the manor.

Gipps' purchase of the estate was in 1731 and further clearance took place. In 1711 John Fuller was admitted<sup>47</sup> to a messuage with a building lying in Storcey Street and one acre of land in the fields; in 1733 absolute surrender of this was made to Gipps.<sup>48</sup> Fuller was described as a copyhold tenant and the surrender was made before the Steward, Robert Martin. The Abstract of Court Books<sup>49</sup> has entries showing that from 1731 to 1733 other absolute surrenders were made; Elizabeth Cressener surrendered a tenement called Nobbs in Church Street; others were made by Robert Woolledge, John Woolledge and Thomas and Maria Pilgrim. In 1731 Robert Elden of Fakenham Magna in Suffolk made surrender<sup>50</sup> of a messuage in West Harling with its barns, yards, hempland, croft grounds, commons and appurtenances with Gipps having immediate right of entry and management. A series of documents<sup>51</sup> covering the years 1656-1731 concerns a messuage with a building and three roods of land in Middle Harling; originally held by Thomas Parker, a miller, it came to the heir of William Pinner who sold to Gipps who then paid an outstanding mortgage. The Abstract of Title<sup>52</sup> shows that by 1738 there were 'Harling House', a blacksmith's shop, and messuages and tenements – or significantly, farms – called Stonehouse Farm, Middle Harling Farm and Thorpe Farm, farms which are still shown on modern maps.

Glebe Terriers<sup>53</sup> supply some topographical details of West Harling at the beginning of this period of change. The glebe lands lay in the fields in various shifts; for example seven acres in Thorpe Field lay in Maggs Shift, another piece lay in Whitecross Shift. The names of other shifts were Whitelaves, Churchcroft, Covensoven (or Goven Ovens), Lodgehill, Linge Close, Ugate, Nedshill (or Neadshill) in Middle Harling, and Storsey Shift. The last helps to confirm the area associated with this name; one piece of land in this shift abutted on Drove-way to the west. Faden's Map<sup>54</sup> (1797) shows the Peddars Way crossing the Thet at the Drove Way Ford, thus locating Storkisey (Storsey) in the west. Also named were various pieces of Infield including one called 'The Holmes' lying just to the west of East Harling common. Two roads were named, one called Raggate, the other Millway; mention was made also of the parsonage



house with orchard, garden and pasture of about three acres 'the greatest part whereof is exchang'd ground as it is said about one hundred years since' (1677 Terrier). The churchyard of Middle Harling was still glebe. In succeeding terriers the descriptions of lands remained virtually the same but by 1729 the number of landholders named in abuttals had decreased. By 1735 the abuttals mention only the Lord of the manor, reinforcing the evidence, already reviewed, that tenants were being displaced.

A Faculty of 1733<sup>5</sup> allowed the removal from the church of a southern aisle built of brick and stone; this was stated to have been formerly for the lord and his servants, but in Draper's time it was made the vestry which had then become superfluous as the church was large enough to hold many more than the existing parishioners. This again suggests change since the time of the Gawdys.

A document of 1737<sup>6</sup> relating to the proposed demolition of the chancel of the church contains further evidence. Draper had placed a wooden window in the east end and this had become broken and dilapidated; it was suggested that demolition was the best solution, since Gipps, 'having bought all the houses and estates in the parish of West and Middle Harling save one small cottage and a house lately built by him with design to be exchanged for the old parsonage house of West Harling hath reduced the number of dwelling houses therein'. A confirmatory endorsement bearing Gipps' name is appended to this; the petitioning rector was James Whalley. In 1743 a tripartite indenture<sup>5 7</sup> between the Bishop, the Rector and William Croftes, now lord of the manor, was made for the exchange of the old rectory for a new house with substantial outhouses, a barn, stabling for four horses, and a cow shed. In the description such revealing phrases as 'the late road from West Harling to Thetford', 'lands lately the common', show continuing change. Middle Harling churchyard was given in exchange for new glebe, and the Rector had previously had the right to put forty of his own sheep with each of the three demesne flocks. That Croftes was actively engaged in the remodelling of the landscape is borne out by an unsigned and undated eye-witness account of the destruction of the remains of Middle Harling church.<sup>5 8</sup> After the exchange Croftes used the mortar and rubble to build up and improve some low meadows and morasses nearby, scattering the bones from the graveyard over the surface.

A Faculty was granted in 1756<sup>5 9</sup> to demolish the spire of All Saints' and to rebuild the tower as they were unsafe. Permission to sell four cracked bells to raise funds was given as there were few parishioners, the principal ones other than Croftes being three farmers. A sketch of the church with its spire still exists.<sup>6 0</sup>

It is plain that the original settlements had been largely extinguished by about 1735 and that by 1750 other major changes had occurred to the landscape. The whole had been transformed into an estate. The development of the estate was to continue under subsequent owners; an agreement between Richard Croftes and a tenant farmer,<sup>6 1</sup> made about 1779, mentions the moving of the park pale, a new road from Bridgham to Gasthorpe, new fences, new plantations and a new gate and fence to the Gallop. A valuation made by Nathaniel Kent in 1795<sup>6 2</sup> describes three farms each with a flock of sheep, 1300 in all, and a landscape which included very large brecks; there were meadows and infield and some osiers had been planted on wet ground. Kent recommended for Stonehouse Farm: 'care should be taken not to suffer any more of the Heath to be broken up, as it would be of great injury to the Flock, on which the greatest Profit of the Farm depends'. This was the landscape which, in substance, survived until the early twentieth

century; the Hall was demolished in 1931 and subsequently a large proportion of the old parish of West Harling was covered by plantations of conifers. The Rectory was sold in 1925 and remains as the Dower House.

The cause of the destruction of the settlements appears, on the weight of the evidence and its timing, to be a matter of individual decision by a landowner or landowners rather than any change of other kinds. Although large-scale flock management was practised in the seventeenth century, with varying fortunes, this does not seem to have been the decisive factor.

The original pattern of settlement is less obvious. Apart from Middle Harling, West Harling certainly included at least two and possibly three inhabited areas, but their locations are not clear. Surface features have been obliterated, especially in the vicinity of All Saints' church where a park had been created. Part of the moat of Berdewell Hall remains and field walking in the vicinity of the church has produced pottery fragments including Saxo-Norman and Early Medieval items (Thetford, Stamford and Grimston wares together with more general material), and Late Medieval material as well as Post-Medieval glazed and stone wares. In the field just to the north-east of the moat ploughing has revealed large quantities of oyster shells<sup>63</sup> but the materials found freely on the surface seem largely modern. The site of Middle Harling church still yields bones. Some traces of buildings and a few fragments of early Post-Medieval pottery have been found near Paper Houses south of the track which leads from All Saints' church. Aerial photographs taken in 1946<sup>64</sup> show some features of unknown nature to the north-west of this church, one of them being an L-shaped depression containing water and obviously man-made. At Thorpe Farm aerial photography<sup>65</sup> shows features both to the east of the farm and, less certainly, to the west. Inspection of the site has revealed a well-marked depression of a linear form (probably a hollow way) from the farm to the site of two existing cottages, and re-appearing beyond them. Surface indications of what seem to be at least four crofts east of these cottages and two to the west of them are fairly definite. A range of pottery has been found there. The area to the west of the farm remains less distinct but two sherds of pottery have been found there. It is tempting to see the possible hollow way as Thorpe Street. A remaining problem is to decide the relationship of Middle Harling church site to the settlement it served as the modern Middle Harling is some distance from it. A programme of field walking may throw further light on this and other problems of detailed distribution within the parish, but much time and patience will be necessary.

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- <sup>1</sup>Norfolk Record Office (hereafter N.R.O.), PD 27/16.
- <sup>2</sup>J. G. D. Clark and C.I. Fell, 'The Early Iron Age site at Micklemoor Hill, West Harling, Norfolk, and its Pottery', *Proc. Prehist. Soc.*, XIX (1953), pp. 1-40.
- <sup>3</sup>J. M. Dodgson, 'The Significance of the Distribution of the English Place-Name in "-ingas, -inga" in South-east England', *Medieval Archaeol.* X (1966), pp. 1-20; P. Wade-Martins, 'The Origins of Rural Settlement in East Anglia' in P. J. Fowler (ed), *Recent Work in Rural Archaeology*, (1975), pp. 137-157.
- <sup>4</sup>C. R. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England*, (1966), pp. 92, 95.
- <sup>5</sup>A. H. Doubleday and W. Page (eds), *The Victoria History of the Counties of England, Norfolk* (1901/6), II, pp. 55, 74, 131, 146.
- <sup>6</sup>*Feudal Aids*, III (1905), pp. 441-2, 457, 530-1, 588, 648.
- <sup>7</sup>W. Hudson, 'The Norwich Taxation of 1254 so far as Relates to the Diocese of Norfolk and Norwich', *Norfolk Archaeology* XVII (1910) pp. 46-158.
- <sup>8</sup>K. J. Allison, 'The Lost Villages of Norfolk', *Norfolk Archaeology* XXXI (1955) pp. 116-62; see M. W. Beresford and J. G. Hurst, *Deserted Medieval Villages* (1971), pp. 195-7, for a more recent listing.
- <sup>9</sup>W. Hudson, 'The Assessment of the Townships of the County of Norfolk for the King's tenths and fifteenths as settled in 1334', *Norfolk Archaeology* XII (1895), pp. 243-97.
- <sup>10</sup>F. Blomefield, *History of Norfolk* (1739-75), I, p. 243.
- <sup>11</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society Deposit, K7(B).
- <sup>12</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., DS 594, 352 x 3.
- <sup>13</sup>N.R.O., West Harling Glebe Terriers.
- <sup>14</sup>Blomefield, I, pp. 199-213.
- <sup>15</sup>N.R.O., BRA 1225, T165A.
- <sup>16</sup>Cambridge University Library, (hereafter C.U.L.) Buxton MSS., Box 83, Bundle 80.
- <sup>17</sup>O. Rackham, *Trees and Woods in the British Landscape*, (1976), p. 37.
- <sup>18</sup>C.U.L., Buxton MSS., Box 83, Bundle 80.
- <sup>19</sup>C.U.L., Buxton MSS., Box 40.
- <sup>20</sup>H. L. Bradfer-Lawrence and P. Millican (eds), 'The Musters Returns for divers hundreds in the county of Norfolk 1569, 1572, 1574, and 1577'. Transcribed by M. A. Farrow, *Norfolk Record Soc.* VI, VII (1933-36), pp. 5, 149.
- <sup>21</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., DS 605, 352 x 3.
- <sup>22</sup>Blomefield, I, pp. 199-213.
- <sup>23</sup>R. B. McKerrow (ed), *The Works of Thomas Nashe*, (reprinted edition ed. F. P. Wilson), (1958), V, pp. 1-8.
- <sup>24</sup>N.R.O., PD 27/1.
- <sup>25</sup>Blomefield, I, pp. 199-213.
- <sup>26</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society Deposit, K7(B).
- <sup>27</sup>N.R.O., Duleep Singh DS 497. See also Historical MSS. Commission 10th Rept., App. 2 *Manuscripts of the family of Gawdy, formerly of Norfolk* (1885), Letter 680 for a reference to Thursmere Street in 1615.
- <sup>28</sup>N.R.O., Minor Collections I, East Harling Collection, BRA 328, 9/19, 113 x 1.
- <sup>29</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society Deposit, K7(B).
- <sup>30</sup>In the early eighteenth century Thetford served as head of navigation on the Little Ouse; see Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-7); see also an undated unsigned MS. describing the memorial stone of H. Cressener (d. 1720), later laid at W. Harling, lying on the waterfront at Thetford, N.R.O., Frere MSS. DS 594, 352 x 3; see also *Gawdy MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm.* (1885), Letter 1194, mentioning boats at Brandon.
- <sup>31</sup>H. Godwin, 'The Ancient Cultivation of Hemp', *Antiquity* (1967), 42, 137; A. J. Davison, 'Some Aspects of the Agrarian History of Hargham and Snetterton as revealed in the Buxton MSS.', *Norfolk Archaeology* XXXV (1972), 335-55; Great Hockham (1599) N.R.O., MS. 18713 34 x 6; Roudham (1674-9) N.R.O., BRA 1225 T165 A; also *Gawdy MSS. Hist. MSS. Comm.* (1885), Letter 1200.
- <sup>32</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society Deposit, K7(B).
- <sup>33</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society Deposit, K7(B).
- <sup>34</sup>Public Record Office, E 179/154/697.
- <sup>35</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society Deposit, K7(B).
- <sup>36</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6495. 6 D.4.
- <sup>37</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., DS 594, 352 x 3.
- <sup>38</sup>The date of this account is uncertain: a note on the back records that it was the particular of Sir John Gawdy and also of Sir Bassingbourn Gawdy; there is the date 1712 and the name of Peter Le Neve. See also *Gawdy MSS., Hist. MSS. Comm.* (1885), Letters 1188, 1200, 1210 and 1211 (which records 1278 sheep in 1669).
- <sup>39</sup>N.R.O., PD 27/2 - unfortunately now almost illegible; see also T. H. Bryant, *Norfolk Churches, The Hundred of Giltcross* (1901), p. 59.

<sup>40</sup>C. Morris (ed), *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (1947), P. 150. For other employment with sheep see *Gawdy MSS. Hist. MSS. Comm.* (1885), Letter 1121.

<sup>41</sup>K. J. Allison, 'Flock Management in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd Ser. XI (1958), pp. 98-112.

<sup>42</sup>C. D. Price, *The Gawdy's of West Harling, Norfolk: a study of education and social life in the seventeenth century.* (1950), M.A. Thesis, University College of Swansea, pp. 204, 258. I am indebted to this work for information contained in the ensuing paragraph.

<sup>43</sup>Price, p. 227.

<sup>44</sup>Blomefield, I, pp. 199-213.

<sup>45</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6760 6 F.2 BRA 63 and MS. 6687 6E.6 BRA 63.

<sup>46</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6687 6 E.6 BRA 63.

<sup>47</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6692 6 E.6 BRA 63.

<sup>48</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6703 6 E.6 BRA 63.

<sup>49</sup>N.R.O., Duleep Singh DS 497.

<sup>50</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6698 6 E.6 BRA 63.

<sup>51</sup>N.R.O., Minor Collections I, BRA 328/8/1-12, 112 x 6.

<sup>52</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6687 6 E.6 BRA 63.

<sup>53</sup>N.R.O., West Harling Glebe Terriers.

<sup>54</sup>*Norfolk Record Soc.* XLII (1975), Introduction by J.C. Barringer.

<sup>55</sup>N.R.O., PD 27/14.

<sup>56</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., DS 594, 352 x 3.

<sup>57</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6705 6 E.6 BRA 63.

<sup>58</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., DS 594, 352 x 3.

<sup>59</sup>N.R.O., PD 27/14.

<sup>60</sup>N.R.O., Frere MSS., DS 594, 352 x 3.

<sup>61</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6714.15.

<sup>62</sup>N.R.O., MS. 6722 6 E.7.

<sup>63</sup>Information supplied by Mr. C. C. Barker of Middle Farm, West Harling.

<sup>64</sup>Photo. Refs. CPE/UK/1801, 3154, 3155.

<sup>65</sup>Photo. Ref. CPE/UK/1801, 3149.