

A Brief History of Starston

This brief history of Starston was written by Roy Riches in 1969 and is reproduced here by kind permission of his daughter, Myra Payne

Foreword by the author

It was whilst recovering from an operation in this year of 1969 that I found time to write this small booklet about the beloved parish of mine, Starston. To obtain some information regarding the past, I have delved into several old books of reference at the Norfolk County Branch Library at Harleston, and much of the other details come from memories going back some 50 years. I thought that if I could make this presentable to the public, it might be held in posterity. As far as I know no one in recent years has attempted to print anything of the history and happenings of Starston.

STARSTON

Starston is situated in the South East corner of Norfolk, its southern boundary goes to within one mile of the River Waveney, which divides this part of Norfolk from Suffolk. For Electoral purposes we are in South Norfolk Division and for local government affairs such as Housing, Sewerage and old peoples welfare we are served by the Depwade Rural District Council whose offices are housed at what was the former district Workhouse at Pulham Market. This building is not now of course a Workhouse but a home for elderly people, and is known as Hill House Hospital.

Starston sends one representative to serve on that council and this office comes up every three years and if more than one person is nominated then an election is called, but as far as my own memory goes there have only been two such elections in the past fifty years. There has been a Parish Council since 1896 - seven parishioners serve on this council the Chairman and Vice Chairman being chosen from the seven elected. The Parish Council also appoint two members to serve as School Managers and four members serve as Charity Trustees. In recent years there has been a very active parish council, several minor improvements having been secured for the parish including two telephone kiosks, one sited in The Street, the other near Pillar-box corner on the Rushall Road.

Starston is mentioned in the Domesday Book and its earliest name recorded is Sterestuna or Steerstown, the latter probably reference to the raising of cattle or stores in the village, and if this is so then it can be said that the raising of cattle has been carried on ever since, many fine bullocks having been raised in my lifetime by Mr. Tubby of Starston Hall, Mr. J. B. Dimmock tenant farmer at Starston Place Farm and Mr. George Warnes of Grove Farm also Mr. George Algar of Poplar Farm.

In the year 1086 Starston was quite a small village being 1 mile and five furlongs long and five furlongs wide according to old maps and references, and the area covered was the northward end towards Starston Hall. As the years went by more

and more land came under cultivation and the boundaries of the village enlarged and at the present time (1969) the length of the village from South to North is four and a quarter miles and the greatest width one mile and a half, the present acreage under cultivation amounts to some 2,240.

Most of Starston is good agricultural land, loamy with a clay subsoil. The land has been used very much for corn growing and to a lesser extent sugar beet. In recent years a local firm of Rose Growers, Whartons by name, have been growing roses on the lighter lands nearer Harleston, and on fields that originally belonged to Beck Hall. These same roses find a ready market all over the country and if memory serve me right over one million were raised and sold in 1968. As land became cultivated so more land became in demand for houses and it is recorded that there was a large increase in the population in the years 1698 to 1798 going up from 215 to 381 and by 1877 the total had reached 510. When an informal census was taken in the year of Queen Victoria's Jubilee it was found that the population was 545. The purpose of the census was to find out how many people were likely to attend a village Fete to celebrate this event.

It appears that after this large increase in population there has been a steady decrease, particularly noted at the end of the 1914-18 war, the approximate population now is 337. The number of dwellings appear about the same, some having been pulled down but others have been built in their place. Starston has been blessed with some good landlords, the houses of the poorer people having been well maintained. The most likely reason for the drop in population is the fact that families now tend to be much smaller being around 2-4 whereas 50 years to 100 years ago families averaged 6-10.

THE BECK

One of the special features regarding the scenery of Starston is centred around the stream that passes through known as the Beck, the source of which I have seen which is from a wide ditch at Tivetshall Hall and by the time this stream reaches the Norwich to Ipswich main road it has become a constantly running stream running through a brick archway under the road there about a quarter mile the south side of Pulham crossroads. When next seen from a public road the stream has grown much larger. The point is near the old railway station at Pulham Market.

Along the whole of its length surplus water is fed into it from the uplands, and there are many minor streams and ditches leading to it and so it continues a winding course through the village of Pulham St. Mary and by the time it reaches Crossingford Bridge which is within a hundred yards of the Starston/Pulham St. Mary boundary it has become a stream capable of maintaining a quantity of coarse fish such as Roach, Dace, Gudgeon and Eels. A quarter of a mile towards Starston is a footpath on the south side of the road and in my boyhood days the beck was known as " Gowers Ford ", a wooden plank bridge was there to allow people to cross when the water was too high to ford. This footpath carries on through 'White House' farm yard and joins up with Cross Road near the Poplars Farm. Further along the road there is another footpath - this is near the Streamlet Farm, and once again a wooden plank bridge is provided, the footpath then continues through the farmyard of 'Yew

Tree Farm' on to cross roads, and so the beck rolls on to the first of four sluices which is situated near the Street.

The main reason why a sluice was erected at this spot was to hold the water at a certain height, the depth being a maximum 4 feet. About two feet down was a suction pipe with a cover over it, this in turn went to the well of the windmill which stands in the corner of Mill Field, quite close to the Beck. The purpose of this windmill was to pump water to a large tank placed on top of Starston Place house, which was the main supply of water for this very large house. Another large tank to be filled by this method was in the farmyard of 'The Home Farm', this tank always being kept full, as in those days there was never less than 200 head of milking cows and fattening bullocks, and besides this a very large herd of pigs were kept. Another use for this water was to maintain the level of water in the horse pond from an overflow pipe from the main tank.

In the days that I am writing about, there were never less than six plough teams at the farm, besides heavy horses for other farm jobs, about twenty in all. As readers will be well aware, the windmill was of no use during calm weather, so to overcome this Mr. Taylor had another pumping well in the centre of the meadow on the south side of Starston Place, this meadow being known as 'The Lawn', the water pumps were driven by a stationary oil engine. I myself was a junior gardener at Starston Place in those days and it often fell to my lot to start and stop the engine.

There was a large indicator on the wall at Starston Place which told when the tank was full, and on this reading would depend the starting and stopping of the engine. The same thing applied to the windmill, Mr. Lubbock, the head gardener in those days, used to say when the wind threatened to get up to gale force, "Boy, you are younger than me..." and off I had to go very quickly to put the brakes on the windmill, to prevent the sails being blown off or damaged. I can recall this happening twice, the most dangerous time being when the wind lay in the south west.

Another good use the sluice had was to hold up the water to a depth of 4 feet for a length of 200 yards and, with the excellent sandy bottom to the stream, this made a good place for bathing and swimming - most of the boys who attended Starston School learn't to swim in that spot. Woe betide the boy who ventured near the water and could not swim, or was afraid to go in, for promptly he would be set upon by the other boys and in he would go, clothes and all. Further down the Beck, some 300 yards was another sluice gate, this one being known as 'Barber's Sluice', due to the fact that a Mr. and Mrs. Barber kept the local Post Office situate just opposite. There was a shed nearby which was used as a stable and a cartshed. The pony in those days I remember was a white one and the cart was used as a carriers, making a trip into Harleston every day except Sundays, when the pony and cart were hired out to people who wanted to visit relatives in other villages. The usual fee for hire was 2/- per day. The sluice gate just mentioned was used to hold up the water in that particular stretch of meadows so that cows and horses grazing there had plenty of water to drink. The meadows on either side of the beck just here were farmed by a Mr. Palmer, and I recall he had a small dairy herd and three horses, and as often as not they were turned out on these same meadows.

Mr. Palmer was a bit wary of us boys and often used to turn us off the meadows, particularly if we happened to get too near his apple trees, as in those days there was a small orchard between the Beck and Beck Hall. Just below this point we come to a fairly modern iron bridge which spans the road taking traffic from the Pulham district to Harleston. Prior to 1825 there was only a ford in this spot with a wooden bridge for people on foot. Three hundred yards further down towards Redenhall which forms part of Harleston, was another sluice gate, and this one used to be operated by either the Rector of Starston or his gardener as meadows on either side were glebe land, and thus came under the Rector's supervision. The next sluice we came to was a mile further on, almost in Harleston, and this one was controlled by Mr. Taylor or the tenant of Starston Place Farm. Here yet again this sluice was regulated so as to provide the cattle grazing on the meadows with drinking water.

What memories this all recalls, I can think of those luscious meadows, and the beautiful summers we had then, and the many nice cattle grazing there, everything really looked a picture. I cannot leave writing about the Beck until I have told you about the many happy days and evenings I have spent there fishing. I recall the late Mr. William Aldis catching specimen fish here, Roach up to two pounds. I can also remember an old roadman called Brewer Snowling shooting a ten pound pike. Another happy memory is of wintertime and the skating that took place on the beck. This used to take place between the Redenhall sluice and Barber's sluice and thus took the skaters under the iron bridge. I can remember one such skater, a Mr. Frank Bailey, who did not duck soon enough and laid himself out, knocking his head so hard. So we leave the Beck and allow it to glide along for another four miles or so to its outfall in the river Waveney at Homersfield.

BUILDINGS IN STARSTON

Without a shadow of doubt the oldest and most historical building in Starston is of course the parish church of St. Margaret's. It is situated in a very commanding position in a well kept churchyard, which has been planted with many fine trees, in particular two very nice cedar trees, one of which was planted on the south side, the other on the north side of the church. The south wall of the Nave is Norman, and is reputed to have been built from 1150 AD to 1200 AD. Records tell that the main part of the church was erected about 1300 AD, the same time the present church tower was erected. The first Rector of Starston, according to Blomefields Register, was Robert De Beverley, who resigned in 1306, and he could well have been the first Rector of the new church. It does appear from the list of Starston Rectors that many prominent people have at one time or another been appointed as Rectors of Starston. One I think deserves special mention, and that is the Rev. William Whitear, who was appointed in 1803. At this period 1803 -1826, the poor of the villages were poor indeed, and often had to resort to fowl stealing and poaching to obtain the wherewithal to help bring up their large families of those days. There were no County or Rural Police in those days, most villages had an unpaid Village Constable appointed by the overseers of the Parish, so the poachers were often able to outwit him.

This was probably a good thing that the offenders were able to do this, for if caught for rabbiting, sheep stealing, wood stealing or taking linen from someone else's linen line, the sentence was death by hanging. Many districts of rural Norfolk formed groups of vigilantes in an effort to catch those unfortunate people, and one such group was formed, taking in some eighteen villages in and around the Harleston district, stretching from Hoxne to Hardwick and from Dickleburgh to Flixton, and this body included in its membership this village of Starston. They were known as 'Harleston Association'.

One such true story goes that it became known that a group of poachers were to visit the woods at Gawdy Hall, on the night of November 27th 1826, so the Committee decided to go out in force in an effort to catch the poachers. So on this very dark night, the armed party which included the Reverend William Whitear and a young man from Starston Hall called Thomas Pallont, proceeded to the woods with the others. In conditions so dark that it was made difficult to see friend from foe, a shooting incident took place, and both the Rev. Whitear and Thomas Pallont fell to the ground wounded, the latter losing a finger and thumb, the Rector more severely wounded in the chest, after some days his wounds proved fatal, and he passed away on December 10th. At the Thetford Assizes early in 1827, Thomas Pallont was charged with manslaughter, but was acquitted, the judge presiding reproved the whole party for using arms on such an occasion.

I have already mentioned one or two of the early Rectors, but I feel I must give a few details of some who lived and worked here in this last century. One of the most famous was the Rev. Angus Macdonald Hopper, who was appointed Rector of Starston in 1845 and remained in the village until his death in 1878. While he was here as Rector, he also became Archdeacon of Norwich, and was very active in the church life of the country. He was a great benefactor to the church at Starston, also to the village school. Archdeacon Hooper left a family of three sons and one daughter. In gratitude to their father's memory, they presented the church with its Brass Lectern which is still in use today.

The next Rector to be appointed was the Rev. Frederick Watson, and he served the parish from 1878 until 1887, when the Rev. Edmund Carles Hopper M.A. was appointed, he being a son of the former Rector, Archdeacon Hopper. He too, proved to be as greater benefactor as his father, and among his gifts to the church were the Lych Gates, the church clock and the present day font. No doubt he did many more kindly things for the church and the poor of the village. He was personally known to me and I can vouch for some of the good things he did for the parish. As a boy of nine years I had to go into hospital for a minor operation, and the Rector was kind enough to pay me a visit. I can still picture him as he came into the ward to see me, a very tall well built man, unfortunately in his later years he became very deaf. He took an active interest in the children and was our Sunday School teacher. He also visited the school every day for morning prayers, and inspected the register. He also was an Inspector of Religious knowledge, and used to go round all the local schools to test children on their religious knowledge. He was greatly mourned when he died in 1924. Other accomplishments were that he excelled as a bell ringer, also on the hand-bells and was a very good organist.

Starston has some very good and valuable plate, the most famous of which is the Silver Chalice, this once belonging to Archbishop Sancroft, who was Archbishop of Canterbury before he retired to live at Fressingfield. The chalice was given to St. Margaret's church in 1742 by his daughter Catherine, and this chalice is still used for Holy Communion.

It is a sad thought that the church attendance at Starston, as elsewhere has fallen off. It was in 1870 that St. Margaret's church had to be enlarged, and the north aisle was built due to the church not being large enough to hold all the people who wanted to attend. The present seating is some 250. The churchyard, as compared with many others in the district is well cared for, and there are many evergreens and ornamental trees as well as those two cedar trees already mentioned, which speaks well of the careful planting and maintenance by former Rectors and church wardens. The churchyard was enlarged in 1891, when the late Alfred Taylor made a gift of the bottom portion, now spoken of as the new churchyard.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL

The School at Starston was built in the year 1839. As the population of Starston increased, the school became too small for all the children who wished to attend, and at a cost of some £30 a further class-room was added, and again in 1877 the school was further enlarged at a cost of £53, both these amounts being paid by Archdeacon Angus Macdonald Hopper as mentioned previously. It is recorded that in 1888 there were 100 children attending the school, with an average of 90 pupils attending each day, and it appears that this number continued up to the time of the 1914-18 war period. One of the Headmasters mostly remembered was the late Mr. G. A. Bannister, who taught during the period 1900-1930. He was a native of Rugby, and brought with him his experience of town life, from which his pupils benefited. There were some bright boys and girls in the school who were helped considerably by this headmaster.

Mr. Bannister, also very interested in sport, led the cricket team and a famous football team which flourished during the 1920-24 period, and he was also secretary and chairman of the clubs. He was one of the first radicals to live in the village, and he was reprovved for smoking in view of the children, and for taking a drink in the local pub during his lunch break. Alas, now the school is closed, and up for sale at the moment. There are several reasons for the closure, the main one being that there are not enough children living in the village. Families are now very small compared to the time when the school was in its heyday. The school has of recent years been used as a primary school, thus children reaching 11 years have been going on to Redenhall with Harleston Secondary School.

CHARITIES

The main charity in Starston is known as 'The Starston Charity' Trust, and is registered with the Charity Commissioners with reference No. 206033. The money brought in is derived from the letting of land which is situated in the north end of the parish. The land in question extends to some 14 acres and is let by tender, the present tenant, Mr. Norton Moore paying £5 per acre, as opposed to a rent some twenty years ago of 10/- per acre. Prior to 1865, the parish of Starston had several small pieces of land, the income from which went towards the relief of the poor of the parish. In that same year, these pieces of land were sold and together with a donation of £25 collected in the parish, and £70 from the Davies Charity, the total sum of £375 was spent on the Charity land.

There was a Tithe charge on the land, but in 1961 the charity Trustees redeemed this by payment of a lump sum, so this land is now Tithe free.

There is also a small rent charge levied on Laurel Farm which brings in £1, and is known as Cuttings Annuity, and this amount is paid to the Charity Trustees each year. There is a Clause in the Charity Account which states that the sum of £4 shall be paid to the Managers of the village school, the money to be spent on the children for educational purposes. As previously mentioned, the village school is now closed, so the £4 is now sent to the Managers of Redenhall Primary School, where all Starston children attend, the money to be spent for the same objects.

When Starston School finally closed in 1968, there were only sixteen children attending. Before 1905, when the school became state assisted, the £4 mentioned was used to pay the rent of the School House which stands next to the school. Yet another charity that the residents benefit from comes from what is known as 'The Titlow Trust', this coming from the estate of the Rev. Samuel Titlow, a former resident of Starston who died in 1871. This money is used to assist boys when they commence work, and goes towards apprenticeships. The Trust so works that Starston gets one payment every sixth year. Redenhall with Harleston gets four turns in payment, and one turn goes to the payment of upkeep of graves in Redenhall churchyard, and also for bedding and clothing for the aged and sick.

The Cutting Annuity came from the estate of John Smith, a butcher at Harleston and one time resident of Starston. He died in 1850, and it does appear that he must have been the owner of Laurel Farm at one time.

THE WAVENEY VALLEY RAILWAY

The construction of the Waveney Valley line created much interest in 1856, when the section between Tivetshall and Harleston was constructed.

There were stations at Pulham Market and Pulham St. Mary, even Starston boasted of a station, as the trains used to stop to drop and pick up passengers. This practice was in operation from 1856 until 1866. It has been said that one of the conditions the Starston landowners insisted on, before giving consent to the Company to construct the railway, was that no trains should run on a Sunday, but with the coming of the

1914 war this ruling went by the board, as troop trains very often moved along the line. Also, with the creation of the Pulham Air Station, much of the stores and materials were carried on a loop line connected with the Air Station. The railway did a steady trade, and in 1860 the line was extended from Harleston to Bungay. In 1863 it went a few miles further to Beccles. With the coming of motor transport however, the amount of business done by the railways declined, and eventually the passenger service was withdrawn in 1953. The line was finally closed in 1966 when the Goods trains ceased to run. As a matter of interest, it was possible to travel from Harleston to Norwich on a Saturday for 2/- return fare in 1938, and excursion trips were run to Liverpool St., London for a return fare of £1 on a Sunday. The railway line was washed away at Homersfield in the 1912 flood, and a shuttle bus service was operated between Harleston and Beccles.

HOUSES IN STARSTON

The largest house in Starston until recently, was known as 'Starston Place', occupied by the Taylor family. The original house was demolished just after the second world war, and a smaller house was built, which is still known as 'Starston Place', and occupied by Mrs. Lombe Taylor. It is established that a house has stood on this site since 1235, but the earliest date mentioned of 'Starston Place' is given as 1878, when a General Clay was the owner. It came into the possession of the Taylor family in 1824 when a Mr. Taylor of Diss purchased it, and was known as 'Bressingham House', the owner having some connection with the village of that name which is situated just outside Diss. Other large houses still occupied include 'Grove Hill' built in 1849, 'Conifer Hill', built in 1881 and 'Beck Hall', the latter first mentioned in 1296.

'Gunshaw Hall' is another house, which stands partly in Needham and partly in Starston, it is said that the boundary of the two villages runs exactly through the middle of the house. Until the year 1836 when the Pulham Workhouse was built, every village had its own Poor House, and the first recorded one stood in what is known as the Church Pightle, this was where the unfortunate poor of Starston were put, usually when they were in a very distressed state. However, with coming of the poor law, Authorities built another house by the side of the Pulham Road, and this became the village workhouse, and until quite recently this house was known by the older residents as Workhouse Cottages. During the last few years, this house has become the home of farm workers employed at Starston Place Farm, and was occupied by three families at one time, being known as Stone Cottages. In 1836, it was decided to put all the poor of the district into one building, and Pulham Workhouse standing by the side of the Ipswich to Norwich road was completed. This was a very large building, with accommodation for 500 inmates. In consequence, village workhouses were done away with. Another of these workhouses is still standing at Pulham St. Mary, and known as Workhouse Cottages, they stand on South Green, and like Starston Cottages, these too are now used as ordinary residences.

In common with many other agricultural villages, Starston had its fair share of poor people, and the Overseers often had distressing cases on their hands to deal with. I record some entries taken from the Towne Booke between 1622 and 1670.

- Given to Ricard Baker in time of sickness 2s 0d
- Paid to Zacary Wooding for shoes 2s. 4d
- Paid to William Fuller for digging widows grave 1s. 0d
- Paid out to Zacary Wooding pair of britches for him 3s. 4d
- Paid out for Goodwyfe Baker for washing Zacary Wooding 6s. 0d.

Also taken from the Churchwardens Book show that Starston was a fairly lively place in many respects.

- 1686 Clerks wages £1 4s 0d
- 1687 For washing surplices 2s 0d.
- 1689 Paid out for Fox killing 1s 0d
- 1689 Paid out to poor man burnt by lightning 6s.0d
- 1690 Given to poor man undone by fire 9s 0d
- 1692 Given to man burnt by thunder and lightning 6s 0d
- 1699 Given to ringers at Gunpowder Plot 2s 6d.
- 1709 Given to sick soldier passing through 2s 0d
- 1731 Removing Goodey Masting to Towne House 4s 0d
- 1744 Paid for 137 doz. sparrows at 3d a doz. £1 14s 3d
- 1772 Paid for a clause in Mr. Davis Will 2s 6d
- 1795 Gave Alburgh singers 2s 6d
- 1825 Workhouse built £420 0s 0d
- 1840 Paid for ringing bells at Queens wedding 10s 0d

VILLAGE LIFE AND ACTIVITIES

Village life in Starston today is very quiet, compared with the activity that used to go on some 50 years ago. Now that the school is closed, no longer do we hear the happy laughter of the children at play, and no more can you hear the children's voices wafting on the breeze, as they take their singing lessons in the school. So far as country games were concerned, Starston children were always well to the fore. After the usual winter pleasures of snowballing, sliding, skating on the Beck and tobogganing on Sand Pit Meadows, the next sport was running with hoops. These round steel hopes were made by the village blacksmith Mr. William Aldis, who had a smithy situated at the end of the Street. These hoops were made from 3/8th. steel, and with a steel chrome to guide them these could be supplied for 1/6d. As spring advanced, the next game was top spinning, and this usually took place in the Street. There were not many motor cars to worry you then. The boys became quite expert at this game, and the smaller type of top which had a hobnail in its base, was known as the Flying Dutchman, using a short piece of stick with string tied to the end, it was possible to spin these tops in the air some thirty to forty yards, the top still continuing to spin on landing. There was also a larger and much slower type of top, this one being known as a Waggon Wheel. As summer came along, marbles was the game to play, and marbles could then be purchased for sixteen a penny. One method of playing was to make a hole in the ground, usually the playground, and trying to get

your marbles in the hole with as least hits as possible, using the forefinger crooked to propel the marble.

As briefly stated on a previous page, Starston in the 1920's boasted of a football team that could hold there own with most of the amateur clubs in the district. Of the team, only Alec Gower, the Captain and centre-half, and Oily Wisken the centre-forward, now live in the district.

Another of the village institutions to close in recent years was the Public House, and ours was known as 'The Gate Inn', and was situated near the school. Many travellers used to call there for refreshments, and it was a social centre for the village, when all the leading topics of the week would be discussed. This talk usually centred around what crops were growing, and garden produce, when gardeners used to compete with each other for size of produce, often descriptions were far from the truth. Ten years before the 'Gate' was closed, there used to be a wonderful Walnut tree growing in front of the pub, and high up in its branches was a sign hanging which read:

"This Gate hangs high and hinders none - Refresh and pay and travel on".

But alas, the walnut tree became old and began to rot, so down it had to come and with it, the sign also. The Brewers then had a miniature gate made, and this was fixed to the front of the building, the inscription slightly altered, read:

"This Gate hangs well - refresh and pay and travel on".

I would also point out that the nuts on this particular tree were very good, and tasted far better than those bought in the shops. Incidentally, we boys used to get in trouble frequently for throwing wooden cudgels into the branches of the tree, in an effort to bring the nuts down, those people living nearby being afraid for their windows. For a great number of years The Gate Inn was kept by a Mr. and Mrs. Osborne, and they lived there up to a few years before its final closure. In addition to his being landlord of the pub, Mr. Osborne was also a fishmonger, he used to travel the countryside using a pony and cart, and he became renowned for the quality of his herrings and bloaters, which he used to cure himself, these were always smoked in his drying sheds, and he would use nothing other than oak to cure them with, and when he selected the herring for smoking, they always had to be prime ones, with lovely fat roes.

Under the heading of "*The Dying Villages of the Countryside*" there has recently been many letters in the press, and Starston could well be described as one of them. As I have already pointed out, the population of Starston has declined from 545 in the year 1877 to 337 in 1970.

There are several reasons for this, one being that there has been little development in house building, particularly since the end of the second world war. Many village people today are elderly and more young people tend to move away where there are new houses and better amenities. One other factor is the decline in the number of men employed in agriculture.

As farms became more mechanised fewer men were needed to work on the land, so in consequence the men now have to travel further afield to find other work. With these conditions prevailing, the village is steadily losing many of its institutions, which have been with us many years.

The village windmill which used to grind the corn is gone, the Public House is gone, the school is closed, and the village Blacksmith's Shop is closed too, and at the time of writing it does appear that we may lose our Rector and the Rectory, as the Church Authorities are now placing as many as three parishes together under one parson.

I should like to end my history of Starston with a poem by Oliver Goldsmith, entitled "*The Deserted Village*".

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey
Where wealth accumulates and men decay;
Princes and Lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, As a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied
A time there was, ere England's griefs began,
When every rood of ground maintained its man
For him light labour spread her wholesome store
Just gave what life required, but gave no more;
His best companions, innocence and health
And his best riches, ignorance of wealth.

Roy Riches. Starston, Norfolk, 1969

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