

## A Social History of Cropwell Butler

**Introduction** Attempting to sketch a social history of Cropwell Butler over almost 1000 years presents problems. Information about small settlements in medieval England is scarce and in the early centuries this is generally limited to the ownership of land and property. The two great local powers were the church and the secular landowners. Ecclesiastical parishes were established by law in Saxon times, and Tythby and Cropwell Butler and the small settlement at Wiverton Hall have been a single parish since the earliest days. After about 1600 more historical detail is available but it is not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that Cropwell Butler becomes more recognisable as the earlier version of today's village.

Some readers may wish to take in the broad sweep of early English history as it affected the village. It is mercifully short. Others will prefer to focus on later and more local events wanting to visualise houses, highways and facilities the day before yesterday, as it were. The account then is divided into three parts and any one part may be read without reference to the others, but Part Three may attract the greatest interest for those enquiring about recent social history.



**The Millennium Village Sign, it shows rural scenes for Cropwell Butler**

## Part One – Early Years to 1660

**Romans, Saxons and Normans** Margidunum, a small Roman town 2 miles to the East of Cropwell Butler, suggests there were local settlements nearby then and later. The Roman road, the Fosseway, ran through the neighbourhood from the middle of the first century AD. There is evidence that there was a Saxon settlement here before the conquest and Ulric had a manor (meaning an area of land rather than a house), exercising some sort of local control. William of Normandy, the Conqueror successfully invaded England in 1066 and to establish his authority, he gave lands to his henchmen so that through them the king's rule might rapidly become secure and absolute. The nobles tightened their grip on the land and the feudal system was further entrenched.



**Norman Rule** The land we now know as Cropwell Butler, comprised two manors, possessed by Roger-de-Poytiers and Abert-de-Laci, although for the long centuries through almost to the present day the land often changed hands sometimes reflecting the tide of events in England. Village life here would be precarious and frequently unpleasant. Tythby had a stone church from the 13<sup>th</sup> century built perhaps on the foundations

of an earlier structure and at some stage Cropwell Butler had its own medieval church, dedicated to St Nicholas, situated somewhere near the approach to Butler Close. This survived until around 1660.

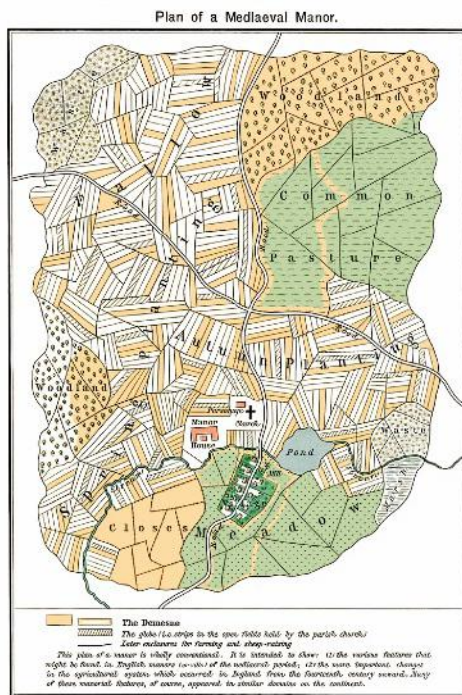
**A Medieval Meeting Place** From early times the country was divided into hundreds, an administrative division, and the Bingham hundred included Cropwell Butler. Moot House Pit, an excavation 120 yards by 70 yards just beyond the top of the rise going into Upper Saxondale, was the site of the local Parliament where meetings were held to settle disputes by formal discussion. The Moot House was removed to Cropwell Butler sometime in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, apparently “for the convenience of entertainment”.

**The Village Name** At the Conquest the area was called Crophille which almost certainly referred to Hoe Hill. Sometime after 1154 the Earl of Chester, who lived in Warrington in great style and luxury, acquired the lands hereabouts but gave the outlying Manor of Crophille to his Bottiler or Butler. The position of the Bottiler in a great house might today be the equivalent of a Steward or Agent of a large estate and from this it is assumed that in time Crophile Bottiler became Cropwell Butler. The Bottilers remained principal landowners until about 1524 when they faded from the scene.

**Monasticism and Cropwell Butler** Since the dark ages people viewed the monastic life of poverty, chastity and obedience as the ideal Christian vocation. From early beginnings grew the great monasteries but beyond the monasteries personal devotion went hand in hand with warfare and the exercise of privilege. But the rich needed to safeguard their futures, even beyond the grave, and this led to the practice of giving property and



particularly land to the great monastic houses. Thurgarton Priory, founded in 1140 grew rich in bequests, for which the monks said masses in perpetuity for deceased benefactors. Sometime in the reign of Henry II a Matthew de Vilers gave land at Cropwell Butler to Thurgarton Priory but the church went to the monastery of St Martins at Sais in France. The religious houses took the land and the tithes (a local tax on the value of the holding) and in return provided a vicar and maintained the building. Similarly the earliest references to a church at Teidebi or Tythby are from about 1291 when the tithes were given by the Vylei family to the Prior and Convent of Thurgarton who in turn supplied a priest. The picture shows a modern day version of the Thurgarton Priory.



**Early Landowners** In 1194 John de Butler backed Prince John in rebellion against the rightful King Richard for which he lost his possessions, only to regain them by going on the latest crusade. In 1486 the young heir of a local land owner, probably Roger Hopton, was abducted and whilst there is no certain information about the outcome, the name appears again in 1520 as holding the Butler manor. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century family names including the Charworths, Butlers, Greshams, Willoughbys all had ownership of land in the parish and there were not infrequent law suits as they sued each other for rightful possession. Generally the picture of Cropwell Butler was of a “wide acreage of pasture dotted with woods providing sheep, and the great expanse of waste which persisted until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century”. “Waste” in this context probably meant “common land”, that is land on which peasants had some rights of use, typically grazing animals and collecting firewood.

The picture is of a typical settlement in medieval England.

**First Enclosures** Much of the land in Cropwell Butler gradually became more valuable for sheep grazing than cultivating to feed the peasants and so the first enclosures of land for pasture began. Land enclosure, a feature for centuries, often deprived smaller landowners who were unable to challenge in law the changes being imposed. In 1493 Sir John Butler enclosed 6 acres of common land in Cropwell Butler and shortly afterwards Thurgarton Priory followed suit and enclosed more common land here. The displacement of farm labourers probably rendered them homeless. It was about this time that the Butler family connection with the village began to fade, at least as lords of the manor.

**The End of the Feudal Age** In 1347 the Black Death, a deadly plague, swept the country and within 3 years 1.5 million of England’s population of 4 million was wiped out. The death of so many created an acute shortage of peasant labour and as a result landlords no longer entirely had the upper hand. The effect of the plague was to usher in the end of the feudal system and gradually the yeoman farmer and the independent merchant replaced the slave-bound serf. A further factor affecting the lives of many poorer people was the invention of the printing press by Caxton in 1476. Although few could read, word now spread quickly far and wide and the peasant was no longer quite so ignorant. Cropwell Butler would not be immune from these important events, but the rich still held the levers of power albeit people were now aware of new ideas and new possibilities.

**Dynastic Civil War** The Wars of the Roses set England in conflict as the Houses of York and Lancaster schemed and fought each other to a standstill at Bosworth Field over the crown in 1485. The Battle of Stoke, about 8 miles north of Cropwell Butler, was a major event in the final defeat of the Yorkists although whether Cropwell Butler was involved in the fighting is not known.

**The Renaissance** By the year 1500 new ideas, new exploration and the notion of the nation state were gaining ground. Now most people no longer believed the earth was flat since Columbus had spectacularly failed to sail over the edge. Henry VIII faced many problems including his need for a male heir, clashes with the Pope over ecclesiastical authority, and chronic shortage of money. Finally in 1533 Henry broke with Rome and steadily disbanded Catholic monasteries and all religious houses. The land and property owned by the monasteries went to the crown, to the universities, and by degrees to the wealthy and privileged who had taken the king's side. Today land adjacent to Cropwell Butler in Tythby is still in crown ownership. The people of Cropwell Butler now had new masters who oversaw their lives.

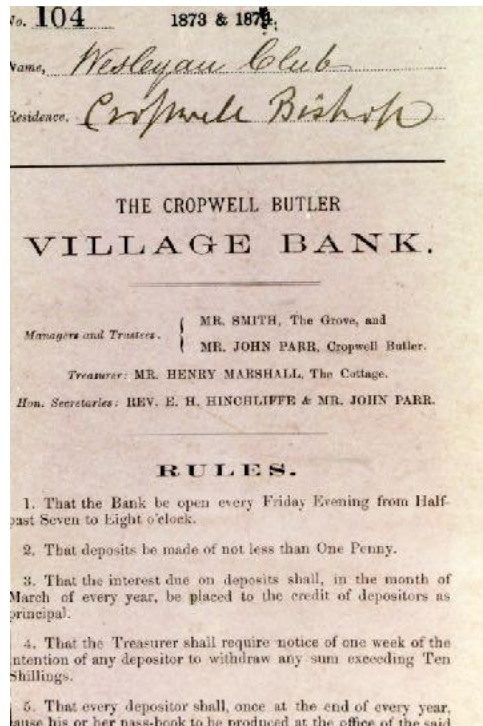
**Crown versus Parliament** Charles I became King in 1625. He held the view that God had appointed him to the throne and that Parliament should simply carry out his wishes, but the common people of England, principally through the House of Commons, defied the crown. In due course a civil war was inevitable, Parliament versus the King, and bloody battles were fought throughout England with countless people slaughtered. Locally Newark and Nottingham were heavily involved, mostly on the King's side. In 1627 Sir George Charworth was created Viscount and he sided with the king maintaining Wiverton Hall against Cromwell until forced to surrender in 1645. His residence in Cropwell Butler was at the Old Grange, a house which existed near to the present Grange into the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



**The Close of the Medieval Period** In the long period sketched out above the lot of the ordinary people changed almost out of recognition, mostly at a slow pace but sometimes, in response to sudden events, much more quickly. Gradually the serf gained his freedom from slavery. Magna Carta established fundamental human rights and a Common Law slowly prevailed. A system of coinage superseded barter, and title to property was established. The Anglo Saxon language gradually gave way to medieval English, and Chaucer and Shakespeare wrote in the common tongue. Kings finally gave up their claims to the throne of France, Parliament was conceived and heavy horses displaced oxen. In 1611 the King James Bible was produced and copies of chain bibles were available in some churches for those who could read. Universities were founded if mostly to prepare young men for the church but mathematics was recognised as a valid philosophy. Craft skills developed and guilds protecting their members came into being. Merchants appeared and many travelled abroad buying and selling raw materials and finished goods. Cropwell Butler, no doubt influenced by

the tide of events, would be taken along with the current, but the gulf between rich and poor, the comfortable and the deprived remained gaping wide.

## Part Two - Middle Years 1660 – 1850



**Founding a Bank** In 1603 the population of Cropwell Butler was about 300 and rose to 362 in 1801. About 500 acres of land were sold in Cropwell Butler in the early 1600s and among the purchasers was a certain Thomas Smith. His son, who prospered as a mercer dealing in various cloths, bought a house in Peck Lane in Nottingham. Here he permitted farmers to deposit cash for a limited period from their weekly market trading for which he made a small charge. Gradually the business turned into Smith's deposit bank and the branch of NatWest on the corner of South Parade in the Old Market Square still bears the name of Smiths Bank on its nameplate. Quite incidentally Cropwell Butler had a village bank in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the front page of its rule book is shown in the picture. However, it is presumed this was a local savings bank rather than a joint stock bank, which is what Smiths Bank eventually became.

**New Landowners** The names of the holders of land here now included successful merchants and traders as well the church and titled aristocrats. Mr Chaworth, a member of the family at Wiverton, lived at The Grange in Cropwell Butler and had become the owner of some 225



acres, acquired after the Dissolution of the Monasteries. (The name of one of his ancestors, Thomas Charworth, is inscribed on a slate tablet is displayed in Tythby church dated 1435, and in fact the family can trace its origins back to the Conquest.) There were at one time two windmills between Cropwell Butler and Tythby. One, a little back from the road, was on the south side but this was blown down in a gale about 1837. The miller, a man called Lank Brewin, being in the mill at the time of its collapse, escaped with bruises as he was able to get into a hollow beneath a large beam. The second mill was on the north side and some 30 yards off the highway but was removed early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to another site. The mill was used by anyone needing flour, but at a charge payable to the owner, a source of annoyance to the villagers. The mill shown is typical of a local windmill.

**The Duke of Kingston**, an overlord of land and property much of it here in the village, died without an heir in 1773. The Duchess, who had led a colourful life, had from his will the estates for life. In 1776 she was tried in the House of Lords on a charge of bigamy having not been properly divorced from her former husband. She died in 1786 following an adventurous career and wished to be buried in Holme Pierrepont, her coffin chained to that

of the Duke. Her final wish was not granted. The Duke's properties descended to Charles Medows who changed the family name to Pierrepont and later became Earl Manvers, a title which became extinct in 1955. Today the Manvers Arms are pubs in Cotgrave and Radcliffe

**The Manor Court** Farming was a communal business and from earliest times was organised in Cropwell Butler by a Manor Court, later becoming the Vestry Meeting, which assembled twice a year. Here decisions were made on the land to be cultivated and the crops to be grown. From the year 1738 there



is a good record of what had now become a self-governed and largely self-supporting village. The parish appointed a constable whose duties included keeping accounts and carrying out the Manor Court's instructions. From the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century the Manor Court selected volunteers, or men otherwise chosen by lot, to join the militia. Likewise the maintenance of highways fell on the parish and there was a Stonepit Close on the Langar road where materials were dug and stored. Land occupiers had to give a number of days' work each year to the task.

**A Major Enclosure** The Open Fields layout, the basis on which the medieval feudal system of working the land had continued for centuries, was coming to a close. Over half the land, about 1004 acres in Cropwell Butler, had already been enclosed, that is, the fields divided into areas hedged or fenced to contain animals. Some 873 acres remained open plus 40 acres in Fern Field divided between the two Cropwells. By this stage an application for land enclosure had to be approved by an Act of Parliament. Various titled nobles had interests in the village but George Charworth was the biggest landowner. The citation listed all the interested parties, their holdings and their lessees and the like and Commissioners were



appointed to supervise the terms of any settlement. Their decision, dated 1788, was final and there would be no appeals. George Charworth came out of the Award as the biggest landowner in the village with a further 232 acres. The Rev William Smith received 30 acres, although his land went to the church as it was the means by which he received an income since he had just lost the tithes of eggs, honey, lambs and piglets which he had previously enjoyed. A map dated 1788 exists (and a section of the map is shown in the picture) and is

held by Cropwell Butler Parish Council. This shows the parcels of land and their owners at the date of the enclosures with a reasonable representation of the village and its dwellings. Cropwell Bishop's enclosure occurred in 1804 at which stage a one acre parcel of land, having mistakenly been attributed to Bishop, was granted to Butler. The benefit of this land has been reserved for the under-privileged since that time and is known as Poores Close. The reasons for land enclosure related mostly to the need for improvements in agriculture and there is a fuller description as an appendix to this account.

**The Canal in Cropwell Butler** The enclosure of the open fields marked a change in the communal way of life surrounding the Manor Court. The tenant or farm worker, deprived of his small parcel of land, had to find work elsewhere or apply for relief. The Nottingham to Grantham Canal was started in 1793 and this passed along the western edge of the parish. A wharf was built for handling goods to and from the



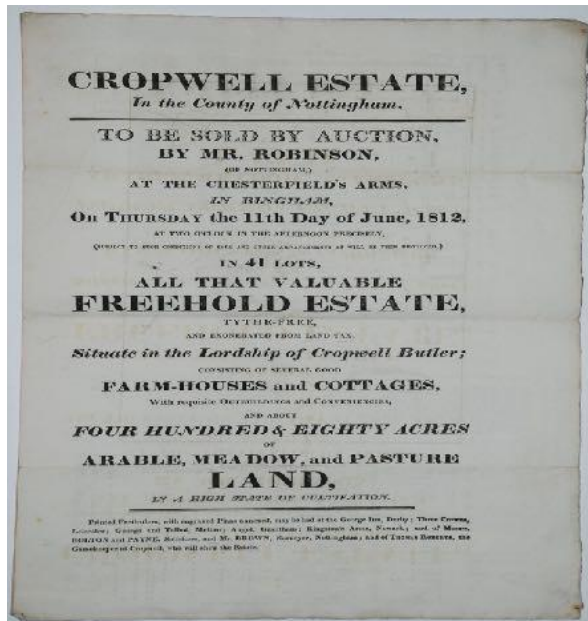
village including



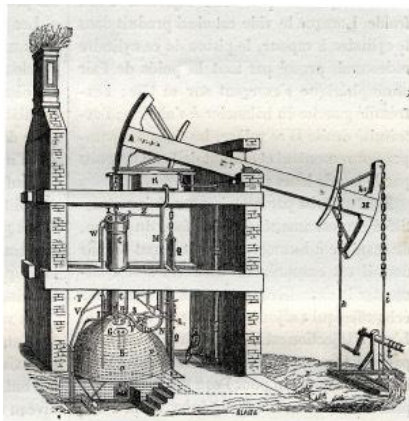
amounts of coal. The canal and its associated brickworks provided some for a time with employment, and cottages were built around the brickworks adjacent to Hoe Hill. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century a lock keeper is listed in the village inventory of tradesmen. From the section of the map of the proposed canal, shown here, there was to have been a link to serve Bingham, called a collateral branch, but this was never constructed. In 1851 about 20% of the population of the village, then 695, was employed in non-agricultural activities including the canal, the brickworks or the lime kilns at Cropwell Bishop.

**The Payment of Tithes** George Charworth and later his grandson, John Charworth Musters, were the principal landowners in Cropwell Butler and Tythby. Following the enclosure of the open fields the matter of tithes came to a head. Tithes were typically a local tax of one tenth of the year's produce from land and labour and its purpose was to maintain the nave of the church, provide a priest and support the poor. It was made compulsory in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The poor, having little or no money paid their tithes in kind, usually corn or similar semi durables. Wealthy individuals now owned the land but the tithes had still to be paid by the tenants. Another commission was set up in 1850 to apportion tithes now payable in money rather than in kind. John Charworth Musters, by his large landholding was the lay rector (a landowner really), was permitted to impose on his tenant farmers the commuted tithes which were now his due. In 1801 there was a population at Tythby of 144 and they were now burdened with a bill of £220 a year.





**A Public Sale of Property by Auction** In 1812 there was a large sale of farm houses, cottages and land by public auction. The sale was held in the Chesterfield Arms in Bingham, and the sale particulars included a map a section of which is shown here. It was probably at this point that other well-to-do people became landowners although details of the individual purchasers' of lots is not known. However, the shape of the village is clear although many of the old dwellings and outhouses were demolished, both in the late eighteenth and then again in the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century.



**Mechanical Power** Since earliest times power for work had been provided by men, animal, gravity and by wind and water. By about 1775 the first commercially practical steam engine was available, and a picture of an early beam engine is shown. Slowly at first but then with gathering pace, cottage industries in the villages were replaced by steam driven factories and mills in towns and cities. Employment opportunities in the countryside gave way to the new manufactures and the industrial revolution was underway, although in 1857 some seventy women in Cropwell Butler still worked unfinished lace by hand to a completed product in cottages in the village. The population of Cropwell Butler

fell from a maximum of 695 in 1851 as rural decline set in and did not recover for almost 100 years.

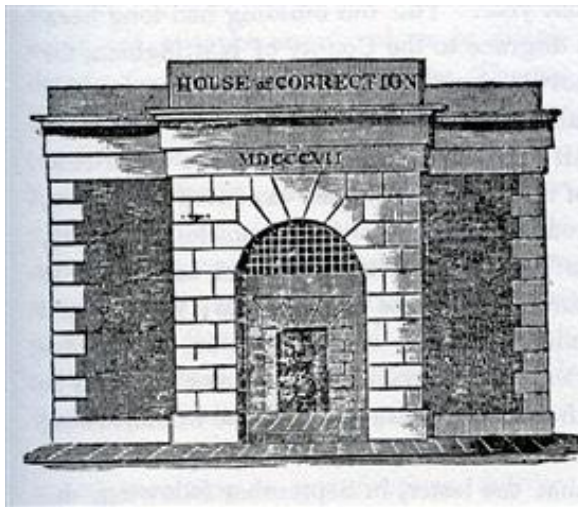
**Steam locomotives and travel by train** began in the 1830s. By the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century railway mania had the country in its grip and fortunes were made and lost in what became a glorious speculation. The impact of the railways was profound and utterly transformed many aspects of life in the country. They made possible journeys that a generation before would have seemed completely implausible. They boosted all kinds of trade, stimulated economic development



and brought in their wake a whole host of social and political changes. In July 1850 a line opened from Colwick, near Nottingham, to Grantham. With a station at Bingham, Cropwell Butler was now within reach of the modern world of transport. The company establishing the line had the incredible name of the Ambergate, Nottingham, Boston and Eastern Junction Railway. In May 1852 the Great Northern Railway (GNR) agreed to work this line, but the arrangement was opposed by their arch enemy, the Midland Railway. In 1852 an

Ambergate train was run on the disputed line. The Midland responded by kidnapping the train and blocking it in with two of their engines. The driver “made a sporting charge at his captors”, but was forced from his engine, which was then locked in a shed. The Midland even removed the rails, and the engine remained impounded for seven months. The delay led to the ANB&EJR seeking powers to build a parallel line from Colwick to its own station in Nottingham at London Road. The Great Northern Railway express locomotive shown was, at its introduction in 1876, the fastest steam locomotive in the world.

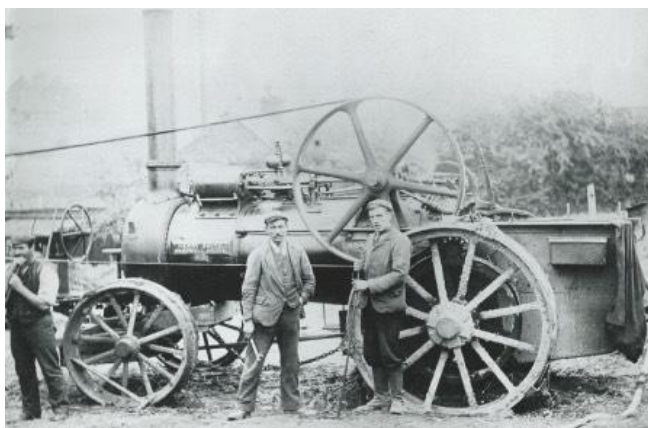
On a local note, when Henry Smith first saw a steam locomotive he was not impressed. *I saw a locomotive drawing itself from Lincoln to Nottingham. This is the first I have seen and I hope it will be the last, for it is the most frightful thing for a timid horse to meet. Henry Smith, Squire, The Grove, Cropwell Butler, 1862.*



**Providing for the Poor** Each parish had the responsibility of providing support for the poor but such was the cost that generally only the minimum could be managed. From the 18<sup>th</sup> century at least, villages would issue Settlement Certificates, a document of entitlement, only to those living locally. Vagrants, beggars and wanderers were often sent to a house of correction; in the case of Mary Leatherland in 1735, to Southwell. Conditions in these institutions were harsh in the extreme. Cropwell Butler subscribed to a workhouse at Gedling in 1808, then at Basford in 1814, and when this folded to a new place at Bingham in 1834. Not every pauper was

sent to a workhouse and many were given an allowance to remain in their own homes, for example 3/6 a week for a pauper capable of work.

**Local Benefactions** Additionally several charities were established in the long period from about 1700 and the names of benefactors have been recorded as Mary Fillingham, 1777, £50, William Fillingham, 1779, £50, John Marriott, 1813, £100 and Ann Parr (to 20 poor children to be educated), £300. Eventually the trusts came under the supervision of the Charity Commission and the monies placed with the Union of London and Smiths Bank Ltd. In a note from Henry Smith in 1903 the total value of the money to be distributed was £6.3.10. In that year £1.4.0 was for the Fillingham Dole on Good Friday. Even in 1903 these were not insignificant amounts.



**Cropwell Butler in a Changing World** In the period described here England enjoyed a long period of political and social stability with steady growth in Parliamentary democracy, although the rich and powerful still enjoyed their privileges. The Industrial Revolution and the growth of the Empire created wealth and confidence and not everything passed Cropwell Butler by although the

engines for growth were focused on the rapidly expanding cities. Transport engendered trade, and trade and profit spurred on new inventions. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century new farm implements allowed scythes to become a thing of the past. Monstrous steam engines ploughed the heavier land at fantastic rates of productivity and new threshing machines did the work of countless labourers. Cropwell Grove Steam Threshing Engine is seen here at work in Radcliffe. In the distance were electricity, telephones and the new-fangled combustion engine. The picture above, perhaps the earliest of anyone in the village, is of Hannah and Matthew Cooper taken about 1860. He was born in Cropwell Butler about 1810 and later emigrated to Canada, in the meantime having fathered 12 children.



It may be helpful, at the close of this section, to trace the growth of the population of Cropwell Butler through the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>		<b>Year</b>	<b>Population</b>
1801	362		1891	478
1811	379		1901	521
1821	489		1921	521
1831	555		1931	517
1841	678		1941	War
1851	695		1951	429
1871	608		1961	482
1881	540			

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Lord Kingston's passed property to Lord Manvers or was sold to various people. This included the demesne (a piece of land attached to the manor) and The Grange to John Musters. At this time Parr and Marriott farmed here as owner occupiers, so the centuries-old practice of one wealthy but remote landowner was beginning to break down into something that is more familiar today. In 1837 Parson Henry Smith bought land from George Chaworth on which he built The Grove, his son in 1853 bought the manorial rights and became the squire. James Butler Smith lived at The Fields. These families were to have great influence over Cropwell Butler for the next hundred years, their descendants finally dying in the 1970s. More of this family is told later.

### Part Three – 1850 to the Present Day

**The Developing Village, Land Ownership** The following table has data from the 1851 census and a later parliamentary investigation. It shows marked differences between the two neighbouring villages. Cropwell Butler had become a village where 92% of the people owned and worked relatively small areas of land with no one farmer owning as much as 1000 acres, and Tythby where there appears to be just one absentee landlord owning most of the land.

Place	Cropwell Butler	Tythby
Population	695	116
Acreage	1800	567
Density, people per acre	0.39	0.2
Landowners less than 1000 acres	14	1
% land farmed and owned locally	92	4
Landowners greater than 1000 acres	0	1 absentee
Resident owners, +1000 acres	0	0
Absentee owners, +1000 acres	0	1
% Landowners less than 1000 acres	92	4

#### Cropwell Butler, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century



**Education** Private schools existed in the village by the 1830s and by 1845 a village school had been established in premises owned by George Parr, which were later extended to provide the Chapel of Ease. The Parr family appears first in the 1780s but were notable in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century as benefactors and promoters of education. Enlarged in 1859 and again in 1866 it accommodated about 120 pupils but a significant change came in 1863 with



the appointment of a very effective new master, Charles Goodwin. Numbers nominally rose to about 100 in 1865 but it is difficult to be certain about how many were on the school roll as some children went to the Wesleyan Sunday school and did not attend the day school. The Education Act of 1870 established full time, compulsory education for children aged 5-13 and Board

Schools provided the framework of education throughout England. Interestingly, although

the old school was now the place of Government established education, Henry Smith, who had bought the property about 1880, let it to the School Managers from 8am to 5pm but thereafter each day it was his to do with it as he wished. In 1902 a further Act established secondary education and under its procedures Cropwell Butler was designated as "satisfactory", accommodating 107 children.



A small school, perhaps 12 – 25 children, also existed for a time in Tythby. It was essentially a dame school (a school in which the rudiments of reading and writing were taught by a woman in her own home) but nevertheless under the auspices of the church. The schoolroom was originally in a cottage but in 1861 a new room was built by Mr Musters particularly for the smaller

children who could not walk from Tythby to Cropwell Butler. By 1871 the school had closed, the provision of schooling in Cropwell Butler being considered quite adequate. The photograph above shows the children in the school in 1905.

The Education Authority now required a more suitable building to meet the needs of secondary education and in 1909 a new school was opened. This picture was taken in 1913, and Dennis Barratt who survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century is nearest the camera in what is the school garden, now part of the village hall car park. This served Cropwell Butler until 1968 when infant and junior children were transferred to a new school in Cropwell Bishop and secondary school children continued their education in Bingham at Toothill School. The closing of the school and transfer of the children to Cropwell Bishop was not without opposition, particularly as there was no bus service and the road considered dangerous without a footpath. Unfortunately at the time of the proposed closure the school numbers had fallen to 21 although the vicar, Philip Davidson, protested that he had christened over 20 children in the previous 2½ years and that numbers must surely rise. His pleas were in vain. The Weekly Guardian ran articles detailing both the complaints and the County Council's determination to make the changes. The formal letter of closure from the County Council was dated 20<sup>th</sup> January, 1967.



In 1989 Millfield Nursery School was started on Tythby Road between the

two villages. By 2015, the school continued to cater successfully for children aged 2 – 5 years from all around the Vale of Belvoir. The nursery sits within 8 acres of rural countryside.



**The Village Hall**  
Members of the village clubbed together in the 1920s and managed to buy and erect in 1929 a fairly large timber building. This provided a much needed centre for community activities, particularly before the age of mass entertainment. Soon after the Edwardian school was closed it was purchased by the village for £2000. A grant was

obtained and additions of indoor toilets, a stage and proper heating were all made, the total cost being some £6,500. The new hall was opened in 1971 by the MP for Carlton, Philip Holland. Over the years many improvements have been made so that it complies with today's standards. The hall is a registered charity and a Trust manages its affairs. The old village hall was sold in 1971 to a scout group from Bristol who took it to pieces and carted it away on a lorry. The picture shows the remodeled new hall with the old wooden structure in the background on what is now the front lawn. An appeal was made for gifts of trees to plant on the front lawn, once the site was cleared of the wooden hall. By 2015 many of those trees had become sufficiently mature to put the west facade of the village hall in shade.

**The Sheldon Field** is a community playing field and wildlife area, controlled by the Sheldon Field Management Committee, a charitable Trust in the hands of an elected body of local people. The late David Shaw was responsible for overseeing the acquisition of the field from the Oldfield family by The National Playing Fields Association. From 1999 it



has been known as a Fields in Trust. From very humble beginnings, there is now a much-used cricket pitch and practice net and a small pavilion with changing facilities and a kitchen. There is an interesting cricket score board with enclosed seating of some vintage. The wildlife areas of the field incorporate a preserved area of ridge and furrow, numerous varieties of trees with an attractive maintained walk around the perimeter. Additionally the Sheldon Field Committee organises occasional village events to mark its involvement in community activities of which Bonfire Night is a great attraction. The Parish Council

generously provides fireworks for the event although bright lights, bangs and rockets are perhaps not normally associated with this sober embodiment of local government. Each year the Parish Council also provides and erects a fine Christmas tree in front of the village hall with very impressive lights.

**Churches and Chapels** There were two medieval churches, the present one in Tythby and one in Cropwell Butler; the latter, a smaller or daughter church, was pulled down about 1660. Thereafter and to the present, Tythby and Cropwell Butler have remained as one combined ecclesiastical parish. The church at Tythby probably appears today from the outside much as it did in the Middle Ages although the Victorians built the north aisle. The font may have been damaged by Cromwellian forces when



Wiverton Hall was besieged in the Civil War of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The church roof was extensively repaired in 1742.



To provide a place of worship in Cropwell Butler a Chapel of Ease was built at George Parr's expense in 1845. In fact George Parr retained ownership of the chapel and at his death it passed to his relatives. They were prepared to sell but terms could never be agreed and in consequence the chapel closed in 1879 and the doorway for public access was bricked up. It was later resurrected by public subscription, which included a bazaar and local gifts.

The Chapel of Ease was improved, rededicated by the Bishop of Southwell and remained in use until sold in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is now a dwelling house opposite The Plough.

Methodism first came to Cropwell Butler in 1773 when the house of Thomas Innocent was licensed for the meeting of 'Protestant Dissenters'. By the early nineteenth century the original Wesleyan Chapel (now the present schoolroom behind the chapel) had been built using money collected from local people. In 1903, the building was significantly extended to its current size with the opening event



including the use of a marquee erected in the field opposite. Primitive Methodists opened a chapel in 1845, remaining until the twentieth century merger with the Wesleyans. Their premises were later incorporated into the village blacksmith's workshop.



**The Cemetery** By 1900 it was clear that additional burial ground would soon be required, the graveyard at Tythby church being almost full. The Parish Council agreed to purchase from Earl Manvers for £60 one acre of ground adjacent to the Cropwell Bishop road known then as Cow Close. In 1902 the Council approved the expenditure of £350 to buy the plot and lay out the ground although a loan had to be raised to finance the scheme. Later the same year the Council decided

to reduce their land requirements but "his Lordship was not disposed to sell half an acre of land, instead of one acre". The original scheme proceeded. These pictures show the original entrance to the new cemetery prior to the First World War and again with the lychgate from 1919 much as it is 100 years later.

**Two World Wars** 18 men from Cropwell Butler gave their lives in 1914-18 and a further 2 in 1939-45. The village reacted to the sacrifice and in 1920 the parishioners subscribed money for a lych gate as a memorial to those who fell in 1914-18. The lych gate is an oak timber frame structure on stone plinths, with a red tiled roof and is surmounted by a Latin Cross. There is a role of honour and below are the words "Duty Bravely Done, 1920". In 2011, after significant restoration, the lych gate was officially listed in the National Inventory of War Memorials and granted an English Heritage Building Grade II status. The names of those who lost their lives in 1939-45 are listed in the church. The picture is believed to show servicemen outside the Plough in the Second World War. On 12<sup>th</sup> May



1941 a lone enemy bomber flew over the village and dropped incendiary bombs which caused fires in some gardens and houses. The aircraft then made another run dropping high explosives, this time close to The Grange.



explosives, this time close to The Grange. People out in the middle of the night dealing with fires were caught in the raid and a Mrs Parkin and two young girls were killed and a Tom Wilson lost an arm. By a miracle it seems, a baby in a pram escaped unharmed.

**The Parish Council** In 1894 the Local Government Act was passed which created local authorities and the Parish Councils came

into being. Cropwell Butler held its first Parish Council meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1894 although the arrangements for the meeting hardly appear to have been very democratic. Henry Smith, the squire, turned up and took the chair and told those attending to fill in nomination papers. By one autocratic means or another he arrived at the 7 men needed to form the Council. Henry Smith, after being heartily thanked, went home and had nothing more to do with the Parish Council. The 7 men comprised 3 farmers, 2 wheelwrights, a butcher and a shepherd, no doubt a good representation of local employment. They in turn appointed 4 constables, a butcher, a saddler, a blacksmith and a baker to see matters were carried out in the community. On 25<sup>th</sup> March 1895 it was resolved that the public should not be allowed into Council meetings – the business was to be carried out privately. There were celebrations, prompted by the Parish Council, to mark Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897 in which seemingly vast quantities of beef, ham and tongue were consumed, and again for the coronation of King Edward VII where 3 barrels of beer were disposed of.

The Council thrived and dealt with important but largely repetitive matters for countless years generally meeting just twice a year. The Council was involved in diverse matters such as the selection of the site for the new school, the sale of walnuts from the cemetery for 15/-, and taking responsibility for the village pump when it was gifted to the parish by Cuthbert Smith. World War I passed almost without notice except to send condolences to Mr Musters on the loss of his sons. The Council was more involved in World War II and actively encouraged several war efforts. In 1942 £14.9.8 was raised and equally divided between the Captain and Crew of HMS Snapdragon and the Cropwell Butler Comforts Fund. There was also a Tank Week although its purpose is not recorded. Victory was celebrated in December 1945 with a free tea for all residents, a fancy dress parade and an evening dance in the village hall.

There was a fuss in 1970 when a newly elected Parish Council managed to meet and make decisions before they were duly authorised, 20<sup>th</sup> May being the appointed date of transfer of powers. As may have been expected with this abuse of democracy, the matter hit the local newspaper headlines. After a little delay and some righteous huffing and puffing in the village, the offending meeting was declared null and void. Two days later an identical meeting was convened to corroborate the decisions of the invalid meeting.

The Parish Council continues to fulfil what must sometimes be a thankless task and there are faithful inhabitants who are prepared to attend to village needs. The fact is that those who represent the villagers on their Parish Council freely give up their time and apply their skills for the good of the community. This is, after all, English village life,.



**The Village Green** In 1959 Cuthbert Smith made the land called the Cabbage Patch available to the village for £65, this sum being raised by 8 generous donors, and the land became the village green. It had previously been the site of 10 older cottages which had been demolished probably about 1870. These were chiefly of mud,

wood and thatch and a small quantity of bricks and tiles, "the whole of them stuck as it were like a lot of pins on a cushion, and the finest specimen of a lot of huts huddled together on a small plot of land one might ever see". The picture above is of typical mud houses rather than the actual ones here described. The land on which they stood was formerly called "The Waste", another term for common land. (Common land is not usually held "in common" by the villagers but land on which ordinary inhabitants have rights such as the grazing of animals or collecting firewood.) Much common land was swept away at the time of the Enclosures. From the Enclosures Act of 1788 the Duke of Newcastle was awarded 6 acres of land in lieu of that which he had lost. However, in 1843 the Duke claimed rent on the houses on the Waste, and, after certain threats from the Duke's agents, all the occupiers but one paid what was due. George Wyles refused on the basis that he was not a tenant but the owner. Shortly afterwards the agents brought a gang of men who physically evicted the occupants including Wyles' elderly mother in her armchair. The house was then immediately razed to the ground, the former occupants watching their home being pulled down. Subsequently in a Court of Law George Wyles was judged the rightful owner of the demolished property and was awarded forty pounds compensation, all of which went to the solicitor who fought the case. A curious event occurred at Mrs Wyles' funeral some twenty years later in about 1862, she being nearly 80 at her death. An eyewitness said that when the



horses drawing the hearse got to the spot where the eviction had taken place they stopped, and no amount of whipping would make them go further until they were led by the bride.

The land on which similar houses on Hardigate Road stood was eventually sold to Henry Smith in 1851. He pulled down some houses and

improved the remainder and also established some sort of drainage system which allowed waste land to be converted into brick or stone walled gardens. In the



picture above a group of allotment holders is shown clearing the ground perhaps after a period of neglect. To the left is The Green in 1967, shortly after the “Cabbage Patch” had been bought by the village and cleared of all the former allotments. The amount collected was £116, the land costing £65 and the remainder was used to re-model the site. The WI planted at least one tree among many others and by 2015 the Green was quite heavily wooded. Memorial seats were presented at various times making the area increasingly attractive. In the background is a former tack room which later became the Village Reading Room.

**The Women’s Institute** This was founded in 1920 and has now prospered for ninety five years. Always active, there are many photographs existing, typically at least one each decade. The WI naturally has its own extensive records but here are three pictures. These are from the 1920s.



**New Houses for Old** By 1964 thirty three older houses and cottages in Cropwell Butler were scheduled for demolition by Bingham Rural Council. The Medical Officer of Health stated that the houses were unfit for habitation “by reason of their bad arrangement or the narrowness of the streets, and that the most satisfactory method of dealing with the problem would be to demolish all the buildings. The Council had purchased a plot of land from John

Sheldon on which about 30 buildings would be built.” The decision had a mixed reception in the village. Most people accepted that many of the properties were damp and lacked modern facilities, but nevertheless they were homes to many who had occupied them for years or even decades. The cottages were generally owned by private landlords and such were the housing deficiencies that the rents were cheap. The shortcomings, it was claimed, could be put right without demolition and the new council house rents would be higher. A new estate would be remote from the shops and facilities at the centre of the village. The matter hit the local headlines, even as far as the Nottinghamshire Guardian, with “Should these





cottages be condemned?" and "A Council's proposal to demolish 33 cottages in the little village of Cropwell Butler has caused a storm of controversy among residents." The article quoted the opinions of several tenants some of which today seem quite prophetic. "Gardens would be smaller, the loss of oak beams and rustic charm would be tragic, the demolished houses would make way for new private housing, the villagers will be driven out and Cropwell Butler will cease to be a village in the real sense of the word." Houses made subject

of the clearance order were on every road in the village. In the event the project went ahead and Butler Close was built. The first occupants took up residence in 1967. Much



earlier, William Baldock, describing the village of his youth in about 1840, remembered 16 mud houses on Hardigate Lane, 6 on the road to Cropwell Bishop and 4 more in Hoe Lane. Some of these properties having been erected probably in the 18<sup>th</sup> century survived into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The picture above is of a corner of Butler Close in 2015. By 2015 many houses had been bought from the Local Authority, a right of purchase being introduced by the national government in the 1980s.

**Carpenters Close** A further development was the construction of Carpenters Close. On the site there had been older cottages and waste land, formerly gardens, known as Parnhams Cottages, within which there was a shop. This was a private development and took place in the 1980s.



**Well-kept Cropwell Butler hits the Jackpot** This was the Advertiser's headline on 9<sup>th</sup> August, 1975 announcing the fact that the village had won the

Best Kept Village Award for the third year in a row. The chairman of the Parish Council, who was said to be jubilant, stated that "it (the award) shows the excellent co-operation that exists between the parish council and parishioners". The euphoria at the success resulted in

the attendance of the Mayor of Rushcliffe at the presentation and as always, refreshments were served in the village hall.

**Celebrations** There was great rejoicing after the end of the First World War in 1919 and the picture shows a parade in the village which included a float with Bingham Town Band in



attendance. The celebrations for the Queen's Silver Jubilee clearly showed how successful Cropwell Butler was and perhaps still is at enjoying itself. The arrangements were well in hand by early 1977, a variety of events being held In advance of the actual occasion to raise money. The actual programme was over two days, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> June, and the centrepiece was a Grand Procession, and later, sports for the children and a Tea Party. The next day provided Adults' Sports, "something to cause amusement for the children", Morris Dancing and finally "A Programme of Entertainment for the whole Family". And yet further, a commemorative seat was to be bought and people were asked to decorate their houses. The picture shows how well it was brought off.

The wedding of Diana and Charles allowed the most extravagant display of creative talent. The wedding party was completely replicated even as far as the Archbishop of Canterbury complete with cope and mitre, although the farm trailer may not have been an ideal substitute for the royal coach.

From the 19<sup>th</sup> century Harvest Festival in the church was one of the great occasions in the church's calendar with people decorating the chancel and nave with sheaves of corn, bread baked in traditional shapes, fruit, vegetables and even sacks of grain. Apples and pears stood on the ledges of tracery windows and the steps to the pulpit were adorned with autumn offerings. Children came with their own gifts carefully packed into simple containers to be received by the vicar



and placed on the altar, each offering jostling for room. Fruit glowed in the morning sun or in the evening dimly reflected the gentle candlelight. Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century success or failure with the harvest in rural England meant a winter of plenty or the prospect of hardship. In the week following Harvest Festival a Harvest Supper would be organised in the village hall where for a modest sum many in the village would enjoy a traditional evening.

This photograph taken sometime in the 1940s shows the old Wooden Village Hall apparently packed with people enjoying a Harvest Supper, row upon row of people sitting shoulder to shoulder for what must have been a very popular annual event.



### Some Older Houses and their Former Occupants in Cropwell Butler



**The Grove and the Smith Family** The story of The Grove is closely associated with the Smith family and is interesting because they had a significant effect on Cropwell Butler for about 90 years, from 1837 to 1928, a period of great social, technical and economic change. Henry Smith Jnr, perhaps the most significant member of the family as far as Cropwell Butler is concerned, 1826-1925, is pictured left. In an earlier section of this account concerning the Enclosure Act in Cropwell Butler, the Rev William Smith received a portion of land on behalf of the church. He was born in 1728 and was appointed curate of Tythby-cum-Cropwell Butler soon after he was married. Thereafter he acquired enough money by getting himself appointed

to comfortable church livings. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century and later, parishes in the Church of England were much in the hands of local patrons, perhaps the squire or lord of the manor, who provided an income for the incumbent (a vicar to all intents and purposes). The patron might expect little more than a sociable parson whom he would think of as a Gentleman. It was common for a successful parson to acquire several livings at once, a practice called plurality. He in turn would appoint a man of more modest ambition to look after his other livings, but at a lower income. This Rev William Butler was sufficiently comfortable to send his son to Cambridge where he excelled in maths and also took Holy Orders. For the first part of his life he too was a country clergyman. This was Henry or Parson Smith, sometimes known as Henry Smith Snr. William Smith died in 1798 and Henry Snr stepped into his father's clerical shoes as curate of Cotgrave.

Henry Parson Smith not only inherited something from his father but his wife, Elizabeth Morris, had money in her own right. He married in 1827 at the age of 56, his wife being 18 years younger than him. Having acquired capital he became a well-to-do farmer, starting a tradition of the successful breeding of pedigree animals. Notwithstanding his age when he married, he had three children, Henry, Edward and Elizabeth. He was well acquainted with George Charworth, owner of land on the village side of The Fosse. Parson Henry Smith bought land from George Charworth and built The Grove, shown above, in 1837.



He died in 1848 and Henry Smith Jnr succeeded to the estate at the age of 20. There is speculation as to who built The Grove and three Marriott brothers may have been involved; the youngest, Joseph, built The Grange in the same year 1837.

Henry Smith Jnr, bought the manorial rights from the Duke of Newcastle and was thus able to style himself

“Lord of the Manor”. He married Mary Butler whose father Thomas Butler had bought and later modified a farmhouse which he named Cropwell Fields. Henry’s elder son was, of course also named Henry or more familiarly Harry.

By 1871 Henry Jnr had increased his land holding and had acquired 51 of the 151 houses in the village. He generally behaved as the Squire, employing numerous people on the land or in service in his rather grand house. He had seemingly autocratic authority over the lives of almost everyone in Cropwell Butler in what was the high Victorian era. He



built The Cottage, pictured here, in 1855 in the village for his mother and sister, and later his son Harry lived there. This rather modest name was later changed to Mahon House. In fact the house stands on the site of a former farmhouse earlier owned by the Parr family. Henry Jnr died in 1915 aged 88.

Henry Jnr’s brother, Edward, married at 38 the twenty year old Mary Barlow by whom he had 9 children. He succeeded to Cropwell Fields on the death of Thomas Butler, although the brothers were estranged for much of their adult lives much to Henry’s sadness. It seems they disagreed greatly over farm practices. Edward later moved to Cotgrave where he became a churchwarden.

Henry Jnr’s son, the third Henry or Harry Smith, became famous for pure-bred Lincolnshire long wool sheep, many of which were exported to numerous countries. He occupied Mahon House whilst his brother, James Butler Smith, lived at The Fields the other side of the Fosse. He died from influenza and pneumonia in 1919. It is believed that the picture to the left is that of Harry Smith and his family.



In turn he was succeeded by Cuthbert Chappel Smith, 1899 – 1979 whom some in the village in 2015 will remember. Cuthbert had an elder brother, yet another Henry, but he was killed in the First World War. For reasons unknown, Cuthbert sold the Grove in 1928 together with land and property to a Mr Alvey Sheldon. There appears to have been a friendship between the Smiths and the Sheldons as the picture shows. Standing on the left is Tom Sheldon and on the right Jim Butler Smith. Cuthbert Smith had a house in Hoe Lane, was married but had no children, and lived a rather colourful life, much involved in motor cars, but he clearly cared about the village. It was he who sold the Village Pump to the parish council in 1926. Over a period of at least 150 years the Smith family were dominant in



Cropwell Butler. They were generous, perhaps in a patrician way, and the village no doubt benefitted from them. Their interest was very much in farming and the breeding of pedigree animals, often unusual breeds. Jim Butler Smith farmed at Fields Farm until his death in 1978. The farm and all stock were sold by auction in 1978.

For Mr. J. Butler Smith

**The Fields Farm,  
Cropwell Butler,  
Nottingham.**

Nottingham 8 miles, Newark 13 miles, Melton 16 miles, Leicester 20 miles.

The Fields Farm is situated 1 mile south-west of the Saxondale roundabout, the junction of the A52 and A46.

**COMPLETE DISPERSAL SALE OF  
LIVE AND DEAD FARMING STOCK**

Comprising :-

**86 ACCREDITED BEEF CATTLE**  
27 Lincoln Red Cows  
88 Progeny by Aberdeen Angus bull from calves to meated stores to fat cattle

**MODERN FARM IMPLEMENTS AND EQUIPMENT**  
Massey Ferguson 515 Combine, 1968  
David Brown 995 Tractor, 1975  
Massey Ferguson 185 multi-power Tractor, 1973  
David Brown 980 Selectomatic Tractor, 1968  
Massey Ferguson 130 Tractor, 1967  
Massey Ferguson 20-8 Baler

**COLLECTION OF ANTIQUE FARM MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT**  
Threshing drum by Foster of Lincoln  
Horse drawn plough, cultivators, hoes and subsoiler  
Horse drawn Crosskill clod breaker roll  
Coke breaker, hand tools, horse harness and milk float

**PRODUCE**  
60 tons Hay  
150 tons Straw

**FOR SALE BY AUCTION**  
Thursday 30th November 1978 at 10.30 a.m.

Luncheon refreshments available.

**John Samworth**, a successful businessman who lived at The Grove from 1976 until his death in 2014, took a great interest in Cropwell Butler. He continually supported local activities sometimes intervening to ensure that village institutions were provided with the means of renewal and improvement.

**The Rookery** Newly built by Earl Manvers, the house in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century was first tenanted by Fillingham Parr, brother of George Parr who had recently gone to live in his new house, The Elms. He was followed by his son John Parr who farmed under Earl Manvers until his death in 1884. It seems he was the last of the Parr family connected with Cropwell Butler. Fillingham Parr had bequeathed money for the support of the poor of the parish. It is not thought there was any connection between this Parr family and that of the pork pie business set up in the mid-late 20<sup>th</sup> century in the village.





Alvey Sheldon acquired The Grove in 1928, his brother Harry having bought the Rookery Farm in 1911. The Sheldons were notable farmers and John Sheldon, his son, was a breeder of specialist cattle showing frequently and picking up prizes. He is shown here with his Champion Beast, 1955. John Sheldon gave considerable support to the village including a generous benefaction to the church. He died in 1963 age 69 but his wife Kathleen continued to

live at The Rookery into her 90s. After her death the farm continued to be worked until the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The land which is now the playing fields under the supervision of the Sheldon Field Committee was made available by the family. Just outside the Rookery on the corner to Cropwell Bishop there used to be a pond called Parr's Weir where the lads of the village used to bathe and slide. This was situated where in the 1890s there was a coach road gate and shrubberies in front of the house.

**Cropwell Court** In 1740 John Parr was a significant landowner in Cropwell Butler and his descendants lived here for some 150 years. George Parr, as noted above, left The Rookery, in 1863 to live in his newly built house, The Elms now known as Cropwell Court. There had been a farm on the site and the back of the house with lath and plaster construction is older than the new building. George Parr, who died in 1868, bequeathed the house to John Marriott. Later Danny Mann a jockey, owned Cropwell Court. He may have



been bought the property by his sponsor and further improvements were made to the Billiard Room, the Stables and Cottage. A Mr George Fowler then owned the property and it was sold in June 1936 to Eric Pentecost. In 1928 Eric Pentecost had obtained a loan to buy a bankrupt textile business and within 8 years had turned a failed business into a public company. His success in business allowed him to begin breeding prize cattle and he claimed more than 300 show prizes and 42 championships. In the 1940s he began work on an experiment to create a Lincoln Red Shorthorn without horns. This was finally achieved by crossing a hornless red and black Aberdeen Angus bull with a Lincoln Red female. When he died in 1980 he left £3000 to the Cropwell Butler WI. The house and land were sold in 1980 for £740,000.

**The Hollies** was built in 1841 and replaced a much older thatched farmhouse about 60 yards to the east which was demolished in 1842. The common bricks for the house were made in the brickyard which existed for some years between Hoe Hill and the canal. Such was the demand for bricks at the time that workmen went to the brickyard in the middle of the night to collect the latest batch from the kilns. They frequently returned with burnt hands and smouldering wagon sides. The house was owned by Joshua Baldock whose son, William



some 50 years later wrote a very lengthy account of his life and times as a boy and young man. One alarming incident occurred in the summer of 1847. Two servants and a baby were in the house alone. The 17 year old, who was in the kitchen, got hold of a flask of gunpowder and having seen others make a fairly harmless fire cracker, proceeded to roll a quantity of the powder into a damp ball about as big as a nut. She applied a lighted

taper to the ball which failed to ignite and so poured a quantity of dry powder onto what in effect was now a fuse. The explosion was heard throughout the village but the girl had escaped from the blackened kitchen although the skin and flesh from thumb to wrist were torn away. The second girl entered the kitchen at the fatal moment and was blown back up the passage. Fortunately the baby, asleep in another room, was unharmed. In fairness William Baldock stated in his "soliloquy", as he called it, that he relied wholly on memory but the memoir is very detailed and an excellent contemporary account. The Hollies remained in the Baldock family until 1932. Many in Cropwell Butler will remember Charlie Baldock who died in the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**The Court** The house was probably called The Lodge in its early days and was occupied by Joseph Marriott Jnr from about the mid 1830s to his death in 1867 and afterwards by his widow Mary for her lifetime. Thereafter the house was occupied or perhaps owned in succession by a Robert Hawden, and then by a hosiery manufacturer called G W Buttram, of which no more is known. The entire property, comprising 6 lots which included the house set in



1.58 acres, 2 detached cottages, an orchard and garden and about 2 acres of grass land, was sold at auction in 1929 following the death of Harry Wyles. (It is interesting to note that George Wyles was the name of the man who defied the Duke of Newcastle, perhaps 100 years earlier, in the matter of the contested demolition of the mud house on the Waste. It is

not known if there was any family connection.) Much of the land sold was on the west side of Back Lane although curiously the road from its intersection with Radcliffe Road is shown as Hoe Lane on the formal sale plan, either by error or because that was the name it was known by at the time. Thereafter later owners sold off land surrounding the house on which a number of modern houses were built and at least one conversion. The house has been much improved in recent years.



**West Lea** Reputed to have Tudor beginnings as a farm, the rear wall is probably very old. The front of the house is Georgian with several alterations over a long period of time. For some 30 years from about 1838 the house was occupied by the owner, John Marriott. From about 1868, a succession of clergymen lived at West Lea namely Revds Hinchcliffe, MacCrae, Woodcock and F C Cursham, all of whom were appointed to Tythby parish. Rev

Cursham remained as vicar for many years into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, being a good cricketer and a notable man in the community. It is then presumed it was sold to A Mr Radford, an antique dealer, who extended the house before 1929 to create a dining room and bedroom above using reclaimed bricks to maintain the appearance of the façade. The house was then sold to the Selbys in 1947. The Gibsons, Tina and John, lived at West Lea from 1963 until 2009 and were great supporters of almost every activity in the village. They were generous to a fault. Interestingly, the Lordship of the Manor, which Henry Smith Jnr bought in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was acquired at auction many years ago by John Gibson, although John chooses to enjoy his possession quietly and without fuss.

**Laurel House** on Tythby Road is possibly the oldest house in the village. The smaller left hand end was built about 1697 and that part was probably one up and one down. The whole house is a combination of several dwellings or outhouses and the remains of 3 staircases can still be seen in the house. There is an ancient copper fire insurance plaque on the oldest part of the house. After the great fire of London in 1666, people began to insure their homes against fire. To show that they had paid their insurance, plaques would be attached to the properties. This plaque depicts the sun, which was a symbol of the Bath Sun and also the Sun Alliance fire insurance companies. The property was owned in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by yet another Marriott who let it to Charles Goodwin, the Victorian village school master. A hundred years later it was owned by another school master the much respected Rev Gilbert Turner.





**The Grange** The present house, being on the site of previous houses of the same name, was built by the Marriott family probably in the 1830s. It seems that the Marriotts built the house, and Langar Hall and at least one other house (possibly The Grove). In a letter written in 1987 Grace Marriott said that her father, Richard Marriott who was a solicitor, was left the house in 1897 by his uncle Joseph. Richard Marriott died in 1935 leaving The Grange to his widow. Grace Marriott, one of 7 children, grew up in the Grange in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and after her father's death Grace's husband bought the house from her mother and lived there for many years. A John Marriott was a noted huntsman and his portrait, dated 1832 and which included his sister Annis, was put up for sale at Sothebys in 1988. The expected price at auction was more than £30,000. The Grange had an adjacent farm and the buildings, called Parnham's Farmyard or Stackyard, were demolished and the site became Grange Park in 1985. Three of the farm buildings were converted



to cottage-style dwellings and four new houses were built.

**The Poplars**, Cropwell Butler, believed to have been built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it may well have been a farm for there is a calf shed behind the garage. The rear of the house may be a little older than the front. The original deeds were lost in a fire many years ago. In a memoir of Baldock there is mentioned a red brick house which appears in the sequence of dwellings described as a farm. On this basis this description fits The Poplars. About 1848 a George Raynor sold the property to George Parr. Thereafter several people occupied the house until it was bequeathed to John Marriott in 1868 by his uncle, George Parr.



**Village House** Additionally there are many delightful older cottages and modern houses which keep Cropwell Butler a village with diverse dwellings. Village House, to the left, is a fine example of a cottage-style house, in the spring the front a riot of blue wisteria. For those keen on cultivating flowers and vegetables there is a Gardening Society where the dedicated arrange informative meetings and summer outings, and in the dead of winter, a fiendishly difficult quiz. Visitors are always made welcome.

### **A Matrimonial Hoax**

William Baldock, who lived most of his life at the Hollies on Back Lane, recorded later in life his recollections of Cropwell Butler when he was young in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. About 1850 there was a great sensation throughout Nottingham and more particularly here in the village which involved a young woman named Harriet Gretton who was a native of Cropwell Butler. She was a girl of humble parents but clearly very presentable.

Two young army officers stationed at the Barracks in the Park came to know an ambitious young Draper in Nottingham who rather fancied he should marry someone suited to his presumed station in life – in other words, a lady possessed of a fortune. The officers, anxious to concoct some sort of prank, persuaded Harriet that she should pass herself off as the Honourable Catherine Lumley, a niece of the Earl of Scarborough, and an heiress to a considerable fortune with property practically everywhere. The young Draper was told that an aristocratic lady had seen him at a society ball and had fallen head over heels in love with him. The officers, seeing their opportunity to further their practical joke, now organised a meeting on Long Row. The meeting was a complete success, each declaring love and fidelity, and agreeing to meet again and bring matters to a “crisis”.

A few days later Harriett appeared in a riding habit again on Long Row mounted on one of Her Majesty’s Chargers with Bob, the captain’s groom on another, and in attendance on her. Bob had been let into the secret, subject of course to the sort of consideration usual in these matters. The Draper now became aware that the lady was outside the shop and she was duly invited in. The Officers also just happened to be passing and asked about her uncle, the Earl, and made various other solicitous enquiries all of which were designed to convince the Draper of Harriett’s position in society. The Draper noted that her hands were rough but she passed this off saying she was a keen gardener.

Things now moved quickly and before leaving the shop it was agreed that a marriage licence should be obtained as soon as possible. This was acquired, they went to a church nearby and were married. The Officers, fearing they could not keep up their pretences at the church, found someone else to be a witness. The bride played her part to perfection, pretending to faint at the right moment and signing her name in an illegible scrawl. The married couple then left at once for their hotel in Derby. However, a friend of the bridegroom heard about the events and immediately followed them to the hotel and vainly tried to convince the Draper that his wife was an imposter. The Officers likewise followed the couple to Derby arriving as matters were coming to a head.

The game was now up and the Draper, not surprisingly, turned on his wife and on the Officers. He threatened to have them indicted for a foul conspiracy and he washed his hands completely of his wife. Harriett protested that she was the same woman before and after the marriage regardless of ‘class’, but the Draper, fearing shame and ridicule, shortly vanished to Russia. Every detail of the whole business was given out to the public but the illiterate Harriett remained married to a man whom she never saw again. It was generally thought she had played her part very cleverly and was afterwards always known as Lady Lumley. It is a sad story of deceit and cruelty, and perhaps it reflects badly not only on the hoaxers but also on the law which at the time counted the wife simply as the husband’s chattel who had been “legally” married. Whatever else, it thrust Cropwell Butler into the limelight for a brief period. What might the News of the World have made of it all?

**Businesses** Here is a selection of enterprises which are here, or have been and gone in recent times.

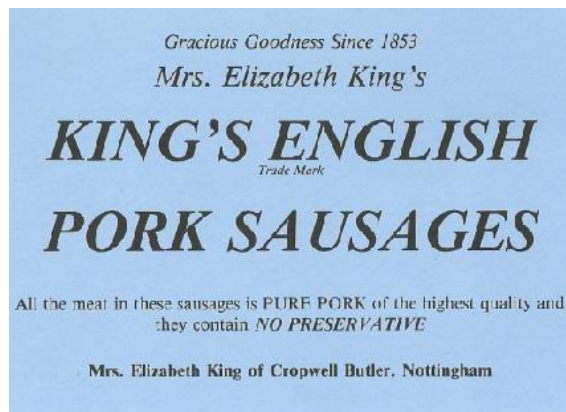
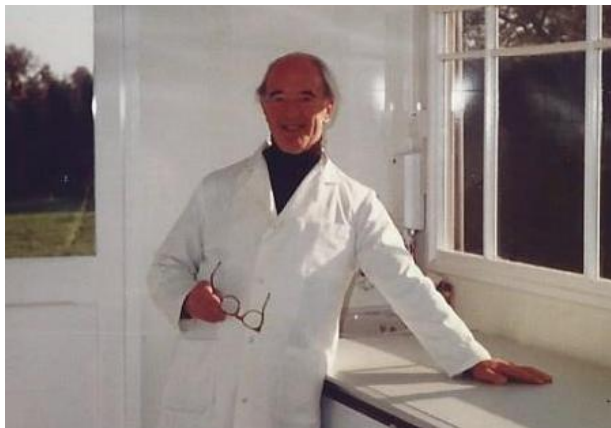
**Harrisons Blacksmiths** In 1967 Philip Harrison modernised an old chapel into what the Nottinghamshire Guardian called “Agricultural Service for the farming community”. In fact the Harrisons had been providing such services for four generations as the following pictures show. Harold Harrison is shown as a younger man, second from the left in the picture. Philip Harrison followed his father into the business and later became Parish Council chairman. In 1980 a hit and run accident damaged the village pump and with difficulty he repaired it at his own expense. Much earlier Cotton and Starbuck had a similar business in Cropwell Butler, and an invoice from 1920 proclaimed “Horses Carefully Shod”. In fact there were many trades,



businesses and shops

in the village from the earliest times. Most were concerned with agriculture and foodstuffs which until the coming of the railways could only be provided locally. Mass production of goods, whether foodstuffs or durables, has completely altered the pattern and distribution of local enterprise.

**Pork Pies and Sausages** Ken Parr was devoted to making sausages and pork pies. His grandfather started a business in 1874 which Ken joined from school and learned first to be a baker and then a pork butcher. Shortly after the war Mr Parr began his own business in a small way in Nottingham, later buying a little



shop in Pelham Street called Pork Farms. The business expanded into Pork Farms Ltd, a well-known prize pork pie enterprise. However, shortly into retirement he found he missed the making of pork pies and decided to start again, at least in a small way. He acquired land between Hardigate Road and Radcliffe Road and in the 1980s built new premises to make the best pork pies and sausages in the area. Melton Mowbray is synonymous with pork pies and the Roper Challenge Cup is the prize for the best pie. Having won the title with Pork Farms he twice triumphed again with his new company – a company comprising himself and a part-time assistant. He adopted the trade name of Mrs Elizabeth King, a firm which had been formed in Nottingham in 1832, but which

otherwise simply provided a means to make his product distinctive. For a time Mr Parr lived at The Grove before moving to the house in the grounds of which he built his Elizabeth King business.

**Barratt and Swann** Roy Barratt and Arthur Swann started off their association as friends in the 1950s. Both were skilled joiners and had spent time in the building business taking on jobs large and small but always having to employ bricklayers to make a contracting team. Believing they could make a business in joinery they formed a partnership and took on any sort of joinery, jobbing or fine work, all from a garage workshop near the Beehive Cottage on Hardigate Road. The business prospered, better workshops were constructed on Hardigate Lane and work came from all directions including a gift shop in Buckingham Palace and modifications to an entrance in Windsor Castle. The business thrives under the next generation of Barratt and Swann, well known particularly for kitchen furniture, for which a fine showroom was provided.



**Branston Bakers** Frank Branston Snr bought the bakery business from Walter Miller in 1930. The bakery was modernised with Electric Production Machinery and in time three vans were acquired for delivery to local villages and businesses. At one time they employed 8 people and this successful village enterprise prospered for many years until mass bread-making and distribution made it impossible to survive. The last loaf was baked in January 1971.



**Bus Services** Lewis's ran bus services from the 1920s until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when the larger companies took over. There was a regular service to and from Nottingham via Cropwell Bishop and Radcliffe. One photo shows a coach about to go on an outing to Derbyshire while the one with the

ladies is from the 1920s when the WI apparently had a trip to Bottesford. This may have been the highlight of the season. In due course the separate Trent and Barton bus companies combined to run county-wide services. They operated timetables partly to suit the County Council's duty to provide public transport and partly their own commercial interests. In times of austerity subsidy of public transport suffered and to some extent this led to parish councils fighting amongst themselves for adequate local services.



There have been and are many families who have made their mark by patient service rather than by wealth or social connection. To mention a great number of them would risk offending others, but Marriott, Baldock, Barratt, Cursham

in no particular order are just examples of inhabitants of here or hereabouts.



**Public Houses** At one time there were three public houses in Cropwell Butler. The Leather Bottle, shown here, still exists as a dwelling house but its licence was not renewed after the death of the then owner, George Parr, in 1868. Prior to 1848 the pub was owned by "Badger" Marriott so called because it was a rendezvous for those engaging in the cruel sport of Badger Baiting. Behind the pub was an old thatched cottage occupied by a Thomas Clifton, an old

schoolmaster and a miserly eccentric. He wrote sufficiently well to contribute to the Ladies' Diary in which he would set and answer some of the enquiries which the periodical might conceivably have received. He was to all intents and purposes a 19<sup>th</sup> century Agony Aunt. This educated man had many quirks and, as might be the case as he got older, occasionally was unwell but declined to send for a doctor as this would entail expenditure. He also disliked the prescribed physic. His remedy was to get drunk, a process which continued for two days or so. After recovering he would pay the landlord all he owed and declared himself to be perfectly well. Such was his parsimony that in cold weather he would sleep with his feet in the fireside oven. He was an elector (before the days of universal suffrage) and on being called to vote for a new coroner, he rather indulged in the food and drink provided after the proceedings. He died from the effects a few days later in 1855 aged 79.



The Royal Oak also exists as a house now known



as Butlers Oak, but it also was closed by Henry Smith when he purchased it also in 1868. The Plough has been a pub for decades. From about 1840 a William Smith owned and ran the inn, and with a short break, the proprietors were a Mrs and Miss Smith. By 2015 it was owned by Punch Taverns, the licensee being a tenant of the company. The

picture above from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century is before the addition of the entrance and toilets. Additions were also made at the rear and the gardens were made attractive to visitors. In earlier days only the left hand side was used as a pub. The right hand side, a village bar in 2015, was originally living accommodation.

**The Fosse Road** In 2015 this ancient but almost straight Roman road sweeps through the parish, now all gleaming and efficient, its traffic thundering north and south. Until recently it was a single carriageway, an overloaded and congested main road, which had borne increasing amounts of traffic for many years. In 2009 approval was given to upgrade and partially re-route a section of the Fosse, the A46, from Widmerpool to Newark. Cropwell Butler was spared an intersection (and the traffic it may have attracted) and acquired an underpass and also a bridge, not only to Radcliffe but to the more outlying areas of its parish.

But in 1911, before the coming of the motor vehicle, the situation was very different. As a highway it counted for little as most traffic went from, say, Newark to Nottingham via all the villages, since that is how the roads ran. The Fosse simply kept going in a straight line, hardly touching any habitation. Local parishes were supposed to maintain their portion of the Fosse and Cropwell Butler had made an attempt at its upkeep. However, there were places in Nottinghamshire on which no trace of any road could be found. Near Widmerpool the Fosse was impassable. Not only was it grass-grown but brambles and bushes had taken over the middle of the road. People travelling south were forced to leave the main road at Saxondale and bypass the Fosse through Radcliffe and not rejoin the Roman road until beyond Loughborough. This added nearly 9 miles to their journey. In another account animals were said at one time to be grazing on the Fosse in our own village.

**Sport** Not much detail is known of sport in Cropwell Butler but several photographs exist both for football and cricket. At the end of the first World War it is clear that several men took the initiative to create something, though quite what is not known at this distance in time. Each photograph has the names where known. From this it is possible to identify many long-term residents of the village, their surnames recurring in other activities.



“Members of the Sports Committee Peace Celebration, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1919”. Top row L-R, CC Smith, G Tomlinson, JB Smith, W Carrington, D Beet, G Scott, P Nowell, WP Green, N Gill  
Bottom row Frankton, Pell, A Zanker, G Archer, J Harrison, Marshall, W Shippside, Draper, HS Barlow (Headmaster)



Cropwell Butler Cricket Club, 1884.

Back Row: Henry Smith, J Groves Hamilton, Wm Hall Baldock (Umpire) Edgar Long, George Parr, Charles Butham

In the centre: Rev FC Cursham (capt), Arthur Tinsley

Front row: Butler Smith, Joseph Baldock, Henry Williams, John Marriott, GT Long and John Wragby.



Cropwell Football Team 1930 in Barratt's Field, Hardigate Road.  
 Back Row: C Foster, M Widdowson, J Tinsley, E Beet.  
 Middle: E Tinsley, F Tinsley, B Smith, J Harpley, Joe Tinsley  
 Front row: W Handley, H Baxter, C Cooke, R Revill, and T Cooke.



Cropwell Butler and Tythby Cricket Club, 1950  
 Back row: A Ingram, G Baldock, D Wilmer, S Parnham, F Cox, D Spencer, A Spencer (umpire)  
 Front row: S Spencer (scorer), J Shepherd, A Archer, C Baldock, H Cox and R Randall.

**Derek Randall**, the Nottinghamshire and England cricketer came to live in Cropwell Butler after he retired from his professional career. Born in 1951 in Retford he played club cricket

until joining Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club in 1970. He made his first class debut in 1972 and thereafter played for the county for 21 years. He had a remarkable international test career, a highlight being his 174 at Melbourne against the Australians with an attack led by Dennis Lillee. An enthusiastic fielder, he was popular with the crowds and frequently kept up a dialogue with himself whilst at the crease. It was said of him that “he was always available, always loyal and his test average in no way flattered him”. The historian cricket writer, Arunabha Sengupta described Derek Randall as “shimmering brilliance with willow and electric fielding”. The Derek Randall Suite at Trent Bridge was named in his honour by Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club.



**Keep Fit** From the Nottinghamshire Countryside, Spring 1945, the following: “Eight years ago after the opening of the Village Hall, although there is no Evening Institute in the village we decided to apply for a Course of Keep Fit Classes for men and women. This proved very popular and later we had sufficient members to run two classes, one mixed for the younger members and one for members of the Women’s Institute only.”  
(Mr Bamford’s role in this activity was not recorded)



Keep Fit class, 1939. Ignoring the 4 on the stage, L-R, R Kemp, H Wragdale, A Beet, F Beet, A Harpley, A Ringham, Widdowson, J Elkington, M Parnham, E Marrison, B Clarke, F Batty and Harry Bamford

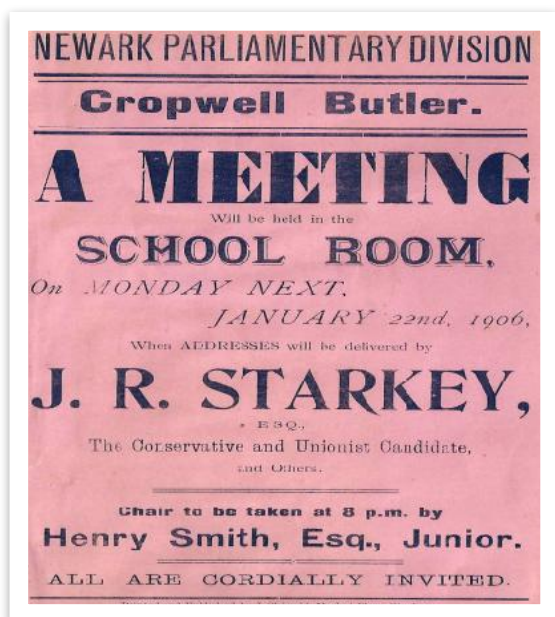
**Village Life** The following three accounts evoke life in Cropwell Butler at three periods in the last 120 years or so.



**Village Life in the 1890s** The principal landowners in 1894 were Henry Smith, Lord of the Manor, Earl Manvers, the Charworth Musters and the Marriott families. In 1960 the recollections of Oswald Scott were published locally and the following is an edited version of his work. Oswald was born in about 1890 and his schooldays were in Cropwell Butler. The teacher was Joseph Hall who frequently used the “switch” to encourage the learning

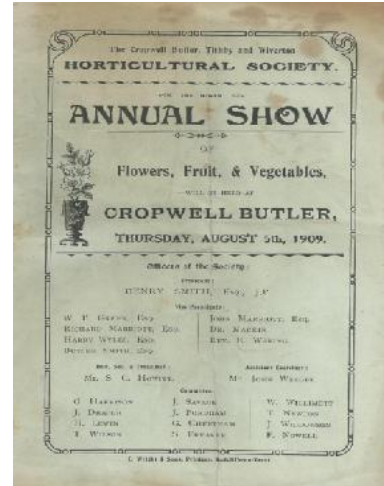
of reading, writing and arithmetic. The school room was beside the Chapel of Ease and Joseph Hall was also organist and choirmaster both for chapel and the parish church at Tythby. All churches and chapels were filled with Sunday worshippers, many devout, some perhaps less willing. Hardigate Road about 1905 is shown above.

Henry Smith at the Grove was the squire, a Victorian autocrat who wielded almost absolute power, offering it seems the choice of a rudimentary existence or the workhouse. Oswald went to work at 8 years old treading chaff, picking stones, leading plough horses, spudding thistles and opening the gates for the Belvoir Hunt, all for 6d a day. Many old customs remained one of which was tinpanning a moral sinner out of the village. Kettles and cans were banged loudly although Oswald joined in he had no idea what it was all about. Plough Monday, early in January, was a week-long celebration where boys went round farms performing charades for entertainment. East Nottinghamshire had the Plough Bullockers and their play had characters disguised by the general blackening of their faces and fancy costume. There was the Quack Doctor and within sub groups a Recruiting sergeant and Hero combat plays.



They were given money and ale and cheese and ended the week at Wiverton Hall for a whole evening. Valentine’s Day was the equivalent for the girls although Oswald had no idea what they did, simply that it was the only time the boys left them alone.

Most houses had a garden and a pig and at the killing of the animal a pig’s fry was sent to the near neighbours. On the hob stood Senna tea and other rural concoctions and a weekly dose of brimstone and treacle was administered with a tap on the head with a wooden



spoon to make sure it was swallowed. Political life focused on the Conservatives, Labour and Liberal being taboo. The poster is dated 1906. A Liberal candidate who tried to speak was ducked under the village pump. At Christmas when so much more food was provided, the boys delighted in showing how much they could eat. The picture shows Radcliffe Road in the early 1900s.

Jobs were limited to the locality, boys to the land and girls into service at The Grove. Oswald had a mile and half walk to work to be ready to start at 6am. He was hired out in his first year for £7 plus his keep and in the summer he worked from dawn to dusk, ploughing with horses when he was 10. Sundays were days of rest and church-going, and everyone knew his or her place. Most walked to Tythby to church but the squire in his barouche arrived in comfort with a groom and sat in his reserved pew. The hierarchy was perfectly clear and, for most people, conformity and security probably went hand in hand. "God bless the Squire and his relations, And keep us in our proper stations" was chanted, though perhaps not with universal enthusiasm. The picture is an advert for the Annual Horticultural Show of 1909.

Oswald's world was more respect and love of parents, good manners to the elderly, and no doctor nearer than Bingham. The saddler's shop took teeth out for twopence with a pair of pincers. Gipsy Smith a great evangelist, came to Cropwell Butler and a reported 2000 people came to hear, occupying the fields opposite the Methodist chapel, this at a time when the village population was perhaps 480. To the left is a picture of Abraham Booth, police constable of Cropwell Butler, in 1870.



Newark Fair was an opportunity for farmers to recruit fresh labour and boys and men stood on the Town Hall steps to have their arms and legs pinched to judge the strength of those looking for work. The annual Club Walk provided boisterous entertainment with one or two bands and dancing under the trees at night.

Oswald's world may have seemed romantic as he looked back 60 years or so. He was fit and well as a boy and perhaps knew little of the wider world. He knew happiness and contentment and wrote of his childhood "we loved our play, even to the extent of putting a



dead pig in Harry Marriot's bed. There were mince pies to make your mouth water, sloe wine and so many other things we have lost the art of making today." The picture is of a mud cottage on the entrance to Barratt's farm, Hardigate Road, about 1908.

There had been a post office since 1860

and this was to change hands and location several times over the next century. One sub post master from 1880, Michael Thurlby, was a man of many parts, being also a baker, shopkeeper and twice-weekly carrier to Nottingham. In 1893 the Cropwell Butler Telegraph Office was opened in a building near the Green and in the first year 1190 messages were sent. The building can still be seen today with its inscription on the wall. The early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may now appear as the end of an era but new inventions were turning old methods of farming and manufacturing on their heads. Then World War One brought about enormous change. Half a generation of young men perished in an appalling conflict, the economy was thrown into turmoil and there began a social revolution, particularly in the role of women in society.





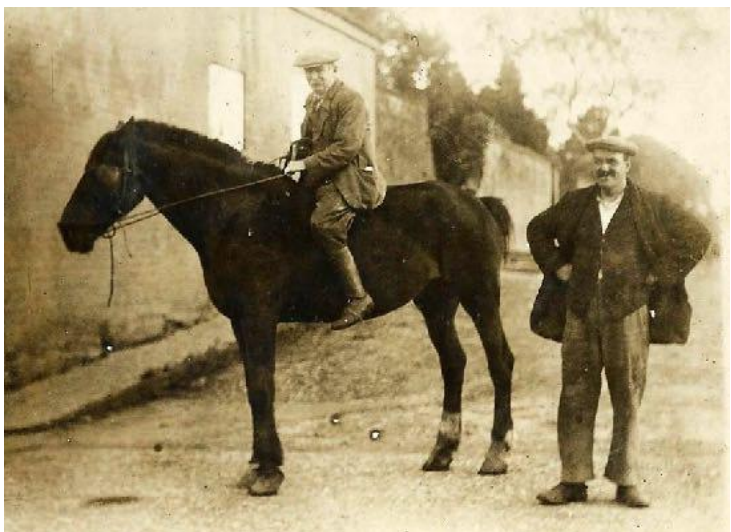
### Village Life in the Mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Another war brought losses from the conflict and the son of the Cropwell Butler policeman, recorded recollections of his wartime childhood.

My Dad, Sid Brooks was the rural village police constable and we lived in the Police House on Radcliffe Road. In the centre of the village, behind the green we children spent many hours watching Mr Harrison at

work in his forge making horse shoes or wrought iron items and shoeing horses. Nearby was

Cheetham's bakery from which bread was delivered with a horse and covered wagon, whilst from Hardigate Lane Branston's Bakery delivered bread in a van. I loved being asked to collect our bread which usually arrived home minus the delicious crust. Milk, which was delivered daily by Cockaynes using a horse and cart, was dispensed from pails into jugs. A grocer, Mr White, from Radcliffe or Bingham used to come on a Monday and take Mum's order for delivery on Friday. The picture shows the two oldest tradesmen, left George Cheetham,



baker, and Harold Harrison, blacksmith, at the entrance to Back Lane in 1938.

The Rev. Lees conducted services at the church which had a hand pumped pipe organ. Nearby was Parnham's small shop and a Post Office. Lewis's Bus Service ran a few trips a day from Cropwell Bishop via Cropwell Butler and Radcliffe to Nottingham. Starbuck's operated a service from Cropwell Bishop on market days, Wednesday and Saturday, again via the village and along Radcliffe Road, to Nottingham. Every Friday Barlow the butcher from Cropwell Bishop called in his van.



There were some large houses in the village owned by the Greens and the Hawthornes and the largest, opposite the White House, belonged to Mr Radford who owned Griffin and Spalding, now Debenhams. He was

often seen in tweeds, a cap and plus fours walking in the village. In 1932 heavy rain caused flooding in Main Street as the picture shows.

The village school had 3 classrooms for ages 5 to 11 with 3 teachers Miss Starbuck, Miss Roworth and Miss Cuthbert, the headmistress. I started school in 1941 aged 5. World War 2 was in progress of course and we had to carry gas masks in a box with the strap over our shoulders. School windows were covered with a stuck-on white mesh material to prevent shattered glass from enemy bombs injuring the children. Each teacher taught two age groups in each of the three classes, talking to one half whilst the other got on with written exercises. Miss Cuthbert used to punish kids by hard slaps on the backs of the hand or in extreme cases for older children, with a strap across the buttocks. School dinners were provided for 2/- per week and we also received a free 1/3 pint of milk a day to ensure children received enough calcium a day to prevent rickets. One unfortunate village boy wore leg braces. On fine Wednesday afternoons we attended to the school garden used for growing vegetables. We were being urged to "Dig for Victory".

The local area had about 26 RAF bomber, fighter and training stations, and aircraft of all types were a common site. Nottingham or a local RAF Station would be the target of a German bombing raid and sirens would signal the start of an air raid. We often heard the distinctive sound of German engines overhead and after the all clear siren a bright glow could be seen coming from the direction of Nottingham. We could also see searchlights and anti-aircraft fire. On 12<sup>th</sup> May 1941 the sound of German twin engines was followed by an extremely loud bang. A lone enemy bomber had first dropped incendiaries and then high explosives which hit Parkin's farm about half a mile away. Three people were killed, Mrs Parkin, a land girl and a maid, and others were injured. On another occasion three incendiary bombs were dropped on our vegetable garden about 10 metres from the rear of the house. After that Dad often boasted about growing roast potatoes. Prior to D-Day there was heavy traffic on the Fosse and planes towing gliders dropping hundreds of parachutists beyond Hoe Hill. In the field opposite some soldiers came one day and began digging trenches and practised with mortars and flares. The children would get up a little earlier to collect the small silk parachutes attached to the used flares. They were popular trophies or playthings at school. Often truck-loads of guarded Italian prisoners of war were driven to farms to do the labouring work.

At harvest time we loved watching the steam traction engine threshing the wheat. Similarly, when a road had to be resurfaced by means of tar and stones, we used to watch the steam roller in action. We had never tasted oranges or bananas and many other essentials and luxuries were denied us by the rationing. To compensate mothers gave their children a spoonful of thick malt and molasses concoction plus Halibut or Cod Liver Oil.



During the war Britain was on 'Double Summer Time', that is 2 hours daylight saving, supposedly to help the farmers. In June it was daylight until about midnight, making it very

difficult for parents to get their children to sleep. Mum was Secretary of the Women's Institute and Dad, with Mum's help, used to organise dances and film shows at the Village Hall to raise money for local charities and for a social activity. Waste paper and scrap metal drives were often held in aid of the war effort. On hot summer days we occasionally had picnics and a bathe by the Grantham Canal. We tried fishing on a few occasions with a line and bent pin but without success. We did however catch tadpoles with a net occasionally. The picture shows Hardigate Lane, probably in the 1930s.

Otherwise Cropwell Butler put up with the shortages and inconveniences of war. By the 1950s Cropwell Butler must have seemed idyllic for outwardly the village was its same old self. The school thrived and all children from 5- 14 were educated in 3 classes in the large Edwardian building. They were all taught together in class but segregated in the playground. Heating and toilets were antiquated and temperamental in cold weather but rarely was the school closed unless coal supplies ran out. In the severe weather of 1947 such was the depth of snow and the degree of frost that children were able to walk on the top of hedges.

Now and later village activities included the WI, drama in the form of the Botiller Players, who performed two productions a year, the Belvoir Singers, 6 men and 6 women who put on Concert Parties. The picture above is from "Wild Goose Chase" performed by the Botiller Players in 1982. From time to time playgroups, the village hall committee and celebrations for Plough Monday, harvest, bonfire night, and there were sports, scouts, and on two occasions success in the Best Kept Village competition. Television had hardly



spread its deadening hand and village social life was in full swing. Partners were found at dances in local villages and without a car it was the last bus home or a goodly walk.

There was a good hourly bus service conveying people to work and to more serious shopping and social events beyond the parish. But many people worked in agriculture either directly on the land or in blacksmiths, joiners, wheelwright and saddlers workshops, all of which met the needs of a rural community. Domestic services and shops included bakers, a butcher and shops for most foodstuffs. There were postal services and the essential sweet shops. The parish was still a rural entity, self-sufficient to a degree but change was always making its way. By 1975 there remained one shopkeeper and one blacksmith.

### Village Life in 2015.

Today the village has become a settlement of individuals and residents as never before in the history of Cropwell Butler and there are perhaps some elements of a dormitory village. But many who belong here, seeking a society or at least social contact, allow themselves to be part of village life. The Plough, its pub sign shown here, still provides alcohol and conviviality and these oil the wheels of social contact. Here serious book club members review their recent efforts and find interesting or perhaps enriching novels. A pool table brings younger people in so that the clack of balls punctuates serious or frivolous conversation. Since pubs in rural situations cannot now survive without food, well-cooked inexpensive meals offer more opportunity for social interaction.



About 600 or so live in Cropwell Butler. Most have their own homes and there are children. Numerous adults are retired but such is the pace of modern life that those in work seem to toil from early morning to late evening, and their weekends are for families and catching up with chores. They enjoy their lives in the reaching and the achieving, making modern hay while the sun shines, many developing their private and not so private social circles. So the retired, free largely from debt and mortgage, are often the modern movers and shakers in the village, stepping up to

the mark as needs dictate or as they wish. But the middle-aged and the older ones make good companions so that there is a genuine community. The old telephone box and the front lawn of the Village Hall are shown above.

The stock of houses, changed considerably since the 1950s, is almost unrecognisable from the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many cottages have been demolished and the few which have survived have been remodelled and fitted with up-to-date amenities. All the shops have gone and most of the old buildings and barns which housed blacksmiths, saddlers, joiners, bakers, pie makers, a cobbler, several sweet shops and even the post office have either disappeared or re-emerged as attractive dwelling houses. The picture shows the bottom of Back Lane.



In the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century there were three farms local to the village, The Grange farm, Rookery farm and Fields farm. By the year 2000 only Fields Farm survived, the remaining land being sold off and in each case the farm buildings developed for housing. In the 1980s Grange Farm buildings were converted into 3 houses and over a period 4 new houses were built. The Rookery farm had been owned by the Sheldon family from about 1911; the family first worked the land until the turn of the century when the descendants put the farm up for sale. During 2000/02 the farm buildings were converted and at least one new house built making a small development of 8 houses. John Sheldon, or rather his heirs, also made the Sheldon Field available for permanent use as a playing field.



The pace of change and refurbishing never lets up but still the village is the shape it has been for nearly a thousand years. The picture is of the village green with the pump behind and to the right of the millennium sign. The village boundaries are little altered and the local authority strives to prevent developers straying into Green Belt though within the village infill is encouraged. Some of the grander houses have been wonderfully restored to a standard never before seen. The older large properties crop

up repeatedly in the history of the village and The Grove, The Court, Cropwell Court, The Grange, West Lea and Rookery Farmhouse would be recognisable, at least in outline, to the time traveller from past centuries. Even Mahon House, about to be demolished in 2015, is to be replaced by a modern but classically designed house.

The motor car is everywhere, both on the move and stationary. The village roads are just straight and wide enough in places for the inconsiderate to tear around, occasionally coming to grief, their own or others. The view to the right is Radcliffe road. Parking is about to become a really contentious issue as most people find the car essential but not everyone has the means of getting off the road. Bus services are now scarce, a dreadful deprivation for those in need of public transport.



The village has a Newsletter, published in an amateur sort of way 10 times a year. It is part self-supporting, part subsidised by the Parish Council which otherwise is studiously neutral about its contents. Similarly the Church of England publishes its own Wiverton News, calling people to services in no fewer than 6 parishes in what is a United Benefice, really meaning



reconciled with today's agnosticism. Main street above winds round towards the village green.

The A46, recently upgraded, still sweeps through the open farmland of the parish. Now we are connected in a short distance to the new road to travel north and south or we may pass beneath it on our quiet journey to Radcliffe and beyond. Anyone from two hundred years ago would be amazed, for then the Fosse was a grassy lane hardly worthy of its Roman origins.

The Parish Council, the lowest tier of local government, is charged with no fewer than 26 areas of responsibility ranging from allotments to war memorials. Elected members meet monthly to address grievances, consider planning matters (for which they have only the right to be consulted), report on progress of long-standing issues and consider their priorities within a limited budget. There is occasionally a contest for places on the Parish Council but mostly elections barely fill the vacancies. Emergencies do occur and the Parish Council chairman is called on to galvanise action. In 2015 the Parish Council is about to launch a website, a mark then of the wish to embrace the technology of the times.



There are several village institutions in 2015, all of which are described elsewhere in this account. Briefly they are: the Sheldon Field, for sports, recreation and a wild flower area, The Village Hall, a committee to keep the hall in good repair and make it available for anyone to use, The WI, an institute for women with common interests, A Gardening Club which shares horticultural interests by meetings and visits, an Indoor Bowls Club and several semi-private activities such as dancing and various keep-fit techniques. The elderly have coffee and gossip every other Tuesday and at least two Book Clubs attest to intellectual interest, or something similar. Since the 1950s the Young Farmers has disbanded, agriculture now being machine-intensive, and village entertainment, no doubt essential in pre-television days, has become less frequent but possibly more sophisticated. The village institution is by no means dead but modern communications and at-home entertainment have displaced the more rustic forms of

community activity. Those who strive to provide village events find a sense of achievement and the frequent congratulations of the party-goers. The red of the Victorian post box is set nicely in the surrounding old Nottinghamshire brick, a sharp contrast with the new tin box on a metal post at the other end of the village. In 2015 collections were made from one in the morning and the other in the evening, the Royal Mail seemingly defying the logic of economic use of their vans.

Of the more recent events the Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee in 2012 generated a great village occasion with tea, sandwiches, music, beer, sausages and dancing - as good as anything in the 1890s, the 1940s and 1950s. There were several republicans in attendance who bravely joined in the celebrations. In fact the occasion was pure English theatre from anytime in the last 1000 years, except that no one finished up in the village pond, perhaps only for the lack of a pond.

**Not the End** This is not the close of a social history for the account goes on as long as Cropwell Butler survives as a separate habitation, retaining its rural character amid the chances and changes of this mortal life. The previous account by Aubrey Harper was published in 1975 and perhaps in about 40 years someone will write more and the story will have yet more life and vitality. Whatever will it be like about 2055? We shall simply have to wait and see.

*The Enclosures Act of the 18<sup>th</sup> century had a profound effect on the later development of Cropwell Butler. The principal need for the enclosures was to improve the quality and productivity of agriculture. The following sets out the problems and the benefits of the changes which came about.*

### **Improvements in Agriculture in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was a rapid improvement in crop yields and also the quality of animals sent to market all of which amounted to an Agricultural Revolution. Through careful stock breeding, farmers were able to produce animals which were heavier for the meat market as well as producing larger fleeces for the wool manufacturers. Between 1710 and 1795 cattle and sheep almost tripled in weight. Medieval farming employed the three field system, whereby three large open fields were worked in strips, two fields producing crops in any one year and the third lying fallow to allow a natural recovery of essential nutrients. Farmers generally were individuals who owned or were tenants of small parcels of land. Large areas of land were often in the ownership of absentee landlords content to take the rents. Living conditions in many rural communities were dire prior to the changes which came with the agricultural revolution. People lived on next to nothing in insanitary and overcrowded conditions and diseases such as tuberculosis were rife and deadly.

At the heart of the "revolution" was the government-led Enclosure Act whereby land was enclosed in good sized areas for greater agricultural efficiency and to stop villagers' animals spreading disease on shared common land. But the Act deprived many small farmers of a living and many were forced into other work or even to moving to the perils of the town. Those who continued to work the land were able to adopt new crop rotations and manures were introduced alongside root crops to feed animals through the winter. Those who lost out often got the poorer quality land or no land at all whilst the wealthier farmers and landowners were given the best fields. The 1850s were the heyday of British agriculture as

the landlord-tenant system generated higher yields and greater profits. The urban demand for fresh produce stimulated dairy farming and the railways and better roads provided the means of rapid distribution.

In the 1870s saw the importation of cheap American wheat, grown in large quantities in the mid-west and transported cheaply by the great railroads. Steamships now carried their bulk cargo across the Atlantic at very low cost. Furthermore, the quality of the US grain was much better for baking white bread. All this plus several years of wet, cold weather created a serious arable depression and many farmers went bankrupt. Those who continued to farm found a market in the expanding biscuit industry which required the soft British wheat. Others turned to livestock, dairy products and the growing of fruit and vegetables. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the American home demand for grain reduced the amounts exported and British agriculture experienced a welcome boost.