

Preface

Before I begin this dive into Glemsford's history I just want to give a small preface to maybe give some context behind it. This writing has been a passion project of mine for some months, and I have learnt on many local historians who have come before me, and many who are still doing great work today – for that I want to thank all of them. Though not everything they said was right, sometimes I did not even know how they came to certain conclusions, but without their work, their enthusiasm for history, I would not have been able to write this piece, and so I will grant them every thanks I can possibly give.

I do not intend for this to be a complete history of Glemsford (sadly I did have to cut many things to make it work), rather I want this to be a starting place for future historians. I have provided enough for a rather simple view of Glemsford's long past, but I have tried to leave just as much out to encourage people to learn on their own, to go searching for answers rather than being handed them. I do hope my writing will encourage people to learn not just Glemsford's history but also the broader history of Suffolk, of East Anglia, of England, thus in places I talk less about Glemsford specifically and more about Glemsford's place in the broader context, and I try where I can to link Glemsford's history to the broader history as well.

The Tale of “Little Egypt”: A History of Glemsford

Your tribe has been following the river for days now, you left your home on the continent in search of new lands, full of fauna and flora, to ensure the survival of your people. Bushes rustle. You freeze. A deer slowly pokes its head up from the brush. Springing into action, you give chase. The hunt takes you through the almost endless forest of alder and birch, you loosen an arrow. A hit. The deer stumbles. With that the hunt is over, all that's left is slowly follow the injured animal until it finally collapses, and it does. Pushing past the branches, you step outside the forest, where the deer lay now. In that moment, however, you are taken over by something else – awe – for before you stretch rolling hills, filled with trees and the songs of birds, and seemingly empty valleys of grasses, occupied by deer and aurochs. It becomes clear – this will be your home in this new land, atop a hill, lodged between a large river to the south and its tributary to the east.

Ten thousand years later, there would be numerous hamlets here, filled with farmers. The trees would be long gone, except for a few plots used for wood, replaced by fields of wheat, barley, and beans. A royal surveyor would go to the Lord and ask him what this place was called, then he would write it down – “Glemsford”.

One thousand years more and this place would be home to over three thousand people in a singular village, living amongst the scars of lost industries. It would boast a long, colourful history and a peculiar new nickname.

Prehistory (pre-43CE)

Palaeolithic, the Old Stone-Age (pre-9000BCE)

The story beginning this piece of work is purely fictional, however, it is very clear that people inhabited Glemsford as early as ~10,000BCE, with a flint tranche axe being discovered in 1978 in a telephone pole hole in Broadway. Though there is evidence that people inhabited the broader Stour Valley area, and thus possibly Glemsford, even before that.

Evidence of stone tools from around 424,000BCE – 374,000BCE, belonging to the Clactonian Culture, have been found in the Stour Valley, although none have been found in or around Glemsford. What is interesting is that these tools belonged to another human species, who arrived in Britain over 400,000 years before modern humans (*Homo sapiens*), called *Homo heidelbergensis*. This particular *H. heidelbergensis* culture preferred riverside locations, therefore making the River Stour a perfect home, and are known to have been a hunter-gatherer society which hunted horses, bison, and deer (with evidence of such animals being processed). It may be speculated that these people and this culture relied on fish, molluscs, and other aquatic life from the river, alongside utilising plants and wood from often nearby woodland. Similarly, it is very likely that this culture was not a sedentary society (i.e. they lived in permanent settlements) instead they were a nomadic society, moving between areas and inhabiting them temporarily before moving onto the next place.

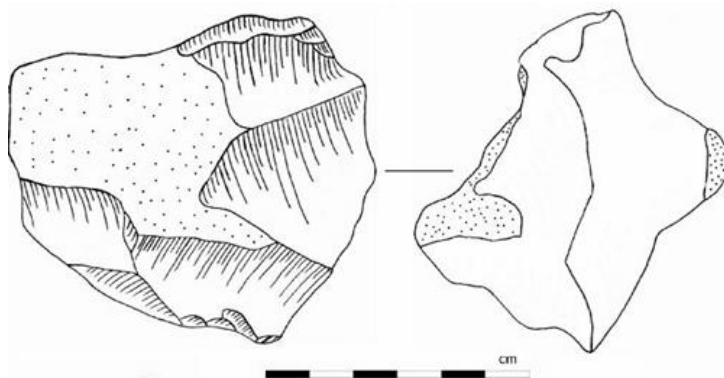


Figure 1 – A Drawing of a Clactonian Tool

I may also speculate that between the habitation of *H. heidelbergensis* and *H. Sapiens* that there was other human species who inhabited the Stour Valley, primarily *Homo neanderthalensis* (often called Neanderthals) who are known to have inhabited Britain from perhaps as early as 400,000 years ago until they went extinct 40,000 years ago, corresponding to the first arrival of modern humans. Though I must add that, at present, there is no evidence of Neanderthal habitation in the Stour Valley.

From ~10,000BCE Britain has been continuously occupied by modern humans, it is not a stretch to say the same about Glemsford. As mentioned before, the first evidence of human habitation in Glemsford dates to about 10,000BCE, though just as earlier human species this was most likely not home to permanent settlements but was instead a singular stop for the

varying human groups who called Suffolk their home at the time. Similarly, the tranchet axe that was found in Glemsford was unlike other earlier axes in that it could be used to fell trees. Therefore, the prevalence of this type of tool across the Stour Valley gives us the impression that people were beginning to radically alter their environment, in ways they hadn't been able to before.

Mesolithic, the Middle Stone-Age (~9000BCE - ~4100BCE)

For the Mesolithic period there is no evidence of human activity in Glemsford, but varying tools from tranchet axes to flint blades and bone axes found in the rest of the Stour Valley can tell us that humans were still active in the area.



Figure 2 (left) – A Tranchet Axe Head found in the Stour Valley (though not necessarily at Glemsford)

Figure 3 (right) – Mesolithic Flints found in the Stour Valley

Neolithic, the New Stone-Age (~4100BCE - ~2500BCE)

Entering the Neolithic period, we begin to see clear signs of human presence in Glemsford once again. Various flint tools and worked flint flakes have been discovered in the farmland surrounding the village, most of which date to the Neolithic. However, these people may not have been the original inhabitants of this land, instead they may have been a group that archaeologists call the “Early European Farmers”. As the name suggests, these peoples were primarily agriculturalists who grew cereal crops such as wheat and domesticated livestock like pigs and cattle; they were part of a group called the “Anatolian Neolithic Farmers” who migrated into Europe from modern-day Turkey in ~7000BCE. These Early European Farmers would arrive in Britain in ~4100BCE, replacing most of the original hunter-gatherer groups. It is not certain that this happened in the Stour Valley, but the evidence does suggest a changing society. Timber and earthwork monuments found throughout the Stour Valley, as well as burial mounds called “barrows”, indicate that a more sedentary and complex society was developing in the region. Similarly, various monuments appear to have been constructed for spiritual or ritual purposes, to quote the Dedham Vale National Landscape heritage

compendia, “as people were able to stay in the same place for longer, they took to more permanent displays of their spirituality or ritual behaviour”.

Whether Glemsford first became home to permanent settlements at this time is hard to tell, but the possibility of the parish being home to small farmsteads is not zero, given the numerous flint tools found in the area

The Bronze Age (~2500BCE – 700BCE)

Once again, the archaeological record for Glemsford is sparse during this period, however, there is further evidence of permanent human settlement with flint tools having been discovered which may link to this period. Furthermore, there is some evidence to suggest that Glemsford was influenced by the changing culture of the Bronze Age: in 2010, a cylindrical golden ornament was discovered in the farmland north of the village, this ornament is thought to be a bead dating to the Bronze Age, suggesting that metalworking had come to Glemsford to some capacity.

If we look at the broader Stour Valley, we can paint a better picture of life in Glemsford. During this period, there is an increasing amount of metal tools being used, particularly those related to woodworking or to warfare such as swords and spears. The lack of bronze farming equipment at the start of this period, in comparison to weapons or woodworking tools, found in the Stour Valley may suggest that this new culture placed a greater importance on warfare and woodworking. Notably, however, at the same time that metal tools begin to enter the archaeological record the quality of flint tools begin to decrease – this is most likely because this new culture was from a new group of people who had arrived in Britain, the Bell Beaker Culture.



Figure 4 – Bronze Age Flints

The Bell Beaker Culture were likely descendants of peoples from the Steppes, given that their genetics were heavily related to those found in the Steppes. When they arrived in Britain in ~2500BCE, they seemingly replaced the pre-existing Neolithic farmers, but in turn they brought new knowledge of metalworking with them (and possibly the genetics associated with lighter eyes and skin tone). Initially, it seems this culture brought the knowledge of

working copper with them; however, they soon learnt how to work bronze. Consequently, it would not be inappropriate to suggest that these people replaced the earlier Neolithic inhabitants living in the Stour Valley.

Whilst the archaeological record for Glemsford may be lacking, it can be implied that this period saw new people settle in Glemsford and the surrounding area, continuing the farming settlements of their predecessors but beginning to work more extensively with metal.

The Iron Age, or Celtic Britain (700BCE – 43CE)

By the end of the Bronze Age, it is likely that inhabitants of Glemsford would have been using bronze for almost all their tools, based on archaeology done elsewhere in Suffolk and England more broadly. Regardless, what is clear is that there was an Iron Age culture beginning to develop in Glemsford.

Excavations done from 2015 to 2016, in what is now Hammond Croft, behind Schoolfield, found ditches and possible droeways dating to the Iron Age period, as well as various pottery sherds¹. Other finds in the area include fragments of querns (stone used to grind grains) suggesting a continued practice of agriculture, which is hardly surprising.

However, that is not to say that the people living here did not change culturally – indeed, during this period we see the eventual abandonment of bronze in favour of iron tools as demonstrated by other sites in the Stour Valley, and Britain more broadly.

Similarly, a new cultural influence would have a profound impact on the people at Glemsford during this time – the Celtic people. The Celtic culture had originated in continental Europe during the Bronze and Iron Age, and the culture had reached Britain by, at least, 700BCE (though there is much debate about both their origins and migration still). Unlike the previous migrations in Britain which had replaced the former inhabitants, it seems as though Celtic culture had simply been adopted by the native population; whilst there is still debate here, it is likely that the inhabitants of Britain adopted this culture thanks to prolonged contact with the continent, alongside intermarriages and small-scale migrations from continental populations. It is possible that Glemsford's inhabitants adopted the Celtic culture via trade routes or intermarriage with groups that had already adopted this culture – though we must not ignore the possibility that this was a forceful assimilation via conquest.

Rev. Kenneth Glass in his “Short History of Glemsford” seems to allude to the latter, describing a supposed known “tribal war” between the Iberians, Goidels, and Brythons. However, this seems wholly fictional as I cannot find any source of this “known” tribal war or even of some of these groups. Therefore, I find the voluntary adoption of Celtic culture to be more accurate, especially as evidence of the same pottery style from the Bronze Age has been found in the Stour Valley, suggesting these were the same inhabitants.

¹ “Sherd” is used to describe pieces of broken pottery in archaeology, as opposed to “shard”

Nonetheless, by the time the Romans conquer Britain, and even before, Glemsford appears to have been fully Celtic.

By 9CE, we can tell Glemsford was a part of the Celtic Trinovantes tribe based on the discovery of over 200 coins, likely minted at Camulodunum (Colchester), bearing the image of King Cunobeline, who was King of the Trinovantes from 9CE until 40CE. It appears Cunobeline, often called Cunobelinus by the Romans, was either an ally or subject of the Romans, judging by the use of “Rex” (Latin for “King”) on the coins bearing his name.



Figure 5 – Gold Stater (Coin) of Addedomaros, an earlier Trinovantes King, found in the Stour Valley

At the time of Julius Caesar’s invasion of Britain (55-54BCE), the Trinovantes were supposedly the most powerful group within Britain under the possible King Imanuentius. Though the Trinovantes were conquered by their neighbours, the Catuvellauni, in 54BCE and later, for a final time, between 5BCE and 9CE.

Aside from the new metalworking and political developments, Celtic culture may have given something greater to Glemsford – its name.

I believe that “Glemsford” may be partly derived from the proto-Brythonic language, spoken by the Celtic Britons. I propose that “Glem” in “Glemsford” is a derived or corrupted version of the proto-Brythonic word for “valley”, *glinn*. It is very likely that the Celtic inhabitants who lived in the area would have noticed that they were surrounded by valleys, the Stour Valley and the Glem Valley, and therefore it is likely they would have named their settlement after this geographical information, like so many other settlements are. Furthermore, we know that *glinn* has other derivations in both the Celtic languages of Britain and in English, take for example the word “glen”. Additionally, Glemsford, to this day, is occasionally called “Glensford” by inhabitants, further supporting its possible ties to the original proto-Brythonic word for “valley”. Even more so, it may explain why the Glem River is named as such – if the original inhabitants knew the river was in the valley, it is likely they would have called it “the valley river” or possibly just “the valley” in their language and later inhabitants, possibly unaware of the language would have stuck to calling it that, or later Anglicised Celts may have continued to use the name alongside their newly-acquired language of Old English.

To neatly summarise, I propose that the original Celtic inhabitants named their settlement after the valleys they lived near, calling it *glinn* something, however, over time this became corrupted into the word “glen” or “glem”, whether that is simply due to the language

evolving or due to new arrivals in the area is hard to know for certain. Therefore, it is possible that “Glemsford” could mean “the valley ford”.

For Glemsford, the Iron Age brought a wealth of new knowledge: the ability to work iron, and a new culture imported from the continent, alongside new political allegiances in the form of the Trinovantes tribe. Likewise, it may have even contributed to its very name. However, the Iron Age in Britain, and by extension prehistory, would come to an end in 43CE, when a new Mediterranean empire sought to conquer the island, bringing with it new cultural ideas, new technologies, and a new language to Britain.

The Roman Era (43CE – 410CE)

By 43CE the Roman Empire had invaded Britain, defeating the Catuvellauni (capturing their capital at Camulodunum), thereby conquering the Southeast of the country – of which Glemsford was a part of – and setting up the province of *Britannia*.

One theory for Glemsford’s nickname suggests it came from the Romans: Rev. Kenneth Glass posited that the name “Little Egypt” was used by the Romans to describe the religious fervour of Glemsford’s inhabitants, likening their Druids to Egypt’s priestly caste. There is zero evidence to support this, and it appears to be wholly speculation, and I have only included it to have a fair discussion.

Regardless, there was a direct Roman presence at Glemsford as archaeological evidence has revealed. Over 40 sherds of pottery, dating from 43CE to 200CE, were found in excavations in, what is now, Hammond Croft in 2016. Years earlier, in 2013, an excavation north of Lion Road found numerous pottery sherds, quern fragments, and various ditches which dated to the Roman period. Likewise, we know that Lower Road was a Roman road linking Clare to Long Melford.

These finds reveal that there was a direct Roman presence and influence in Glemsford, but even more than that, it has been suggested that there was a high-status Roman building in the area – that meaning, there was potentially a Roman Villa in or around Glemsford. I will point out here that it is not that the Roman invaders set up a presence here, rather it is more likely that these were local British elites who were Romanised, possibly even before the Roman conquest given that the Trinovantes had ties to the Roman Empire and conducted trade with them under King Cunobeline, and who encouraged the local population to adopt a Roman lifestyle to some extent (though it is equally possible the locals adopted Roman culture due to the contact with the Roman Empire in general).

In 60CE, unrest in the conquered territories was about to erupt, led by Queen Boudicca of the Iceni (located in roughly where Norfolk is today). The revolt was motivated by the Romans’ violence toward the Iceni tribe (and the general conquest of Britain), and particularly the Romans’ disregard for the treaty signed by Emperor Nero and the Iceni King Prasutagus, which guaranteed the Iceni’s independence. However, the Iceni did not revolt alone, they were joined by the Trinovantes, of which Glemsford had been a part of, and other Britons. Whilst we cannot be certain, it is definitely possible that Glemsford joined in the revolt against the Roman Empire, helping them in their attacks on Camulodunum (Colchester),

Londinium (London), and Verulamium (St. Albans). Sadly, this revolt ended in defeat for the Britons, resulting in the death of Boudicca – whether by poisoning herself, or illness is unknown – and the continued conquest, and rule, of the Roman Empire.

The Roman presence continued in Glemsford, as it did for Britain, for the next 300 years: coins spanning the entire Roman period have been found in farmland around the village, as have various pins and brooches. One coin was definitively dated to the reign of Antoninus Pius from 138CE to 161CE, which was found in what is now Kings Road. Whilst, it is hard to say what Roman Glemsford was like, based on the current evidence we have, we can speculate that a Romano-British culture (a fusion of the Roman and Celtic Cultures) was forming, or intensifying, like in the rest of Britain. Likewise, despite the presence of a Roman Villa in Glemsford it is possible that smaller farmsteads existed around the parish. As for their language, it is likely Glemsford heard both the imported Latin language and the native Brythonic language, with Latin primarily being spoken by the elite and Brythonic continuing to be spoken by the peasantry, though it is possible that some people were bilingual.

Glemsford would remain part of Roman Britain, experiencing numerous administrative reforms, political crises and revolts, and the introduction of Christianity to Britain, until the end of the Roman Rule in Britain in 410CE, giving way to a period called “sub-Roman Britain” where Roman culture was still alive, but the Roman Empire had firmly lost control. In the now unstable political landscape, Romano-British kingdoms and warlords took control, but not for long, as new arrivals from the continent would come to dominate the political landscape of England.

The Middle Ages (410CE – 1500CE)

Early Middle Ages, or Anglo-Saxon Britain (410CE – 1000CE)

There is much debate about how the Anglo-Saxons came to Britain, ranging from small-scale migrations which caused the native Celtic population to assimilate to the new Germanic culture, to large-scale invasions and conquest of Romano-British Kingdoms. Either way by the 500s CE, the Anglo-Saxon culture and their language of Old English was prevalent throughout England, with Romano-British Culture disappearing from most of the island. At this time new Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms would come to dominate England, replacing the Romano-British Kingdoms and local warlords.

I will focus on one kingdom here because it is of particular note in Glemsford’s story. The Kingdom of the East Angles, or the Kingdom of East Anglia, was most likely one of the first Anglo-Saxon kingdoms as East Anglia was one of the first areas to be settled by the new arrivals. Details of this period are very murky throughout England, therefore what we know about this kingdom, and by extension what we know about Glemsford, is very limited (and is possibly more akin to legend than history in some cases).

The Kingdom of East Anglia is likely to have come into existence in the 500s CE, after the political centralisation of the new Angle settlers: the first kings were possibly King Wehha and King Wuffa, who ruled through the 500s, though these two figures may be entirely fictional or only loosely based on real people. It is after Wuffa which the first dynasty of East

Anglian Kings gets its name, the Wuffingas. The Wuffingas would rule East Anglia until roughly 749CE; under King Raedwald, the Kingdom would become Christianised after the King converted to Christianity. East Anglia would flip between being an independent kingdom and a client kingdom of Mercia, its western neighbour centred around the Midlands roughly.

Whilst we do not know much about Glemsford specifically, we do know some things. Glemsford was likely a series of small hamlets at this time, centred around the Church (which was also likely first established as the parish church at this time), around Fair Green extending down Brook Street, and around Tye Green extending down to Skates Hill – this idea is supported further by the fact that later maps of Glemsford clearly depict disjointed areas of settlement. Similarly, during this time we see the beginning of manorialism, the system of manors which dominated the countryside until as late as the 1800s, with Glemsford parish likely being home to several different manors, as other villages were at this time.

The Anglo-Saxon settlement of Glemsford may have also brought Glemsford a new farming arrangement, called open-field farming, which continued to be used up until the 1800s. Open-field farming consisted of fields being split into small strips and divided amongst the population, for example, a field may be divided into 10 one acre strips and given to 10 different families to farm. This system was often a very communal affair, with the ploughing of the fields and harvesting of crops often being undertaken by the entire village, with each landholder then being entitled to the contents of their strip of land (minus the amount which was owed to the Lord of course). Complementing this system was a crop rotation method called “two-field farming” where crops, often grain, would be planted on half of the fields in one season, or year, whilst the other half would be left fallow to recover from the last harvest. For example, if a village had two open-fields then one field would be planted with wheat in autumn or spring, whilst the other field would be left fallow so that it could recover its lost nutrients from the harvest before, in the next year the two fields would swap. By the end of this period, this two-field system was replaced by a three-field system (see Figure 6) where one field would be planted with grain in autumn, one field would be planted with beans, or legumes, in spring, and the final field would be left fallow, then they would swap – this meant that a field would be used 2 years out of 3 instead of 1 year out of 2 like before. This system would last until the 1800s, and crop rotation is still used to this day by farmers.

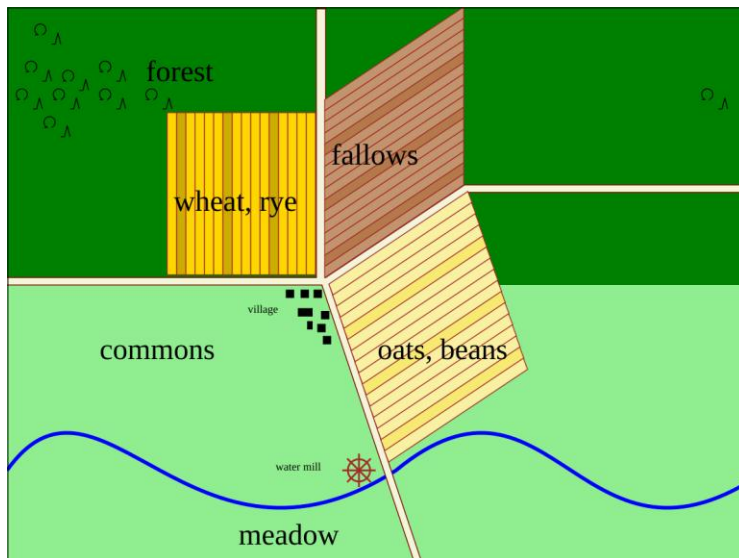


Figure 6

Beyond agricultural and political arrangements, it is here where Glemsford would truly become “Glemsford”. Whilst we are still debating where “Glem” comes from we can be certain that “ford” is of Anglo-Saxon origin, and unsurprisingly means “ford”, that is a “river crossing” and was evidently used to describe the fords in either the River Glem or the River Stour which the local population would have been familiar with. Whether “Glem” is of earlier Celtic origin or is actually of Anglo-Saxon origin is debatable, but it was definitely the Anglo-Saxons which first called this village “Glemsford”, and the name has stuck for nearly 1500 years.

Once we enter the later section of this period, things begin to change extensively. By 869CE, the Kingdom of East Anglia had been conquered by the Vikings and had been incorporated into part of the Danelaw – an area of England where Danish Law was applicable alongside English Law, I will point out this was not the actual name of the area, with most areas continuing to use their Anglo-Saxon names. It would seem that Glemsford saw its fair share of Viking raids, as one folktale tells of a field just north of Lower Road called “Dane’s Field” which was supposedly the site of a battle between Vikings who had sailed up the Stour River and the Anglo-Saxon inhabitants of Glemsford. Similarly, Rev. Kenneth Glass notes that the tower of the modern-day church was once a Saxon watchtower used to watch for potential Viking invaders; he notes that there, too, is a potential earthwork which descends from the church to Lower Road. However, I am unable to verify these claims and therefore, I cannot say whether this is true or not, but it is a possibility.

But this Viking rule of East Anglia would not last, as East Anglia’s rulers would submit to the Kingdom of Wessex in 918CE, becoming a part of the new Kingdom of England. It is likely that the inhabitants of Glemsford did not even notice or care much about this seemingly profound development as life for many of them would not have changed much under the new “English” kings from their life under the East Anglian kings.

We do not know much more about Glemsford during this period, it is likely that life just went on for the inhabitants, whilst kings rose and fell the villagers would probably have been more concerned with paying their dues to their local Lord and with praying that the harvest went well that year – they probably focused on raising their children, tending to their farms, and trying to enjoy the life they had. Indeed, it seems little would change for Glemsford until a new conqueror entered the scene in 1066.

The High Middle Ages, or Norman Britain (1000CE – 1300CE)

Between 1000 and 1066, England would switch between Anglo-Saxon and Viking rule, with Harold Godwinson being the last Anglo-Saxon king in 1066. Though I'm sure the inhabitants of Glemsford cared very little that they were now paying taxes to a different king than before, but we have no evidence from then anyway. Instead Glemsford, and England, would really change after October 1066.

Famously, the Battle of Hastings took place in October 1066, with Harold Godwinson being shot in the eye with an arrow and William the Conqueror coming out victorious. This would mark the start of the Norman rule of England – however, William, now King William I, needed to know who owned the land in his kingdom and therefore how much he was owed in taxes. In his endeavours, he would send surveyors across the country to document the land and its lords in the Domesday Book.

This would be the first time Glemsford would appear in written history: in 1086, the parish consisted of 3 manors – Glemsford Manor, Peverells Manor, and Fenstead End Manor. All together they recorded ~48 households which meant, in 1086, Glemsford had a population of ~144 to ~250, 81% of whom were *villeins*.

The Manors of Glemsford Parish

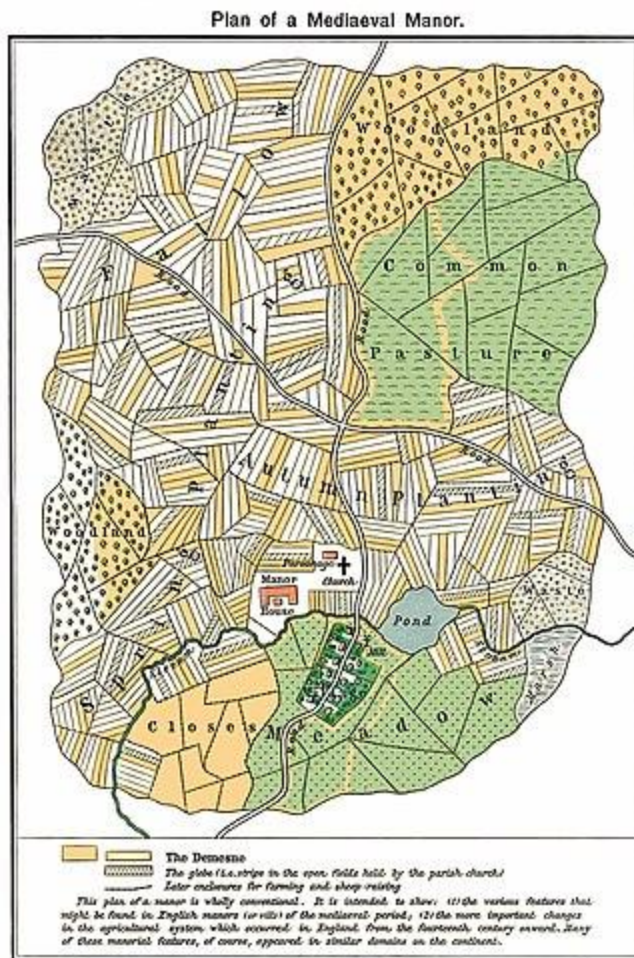
Before I talk about the manors specifically, I want to outline what a “manor” is because it is often misunderstood.

To start, a manor is not just a landed estate, as in a collection of lands, instead it is also an area of jurisdiction in which the customs (think bylaws) of the manor apply. Confusingly, a manor could reach across different parishes, or a parish could reach across different manors, and their lands weren't necessarily continuous (you could easily have one farm belong to one manor and be surrounded by farms belonging to another manor). Similarly, even villages could be split between manors (which likely happened in Glemsford's later medieval history) making a very confusing affair. Though interestingly, in the case of a “village-wide” issue villagers would supposedly form organisations separate from their manors as to better deal with the issue.

A manor often consisted of various types of land: the Demesne land which was land owned directly by the Lord, Glebe land which was owned by the parish church, then Peasant holdings which was land owned by the peasantry to support themselves. I want to note that I say they “owned” this land but it was more akin to “had the rights to use” the land – for

example, the King gave the Lord the “right to use” some land (the Demesne) then the Lord gave the peasants and the Church the “right to use” some of that land (Peasant holdings/Glebe). Additionally, a manor had “Manorial waste” and “commons”: waste land was land that was unused by the Lord but wasn’t granted to anyone else (often this was because it was unfertile land, or it was on the edge of the manor and was thus hard to use), whilst the “commons” were land, usually pasture, where villagers had the right to graze their livestock, with no one person holding exclusive rights to it. There are cases where waste land was used as common land, often by poorer inhabitants, but I cannot say if this happened at Glemsford.

Within that manor, you had various inhabitants: freemen, villeins (serfs), and slaves (and also landless peasants who were often unrecorded). Your status was defined by the type of land tenure you held, which defined your legal protections and rights. Freemen were the highest status, they held land in return for (often) *socage*, an annual rent, which granted them the ability to leave the manor freely and, if they committed a crime, to be tried in royal courts as opposed to manor courts (which were heavily biased toward the lord) – higher status freemen (like aristocrats or nobility) held their land in return for knight-service, frankalmoign (prayer/religious service), or major/petty *serjeanty* (various services, eg. Advising the king). Villeins were the most common inhabitant throughout England, these people held their land in return for working on the Demesne land (known as unfree tenure) whether that be farmland, woodland, or upkeeping public roads – this type of tenure came with lots of restrictions and additional taxes (for example, if your daughter wanted to get married you’d have to pay a *merchet*, or if you took on new land you’d have to pay an entry fine), however, many often willingly entered into villeinage because it granted them and their families stability and security for generations. Slaves were the lowest status (though slavery was outlawed under the Normans), they held no land of their own but would have to work the Lord’s land, surviving off only what the lord gave them. Landless peasants were similar; however, they didn’t have the same legal restrictions as slaves – these people held no farmland of their own and would have to work for others in exchange for a wage. It’s important to note that these positions didn’t dictate a person’s wealth or success necessarily: there are cases where villeins were richer and more prosperous than freemen, they are slaves even who were incredibly successful compared to those with more freedom. Ultimately, whilst your status definitely affected your life and your struggles, it didn’t necessarily have to define your success or prosperity.



A Simplified Outline of a “Manor”

Before I begin talking about the manors, I want to make it abundantly clear that the often-cited “fact” that Odo of Bayeux, or his relatives, held land at Glemsford, or had a part in Glemsford, is completely false. It was first mentioned in the 1700s in John Kirby’s “The Suffolk Traveller” with nothing to back it up, and all the actual manorial records disprove it. Rev. Kenneth Glass cited a similar lie in his booklet, that the manor of Guthelnesford (owned by Odo’s relatives) was located at Glemsford but this is untrue. Guthelnesford, as far as I can tell, was located in part of, what is now, Ipswich, nowhere near Glemsford or even this side of Suffolk.

Now then, let’s talk about the manors at Glemsford.

First of all, the biggest manor was Glemsford Manor, in 1086 it held a total of 960 acres (though it probably held more) of land and comprised 40 households. 34 households were classed as villeins, whilst only 1 was classed as freemen. In 1086, the manor was held by the Abbey of Ely and was worth £16; in 1066, the Abbey also held the land, however, it was only worth £10. Interestingly, it seems that the Lord converted part of their land to sheep farming during those 20 years as in 1086, it notes that there were “200 sheep” which are notably absent in 1066. Likewise, it appears that where Park Farm now is, and along Park Lane, was a deer park which was owned by the Bishop of Ely during this time.

The second manor, Fenstead End Manor, is an interesting one because nowadays Fenstead End is no longer part of Glemsford civil parish (although it is still part of the church parish). Regardless, the manor held 320 acres of land and comprised 8 households, 3 of which were villeins, with the rest being slaves. In 1086, the manor was held by Ralph of Limesy and was worth £5. 20 years earlier, it was owned by Edgar of Houghton and “Earl Harold”, though the Lord was Uhtred.

The final manor, that can be confirmed, is Peverell Manor. In 1086, it held a total of 30 acres of land but had no households (at least none were recorded). In 1086, it was owned by Ranulf Peverel (whom the manor was named after), but the Lord was Warin, with the manor being worth 6 shillings. In 1066, it had been owned by Siward Barn, and the Lord was Blaecwin. By 1230, the manor had passed to a family (or maybe the descendants of Warin) who took the surname “Glemsford” as we see that a “Robert de Glemsford” sold 2 acres of farmland to “Richard of Crownthorpe” for 20 shillings, with an annual rent of 12 pence.

However, there is another estate which can be gleaned here. In 1274, Matilda Walerand was paid “10 marks” (£6, 13 shillings, and 4 pence) in rent from Alan de Plogenet and £8 from the King. First of all, this tells us that Alan de Plogenet and King Edward I held land in Glemsford in 1274 and were seemingly indebted to this Matilda. To explain simply, it seems that Matilda’s husband, Robert Walerand, held lands in Glemsford as part of his estate which spanned across England and Wales. Due to various agreements, these lands passed into the ownership of Alan de Plogenet, of which Glemsford was included, but an annual rent would be paid in exchange (the same was agreed when some of the land passed into the King’s ownership). Similarly, the agreement seemed to include that these lands were held “for the heir of Robert Walerand”, but it seems this heir never inherited them. When Robert died in 1273, it seems the annual payment continued but went to his wife instead.

Medieval “Fair Green” and “Tye Green”

Whilst we begin to see written sources surrounding Glemsford from this point on, during this period those records are still quite scarce and mostly pertain to land transfers and the dealings of manors. However, one we might be able to glean a little from modern-day street names: particularly, Fair Green and Tye Green. The small triangular greens are a common sight in British villages and there is a reason for that – most of these greens were originally used as common land, where villagers would graze their livestock (or as meeting places for village issues, and obviously, for fairs). It is very likely that Fair Green and Tye Green started out like this in Medieval times, as a place for the inhabitants to raise their livestock, and they have been preserved as a sort of “public green space” ever since.

Quia Emptores

As this period went on the feudal system changed shape and there was one change which would have drastic effects on feudalism across the country. In 1290, the law *Quia Emptores* was initiated on behalf of the great Lords throughout the country. This law prevented feudal tenants from subinfeudating their holdings, dramatically impacting the manorial system.

For starters, let me explain feudalism before this law came into effect (see Figure 7). The whole of England was considered part of the “King’s Estate”, or his Realm, but he could not run it all himself, so he granted parts of his land (subinfeudated) to “tenants-in-chief” who then owed the King various services (often a number of knights). Tenants-in-chief, with the King’s permission, would then subinfeudate it again to “Mesne Lord” who then owed them part of those services the tenants-in-chief owed them King (for example, say they owed 5 Knights to the King, then the Mesne Lord would owe them 2.5 Knights). These Mesne Lords would then continue to subinfeudate this land to relieve their own obligations. Now, this created a problem because the tenants-in-chief would often come up short on their obligations, because their obligations were now divided amongst 100s of lesser lords who couldn’t provide 0.5 of a knight and so paid in cash (which didn’t help meet their obligations).

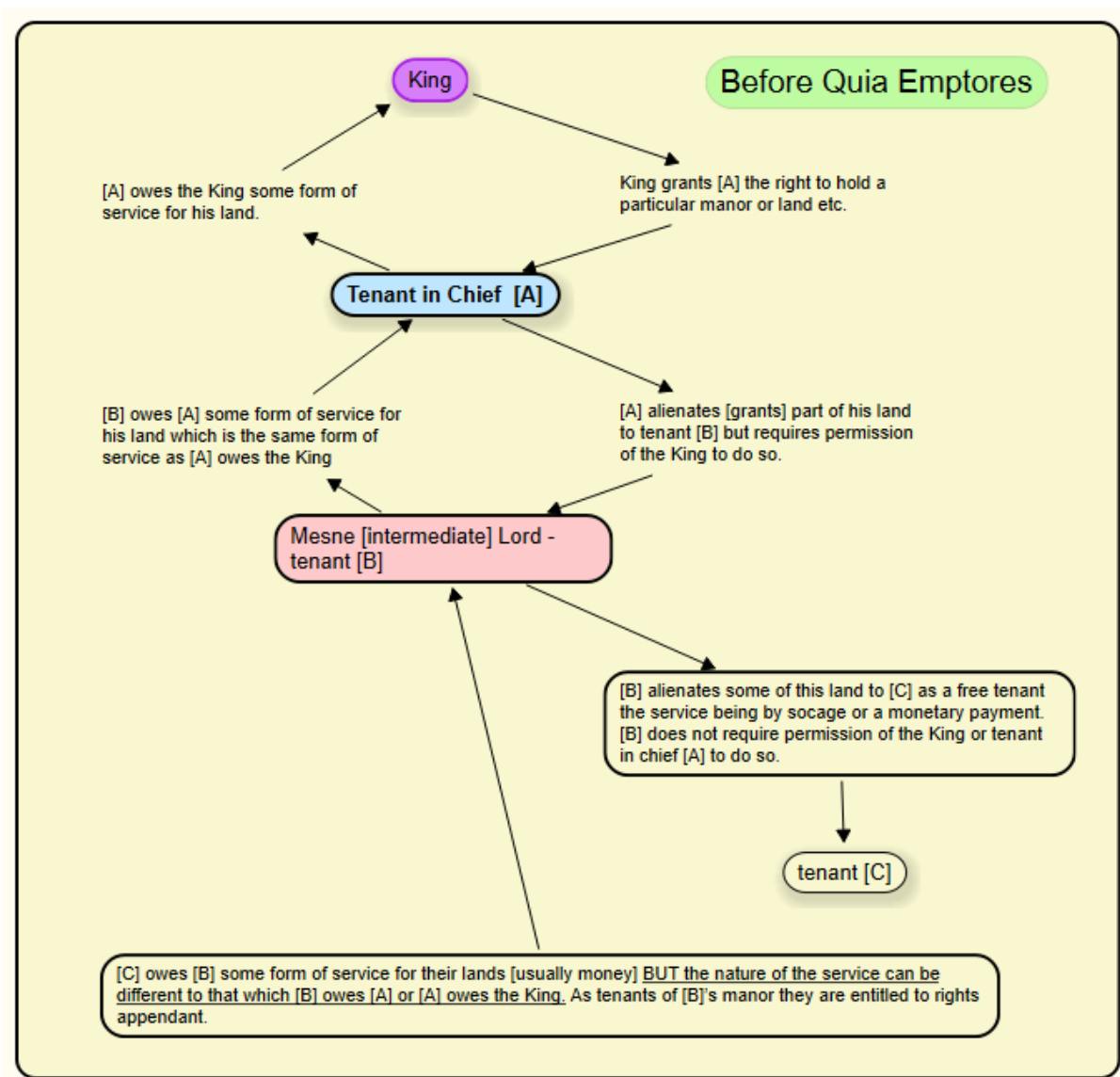


Figure 7

Quia Emptores prevented these Mesne Lords from creating new free tenants, i.e. they could no longer subinfeudate their holdings (see Figure 8). If they wanted to get rid of their land, they would have to substitute it. This means that the new tenant would have the same requirements as the old tenant did under the tenant-in-chief. For example, if a Mesne Lord owed their tenant-in-chief 5 knights and then substituted half of their land, they would then owe 2.5 knights instead, and the new tenant would owe the same tenant-in-chief 2.5 knights as well. This system guaranteed that tenants-in-chief could meet their obligations to the King, however, it had the consequence of preventing new manors from coming into existence unless granted by the King, and it prevented new freemen from being part of the manor they got their land from (thus shrinking the manor's area of jurisdiction).

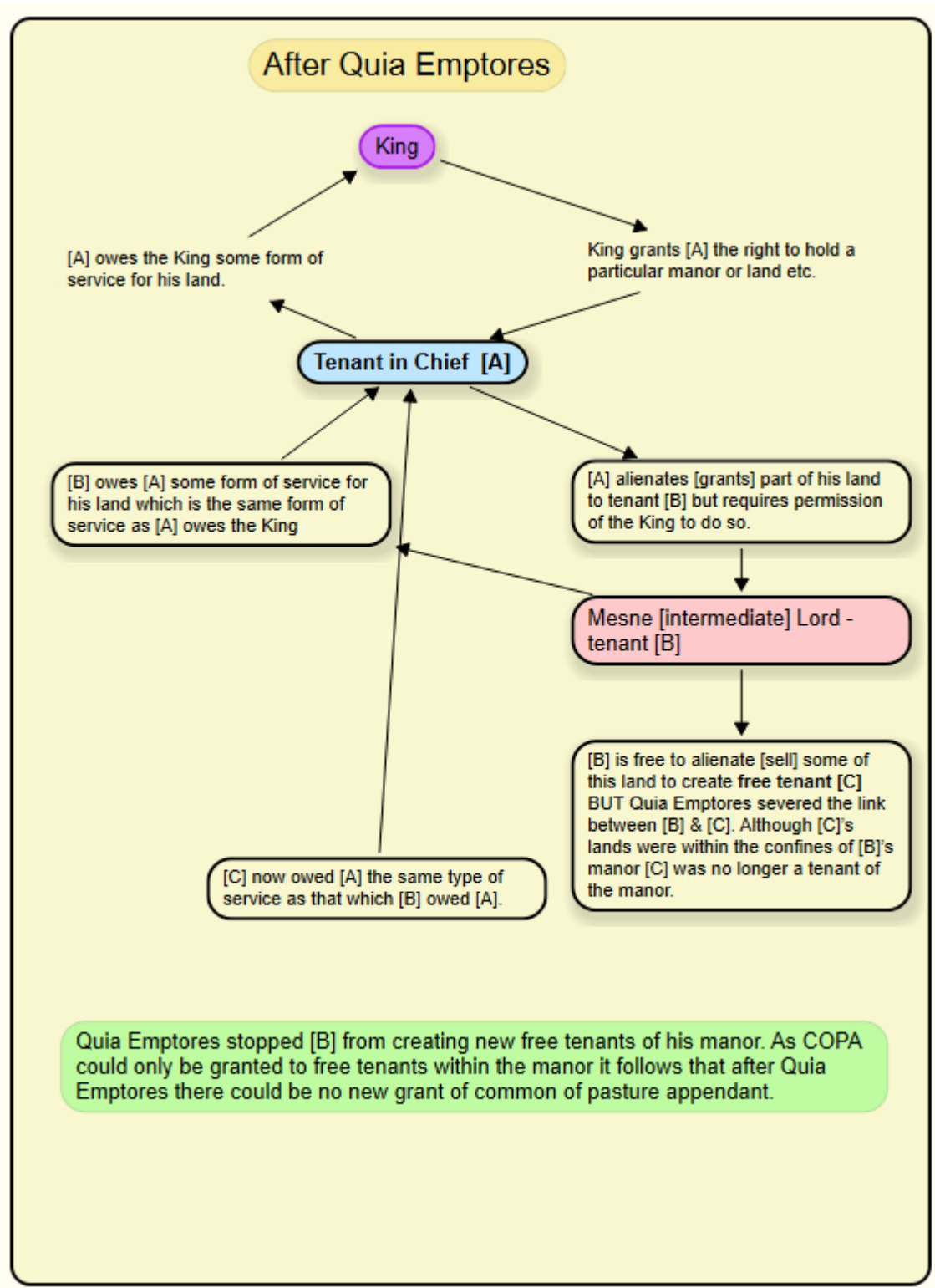


Figure 8

In Glemsford, this change mattered a little less because Glemsford Manor was directly owned by a tenant-in-chief (the Abbey of Ely) however, it does mean that later manors in Glemsford

were approved by the King. Likewise, it is an important change to be aware of if you wish to do your own research on this time period.

Glemsford's College of Priests

One last story that pertains to this period is that of the Fraternity of Clerks of Glemsford. Supposedly, this was a guild of priests that was established by King Canute in 1020CE to carry out specific duties in the church at Bedoericworth (Bury St Edmunds). Under King Edward the Confessor (1042 – 1066) the Fraternity was granted special privileges and protections. In connection with this, a school was supposedly erected in Glemsford to educate future priests and clergymen by the King, under the administration of the Abbey of Ely. Each succeeding monarch renewed these privileges, even after the Norman conquest, thus the College continued to operate until the reign of Henry III (1216 – 1272) who initially renewed its privileges but later rescinded it.

The Late Middle Ages (1300CE – 1500CE)

As the Middle Ages entered its final period, Glemsford continued to change as did the rest of England.

The most formative of these changes took place due to the Black Death, from 1348 to 1349. It is likely that Glemsford's population decreased significantly, possibly up to 60%, like in the rest of the country. This would have left a lot of farmland uncultivated which was subsequently replaced by sheep farming in order to endure the sudden shortage of labour. Likewise, this shortage of labour may have prompted better working conditions and higher wages for the peasantry, as their work was suddenly a lot more valuable to their lord. In England more broadly, the King passed laws which kept the wages for labourers set at pre-plague levels, fuelling discontent towards the landed nobility over the next few decades. This discontent would bubble up in 1381 in the Peasants' Revolt. In Suffolk, this revolt was led by John Wrawe: the rebels marched on Bury St Edmunds and Cavendish against the wealthy nobles and clergymen. It is very possible that some inhabitants of Glemsford were involved in the revolt, particularly in the marches on Cavendish, and may have rebelled against their own lords (though we cannot be certain without evidence).

Whilst the Peasants' Revolt was defeated by the King and his army, it did lead to important social and economic changes. From 1400 to 1500, feudalism as a system mostly collapsed: villeins gained a greater legal status, with many of the same protections and rights as freemen, due to a new type of tenure called "Copyhold". Copyhold tenure was similar to villeinage as copyholders still held their land in exchange for working on their lord's land for a certain number of days a year, however, unlike before, they had greater legal protections and rights (including the right to buy and sell their land freely).

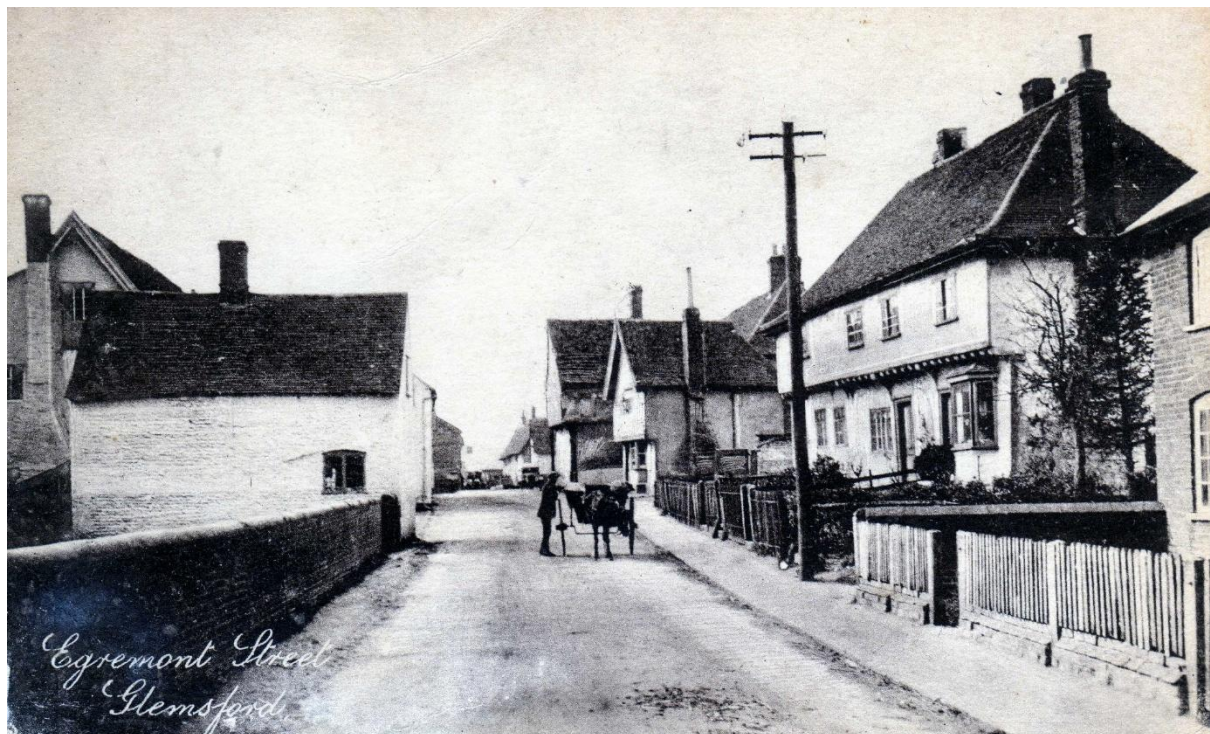
The Wool Trade

From 1250 – 1350, the Medieval Wool Trade entered its peak, exporting roughly 20,000 to 40,000 sacks of wool each year to continental Europe. A major source of this wool trade was

in the “wool towns” of East Anglia, which Glemsford was a part of. These towns were financed heavily by wool merchants and consequently were home to numerous clothiers who sought to exploit the wool trade to make woollen cloth. Glemsford was no exception to that, as it was likely a major source of wool, with fields being dedicated to sheep farming (intensifying after the Black Death), even after wool exports declined. Consequently, the village was home to wealthy clothiers who sought to get rich off making woollen cloth, and who may have produced their own form of broadcloth called “Glainesfordes” which were distinct undyed white cloths.

One prominent merchant family was the Golding Family: the Goldings came to Glemsford in the 1400s, probably due to the wishes of John Golding (the head of the household), living in, what is now, the Angel Pub (then the Angel House). It seems the Golding family bought land within the parish, which they then leased out to other residents, judging by the records we have. When John Golding died in 1496, he left various properties to his family, 12 pence (~£44 in 2025) to each of his spinners, and over £40 (~£36,000 in 2025) to the parish church. That £40 was to be put towards the building of a chapel where John Golding was buried, which now forms the “Golding Chapel”, and possibly towards the “erection of the present parish church” as Rev. Kenneth Glass claims.

The street which the Angel is located on, Egremont Street, seems to have been named after another famous resident/landowner in the village, John Multon de Egremont (or Egremond), who owned lands in Glemsford in 1335 (and probably for longer).



The Angel Inn, home to John Golding and his family, pictured in the back

The Manors of Glemsford Parish

The manors of the High Middle Ages continued into this period with few changes; however, new manors began to enter the parish (though some may have already been there earlier).

Glemsford Manor continued to be held by the Bishop of Ely, though in 1361 it was granted “frankalmoign”, which was a type of service reserved for religious authorities that entailed owing prayer, or religious services, to the King. This meant that Glemsford Manor did not have to provide knight-service to the King unlike other manors, instead the Church had to pray for the King’s safety, success, or long-life, in return for the manor’s lands.

As for Peverells Manor, the Glemsford family continued to own the manor until 1437 when it was supposedly sold to John Colte of Cavendish. Regardless, by 1497 Peverells Manor was part of the Manor of Greys, owned by the Cavendish family. In the same year, it was seized by William Felton of Sudbury and his son, Edmund. It is in the same century, the 1400s, that Peverells (the house off of Tye Green) was seemingly built, likely as the home for the lords of Peverells Manor.



“Peverells”, pictured on the right, supposedly built during this period

Another manor was created in the parish during the 1400s, Callis Manor (or Caley), likely being carved out of Glemsford Manor (and maybe others) from the lands of a large-landowning family. The first mention of Callis Manor is in 1448, when we see a quit-claim by “Walter Whytebred” who renounced “all his right and claim in the manor of Caley”, however we do see records of a Caley Family decades before. The first Caley we see is Joan Caley in 1426 who was granted land by Robert Trigg, possibly in and around Glemsford but the record is too confusingly worded to tell; next, we find a record in 1439 of Thomas Caley’s

Will, who was possibly Joan Caley's son, in which he is referred to as "gentleman" indicating that the manor of Callis may have been created under him, thus making him its first lord; finally, we see Walter Caley in 1444 who granted his "lands, tenements [houses], services, [...] in Glemsford, Cavendish, Boxted, and Stanstead" to Walter Cotton "and others", then 3 years later, in 1447, Walter Caley seems to have had a dispute with Robert Trigg over some lands in and around Glemsford. Judging by the manor's name, this family seems to have been the lords of manor, at least initially, until the manor passed into a different family.

During this period, we can also surmise that Kentwell Hall may have owned land in Glemsford. In 1473, and in 1485, we can see evidence of a "John Clopton (esq.);" granting land to Glemsford residents: John Clopton was the Lord of Kentwell Hall from 1446 to 1497 and was therefore an "esquire" (esq.). Thus, I would suggest that Kentwell Hall owned land in Glemsford parish during John Clopton's lordship, though I find it likely that Kentwell held land for some time before that.

Likewise, Boxted Hall seems to have held land here. In 1362, there is a quit-claim associated with Boxted parish from Cecilia Giffard, addressed to Stephen and Beatrice Bacun where she is quitting "all her right in the manor" and the lands connected to it in Boxted, Hartest, and Glemsford. It is suspected that Stephen Bacun was the Lord of Boxted Hall, possibly after Sir William Giffard, who held the manor in 1339 and who seems to have been Cecilia's father – this was likely why Cecilia claimed to have a right to the manor in the first place. Later on, Boxted Hall did definitely hold land in Glemsford, therefore it is likely that the manor had held land in Glemsford parish previously.

Somerton Manor also had influence in the parish: records from 1335 show that a "John Multon de Egremont (or Egremont)" held lands in Glemsford, this John de Egremont seems to have become Lord of Somerton Manor in 1334, therefore demonstrating that Somerton Manor held land here. Whether the manor held land in Glemsford before or after Egremont's lordship is harder to verify but it remains a possibility. Interestingly, it is from John de Egremont where "Egremont Street" likely gets its name from, which may suggest that his lands were near the street.

The Early Modern Period (1500CE – 1800CE)

As the centuries marched on Glemsford's clothiers continued to make broadcloth and their famous "Glainesfordes" and local sheep farmers continued to benefit as the clothiers relied on their wool. By 1603, supposedly, most of Western Suffolk had been converted into use for sheep farming, most likely due to the lucrative clothmaking at the time – Dorothy Kemp puts it elegantly in the 1911 'A Victoria History of the County of Suffolk' saying that in the 1500s "Suffolk was but the handmaiden of the dominant industry of cloth-making".

Naturally, this could not last and throughout the 1600s the clothmaking industry went into decay, leading to rising poverty, amongst clothiers (who could no longer sell their cloths) and amongst farmers (who could no longer sell their wool to the clothiers). We can clearly see this trend as the century goes on because more and more wills left charity to the impoverished people in their area. Some landowners even left whole estates to provide for the poor during

this century: one example is John Corder who, in 1636, left his house and 18 acres of his land at Lawshall to provide bread to the poor of several parishes (using money from their rents), including Glemsford. Others include Thomas Boldero, in 1699, who left his field of ½ acre to provide bibles to the poor, and Thomas Hammond, in 1670, who left a field of 9 acres to provide for 6 elderly men of Glemsford. By the reign of King Charles II Suffolk was ranked 12th in its average Poor Rate (a tax on each parish to provide for their poor – the more people were poor in a parish the higher the tax).

According to Rev. Kenneth Glass, in 1610 a Glemsford clothier attended a meeting by the Bury Corporation, where various clothiers, tailors, and weavers formed a Company in the same vein as the London livery companies (which oversaw the quality of members' work and ensured the members could be trusted by the public). The Bury Corporation would oversee the payment of wages and the employment of apprentices, journeymen, and workers. The hope was that the Company and Corporation could regulate the wool and cloth trade, ensuring that the livelihoods of these industries were protected, however, the endeavour seems to have failed as many wool merchants continued to go bankrupt.

By the 1700s, the clothmaking industry continued to suffer alongside the wool industry. In an attempt to fight off ruin, clothiers switched from manufacturing broadcloth to finer woollen cloths, however, the industry would face another blow towards the end of the century. Between the 1770s and 1800, the wool industry was shifted away from East Anglia and Suffolk to Northern England, particularly Yorkshire, where the steam-powered loom was put in use as the Industrial Revolution was in full swing. At the same time, after 1773, London silk manufacturers began to set up new branches in the Eastern Counties which offered better wages in a time of continued poverty for many. For Suffolk, and for Glemsford, the wool industry began to fade, replaced instead by the silk industry.

Stour Valley Settlers

As poverty, and religious strife, wrecked Suffolk many looked outward, toward a new English territory – America. East Anglia, including Suffolk, had become home to Puritanical Christianity (the Puritans) after the Reformation had taken place, these Puritans had suffered under the prosecutions of the Catholic Queen Mary and felt threatened by the influence of Charles I's catholic wife. Additionally, many of these Puritans were clothiers who had suffered under the declining cloth industry. Consequently, many left for America in the hopes of a better life.

One of these settlers was John Winthrop who was born in the Stour Valley, specifically in Edwardstone, as were many of the 700 passengers who went with him. It is entirely possible that some of these passengers were from Glemsford, fed up with the discrimination against Puritans and the crushing poverty resulting from the declining cloth industry.

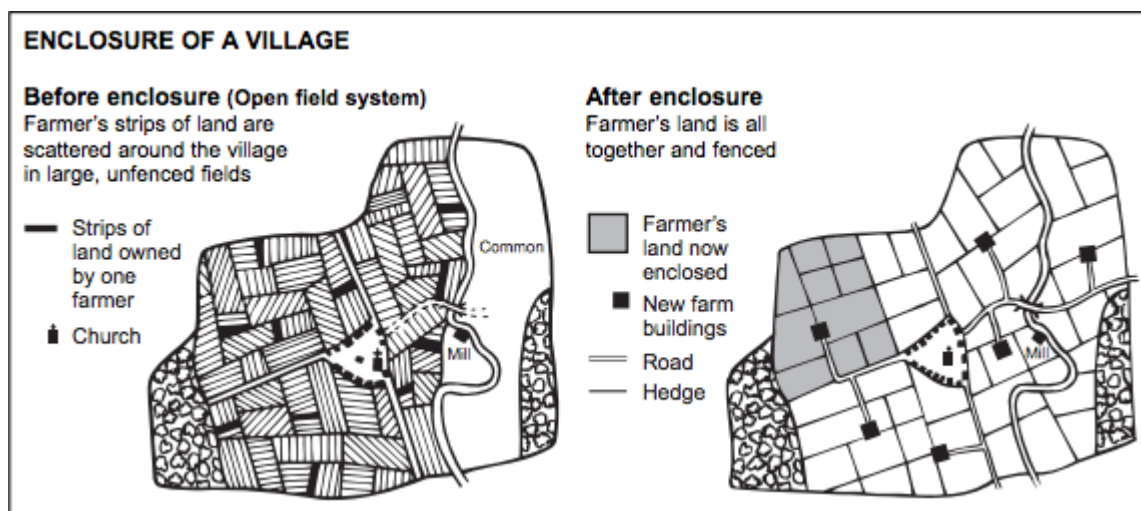
The Enclosures

Similarly, life for crop farmers was heavily affected from the 1600s by a type of land privatisation called the "enclosures". The enclosures involved privatising land which had been in common ownership – "the commons" – such as the open fields and the common

pastures in the manor, this effectively meant taking away ownership, and use, from groups of villagers and giving it to a single owner (be that the Lord or another landowner). This meant the land could now be used however that landowner pleased, they could rent it to tenants, convert it to pasture, or use it solely by themselves – often the original tenants were evicted, and the land was converted from farmland into pasture.

These enclosures had been happening sporadically since the 1100s, often illegally by Lords and landowners, but it increased from the 1400s and 1500s. From the 1600s, these enclosures began being passed by Parliament, with the first “act of enclosure” in 1604, increasing in frequency until 1750 when “enclosure by act of Parliament” became the usual method of enclosure. The 1773 Inclosure Act made enclosures by landowners legal, though the requirements set out in this law were often abused by landowners, therefore farmers continued to be evicted from their land - becoming “landless labourers” who had to work for others in the process - with minimal or poor compensation.

Whilst I cannot say specifically how this affected Glemsford, I suspect it did affect Glemsford in some way. By the 1800s it seems most of the land was owned by only a handful of landowners; this consolidation of land in the hands of a few likely started in this period, and the early 1800s. Similarly, I suspect some of the local sheep farming in the parish was spurred on by the conversion of enclosures into sheep pasture by their landowners, though this probably made up a minority of the sheep farming, given that the enclosures did not take full effect in England until the 16 and 1700s at which point the wool and cloth industry declined significantly.



An Example of the land “enclosures”

The Churchyard School

Whilst there was presumably some sort of church-run school to give the local children some basic education (and religious teachings) the first recorded instance of a school in the village is in 1657, which was located in the Churchyard. According to Richard Deeks’ “Glorious

Glemsford” this school was given by the clothier John Distor. This school operated in the parish until, what is now, the “Old School” in Hunts Hill was built.

The Manors of Glemsford

As they had done for centuries at this point, the manors in Glemsford continued to be present in the political landscape of the parish, though this period saw drastic changes in their ownership.

As in the previous centuries Glemsford Manor continued to be owned by the Bishop of Ely until 1585 when it was leased to William Allen for 20 years. However, in 1600 the manor was alienated to Queen Elizabeth I, which passed onto King James I, it stayed in royal ownership until 1610 when it was granted to Prince Henry (James’ eldest son), however the prince died only 2 years later of typhoid fever. Who owned the manor from 1612 is uncertain, it is possible that the manor immediately returned to the King’s ownership, but it is also possible that the manor passed onto one of his other children (most likely Princess Elizabeth), regardless by 1617 the manor had passed back into the King’s hands. It seems the Crown held onto the manor throughout the rest of the 1600s, except from 1642 to 1660 when the English Civil War raged on and the Commonwealth of England was established, until it was purchased sometime in the early 1700s by John Moore. John Moore died in 1753, where the manor passed to his son, Henry, who died in 1769; then to his son, Richard, who died in 1782, who was succeeded by his son of the same name, Richard, who held the manor into the 1800s.

Peverells Manor continued to be owned by the Felton family, who had seised it in 1497: Edmund Felton died in 1519 and was succeeded by his son, also called Edmund Felton; he then died in 1542, succeeded by his son, George. The last confirmed Lord of Peverells is George’s son, Edmund, who took the lordship between 1553 and 1570. After this point, Peverells seems to fade out of the historical record, however, the Feltons were also lords of Tricketts Manor in Boxted parish, therefore we might infer Peverells’ next owners (if it continued to exist): in 1570 the manor appears to have been owned by George’s wife, Margaret, and others but by 1572 it was owned by John Felton. Between 1572 and 1625, it is uncertain who the Lord of Tricketts was, but by 1625 it was owned by a man called Frederick Scott. After him, it passed to Sir Robert Dicer Bart, though I cannot confirm when it passed to him or to whom it passed to afterwards.

The Manor of Callis, created in the 1400s, continued well into the Early Modern period. It seems just prior to 1569 the manor was owned by a man named George Smith, as in 1569 when the manor was bought by John Allen it notes that it was obtained from “George Smith”. John Allen thus became its lord in 1569 alongside becoming the lord of Metholds and Wimbolds (another manor we have yet to talk to). It is here that we see an interesting change with Callis Manor as it is under John Allen’s lordship when the manor is first referred to as “Callis al. Tynes”. In 1569 a manor called “Tyrheys” is listed alongside Callis, which I believe is what later became “Tynes”, suggesting that the two manors merged sometime after John Allen acquired them – but one question remains, where did “Tyrheys” come from? I believe I know the answer: in 1459, a woman called Agnes described as the “daughter and

heir of Baldwin de Tilney” seems to have owned lands in Glemsford (which had possibly been owned by the Tilney family for generations); I believe that these lands were colloquially known as “the Tilney’s”, or something similar, by the locals, and may have been acquired by John Allen, or by someone earlier, who then set up a manor based on them; over time the lands of Callis and the lands of Tilneys may have merged together to form one manor called “Callis al Tylnes” with Tylnes being a corruption of Tilneys. To further support this theory, a dispute over land in later decades, which was taken to the manorial court, refers to a “Tilneis Wood” off of Brook Street (possibly named after the Tilneys), which adds to the idea that some lands which were a part of Callis manor were once owned by the Tilney family or were part of a Tilney Manor. Moving on, Callis Manor passed onto the Appleton family in 1598 when it was acquired by Thomas Appleton, who was then succeeded by his son, Isaac, in 1609. After Isaac, until the 1830s, it is then uncertain who owned the manor as no records seem to exist for the rest of the Early Modern period.

As I have mentioned already, another manor was created during this period. The Manor of Metholds and Wimbolds is first mentioned in 1515 when a manorial court was held by William Medewold, who was seemingly the first Lord of the Manor as it was likely named after him. In 1542, it was sold to John Smith, whose family was seated in Langford in Norfolk; it then passed to his son, also called John, who then passed it onto the same George Smith who owned Callis. From here it follows the same line of ownership as Callis: it was sold to John Allen in 1569, then passed into the Appleton family in 1598 until 1609 when the manor fades out of the historical record until the 1830s.

I am unaware of whether Kentwell Hall and Boxted Hall continued to own land in Glemsford during this period as I cannot find any records which suggest they did, however, I think it is likely as they continued to hold some land by the 1800s and I find it unlikely that they would have suddenly lost and then regained their previous holdings.

There is another manor that can be confirmed however, the manor of Depden. In 1590 we see records of a “John Jermyn (esq.)” granting some possessions in Glemsford and surrounding villages to a “Thomas Banks” and “Stephen de la Prend of Haverhill”, including a sale of “certain lands in Glemsford” for £700 (~£207,000 in 2025). John Jermyn became Lord of Depden towards the end of the 1500s, though he died in 1588 so it’s possible that these specific arrangements were actually organised by his son, Thomas, who succeeded him. Before this period, or after it, I cannot confirm whether Depden Manor held land in Glemsford as I can find no records which suggest they did.

The Modern Period (1800CE – Present Day)

From 1800 Glemsford begins to look increasingly like it does today: new industries would rock the farming foundations that the village rested on (and increasing acts of enclosure would only fuel this change); buildings which still stand today would be erected; new streets and estates would be created to cater for a growing working class; the village would be

marched to wars on the continent; above all, growing unrest would spark events which would bestow the village with a new nickname.

Glemsford's Industrial Revolution

As I'm sure most people know, Glemsford was once quite the industrial hub, boasting various factories and a working class who worked within their walls for a living. It is here, in the 1800s, where the village becomes steadily industrialised.

In conjunction with this industrialisation was the continuing enclosing of farmland by local landowners (as happened in the previous centuries) which saw more farmers be evicted from their land. These farmers, deprived of their livings, would then enter factories for work or would become hired labour for landowners who couldn't farm their land by themselves. Though Glemsford, interestingly enough, seems to have held onto some of its open fields for some time as directories for the village mention that "part of the parish is still in large open fields" until 1874. After this point, all of the open fields, which had their origins in the Middle Ages, appear to have been enclosed and divided up by a few landowners.

This sets the scene for the industrialisation of Glemsford: lots of displaced farmers in need of a living, combined with the dying wool industry in the two centuries beforehand, allowed for new factories to access a plentiful source of labour. We saw the first glimpses of the silk industry entering Glemsford in the 1770s when London manufacturers began to offer silk-weaving work to the Eastern counties, replacing their previous wool-weaving work, however, this was not factory work just yet as these people still worked out of their own homes and workshops like they had done for generations. It wasn't until 1824, when duties on raw silk were lifted, that silk throwing mills were constructed by these manufacturers – it is in the same year that Glemsford would see the first factory in the village, a silk throwing mill down Chequers Lane. Only 20 years later, in 1844, it employed 60 people (mostly women and girls) and by 1874 it was employing 230 people. Something I want to make abundantly clear here is some of those "employees" were children – I think it is easy to read distressing parts of our history, like child labour, and think that those things happened far from our homes, in the cities or towns, but I want to make it clear that Glemsford, and other villages, is not separate from these things; terrible things happened in our own backyards, just like elsewhere in Suffolk and England more broadly. One example I have found is of a 10 year old girl who is listed as a "silk weaver" in the 1841 Census, she worked alongside adults in the silk mill at the age of 10 years I want to make that crystal clear – do not think for a second that just because Glemsford is a village in the corner of Suffolk it does not have its fair share of distressing history.

In 1840, the Silk Mill was owned by Alexander Duff, a prominent landowner in the village, but by the 1850s it seems to have been owned by Eaton & Sons, headed by Henry William Eaton. However, in 1840 there appears to have been another Silk Manufactory where the Horsehair Factory would be, which was owned by the "Parish of Glemsford" but occupied by Henry Twin (who likely rented it). By 1858, more silk factories would be established throughout the village: Jospeh Foot & Son were the second silk manufacturers to set up shop (though I cannot say where), by 1883 this company seems to have become Barton Foot & Co.

and a new silk manufacturing company, Vanner & Sons, had established a factory in the village. These new factories were located at top of Brook Street, where Silk Factory Row now is, and on Hunts Hill, where house 19A and the houses behind it are now located. These factories evidently however fell out of use and are recorded as “disused” on a map from the 1890s.



The Silk Mill, established in 1824

Of course, silk was not the only industry which arrived in Glemsford during this time, in 1844 the horsehair industry came to the village when Messrs. H Kolle & Sons established a Horsehair Factory in Bells Lane. By 1855 they were supposedly employing 470 people, increasing to 700 people in 1874. By 1907 the Horsehair Factory transferred ownership, becoming property of Arnold & Gould. Likewise, the factory now faced competition from a new factory which had opened up around the corner in Windmill Row during the 1890s owned by Tomkins & Sons, who were employing over 100 people (mostly women and girls) by the late 1890s.

Similarly, by 1892, several Coconut mat-weaving companies had opened in Glemsford. An 1892 directory records two such companies: Goodacre & Son, and Holdsworth & Co. I cannot say for certain where they were located, however there was a factory off of Egremont Street, where Holdsworth Close now is, therefore I suspect this was the factory owned by Holdsworth & Co. Meanwhile another factory was located off of Flax Lane, then called Workhouse Lane. Judging by a map from the 1890s it seems like there was another factory located at the end of Skate's Hill, however I cannot tell who owned this factory, it may have been owned by Kolle & Sons as they were also Coconut mat-manufacturers by this point; it

may have also been owned by C Smith & Co. as they are the only other mat-manufacturers mentioned in the next directory in 1912.

The last major industry in Glemsford was the Flax industry which thrived during WW1 and the interwar period (1918 – 1939). The Coconut mat-making factory, which was established off of Flax Lane, mentioned above, was taken over in 1916 by the British Government in order to produce linen which was needed for the war effort. Supposedly, during the summer, boys from London would camp here so they could help pull the flax. The Flax industry continued to thrive until 1925, however, it continued to be present in the village for some time as a factory for it was set up in 1938 according to Rev. Kenneth Glass.

Many other smaller industries sprung up as well: in 1883, a machinist company called Downs & Son, and “Cooperative Stores” are listed in a directory as being in the village; by 1912, a branch of Barclays had been set up; by 1933, a company called “East Anglian Electricity Services” had established itself in the village. An interesting phenomenon which appeared alongside industrialisation was the establishment of “friendly societies”: to explain simply, in a friendly society, members pay a fee every month/year, then if a member fell into times of trouble (e.g. lost a job, was too old to work, or just general misfortune) the society would pay out to help them. For example, if you, as a member, were to suddenly lose your job and could not provide for your family, then the society would provide you some money to help. This ensured that people had security in their lives in the event of unexpected troubles – the society would even help the widows of its members or provide funds for a member’s funeral if it needed to. Glemsford was home to two such societies: The Oddfellows, as the Loyal Wellington Lodge (the name for the Glemsford branch), and the Ancient Order of Foresters, as the Excelsior Lodge. These societies do still exist today, however, they have fallen in prominence due to the introduction of state-funded pensions and welfare benefits.

To further put into perspective Glemsford’s industrialisation let me present how the occupations of men changed between 1831 and 1881: in 1831, ~54% of men were working in agriculture (~90% as agricultural labourers i.e. hired farmhands), by 1881 this had dropped to only ~20%. Meanwhile, in 1831, ~38% were working in either trade, manufacturing, or handicrafts but by 1881, this number had risen to ~71%. Though I suspect the real percentage is even higher as the 1881 occupation statistics seem to leave out a large chunk of the population.

Of course, this industrialisation would not have been possible, or at least as easy, if it had not been for a new form of transport in the village. The Eastern Union Railway opened a train line from Colchester to Ipswich in 1846, adding on a line from Marks Tey to Sudbury 3 years later in 1849. The Great Eastern Company would then build a line to connect Long Melford, Glemsford, and Haverhill to Sudbury and Cambridge in 1862. The line opened in 1865 as the Stour Valley Railway, running from Marks Tey to Shelford (near Cambridge). Glemsford Railway Station saw its fair share of freight trains, loading off and on various goods such as grain, sugar beet, coal, and even livestock as Celia Hall notes in her account of her life at the station in the 1940s. Similarly, the station hosted a number of passenger trains: at the time of

its opening there were, supposedly, 3 trains running each way on weekdays, increasing to 6 trains each way on weekdays in the 1890s.



A photo of Glemsford Station

Industrial Decline

Sadly, as is obvious from the village today, Glemsford's industry declined during the 20th century (1900s) and in some cases little trace remains of them at all.

Let me first preface this section by saying that this period has, for some reason, been notoriously difficult to both research and verify. One such reason, I believe, is because for many (particularly older residents) this is not "history", it is "memory", therefore it does not occur to write down these things, or to share them sometimes. This information is locked away in people's memories, not being shared with the wider world, because to them it's not worthy of being "history" it's just "back then". Likewise those interested in the past may look over the "recent past" in search of a more "interesting" earlier history – sincerely, this is a mistake, if we do not take an interest in our recent history we do not give people a chance to share their memories, then suddenly, before we know it, we've lost a whole section of our past.

Now, let us continue.

A general industrial decline in Glemsford had started by 1900, with the number of people finding employment in Glemsford's factories decreasing year on year, partially due to company's relocating their operations abroad and elsewhere in Britain.

By the 1920s, coconut mat-making had entered decline and by the 1960s it seems many of the factories had been closed, save for one. Though I cannot confirm that, however the

industry certainly began to decline in some capacity as Rev. Kenneth Glass mentions that “many factories in Glemsford were closed” in 1962.

Similarly, the Flax industry had collapsed post-WW2, with the last flax factory established in 1938 on Lower Road becoming vacant in 1957.

The horsehair industry, too, began to decline as the 20th century went on: the horsehair factory, still owned by Arnold & Gould, which had once employed 700 people, only employed 100 people in 1950, until it was finally disused by the 1970s. In 1985, it was redeveloped into industrial starter units which were officially opened by then MP for South Suffolk, Tim Yeo. Going into the 1990s, the former horsehair factory was again redeveloped, but this time into housing, which it remains to this day. As for Tomkins & Sons, it seems the company declined and was eventually demolished sometime after the 1930s, however, I cannot confirm that as I have found very little about the company – it is last listed in a 1937 directory, after which I cannot find any information about it.

The railway station, too, which had helped breathe life into the village, was also closed after 102 years in 1967 as part of the Beeching Cuts of the 1960s.

However, Glemsford’s industry continued to meander on, with the occasional uptick in employment after the 1960s. Not only did small businesses, which had existed, in some cases, from the 1800s continue to operate, but older factories were taken over by new thriving industries.

E.W. Downs & Son continued to operate out of their factory off of Fair Green (now Foundry Close), even into the 21st century. Meanwhile, the Flax factory which had operated off of Flax Lane seems to have changed hands from the 1920s and 1930s (though I cannot say that for certain), but by the 1990s it was a mirror factory owned by Mirror UK, employing 30 people; I am unsure when it shut down, however, I suspect it was in the early 2000s as Babergh Council had been having disputes with the owner from the late 1990s.

The Flax factory that had been abandoned in 1957 was purchased by the Holloway group (a group of London-based plastic manufacturers) in 1958 and converted to the production of various plastic items. At some point in the 1960s it was acquired by Unilever, reaching 500 people employed by 1970, when it was sold to Metal Box. Metal Box decided to close the factory in 1971, and the number of employees dwindled down to 90 people; the workers however did not go down quietly and many openly fought against the factory’s closure – even the management joined them in some cases – alongside their trade unions. Despite their best efforts, the factory was sold to Cannon Rubber Ltd in the same year after all 500 employees had been made redundant. Cannon produced various products at the time, including baby feeding products under the name “Cannon Babysafe”. In 1984, this factory would begin producing a new type of baby bottle, which was named “Avent”, with the company which operated out of Glemsford now called “Cannon Avent”. In 2006, the company was acquired by the Dutch technology company “Philips” and renamed “Philips Avent”; they continued to operate until 2020, when the factory was acquired by the Malaysian company “Guan Chong Berhad group” for cocoa production, which continues to this day.

Finally, the Silk Mill, which had opened in 1824, built a new up-to-date factory in 1960. However, the Silk Mill had been on the decline since the early 1900s, and it finally closed its doors in 2008 when the company that owned it, Stephen Walters & Sons, consolidated their production at Sudbury. The decision to demolish the building began in 2015 and the Silk Mill, one of the oldest factories in the village, was demolished in 2019/2020, nearly 200 years after the original factory was constructed.

To me, the Silk Mill's demolition marks the last hurrah of Glemsford's industrial past – despite the fact that the factory on Lower Road still provides work for countless residents, it feels disconnected from the village, sitting on a main road, at the bottom of the hill, far outside the bounds of the village. If the 1800s marked Glemsford's industrial rise and prompted the world to look inside our humble village, then the 1900s marked its industrial demise and prompted Glemsford's residents to look outside into the broader world.

The Changing Land

As mentioned previously, it is likely that Glemsford's fields were once utilised by countless farmers in vast open fields, but by the 1600s these were being privatised into “enclosures”. Consequently, land was consolidated into fewer and fewer landowners as farmers were evicted from their land, which was then given to new owners.

Whilst I cannot confirm when the land was enclosed, it is clear that, by 1840, the land was owned by very few individuals. In the 1840 tithe map roughly 78% of all land subject to tithe payments (i.e. mainly agricultural land) was owned by only 10 people, which was less than 1% of the population at the time. Alexander Duff, the top landowner, owned ~21% alone (or roughly 471 acres): most of this land was rented by other residents, who then employed labourers to work the land. For example, one farm which no longer exists, Bell's Lane Farm, was rented by William Mann. However, Alexander Duff did own 209 acres by himself (i.e. not rented to tenants) in the form of Hill Farm, located on what is now Duff's Hill (presumably named after Alexander Duff).

Similarly, by the 1929 tithe apportionments map this had changed very little as roughly 75% of all land subject to tithe payments was owned by 10 people. However, the top landowner, S. C. Goodchild, had increased their share of the land to ~29%, owning roughly 653 acres.

Some parts of the parish (including farms and houses in the village) were also owned by the manorial lords, though tenants held the land via copyhold tenure (i.e. they owed the lord services or work in exchange for land, however by this time most copyholders paid for the land in cash rents) making them more akin to the “real” landowner. For example, in 1844 Broom Farm, comprising 66 acres, was copyhold of Glemsford Manor, whilst in 1875 a messuage (which had become 2 houses) in Egremont Street was also copyhold of Glemsford Manor. In 1866, the Manor of Callis, Metholds and Wimbolds apparently had 16 copyhold tenants, meanwhile 18 houses were copyhold of the manor.

These are only a few examples of the landownership during the modern period, I would implore anyone curious to find a copy of the tithe maps and newspapers from this period as

they record who owned the land at various points in time, making it possible to piece together how that land shifted hands over time.

The Changing Village

It was not only the land that changed during this time, the village itself changed during this time as well. We have talked about Glemsford's industrial rise and fall already, but more permanent changes during this time remain to this day.

Already I have mentioned that Glemsford's first school was established in the 1600s in the churchyard; it was this school that was incorporated into the National School Scheme (a scheme run by the National Society for Promoting Religious Education which provided basic education to the poor) in 1840. The National School, associated with the same society, was built in 1856 in Hunts Hill. The National School continued to educate the parish until 1870 when the Compulsory Education Act came into effect, after which the current school in Glemsford was built from 1871 – 1873. The school was initially divided into 3 schools: one for boys, one for girls, and one for infants, numbering ~600 students all together. To this day, it continues to educate the village's children, despite their dwindling numbers.



A photo of the current Primary School taken sometime in the late 1800s

Similarly, changing religious beliefs required the erection of new chapels. St Mary's Church, at the eastern edge of the village, has been in the village since Anglo-Saxon times, with the current building being initially built in the Early Modern period, then being reconstructed various times since. However, during the 18 and 1900s, new chapels began to be constructed to accommodate the new religious denominations of the time. The first of which was Ebenezer Baptist Church, which was constructed in Egremont Street, opening in 1829. During its running, a schism arose amongst the Baptists and a new chapel was established in Hunts Hill, where the graveyard now is, called Providence Chapel in 1859. Supposedly, another chapel was built during this time by a branch of the Long Melford Congregational Church off of Egremont Street, which was rented out to a group of Methodists on Sundays – earning it the name “Renters Chapel” – though I cannot confirm if this actually existed. Finally, a Primitive Methodist Chapel was built in 1914, which opened on Whit Monday in 1915, off Tye Green for a cost of £495. As the 1900s continued on, many of these chapels closed and were demolished: the first to go was the Congregational Church which supposedly closed and was repurposed after WW1; Ebenezer Chapel would close in 1945, when the last pastor, Pastor Laver, resigned; finally, Providence Chapel had shut its doors by the 1960s as Rev. Kenneth Glass mentioned, and it was finally demolished in 1974. As is obvious, the Methodist Church continues to operate to this day, over 100 years after its opening.



A photo of Providence Chapel on Hunts Hill in 1918

By the early 1900s, Glemsford still lacked many of the streets and houses which seem inseparable from its modern-day character. It may come as a surprise to some that large

portions of the village only came to be less than 100 years ago. I will not try to cover every street and house; however, I will illustrate a few examples. The houses next to the school, along Lion road, were only constructed 100 years ago in 1922 it seems and are referred to as “School Villas” in the 1929 Tithe Map. Meanwhile, Schoolfield was planned as post-WW2 housing, with the first plan being drafted in 1944/1945; Schoolfield would then be constructed after the war, through the end of the 1940s. Prior to this, Schoolfield had been a piece of farmland called “Twins Lay”. Similarly, Kings Road, and all its offshoots, only started construction in 1965 under the name “Park Lane Estate”, however, the name got later rejected in favour of “Kings Road”; it has continually expanded since this point. Other smaller streets throughout the village also cropped up in the 1900s, often shooting off from the original road which goes from Skates Hill to Churchgate and down to Hobbs Lane.

Events of the Modern Era

This section is not going to have the same cohesiveness as previous section; however, I want to tell some stories of Glemsford’s history. I want to include this section both for entertainment, but also to highlight the more “human face” of the village: so far I have talked about rather broad non-human (though human-made) things like industries, politics, land etc., now I want to show some of the events that the people took part in, within this larger context of land ownership, political change, and industrialisation.

Starting with a more well-known story: The Long Melford Riots of 1885. In 1884, Parliament passed the 3rd Representation of the People Act (also called the 3rd Reform Act), which extended voting rights to a greater number of men (mostly because it extended the requirements set for townspeople to the countryside, previously the two had different requirements to vote). Consequently, a larger proportion of men in Glemsford could vote for the first time (~410 men) however, Glemsford lacked a polling station and the closest one was situated in Melford. Supposedly, Melford and Glemsford had quite some animosity between them due to Glemsford being a strong supporters of the Liberal Party whilst Melford were strong supporters of the Conservative Party – it is said that the antagonism was so bitter that Melford residents referred to Glemsfordians as “Egyptians” due to their perceived barbarity; this is the most likely origin of Glemsford’s nickname “Little Egypt”. Tension had been growing prior to the election as labourers in Glemsford, Melford, and Lavenham had supposedly been striking for better wages, but the forthcoming election would continue to fuel the flames. It was reported that the men of Glemsford assembled on Tye Green, led by foreman of the horsehair factory, adorned with a banner remarking “Be just and fear not, unity is strength” (a banner used during the strikes) which was decorated with yellow. The newspaper reported that “the whole village appeared to have turned out to enjoy a holiday”, with children accompanying the men into Melford. It seems as though Glemsford’s men met Melford’s liberal supporters to a great cheer, before entering the polling station to vote. It is at this point, where the hostility appears to begin: one of Melford’s Conservative members appears to have been attacked by Glemsford’s men (though also by Melford’s it seems) and aggression looks to have taken a hold of the crowd; businesses supporting the Conservatives were attacked, outward supporters of the Conservatives were pelted with stones – the police attempted to contain the rioters but, finding their attempts futile, called for the military police

in Bury. The Riot Act was read to the men by Capt. Bence, then Lord of Kentwell Hall, which was met with a cacophony of groans and had to be finished by Melford's rectors who was much more liked. Various attacks on Conservative supporters continued throughout the day, particularly after the men had started to drink. It was supposedly the arrival of Cuthbert Quilter, the Liberal MP, which prompted the men to settle down for a time, though it seems it was not until the arrival of the military at 5pm that things would settle down completely. Indeed, in between the time of Quilter's arrival and the Military's, the Crown Inn had been attacked by the men and, according to one newspaper, "completely gutted."

Another story, this time rather mundane, is of the Glemsford Fete in the summer of 1866. In 1866, the church was in desperate need of repair - for example the tower had "fell and was reduced to a monster heap of ruins before completed" - thus a fete was held in hopes of raising a restoration fund. The fete was held on the Rectory grounds and boasted numerous attractions and entertainments, roughly 7000 to 8000 visitors were expected to attend, however, owing to poor weather, only a few hundred showed up in the end. During the event, a group of Chinese celebrities were front and centre as the main attraction: Mr Chang gave an impassioned speech in Chinese, celebrating Britain's institutions and its liberalism; meanwhile, Lady Chang, his wife, entranced the crowd by showing off her "foot binding" - an old Chinese tradition where women would bind their feet to prevent proper growth, impairing their ability to walk, but giving them smaller feet; finally, a "dwarf" who accompanied them sang and apparently "mimicked warlike exercises" using a tiny dagger. After this many guests left, having only shown up to see the Chinese celebrities, in an attempt to escape the rain and wind. However, the fete continued, hosting dances and games, though whilst the dances went on, the games were ignored due to the damp grass and mud, making it difficult and unappealing to play. Some guests took the time to enjoy the gardens of the rectory, walking under the poplars and chestnuts, or admiring the orchards and carefully cared-for flowers. A refreshment tent was provided by the Four Swans Hotel of Sudbury, which many used to escape the weather, with the profit being generously donated to the restoration fund. The last peculiar attraction was the "Church and State Curiosity Shop" which boasted a variety of items such as "Chinese curiosities", a "mummy of a Japanese mermaid", and a "stone coffin found under floor of the church". Of those unable to attend the fete, a host of stalls, carts, and a general fair, were located outside the gardens, on the green. Despite the misgivings, the fete seems to have gone well overall, though I am unsure if the restoration fund was enough to clean up and repair the church.

Glemsford has, at times, engaged in the political scene with speeches and meetings addressing the issues of the day. One such speech was held in May 1890 by an organiser for the National Federation of Labour Union, Mr John E Williams: Mr Williams stood at Tye Green, accompanied by a large number of Glemsford's working class (namely factory workers), where he spoke about the need for the workers to unite to fight for better wages as London workers had done some months prior - the crowd listened intensely it seems, as Mr Williams urged the workers to continue their union activities, or to join a trade union, had they not already. The speech continued for an hour before concluding.

The final story is another more well-known tale, particularly because it is the origin of Fair Green's name. It is well known that a fair was held on the green in, what is now, Fair Green on 24th June, it was supposedly for "pedlery and toys". It is unknown when exactly this annual tradition started, but some say it has its origins in Medieval times, however, it doubtless continued for some centuries it appears. The fair ran into some trouble before its running in 1777: it appears someone raised an objection to the fair, specifically objecting to "any sale or show of horses or peddling goods, on midsummer-day". It appears that the fair was not legal, though whether that was always the case is certainly up for debate, this resulted in the Rector, the Churchwardens, and a few residents trying to prevent the fair, declaring that they would "prosecute all those who shall be found offending therein contrary to law", this resolution came after they had called a vestry-meeting to discuss the "proper method" to "suppress the fair". However, it seems they failed in their pursuits as decades later in the 1844 White's Description of Glemsford, he mentioned that a fair took place every year on the 24th June still. Indeed, the fair would continue for several decades after him, however, it seems it came to an end in 1925 when no fair was held on the 24th, causing the village to be struck with confusion, with many older residents being unable to recall a year where there was not a fair held. For the past 100 years, it seems no fair has been held on Fair Green in June, though its memory lingers on in the green's name even if many residents do not know there was ever a fair to begin with.

Glemsford at War

The 20th Century is primarily defined by two events, two globe-spanning wars which would result in the deaths of millions, and the injury of even more. Amongst the battles and generals, the great statesmen, and the hundreds of new technologies made for warfare, there are people, just like us, who were pushed to the front lines to die in a land not their own. Even a little village, such as our own, did not escape the pains of war; the losses it brought to millions of others across the world were brought to our doorstep as well. I am not here to debate if these people died for some noble cause, died for their country, or whether they were just pawns in the political machinations of governments, whether their sacrifice was worth it or not; I am not here to tell you what I think, I am here to tell you that Glemsford did not escape the pains which the world wars wrought upon the planet, I am here to tell you of how Glemsford's men and its boys were marched to war and to tell you of how many never came back. I am here to remind you that the names on the graves, and the memorials, are not just names, they are people who died fighting a war they would never see the end of, they are people who never saw their loved ones, or their home, again.

I do not know exactly how many men in Glemsford served in the First World War, however, based on the enlistment records I have found, it seems to be between 100 and 200 (possibly more). It seems as though a lot of those men were called up to serve after the Military Service Act came into effect in 1916, which imposed conscription on single men from 18 to 41 (though this was extended to married men and up to 51 years, in the following months). Many would serve in the Suffolk Regiment, though not all as some were assigned to other

county regiment like the Essex Regiment or the Royal West Kent Regiment; some were assigned to specialist corps like the Royal Army Service Corps, or the Labour Corps. Most men would join the Western Front in France and Belgium; however, a few would be sent further from their homes to Greece or Persia.

At home, in Glemsford, the war would come to the residents' doorstep in a strange way. During the First World War, there was a need to house Prisoners of War (POWs) captured during the war, one such POW Camp was set up right here in Glemsford in part of the Horsehair Factory. It did not house many German POWs to my knowledge, however, it is strange to for our village to have been home to a POW Camp. According to Ted Hartley in 1978, the POWs would write messages on matchboxes to throw to the women outside the factory.

Of course, war is an exhausting affair, not just for soldiers, but for the civilians too: rations, fear, harsh governance, it drains a population the longer it continues. So after the news that an Armistice had been signed in November 1918, then a Treaty, ending the war, had been signed in the summer of 1919, the country erupted in celebration, as did Glemsford. A Peace Celebration was organised post-haste: different societies of Glemsford all turned out for the event from the Oddfellows to the Lads Brigade, as did all the residents of the village on Fair Green – the older girls carried sets of “peace lillies” whilst boys played the cornets, one girl called Vera Twinn was crowned the “Queen of Peace” and was attended by 24 maids and by boys on “decorated ponies”. To go along with this, a dinner had been arranged at the school for the demobilised soldiers and sailors, and their wives, mothers, and sweethearts – all-in-all about 180 attended, however, many soldiers were unaware of these plans and had thus made plans of their own. Consequently, many went down to the “Prince of Wales” Inn to have dinner, hosted by the owner.

However, the jovial atmosphere hid what must have been a painful moment for some, if not all. It must have been clear that not all the soldiers came home that summer, indeed, it must have been clear that many had not even made it back to Britain at all. Of the nearly 200 men who had gone to the Front, ~74 never made it home. It must have been painfully apparent to the village's residents that they were missing neighbours, friends, and coworkers, let alone missing sons, fathers, and brothers. This is what I mean, no matter what you think about their serving, the war brought pain to the doorstep of this village, just like it did to so many others across the world – the village was now missing 74 people, 74 people who died and were buried in a land across the sea and in some cases, across the world, never getting to see their home for a final time, never getting to say goodbye to their loved ones.

The interwar period brought time for mourning and, more importantly, time for peace. However, this would not last long, for only 21 years after the “Great War” ended another war would break, plunging the world back into fighting and bloodshed once more. For Glemsford, it meant more of her men would march off to war and even more would never return.

I am unaware of how many men enlisted from Glemsford, of those I am aware of, many would be sent to fight in Burma against the Japanese Empire – some of whom were captured as Prisoners of War. Others, however, were sent to North Africa to fight in Egypt, or Tunisia,

or to Iraq (to fight an Axis-supported Coup), and to Continental Europe. There was at least one man from Glemsford who seems to have taken part in the D-Day Landings, being amongst one of the many to die during them.

By the war's end in 1945, it seems at least 11 men from Glemsford had died fighting in foreign lands far across the globe. Those 11 men would never see the end of the war they fought so desperately for, nor would they see their homes again. I cannot imagine the pain of their loved ones, who never got to see them for one last time, nor can I imagine the pain of those who did come home but were never the same again. Just as in WW1, no matter what opinion you hold of their sacrifice, or their serving, it should be obvious that war brought agony even to our little village – here, in the south of Suffolk, so far from the front lines.

Every man from Glemsford who died fighting during either WW1 or WW2 should not be forgotten from our village's collective history – even if only to serve as a reminder that war does not just hurt those caught in the crossfire on the front lines, it hurts those miles away, across oceans and continents, it hurts people in villages which only few know the name of. These men have not been forgotten by the world, many rest in graves in foreign lands from France, Belgium, Greece, Iraq, Tunisia, Egypt, India, and South Africa; their names are engraved on memorials in all those places and more – Glemsford should be no different, we should not forget these men, let their deaths serve not as a glorification of sacrifice but as a reminder of the pain of loss, as a reminder of the agony of war for all those who live to see it.

Manors of Glemsford

Finally, we come back to the manors during this period; during the 1800s, most manors did not directly own their lands (i.e. there was no land that was privately owned by the Lord *per se*), this is because most of their lands were held by copyholders. Whilst legally the manor was the owner of the land, for all intents and purposes it was actually owned by the copyholder (hence why various lords do not appear in the tithe records despite having land in the parish). Copyholders, at this point, just rented the land for a price from the lord – no service was owed to the lord – and over the decades the manorial lands eventually became freehold, meaning legally they became property of the copyholder, not the manor, thus ending their copyhold tenure. Finally, the 1925 Law of Property Act extinguished any remaining copyhold tenures, turning them into freehold property – this meant that the manors, which had lasted for over a millennium, were effectively abolished. Some manors did manage to retain manorial rights and titles over certain areas, and others which did not have copyhold tenants would have also retained their lands.

Starting with Glemsford Manor, it remained with Richard Moore until 1826, when it passed to his son, Willoughby. In 1834, Willoughby sold the manor to John Wright, who then sold it to Edmund Stedman in 1839. By 1840, all of the manor's land seems to have been held by copyhold tenants, however it seems to have comprised: Broom Farm, 165 acres of “Lodge Estate” (possibly Lodge Farm), over 40 acres of other farmlands, and several houses and shops. By 1874, it seems the manor had passed to Edmund's son, Robert Frost Stedman, though in the following year, 1875, it was sold to Sidney Pattinson, however, it then was sold again in 1876 to Henry William Eaton, owner of Eaton & Sons, who operated the Silk Mill.

Henry Eaton held the manor until 1888, where it was sold to Joseph Beaumont. Joseph died the year after, in 1889, where the manor passed to his son, George Frederick Beaumont. In 1925, what remained of the manor's land would have been turned into freehold property, effectively abolishing the manor's jurisdiction and passing its lands legally to their tenants. However, Glemsford Manor retained some manorial rights and its title remained in use – George Frederick Beaumont continued to be the lord for 3 more years, until 1928. After which, it passed onto Amy Beaumont, his wife, until 1944 where it was inherited by their children, Horace and John. The brothers held onto the manor until 1954, when they sold it to Maj. Ernest Noel Husbands. Though he was only lord for 3 years, as the manor was sold to Norman J. Smith in 1957, who held it for 10 years until 1967, when it passed to Leonora Smith, for the next 3 years until 1970. It was then purchased by Maj. William Francis Tuthill and his wife, Laura Tuthill. When Maj. William died in 1974, Laura Tuthill seems to have retained the manor, though it appears this was disputed in some way. Indeed, a dispute over the manor's land also seems to have taken place in 1974, as Mrs Tuthill (and possibly the residents) seems to have asserted that Tye Green, Fair Green, and Church Green were property of the manor. This assertion seems to have been in response to a proposition to turn Tye Green into a car park, which the villagers vehemently disliked, thus prompting them to try register the greens as "Village Greens" by law, effectively invoking their ancient rights to the commons. Whilst the Commons Commissioner decided that the greens were actually property of the parish council, not a part of the manor's commons, it seems as though the villagers did manage to protect the greens as they remain to this day. Now, as for the manor, I cannot say what happened to it – if Laura Tuthill was able to be recognised as the Lord, then the manor may well have lasted into the early 2000s and indeed may still last until today. Though that is mere speculation, I have no evidence which hints to the manor's continued existence, so to my knowledge the manor ceased to exist in the 1970s.

As I have mentioned above, I do not know if Peverells Manor continued to exist after the 1500s, but if it existed by the 1800s, it may have been owned by Asgood Pec. It ceased to exist by 1925 for definite.

By the 1800s, the Manor of Callis, Metholds and Wimbolds, re-enters the historical record in 1837 where it was jointly owned by James Sparke, Timothy Holnies, and John Jackson. Just as with Glemsford Manor, it seems the manor's lands were rented out by copyhold tenants, however, by the 1800s, it seems it comprised: 53 acres of Clockhouse Farm, a Soap/Candle Factory located off Flax Lane, and at least 18 houses in the village. The manor seems to have owned at least 90 acres of farmland in 1866 and had at least 16 copyhold tenants it rented its land to.

Additionally, it seems like Kentwell Hall held some lands in the parish during this time. In an 1855 directory, one of the chief landowners was Edward Starkie Bence (Edward Robert Starkie Bence), who became lord of Kentwell Hall in 1838, at the age of 15. Kentwell would continue to hold lands in Glemsford up to 1937 at the least, under Edward and then his son, Edward Starkie Bence, from 1889. After that I am unsure whether Kentwell Hall still had a presence in Glemsford, though the manor itself continues to exist today.

Similarly, Boxted Hall also seems to have held land in Glemsford, like it had done in prior centuries. The 1840 tithe map lists George Weller Poley amongst the various landowners in the parish, in particular, he was the owner of Swan's Hall Farm, which was located partly in Fenstead End. Likewise, George Weller Poley was listed as a chief landowner in an 1844 directory. George Poley became Lord of Boxted Hall in 1799, he was then succeeded by his son, John, in 1849. Boxted Hall continued to hold land in Glemsford under John as he is listed as a chief landowner in an 1855 directory, though by 1874 it seems they lost a lot of their lands as John, nor his son, also called John, are listed as chief landowners in the directory. However, Boxted Hall may have continued to retain a small amount of land in the parish going into the 1900s. Despite the fact I am unsure of when it lost its land in the parish entirely, Boxted Hall continues to exist until this day even if it no longer has any presence in Glemsford.

Long Melford Manor may have also had a tiny presence in Glemsford during the 1800s, as in 1840 Sir Hyde Parker is listed as the owner of a small piece of pasture in the parish. Sir Hyde Parker was the Lord of Long Melford Manor from 1830 to 1856; therefore it is possible that the manor was present within Glemsford for a short while. I want to make clear that this is the only evidence I have for this because none of the later or former lords appear in any records I can find, and the manor seems to only have held very little land if it was present at all anyway.

Conclusion

Glemsford, as a village, may have only existed for over 1000 years, but the area it is situated on has a history dating back over 11,000 years. The people that have lived here have experienced countless ways of life, countless struggles, countless joys: they lived in hunter-gatherer bands living along the River Stour; they lived as early farmers, brandishing copper, bronze, and iron; the Romans brought an empire to their doorstep, and they fought back; they lived as medieval villeins, farming for their lords; they farmed sheep, and weaved wool and cloth; they lived as factory workers in the mills and factory lines; they watched their livelihoods collapse as their industry declined. All of their lives bring us to us today, Glemsford's most recent residents. We sit on an entire archives' worth of history, history which has sadly been forgotten by most, we have so much to share yet we also have so much to discover still. I have tried my best to display that history which lay hidden away inside our "Little Egypt", and it is my hope that it has encouraged someone to learn more about our home, and I hope that someone will come and expand what I have written here when, in a time when we know even more than we do right now. I might even hope that our lives become but a single part in the ever-expanding tapestry that is Glemsford's history.

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The Stour Valley Compendia: Prehistoric Landscape

The Stour Valley Compendia: Historic Landscape

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Figure Sources

Figure 1: The Stour Valley Compendia: Prehistoric Landscape

Figure 2: The Stour Valley Compendia: Prehistoric Landscape

Figure 3: The Stour Valley Compendia: Prehistoric Landscape

Figure 4: The Stour Valley Compendia: Prehistoric Landscape

Figure 5: The Stour Valley Compendia: Prehistoric Landscape

Figure 6: commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Three_Field_System.svg

Figure 7: “All Things Common: The Statute of Quia Emptores” from johnmartinofevershot.org

Figure 8: “All Things Common: The Statute of Quia Emptores” from johnmartinofevershot.org