

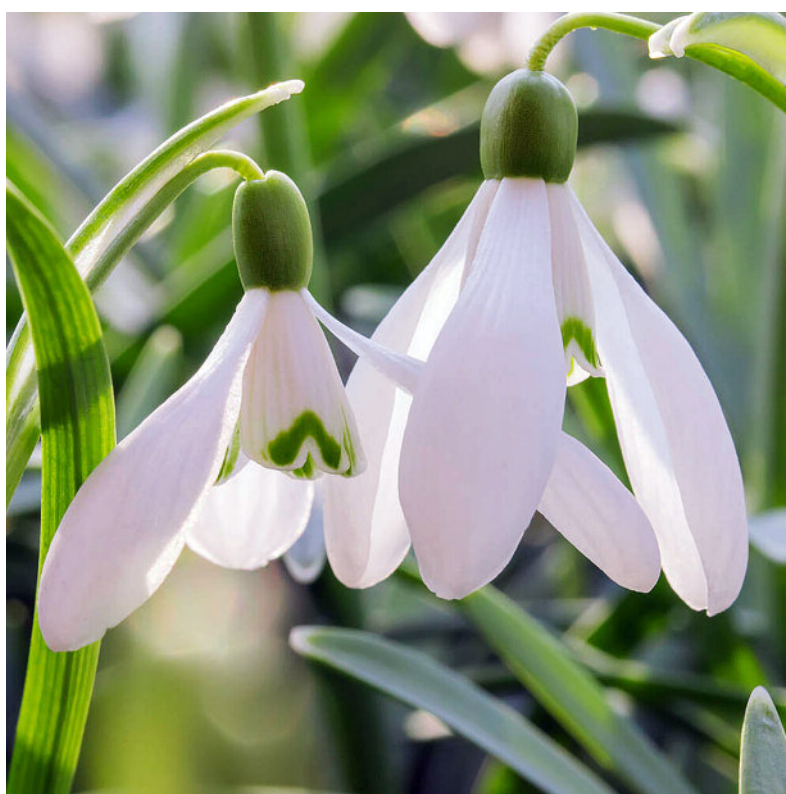
# GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Free to members,  
50p where sold

SPRING 2021

## Spring has sprung!

Oyez Oyez! let the following be known among you good history folk. The present researcher and scribe, is calling for new blood and fresh ideas. That is, a new gatherer and sharer of historical information, anecdotes and life relating to this good village of Glemsford and its environs. It is not an arduous task, but one that requires some thought, a little planning and of course an agreeable manner. Talking of planning, Pete, our layout artist came up with a good idea for Newsletter material: 'Why we live in Glemsford'. I suspect that the majority of you, like your editor, are incomers rather than born and bred Glemsfordians, and it would provide interesting reading to discover our various reasons for settling here. So come on, keyboards or pens ready to help towards the next and future editions, I'll start the ball rolling in this issue then it's over to you members.



The absence of meeting reports does mean more space to fill, and fortunately there is something in the 'store cupboard'.

Some family history research – by Barbara Richardson-Todd – involves one Jabez Copsey, who featured in the *Pubs & Inns of Glemsford* book (by GLHS published 2018). Those of you who buy the Contact Magazine will recognise an article reproduced here, with permission of the author, entitled 'Edmund Hibble of Somerton'. Not far from Glemsford and very interesting regarding the history of Parish Registers. There is also an article, with a request for help, relating to the organ at St Mary's, by Patrick Hemphill.

Enjoy your reading and start preparing your piece on why you moved to Glemsford and PLEASE, someone, do consider having a go at editing this Newsletter, just try it or consider a 'job share' with another member, (how about husband/wife or partners). You need a change of 'voice' after six and a half years. Simply contact me (281161) or any other member of the committee.

**Jenny Wears**, Editor

GLEMSFORD  
LOCAL HISTORY  
SOCIETY

**President:**  
Sid Watkinson

**Chairman:**  
Rowan Cain

**Treasurer:**  
Patrick Currie

**Secretary:**  
Margaret King  
01787 280996

# Edmund Hibble of Somerton



Nearly 500 years ago, on a warm September afternoon, baby Edmund Hibble was buried in Somerton churchyard. The significance of this sad event is that his was the first burial to be recorded in Somerton Parish Church's brand new Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials. Edmund's baptism a few months earlier on 30th June, 1538, was only the second to be recorded in the same Register, both by John Groome, Parson of Somerton Parish.

Thomas Cromwell, Henry VIII's Lord Chancellor, had ordered that all English parishes should adopt a system already common throughout much of Europe, the registration of baptisms, marriages and burials. The names of the wealthy landed class had always been recorded for posterity in land titles, tax returns, wills and other documents, but for everyone else, it could be far more ephemeral. You could be baptised James, son of Peter Brown, grow up, learn a trade and become James the Smithy, and then move to another village and be known as James Smith of Somerton, and so on.

From 1538, Cromwell's Registers gave folk a name that they carried with them through life and that could be used to prove a

marriage, or bastardy, in land disputes, or in your last Will and Testament. The earlier records were made on paper so rarely survive but in 1558 it became a legal requirement that bound parchment be used and older records were supposed to be copied over. To prevent interested parties from tampering with the records, perhaps to disinherit a brother by altering the baptism date, these new Registers were to be kept within the church, in a secure coffer with two locks, the parson to hold one key, the Church Warden the other.

In 1538 there were more than 10,400 parishes in England, but only 800 have parish records that have survived from this time. Somerton is very fortunate to be one of them. At this time the village had a population of about 60, of whom 17 were taxpayers. The powerful Earl of Oxford owned Somerton Manor and the Drury family owned Hawes Manor (now Manor Farm). It was a land of wood and meadow pasture with villagers engaged in dairying, pig-keeping, horse breeding and poultry. Cereals were the main crop, mainly barley but some wheat, rye, and oats. Vetch was grown for fodder, peas for food, hops for local brewing and hemp for spinning fibre.



*St Margaret's Church Somerton, by Anne Booth*

So who was baby Edmund Hibble of Somerton? We know that his father was also named Edmund. The English tradition at the time was to give the father's name to the third born son, so he may have had two older brothers. We know he only lived for a few months. There is no Hibble recorded in the 1524 Suffolk Subsidy Returns granted to Henry VIII to pay for his war in France, so either the family did not live in Somerton at the time or did not own more than one pound in goods or land. It is more likely to be the latter, for the Hibbles are not recorded on the 1568 Suffolk Subsidy Returns either, yet we have the evidence from the Registers that they were here. Indeed, there are records of the family living in Somerton from baby Edmund, for at least another 337 years, until the death of James Hibble, aged 76, a manservant at Somerton Hall, in 1875.

Researched by **Lynda Ronalds**



# A history of the organ in St. Mary's Church, Glemsford

I'm appealing for help within the History Society and the wider public for any information about the history of our church organ.

While it is not certain at this time who originally commissioned this instrument, the organ was supplied new and installed by the venerable organ builders Forster & Andrews of Hull. There is no plaque or documentation that has come to light so far to suggest it was paid for from a bequest, but according to the entry in Forster & Andrews' log, it was undertaken as job no. 737, and completed at a cost of £280 on 28th July 1877. It is not clear if that was the date of installation or of completion at the works. The bottom of the Forster & Andrews log states:

"Glemsford Parish Church, near Melford, Suffolk – Station about 2m from Church – Rev. Wm. P---?, Barnham, Thetford – Miss Coldham (Rev G. Coldham) Glemsford Rectory – Sudbury – Suffolk. H. Peacock Esq. The Silk Mill, Glemsford. Treasurer of Fund".

Where Rev. Wm P---? fits in, we are not sure – was he a benefactor, and why so if he was not a local of Glemsford? Was H. Peacock Esq. the owner or manager of Glemsford Silk Mills?

Although this fine 2 manual instrument was believed to have remained in its present position next to the vestry all its life, there is some evidence from the British Organ Archive to suggest it may have been temporarily relocated to nearby Gestingthorpe Church in 1886. As it is no small undertaking to move and recommission a church organ, it is a mystery why this was done, ultimately to return to its original home – if indeed this was the case. We are trying to find out more about this.

It is believed that one of the first performers to play this fine instrument was Bernard Horace Hurst in 1877, moving to Long Melford a year later having also played at Cavendish. The list of subsequent organists is rather scant, although a long time devotee at St. Mary's, Janet Garwood,

retired around 2018 after many years. A more detailed list of past organists would be very helpful.

Of course the organ has had running repairs over the years; in 1950 an electric blower was installed, overseen by the then Rector the Rev. A. Harpur. The blower supplemented the original manual bellows, pumped by many a choirboy, including the late John Suttle who vividly recalled doing so! In 1973 the incumbent Rev. Christopher Lawson commissioned an approved organ restorer to repair much of the mechanism. These repairs to quieten the noisy pedal action are believed to be the most recent to date, other than regular tuning. However the organ is believed never to have been completely restored.

Now that, once again urgent major repairs are needed to our organ, the Church needs to raise funds as before, this time for many thousands of pounds for a complete but lasting rebuild. There is a Facebook page: *St Mary's Glemsford – Church Organ Restoration - Posts | Facebook* where if you wish you can make a donation or sponsor an organ pipe, all of which will hasten the repairs.

But we also need to know more about this wonderful instrument, so if you have any information you would like to share, however trivial, please contact me on 01787 282307 or email [patrick@hemphill.org.uk](mailto:patrick@hemphill.org.uk). I look forward to hearing from you.

**Patrick Hemphill**



# The Boy who Burned Down a Barn: — a tale of transportation —

When Jabez [Javis] Copsey was born on 4th June 1823 in Glemsford, Suffolk, his father, Samuel, was 48 and his mother, Susanna, was 29. He had five brothers and five sisters. He probably died in May 1852 in Tasmania at the age of 28.

From the convict records Jabez was described as a kitchen gardener, height 5/5½, age 21 (two years older than the age given in the court records), complexion fresh, head and visage oval, hair and eyebrows dark, no whiskers, forehead, nose, mouth and chin all medium, eyes grey, no distinguishing marks.

Before his transportation he spent time in Bury Gaol, where the first treadmill had been built to prevent the idleness of prisoners.



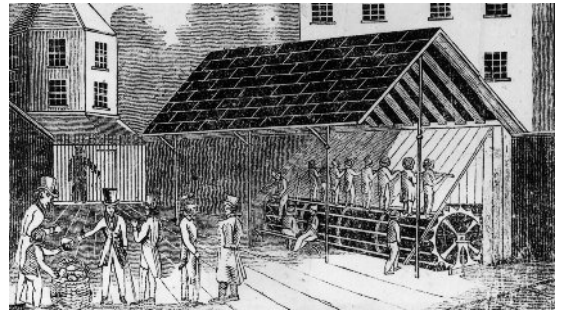
Bury St Edmunds gaol was redesigned in 1819 in a customised panopticon which had four wings with the guards in the middle allowing them to watch the prisoners. The prisoners shared cells but were not allowed to talk to each other.



William Cubitt 1819

The treadmill had the prisoners walking on it for hours each day and it drove millstones to grind corn. In some gaols the treadmill did nothing apart from keeping the prisoners occupied and exhausted. The first treadmill was designed by William Cubitt, who worked for Ransomes at the time.

It was a time of revolution in Europe and the Corn Laws gave a simmering sense of injustice to the working or poor man.



Cobden was lecturing on the rights stirring up the discontent.

The invention of the match allowed people for the first time to have instant fire. The simple act of lighting a fire was extremely difficult until then. The first matches were called Lucifer – the bringer of light but it armed people. The supplier had to have a licence to sell matches and it became a most desirable thing to have a match in your pocket.

From *Sudbury Post* January 31st 1844:

‘An incendiary is at work in Glemsford, a fire was discovered in the stackyard of Mr Charles Bigg of Churchgate farm at about 7 in the evening, engines from Melford and Hartest arrived and damage was confined to one stack.

‘A fresh alert was given about 1 in the morning when fire broke out in the barn belonging to Mr Allen the wheelwright, the barn was consumed with a lot of seasoned ash plank, there has now been 4 fires in the village in 2 months.

‘We have now heard, a man named Copsey has been taken up.’

The following week in *The Essex Standard* of February 2nd 1844:

‘In our account of the two incendiary fires last week, at Glemsford, we mentioned that a man was in custody on suspicion of being concerned in them: he underwent a second examination on Tuesday last, at the Bull Inn, Melford, before the Rev. Dr. Colville and Robert Mapletoft, Esq, when he made a

full confession of his guilt, and on his information his accomplice, Stephen Boreham, was also arrested.

‘Javis Copsey, the man first taken, is a bricklayer’s labourer, aged 22, and Stephen Boreham, a farming labourer, only 18 years of age. Copsey said that he and Boreham set fire to Mr. Shepherd’s premises about six weeks ago; he was in his own house when Boreham came and gave a signal whistle; Copsey’s mother and sister objected to his going, and said he was after no good, but he came out and went up Shepherd’s Lane to the back of the barn, where Boreham set fire to the thatch in two or three places; they then ran off in the direction of Fair Green.

‘Three or four days after Boreham asked him “to have another flare up,” and they then planned to set fire to Mr Mann’s premises, but something occurred to prevent their meeting on the night proposed. They subsequently agreed to set fire to Mr Bigg’s stacks. Boreham went in first and called him (Copsey) to assist; they had seven lucifer matches, and tried six without being able to obtain a light; the seventh ignited, and they fired the stack. The matches were stolen from Mr. Albin’s blacksmith’s shop; Mr. Albin’s apprentice missed the matches, and mentioned it to his master the next morning.

‘Copsey then proceeded to state that after Boreham had fired Mr. Bigg’s stack they got over the wall and ran across “Grescroft,” where Boreham’s grandfather lived, and where he stopped till he heard the cry of fire, when they went and assisted; they afterwards repaired to the Crown Inn, and took the beer which was allowed them for helping at the fire. They then went to the Cock public-house, where he gave Boreham a halfpenny to get a pipe of tobacco; after he had lighted his pipe they walked to Mr Allen’s barn, when Boreham asked him to have “another flare up.” He then tore a piece of the lining out of Boreham’s coat, into which they emptied the burning tobacco, and wrapped it up, put it into the barn through a hole in the wall, and pulling some straw over it, ran away; as they were running they met two men, and after that another, named Thomas Chatter, who said to them

“There’s another fire yonder,” and they went back with him and helped to extinguish it.

‘Copsey further stated that Boreham was always after him, and persuading him to join him in firing these premises; he did not know that they had any animosity against any of the parties; he did not know why they did it. It appears that some time back Copsey had obtained some beer by means of a forged order in Mr Shepherd’s name, and was discharged from his work in consequence of it; Boreham had also been out of employ about ten days.’

They were both committed to the County Gaol to await their trial at the ensuing assize. Great credit is due to Mr. Freestone, of Glemsford, for his indefatigable exertions in causing the apprehension of these incendiaries. The frequent fires which have taken place in that parish have filled the whole village with alarm, and the satisfaction of the inhabitants at discovering the perpetrators of these diabolical deeds may be easily conceived. Boreham conducted himself at the examination with the greatest effrontery, and when starting out for gaol called out, “Good bye, gentlemen.”

From the *Sudbury Post* newspaper archive : April 10th 1844.

Jabez Copsey and Stephen Boreham of Glemsford were charged with setting fire to Mr James Allen’s barn in Glemsford. Walter Bullock said he saw the prisoners in the Cock Inn and they went off together.

‘Charles Hartley said “prisoners left the Cock before me, later I saw them coming over the hedge from Allen’s barn”.

Frederick Shadbolt said he was a prisoner in Bury gaol and he had asked Boreham if he did set fire to the barn and Boreham said he did, in answer to a question witness said he had also given evidence the day before on a similar charge saying a man named Barley had also admitted setting fire to a stack and he did not give evidence for a reward. Transportation for life.”

**Barbara Richardson-Todd**

*To be continued in next edition (June/July)*



# Why we live in Glemsford

We lived in Halstead for about 15 years and five or six years into the new millennium we decided it was time for another move – out of town.

Our sons were working and living independently, I was due to take early retirement from the NHS and husband had already retired, so we had no real reason to stay where we were. Our idea of moving to Dorset or Somerset changed when we remembered the practical aspects of living far from family and friends. (We had lived in North Devon for a year, in the mid '80s) so, we decided on Norfolk, Suffolk or NW Essex. We didn't want to be isolated or in a village with very few amenities, but after a lot of driving and external viewing — this was pre-Rightmove — we came across Glemsford, via details from an estate agent.

We dismissed the first property after seeing it from the road but another bungalow came up. We looked at its position and tried to find out the usage of the 'Home' that was next door.

We liked the rural position, a few yards from a large grass area that contained some allotments, and footpaths to open fields, ideal for walking our dog. We had a full internal viewing and strolled around the extremely overgrown gardens, inspected the garage and numerous 'animal sheds' that lined one side of the back garden. The interior was in a pretty neglected state but nothing that we couldn't put right in time! (As we moved in, a resident from the home leant over the wall and cheerfully asked our names. David continued to be a chatty and

mainly happy character, who, like the other three or four residents, was cared for by Mencap. He died about two years ago, and we did miss his cheerful face.) It was some months before we discovered that the Home had been the Weavers' Arms (work on the house coming before history research!).

Glemsford looked promising when I had 'Googled' it. There were all the amenities that sprang to mind, library, doctors, shops, plus a History Society among the numerous clubs and societies and a regular bus service if needed. I had been an active member of Halstead's History Society and was pleased to find one here. The village ticked all our boxes. Now almost 14 years later, it still suits us. Plenty to do, with something going on most afternoons or evenings for those who like to be kept socially busy. Besides belonging to just three or four 'clubs', we've met a lot of other residents, many born here or having lived here for years, as we've walked around the village. It's a very sociable place. The bus service is a little reduced but then, you can't have everything. Then again, this past year has shown the great advantages of living here. From local shops prepared to deliver, after a phoned-in shopping list or an email, to volunteers collecting medication from our surgery pharmacy. And, people notice when they don't see you around the place, on a regular walk.

This is why we live in Glemsford, not that we knew it when we moved in.

**Jenny & Denis Wears**

## GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

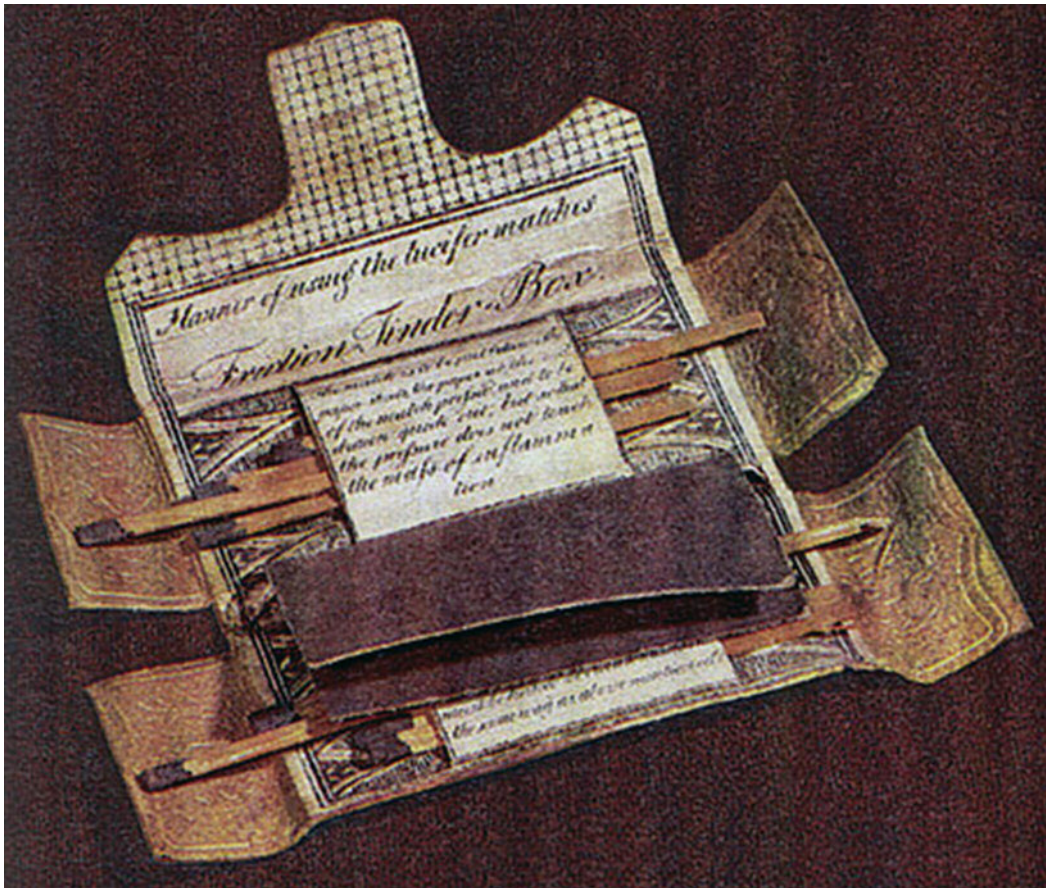
The Glemsford Local History Society would like to wish all their members, both old and new, (along with other prospective new members), a very happy, safe and healthy New Year with hopes that 2021 will eventually take us back to some sort of normality when we can socialize again, restart our monthly meetings and generally enjoy ourselves.

However, in the meantime the committee wish to assure you that we have not forgotten you! We are really pleased to observe that the Society's latest publication *Shops & Services of Glemsford* has sold remarkably well and received some encouraging feedback from friends and acquaintances far and wide. We convey our thanks to the sub-committee of Rowland Hill, Jenny Wears, Patrick Hemphill and Peter Coote, together with all the contributors responsible for putting the whole project together. Likewise, I should like to thank our chairman, Rowan Cain, for his Christmas quiz with its general knowledge teasers and devious cryptic clues. The Newsletter team have also been very busy sending out a brilliant seasonal issue, together with a local history quiz, which we hope you all enjoyed reading and attempting. Here again, thanks must go to editor Jenny, Patrick and Peter.

Another development which I am sure many of you have taken on board and indeed shown involvement, is the launch over Christmas of the Society's Facebook page. Here we owe an enormous debt to member Keith Slater for his intricate knowledge, initiative and encouragement in getting this running. At the time of going to press the FB page had a membership of 700 and it is quite amazing to see the amount of interest it is generating, not just the village and surrounding area, but also around many parts of the world! It is particularly gratifying to notice that large numbers of the younger generation have joined, and are discovering much about the former life of Glemsford — its inhabitants, buildings, stories, facts, photographs and events — previously unknown to them. This can only be good for the future.

In this time of abeyance, all we can do now is await and see how we fare in the coming months. The Society is hoping that it is able to resume sometime during this year but, in the meantime, be assured we appreciate your continued loyalty and while we will endeavour to keep you informed, we really look forward to meeting all our members again. Stay safe!

**Margaret King** (Secretary)



19th century Lucifer matches



## Newsletter | Spring 2021 edition

**Annual Subscription:** £12.00 **Visitors:** £2.50 per time

In happier times we meet on every second Thursday of the month in Glemsford Primary Academy at 7.30pm. This is obviously now suspended until further notice.