

# GLEMSFORD LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Free to members,  
50p where sold

AUTUMN 2020



A reduced editorial in this issue: just a few lines about the content. The death of our past President Mr George Grover is observed by the three obituaries written by those who knew him well.

Another excellent article from Stephanie Hemphill, this time on Charity Schools. Robin Ford has contributed an illustrated natural history piece about Henbane, while Patrick Hemphill tells of being caught out in the flooded Stour. (Not likely this year I hope).

November would have seen the GLHS celebrating its 30th birthday, the inaugural meeting having been held on November 15th 1990. Oh well!

No meeting reports, no forthcoming meetings, gatherings, or outings – until who knows when? The committee will keep you all informed of when and where we can meet again.

Think positive and keep well.  
Your editor, **Jenny**

GLEMSFORD  
LOCAL HISTORY  
SOCIETY

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Margaret King  
01787 280996

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## In Memory of **GEORGE GROVER** (1926 - 2020)

It was very sad to hear of the passing of our friend, George Grover.

George purchased Chequers while still living and working in London. He visited the village when Chequers was divided into three properties. Slowly the house was restored to the single property it used to be. Much time was spent renovating the house and developing the garden.

Some of us were entertained by George at his Livery Company at Plaisterers Hall, 1 London Wall, George always being most generous with his hospitality. George and Ann were great supporters of the Glemsford Local History Society. He was elected to become President during the early months; he continued in this post for 25 years.

Every Christmas, George and Ann hosted the GLHS Christmas Party at Chequers, members supplying the buffet and George always providing all of the drinks. Not only did they host this event, but on a number of occasions also hosted a Summer Garden Party in their beautiful garden. No parking on the grass please!

George and Ann also supported village activities attending both the Christmas Bazaars and Summer Fetes in aid of St. Mary's Church, George often to be seen walking from Chequers to the village hall.

A gentleman who will be sadly missed.

**Rowland Hill**

The death of George Grover has saddened many people in the village. Throughout his life, he was a man with many interests, much involved in the local community; however here we are principally remembering his participation in, and his work for the Glemsford Local History Society.

The inaugural meeting of the Society took place on 15th November 1990. It was in September 1991 that George was asked if he would consider becoming the first President. He accepted this post gladly, although I believe that, at the time, he was primarily based in London during the week, thus making regular attendances at meetings difficult. However, it was George's idea to hold an annual President's Evening on a Saturday, the first one of these to incorporate the Christmas season taking place on December 11th 1993. The rest, as they say, is history. George, expertly aided and abetted by his wife Ann, continued to host the December President's Evenings for

many years, in fact the last being in 2016 a few days short of his 90th birthday. His hospitality and generosity were greatly appreciated by all who attended over the years, The Evenings becoming traditional and certainly something to anticipate. Memories of these happy occasions in the beamed rooms of the 17th century 'Chequers', with its large inglenook fireplace where a blazing fire crackled pleasingly, will stay with us for a long time. The excellent seasonal food and drink mingled seamlessly with Christmas poems and prose, carols and songs, popular talks and, of course, a wide selection of eclectic Quizzes! Good times indeed.

George was a lovely, thoughtful host and throughout the many years of his Presidency, a most supportive member of the Society. Truly, he will be greatly missed by all.

**Margaret King**

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I first got to know George about 20 years ago, not long after I moved to this village and was invited to join the Glemsford Local History Society, of which he was the illustrious President. The first Christmas event I attended as a member was at his magnificent home in Chequers Lane where he hosted the Society's annual Christmas function. Both he and Ann were as welcoming as the roaring fire and good cheer, and it was my treat of the year to be able to attend.

At this time he was a part-time Glemsfordian as although he had bought 'Chequers' around 1963 he still worked in London, coming down at weekends. It was clear that he had made Glemsford his home since, in the intervening years he had completely and sympathetically restored the house and was very much integrated into village life as an active

member of the Conservatives as well as a generous benefactor of local good causes. Many a village committee meeting have I attended at George's house which he would chair with efficiency and affability in equal measure.

It was with much regret that he stood down as the GLHS President when he could no longer give the post the commitment he felt it deserved. I believe he served in the post far beyond the call of duty; providing the wine free of charge for functions as well as opening his house and grounds.

In George's passing we have lost a good friend of the History Society and a true patriarch of Glemsford.

**Patrick Hemphill**

# Charity Schools in the 18th Century

The majority of charity schools were reorganized and new establishments founded at the end of the 17th century, and at an age famed for its moral liberties and with a notorious Royal Court, the ordinary people had little guidance and so the time was ripe for a group of (mainly) clergymen who not only wanted to bring the population back to the moral “fold” but promote hard work and clean living rather than debauchery and profanity. The way to do this was by education; teaching a new generation of the poor and labouring classes.

## The Founding of Charity Schools

In about 1699 a like-minded group of devout Anglican clergymen had banded together to worship God, and on a practical note to help the poor; the movement these men started developed into the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge. Thomas Bray, a devout Christian and a kind studious man began to shape the society into an organization which would help and set up more than 1,600 schools (by 1729) and start a gradual social reform.

Education by and large was only open to the very rich. Most if not all endowed schools had been closed during the religious turmoil of previous decades and although grammar schools maintained education their curriculum centred on Latin grammar and quite often other subjects lagged behind. For most children born into labouring families the opportunity of an education was pure fantasy; their lessons of practical working skills were learnt in the blacksmith’s forge or at the spinning wheel. Literacy was not needed; although education was held in high regard it was not suitable for the farm boy or dairymaid.

At the end of the 17th century there existed a large number of charity schools throughout Britain but many were poorly administered and needed professional organizing. The S.P.C.K saw this as a good opportunity to begin to set to work. These schools would

provide the knowledge a new generation of working class children would need. Unusually both boys and girls would receive an equal education, so from its beginnings in the parishes of London the charity school movement spread.

All charity schools were founded and depended on donations from rich or kindly benefactors; although a lot of educational establishments were established nationwide, many eventually closed due to financial resources drying up. Some new charity schools were in direct competition with small private schools, which were also aimed at the poor.

The early years of the movement was not without its political difficulties. After the death of Queen Anne in 1714 the new King George I and the Whig party which supported him were not keen on promoting ideas of their Tory opponents, and things were made worse when rumours began stating that some of the teachers of the S.P.C.K. supported the “Pretender” (James Stuart) to the throne of England. This prompted action and all S.P.C.K. teachers were required to swear an oath of loyalty to King and Government. When staffing matters had been settled a set of rules and regulations for all charity school staff to abide by were set down:

“Rules for the good Order and Government of Charity Schools drawn up by the Trustees of these Schools within the Bills of Mortality.”

1. Children are not to be taught anything to set them above the conditions of servants, or the more laborious employments.
2. The Psalms to be sung are regulated.
3. Children are to be taught allegiance to the present Government.
4. Every teacher is to be a member of the Church of England.

Other rules were very similar to that of grammar schools of the time. ▶



*Statue of a girl  
in wall niche at  
Burrough Green  
Charity School*

The financial funding of charity schools was very important. Without sound backing many had to close. A body of trustees having been formed, the leading member was always the vicar, the other men of good social character and means (merchants, gentry). The subscribers provided donations to run the school. The role of the trustees was an administrative one, they had to find or supply suitable buildings to house the school, appoint teaching staff, clothe and feed the young scholars, inspect the school and of course keep the provision of funds constant. Several unique fund raising ideas came into place; collection boxes were placed in local churches; public examinations of the children were held and donations were then collected for all the children who did well. Small gifts were handed out to the pupils – combs, laces, and penknives. Endowments were drawn upon to provide from working farms and other financial concerns.

### Teachers and Educational aims

All teachers had to be at least 25 years of age, sober and of good character, kind in temper and a supporter of King George. An extensive knowledge of the Christian doctrine was also a major qualification. The salaries were low as all costs had to be provided from the trust or endowments. The age of schooling usually started at seven years of age and continued until eleven or fourteen depending on individual places. The schools themselves were divided into four classes, the elementary for the youngest children where reading and writing was mastered; the second class learnt to improve their reading skills and Bible study and Psalms were taught. The third class concentrated on the entire Bible and its message, while writing was again improved. And in the last class children learnt simple arithmetic and keeping or casting accounts, a skill valued by new masters of new apprentices.

Despite the academic level the main aim of all S.P.C.K supported charity schools was really to produce God-fearing, industrious, clean living people who held high moral standards and above all knew their proper place in society. Periodically the pupils

would be tested by the school vicar on the lessons learnt and in the presence of the trustees or benefactors. For those children who were fortunate to be accepted into school, discipline was far harsher than today's child would ever encounter; a rod or cane was carried by the teacher and used although with discretion. The reasons for punishment were explained to the erring child and expulsion was a final course of action. A Book of Faults was held in school and all misdemeanours recorded by the child's name:

A - absent C - cursing L - lying P - playing  
C - church (bad conduct in church) S - stealing  
T - truant.

The book like the modern register was recorded daily and shown regularly to the school trustees.

Parents of charity schools pupils also had to play their part; they must always send the child to school with clean face and hands (a daily wash was required), hair to be combed and tidy, the uniform provided must be well kept as the uniform made children from very poor families look respectable. The benefactors had their egos boosted when they saw children clothed from their generosity, also the uniform copied the older schools (which had long been established) which gave them some social standing with critics of the S.P.C.K movement. Those pupils who transgressed and were expelled did not take the uniform with them but handed it back to the school. It was crucial that pupils did not beg in the street, which would have reflected badly upon the school as after school hours rules still applied; they must never be part of a rowdy mob, beg money for bonfires, never ever to play dice or any other unlawful street games.

Schools, which concentrated on skills, were known as Working Schools where labour occupied the majority of its curriculum. Often the sale of produce helped to further the schools' income. After initial problems or apprehension it was decided that the children should alternate working days with learning days; finally the outcome was hard-working skilled people. ▶



*Companion wall niche statue of a boy*

Ampton Hospital (as the school was known) was founded in Suffolk in 1692 by James Calthorpe Esq., a wealthy country gentleman who did not marry and had no children of his own. He entrusted his lands in Norfolk for the education, clothing, feeding and maintenance of six poor boys from the surrounding villages of Ampton, Gt. Livermere, Lt. Livermere, Ingham and Timworth, although it was preferred if the boys came from his estate village of Ampton. This school like many other charity schools taught from the Bible with the emphasis on morals and hard work. Eventually it was hoped the children who left school would secure good apprenticeships and better futures, all thanks to their benefactor. By 1720 the first intake of local boys had been apprenticed to trades varying from basket making to butchery. Some remained in Suffolk; one boy was apprenticed in Thetford.

In the neighbouring county of Cambridgeshire other charity schools were also teaching hand picked children from their parishes. In the small village of Cheveley the small school founded in the reign of Queen Elizabeth 1 in 1568, by John Raye (from whom it took its name) had been undergoing several changes, gradually moving away from grammar school status and teaching the boys of local labourers who had no use for instruction in the Classics. Sadly over time it fell into decay; unable to attract a schoolmaster the local rector undertook the duty and sole trusteeship. In 1709 certain lands were left by Lord Dover for its benefit, which continued as an educational establishment until the mid 19th century when a new elementary school was built across the road and village children attended there.

In Dullingham village, also in Cambridgeshire, under the Will of Boradail Millicent (or Milson) in 1678, a sum of £5 per annum 'charged upon the rectory' was left to the schoolmaster 'for careful instruction of 5 boys in Grammar learning, poor children born or inhabiting the parish'. If the vicar himself undertook the duty of teaching, he was to receive the said income.

A couple of miles away from Dullingham at Burrough Green in 1728, a school described

as a charity school was in operation and there had been teaching there for a number of years prior to that date. In 1709 Thomas Watson, late Bishop of St David's gave a messuage (dwelling-house with outbuildings and land) and pasture which helped to support another school in the school house on the green built in the early 18th century under the Will of Samuel Richardson. Samuel Knight (1746), Rector and Richardson's executor also left houses and land to buy bibles for children leaving school and to pay a master who undertook a pupil for an apprenticeship.

Throughout Suffolk during the 18th century more than forty charity schools taught at some point. The number of such establishments in Norfolk at the same period was far fewer. From time to time in some market towns schools would start but gradually close due to lack of pupils. Illiteracy remained widespread; between 1700 -1750 only 22 charity schools taught in Norfolk compared with 42 in Suffolk during the same period.

Education then as now was recognized as the only way to improve social deficiencies; it was hoped that through good moral teaching a new generation would have an opportunity to succeed through hard work and be able to continue to enjoy the advantages of their learning by encouraging their children to balance an education with social rank.

## **Stephanie Prythergch-Hemphill**

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# Henbane

Some years ago, Margaret King discovered a plant of Thorn Apple *Datura stramonium* growing on the edge of a field bordering her garden behind Park Road. At the time I wrote a short article for the newsletter describing the plant and its ability to produce delirium in humans.

During the last few months my botanizing has been restricted to walks round the parish of Glemsford. This occupation has proved most rewarding. However, on Saturday June the 20th, the discovery of another member of the Deadly Nightshade family, growing from the base of a wall on Hunts Hill, came as a complete surprise. Described in one of the field guides as "an

Probably introduced to this country during the bronze age, Henbane has been grown since medieval times as a remedy for nervous irritability, insomnia and toothache, although sometimes with unfortunate consequences. Lines from Shakespeare's Hamlet probably refer to Henbane:

——— *Sleeping within mine orchard  
My custom always in the afternoon,  
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,  
And in the porches of mine ears did pour  
The leperous distilment;*

Henbane has not been grown commercially to any extent in this country but was

cultivated in fields around Long Melford at the beginning of the last century, supplying the drug and flavouring company of Bush, Boake Allen. It can still be found, growing as an arable weed, near the Long Melford sewage treatment works.

According to Martin Sanford, in his *Flora of Suffolk* (2010), Henbane is in "decline nationally and is classed as vulnerable". Its strongholds in Suffolk are the

Brecks and Landguard Common, Felixtowe. However, it appears never to have been recorded within our Parish boundary. I returned to Hunts Hill at the beginning of July but could find no trace of the plant.



evil smelling biennial, clammy with sticky hairs, the flowers of a lurid yellow leading to a purple throat", Henbane *Hyoscyamus niger* is unlikely to be picked and displayed on the living room windowsill. In his poem *The Borough* (1810) the Suffolk born poet, George Crabbe (1754-1832) wrote:

*On Hills of dust the Henbane's faded green  
And pencilled flowers of sickly scent is seen.*

**Robin Ford**



# Glemsford Floods

It was autumn sometime around 2004 when Glemsford and the neighbouring Essex border experienced unusual levels of flooding due to rain. In particular I recall the Stour bursting its banks near what was the Glemsford picnic site, on the road towards Pentlow and Liston.



Landies used to wear. But by the time I reached the bend on the road to the picnic site the water level had risen dramatically; however I only had to negotiate that short stretch of flooded road, cross the bridge over the Stour, up the incline past the old railway station onto the main road, and home.

At that time I was younger and more foolish; I also owned an example of the ultimate off-road vehicle – although not so fashionable as it is today – an ex-Essex County Council Land Rover van. Now I don't know if you are acquainted with true Land Rover nuts (not the Chelsea Tractor types) but the one thing they must do is to test the off-road capabilities of their steeds. And where better to test the wading capabilities of my vehicle than across the nearby swollen river?



That was the hard part. Remembering past lessons on negotiating water in a vehicle, I engaged low ratio to slow down the Land Rover to walking pace in order to reduce the effect of a bow wave, then gingerly proceeded towards the bridge. The water level was getting higher and higher, with quite a sideways current. The next thing was I noticed water entering the cab, as my feet were getting wet. But the truck was still going. I couldn't retreat now, so I proceeded further, as water continued to rush in at an increasingly alarming rate. I was almost on the bridge when the engine stopped – the fan had thrown water over the electrics which, being a petrol model immediately stalled. It wouldn't restart, and by now I was scared the force of the current would wash me off the road altogether into the drink, so in desperation I engaged gear, turned the key to operate the starter and cranked my way clear of the water, where I could dismount and try to dry the engine. My saviour that day, apart from my guardian angel was a can of WD40 which I used to disperse the water and the engine restarted, allowing me to struggle home.

With this in mind, I set off one afternoon after work, driving down Skates Hill on the main road towards Cavendish, which I reached without incident. I turned left down the road past Pentlow Mill; although the river was high at this point I don't remember any difficulty negotiating the bridge there. I continued, then steered left again approaching the Foxearth road, enjoying the puddles and standing water as I splashed along on the noisy tyres old

When I eventually arrived I had to change my clothes and dry out, and the next day I just left the Landie on the drive with the doors open to allow the residual water to drain out. I heard from a friend the following day that his teenage son had been playing near the bridge with some pals and had witnessed the whole occurrence. He had reported that the water reached up to my headlights, quite a feat in a Land Rover...

**Patrick Hemphill**



# Where in Glemsford?

Valuable estate called  
'Coates' at Glemsford  
to be sold, upwards  
of 200 acres

From Bury & Norwich Post July 20th 1814.

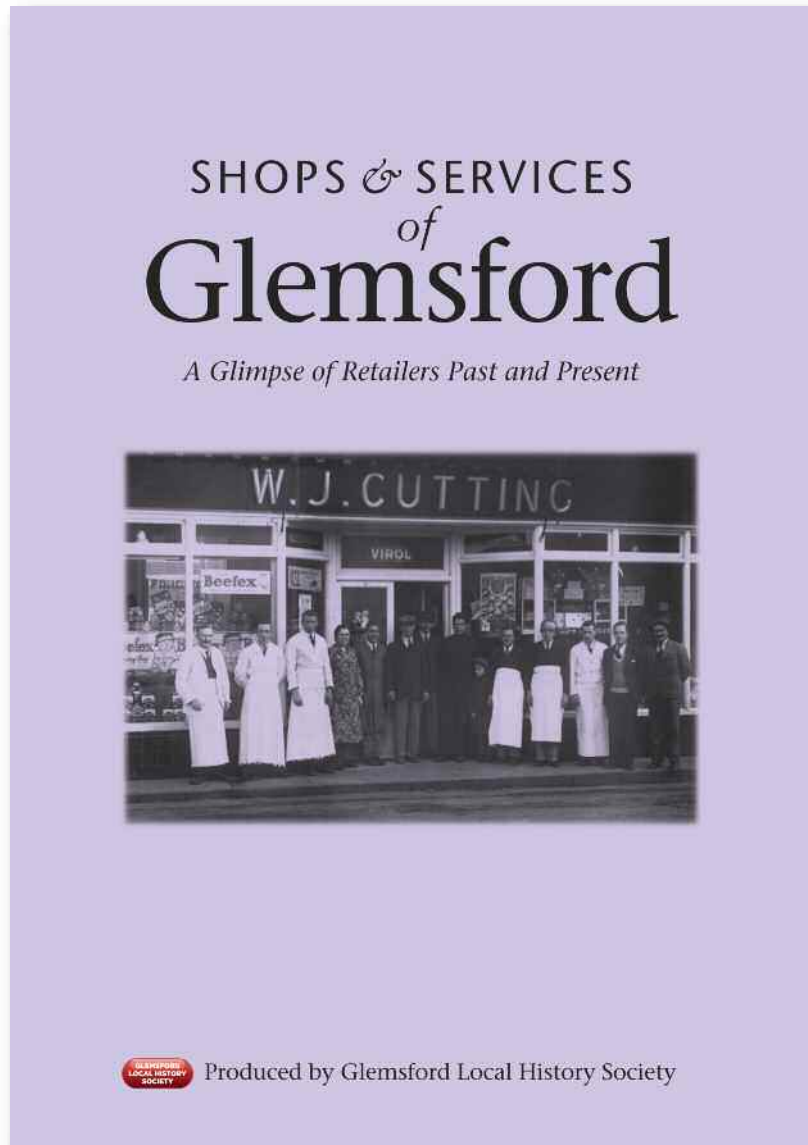
To be sold at auction in three lots  
on 26th, the valuable estate situated  
in the centre of Glemsford known as  
the "Glemsford Garden Farm". Capital  
Farm and homestead - dble barn-  
stables-cart lodge-bullock lodge-  
piggeries-orchard. Entrance near  
Fair Gn, now in occupation of Josiah  
Sparkes — it is bounded by the lands  
of Eaton esq.

The house and buildings have been  
erected within a few years in the best  
possible manner and are within the  
easy reach of the factories. The division  
of the property is arranged to offer  
advantage to parties wanting to build  
in this thriving and populous village.

From Bury & Norwich Post Sept 20th 1854.

BOOK PROMOTION

# Look out for our latest book



To be on sale at: Hunts Hill Stores, Willow Tree Farm Shop,  
Glemsford Library, and Tourist Information, Sudbury Library in time for Christmas.

This is the fourth title from GLHS – the history of our village.

GLEMSFORD  
LOCAL HISTORY  
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## Newsletter | Autumn 2020 edition

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

We meet on every 2nd Thursday of the month in Glemsford Primary Academy at 7.30pm.

We welcome your continued support and that of others. Please encourage your friends and neighbours to join us.