

*Drake Diaries
of
Sutton
in the Isle*

Lorna Delanoy MBE B.Ed

INTRODUCTION

The Drake Diaries cover the years from 1880

Richard's daughter Lizzie and her brother Arthur wrote diaries of their early youth in the Fen village of Sutton in the Eighteen-Eighties and some eighty years later RGD, Richard's grandson, known as Dick, transposed them to legible handwriting; this tome was stored by his cousin Henry (known as Ewart) see letter dated 1972 and were eventually passed via his daughter Jenny to me, Lorna Delaney in 2021 (whose uncle by marriage was HED).

Ewart told the story of the Drake empire as part of the Farmland Museum Sound Archives and it may be listened to on my web "farmlandvoices.org.uk."

His cousin Eric, on retiring to Norfolk (having been a tutor at Loughborough College) wrote copious notes re his childhood here in the Fen Country and excerpts of these were used in publications such as Bog Oak Country and Ten Miles from Ely.

My plan in 2021 is to compile a study of life in Sutton in the Isle using as much relevant material as I can from these three sources and then deposit Dick's tome together with Eric's reminiscences in the Cambs County Records Store which has recently been transferred to Ely.

VERSES WHICH GENERATIONS OF SCHOOL CHILDREN HAVE CHANTED

*Sutton good mutton, Ely good beef;
Haddenham's a pretty town, Wilburton's a thief*

Enid Porter quoted this in her Cambridgeshire Customs and Folklore; the last two places could be alternated!

*Sutton Church stands on a hill; Haddenham Church is higher still.
Mepal Church is in a hole and Witcham Church does ding dang dole.*

*For further info re Sutton see:
local websites, Mike Petty's web, Victoria County History, Kelly's Directories,
publications by Feast Committee, "A Countryman's Year" by John Humphries, son of
the vicar.*

Diary extracts 1880 – 1895

Victorian Life

The influence of the Wesleyan Chapel on the Lives of the Drake family.

Attendance at chapel was not only on Sundays but the whole family were involved during the week in such activities as services of song, concerts, baptisms at both the Gault and at Mepal together with public teas and bazaars (to raise funds for worthy causes), the two most important meetings were the Harvest Festival (when most of the farming fraternity put on their best suits and sang heartily "All is safely gathered in") and the Sunday School Anniversary for which the children had been practising the new hymns and recitations "up to three times per week" and for which "girls had new dresses and their Mums had new hats" (chapel/church attendance required ladies to wear head-gear) Almost every evening there were meetings to attend and at twelve Lizzie records herself as "playing the harmonium" for hymns (Methodism was "born in song") and after the traditional "Sunday Tea" the entire family would gather round to sing hymns often accompanied by the "older members playing violins" Some Sunday evenings the older members would walk to Haddenham or Mepal to attend services in chapels there.....remember there were no cars/buses in those days!

The family was brought up in a strict Victorian fashion, all signing "the Pledge" re alcohol....and even when Arthur was in London doing an apprenticeship as a draper, his father Richard made sure that he was attending the local Wesleyan church by calling in at the service himself before catching the late train back to Ely!

Exams based on the scriptures were taken and in 1889 Lizzie was a young teacher and the Sutton entrants competed with those from Stretham, Haddenham and Witcham in the Ely Circuit ; R himself was superintendant of the Sunday School at Sutton for over 50 years (see certificate) and his eldest son became Circuit Steward, an honourable post, as did his Grandson Ewart in the 1950s.

The social life of the Drakes revolved around the CHAPEL, so it is not surprising that several of them married into other Methodist Families (the Cheeswrights of Littleport and the Adcocks of Soham....a familiar cliché which Ewart used to say "brother and sister married brother and sister"; with travel a difficulty many of the marriages were local.

My family, the Freemans at Haddenham, used to refer to the Sutton Chapel as "Drakes place" and it is not surprising when one sees the list of Drake-family names as recorded in brick on the 1914 rebuild (now a private residence)....see list; the son of R's youngest Grandson, Oliver, (whose name is at the front left of the building) retired back to Cambs in the 1990s having been a head-teacher in Grimsby....several of R's decendants became teachers/lecturers.

Anecdotes re Travel from the Diaries.

"A walk after Sunday evening service" was a very common entry; Ma Drake often visited the Hiams at Mepal or the Mortons at Wentworth; it was considered very unladylike for a woman to be seen on a bike (which were very rare, even for men, prior to the turn of the century) hopefully she would be collected by pony and trap for the return journey. Shopping was done mainly in the village (as recently as the 1950s my parents would go by car to Sutton on a Saturday evening to buy local cheese etc) and bigger items were purchased at Ely or St. Ives, making the journey there by train on the Grunty Fen Express. Richard, for business reasons, ventured as far as Lincoln (where some of his machines were made). Doncaster (for the Agricultural Show) and regularly of course to London where the head-quarters of his business (see magazine article) were at Bow.

Often he had to be met at Ely Station late at night by one of his sons with the pony and cart; his sons "all did as they were told" and one can see, looking back, how very important horses were both for work power and pleasure....no wonder his product, NOSEY was in such great demand!

Life was NOT "all work and no play" for the Drakes.

Lizzie frequently writes about birthdays when presents listed included "a handkerchief, a bandano (a scarf for the neck) a pretty card and a verse"....such frugalities but for one of his daughters R bought her "a set of false teeth"....did they fit I wonder?
With a family of nine, the older ones (Charles b 1858) had married before Keeble, the baby, was born in 1879, so the Drake Household was a very busy one and the girls had to help their mother not only with cleaning and cooking but outside chores as well such as "fetching water"....remember mains water was not available till the nineteen twenties.

One of the most exciting events was the day-excursion by train to Great Yarmouth and the very first holiday was at Brighton, staying with the Blake family who used to own the Dame School at Lincoln House. Another "excitement" was to go to Ely to get "a likeness" - ie a photo as cameras were uncommon in the nineties.

The Feast used to be held in October so that "All is safely gathered in" could be sung with gusto as recorded in John Humphries book about seasonal happenings in the farming village in which he grew up in the nineteen fifties....his father was the local vicar.

Hobbies and Interests

With no radio/TV/computers the Drakes used their free time in a variety of ways: the word BORED was never part of their vocabulary. The winters were certainly colder and as a regular sporting area was just down the hill at the Gault....skating was commonplace on the Washes for members of both sexes (the Drake Family at Chatteris won the championship at Whittlesey in 1799). When there was no ice a man named Morris would row people across the washes and at Mepal a man named Waters (appropriate name!) did the same; now there are viaducts over the two Bedford Rivers. Eels were caught, taken home and cooked and eaten with parsley sauce....other fen fish were not so popular.

In summer cricket was most important for the boys; Lizzie reports that her brothers went to Cambridge to see Grace and Hobbs play for Fenners and local teams Wilburton and Witcham competed with each other at weekends.

The Drake Family was probably the first in Sutton to have its own tennis court so this provided sport for the girls and their friends; the Haddocks, the Cattells (the bakery family) the Vyres (from Witcham)....and an opportunity in a social setting for "girl meets boy" apart from the chapel! Fishing parties and rowing groups on the river cost nothing and it seems that a "happy time was had by all"

Pocket money as such did not exist but Lizzie was paid by her brother (who ran the post office) to deliver telegrams....and the sum of sixpence she received having walked all the way down the Gault and back, often missing school!

Entertaining.....at home

A lot of mentions are made of "having friends to tea" or supper....what did they eat? No mention of course of coffee chat! We know from the diary that pigs were killed so ham sandwiches....or pork cheese with bread and butter? Parts of the pork were shared with other farming friends who in turn would reciprocate when their pigs were killed (I recall this exchange of "goodies" when we had pigs killed after WW2) Mrs D also SOLD some joints of pork so this perhaps gave her "pin money" as she had no income of her own, like most women of her day....and she loved to go to local auctions, buying all sort of irrelevant furniture! Eggs were cheap - one shilling (5P) per score (20) and butter was a shilling per pound so homemade cakes were essential (no bought cakes in the Drake pantry!)
Arthur's grocery and drapery shop had a branch at Mepal which shows enterprise and Arthur Darby (Sutton House) and Burton Darby (Bury House) developed their own businesses in Sutton when their father Charles died in 1894, a parallel with the Drakes.

Often goods were paid for "arter harvest" by the richer customers and "on the slate" for poorer ones; money was scarce in Victorian Times; "poors" money was allocated for the less-able residents in the Jubilee Hall each year which brought trade to Arthur Drake's shop.

Communication....in 1891, the telephone link opened between Paris and London.

We take telephones and emails so much for granted in 2021 but the BIG development for R was when his boys fixed the link between R's house and the Post Office next door; he has special cards printed and sent to friends complete with a photo of himself and the words; Hello, this is Richard Drake of Sutton speaking on phone no.4.

Letters were addressed to "Drake, Sutton" ...numbering of properties did not happen till after WW2 in Ely Rural villages so perhaps this is why so many names were referred to in the diary....Stone House, Eastville, West Lodge, Gresham House etc....all lived in by the Drake Family (in fact only one of the nine children settled away from Sutton, Fred who lived in Cheltenham).

Travel costings make interesting reading: Ely to Sutton return, half a crown (12 and a half P) London and back, four shillings (20P)....both special offers.

Jottings direct from diaries

Drum and Fife concert in Vicarage barn

Plough Monday was a special day (workers visited farmers pleading for "extras")

Got up early to stone raisins for Christmas puddings

Arthur walked in front of engine with a red flag all the way to Witcham

Threshed gleanings today (corn that had been collected by women after harvest)

A scrap album and a nice card....Lizzie's twelfth B'day present

Mother went to auction at Hinton Hall Haddenham and bought a tapestry carpet and celery glass

Charles kept bees in a skep (woven from straw like the ones at Farmland Museum)

Bought a parasol lined with mauve; Carrie cleaned the bedrooms and I helped a little (not keen)

Nellie and Keble were thrown out of cart when it hit a stone at the Row (big drama!)

Arthur and I were copying papers for two whole days in connection with bankruptsy

Toothbrush as a B'day present; geese provided quills for writing

Twenty seven shillings raised at service of song (for which they had practised many hours)

Went to see reaper at work at Wentworth (what a big improvement on scything!)

Washed 9 or 10 counterpanes by hand; whitewashed the ceiling and papered a room; spring cleaning was a big event each year.

Big seat for old men to sit on made by Richard's men; "for the use of untitled noblemen"

Rev C Spencer, vicar, present at school concert (he was Winston's uncle)

Queen Victoria in mourning for her fourth son, Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany

Ambrose Kirby, a big man, cooked on his engine shovel, and ate 2 lb sausages in one go!

1890 opening of the Forth Bridge; 1891 statue of John Wesley unveiled in London

Biggest employer in Sutton; arranged engines and wagons to take them to Ag show at Chatteris

Stabling for eight horses behind house....source of power on farms.

Charles skated to St. Ives and back in one day...1890/91 was coldest for years.

HOLLOWAY'S
SOUVENIR



OF
Her late Majesty
QUEEN
VICTORIA



ATLANTIC
FIRST CROSSED BY STEAM, 1838
FIRST TELEGRAPH, 1839
PENNY POST ESTABLISHED, 1840
ROYAL EXCHANGE OPENED, 1844
FIRST GREAT EXHIBITION, 1851
VOLUNTEERS FORMED, 1860
ATLANTIC CABLE LAID, 1866
EDUCATION ACT, 1870
HOLLOWAY SANATORIUM
OPENED, 1885
ROYAL HOLLOWAY
COLLEGE
OPENED, 1885
BORN,
May 24, 1819
ASCENDED THE
THRONE, 1837
CROWNED, 1838
MARRIED, 1840
PROCLAIMED
EMPRESS OF INDIA, 1876
GOLDEN JUBILEE,
1887
DIAMOND JUBILEE, 1897
DIED, Jan. 22,
1901



WINDSOR CASTLE

Victorian postcard (penny post established in 1840, just after R's birth in 1837) shows important dates during R's life; he relied on post and telegrams for communication.

SUTTON METHODIST CHAPEL STONE_LAYING INFO

Looking at front door from road, RHS as follows:

On behalf of Local Preachers Miss Cheesewright Miss A Robinson in Memory of Miss Lily R Mrs. Young in Memory of Mr. Blackman Young Mr. and Mrs. Allerson Gimbert Rev.Charles Bryant on behalf of Ely Society J Adams and family, Littleport

RICHARD DRAKE JP 1914.....and down side wall:

J Leach Mrs. William Clark Mr Wayman Cox Maud Sawyer Richard G Drake Winifred Drake Nellie Norman and Norah Adcock Marion C Drake Gwen Drake Arthur C Drake Walter Robinson Lilla Robinson Sidney R. Donald Humphrey Gladys Bradshaw Mrs Wilkin Harold Bull Dorothy Papworth Guy Drake

LHS alcove:

Oliver B Drake Mr and Mrs M H Norman Mr and Mrs J W Robinson Miss Eva Longstaff Miss Jennie Drake Mr W Vye on behalf of Ely Circuit

LHS alleyway:

J Mehew J E Cockerton R Wise P Amory J Jacobs J Savidge JTturner C I Drake H Robinson C Peters J.....? M W Worsnop W Robinson B Fletcher B Savidge J Scott J Painter J Angood S Thomas W H Cashmore A Gifford ; then two obviously recycled stones: "This memorial stone was laid by Mr Joseph Ryder of Cambridge October 17th 1871" and ditto" Mr. James Scott of Downham Market"

At the back of the schoolroom names are as follows on the LHS looking towards the road:

H.K.Drake Miss N Drake Mr and Mrs A Drake Miss B Longstaff Mr and Mrs H L Drake....then a large stone "Wesley Guild"...Miss J Drake W P Marshall Mrs E B Cheeseright Mr and Mrs f G Drake Mr and Mrs and Miss Granger Mr and Mrs C Drake Mr and Mrs R Drake....then on the buttress: HED WS FW ELD HJP MP AHS BS MAR TK WT JNC LR MS CMD HC GV HV AR HT MC... Mr and Mrs W J Marshall Mr S Manby Mr and Mrs Howard Coote

The Drake Connection with the Wesleyan chapel; note the members of R's family whose names were inscribed on bricks; Hadnam Methodists used to refer to the chapel as "Drake's Church".

RICHARD DRAKE & SONS LTD

HAY, STRAW, CHAFF & COAL MERCHANTS & THRESHING MACHINE PROPRIETORS.
MANUFACTURERS OF PATENT PREPARED PROVENDERS.

Established 1856.

TELEPHONE: NO. 4 SUTTON, ELY.

TELEGRAMS:
DRAKE, SUTTON, CAMBS.

LONDON DEPOT:
514, ARNOLD ROAD, BOW, E.

*East Anglian Forage Works,
Sutton, Isle of Ely.*

18th May, 1916.

Mr J. Hamence,
High Street,
SUTTON.

Dear Sir,

~~We should be obliged if you will send us invoice of~~
Oak had of you on April 25th, as we are wanting it to send in
an account.

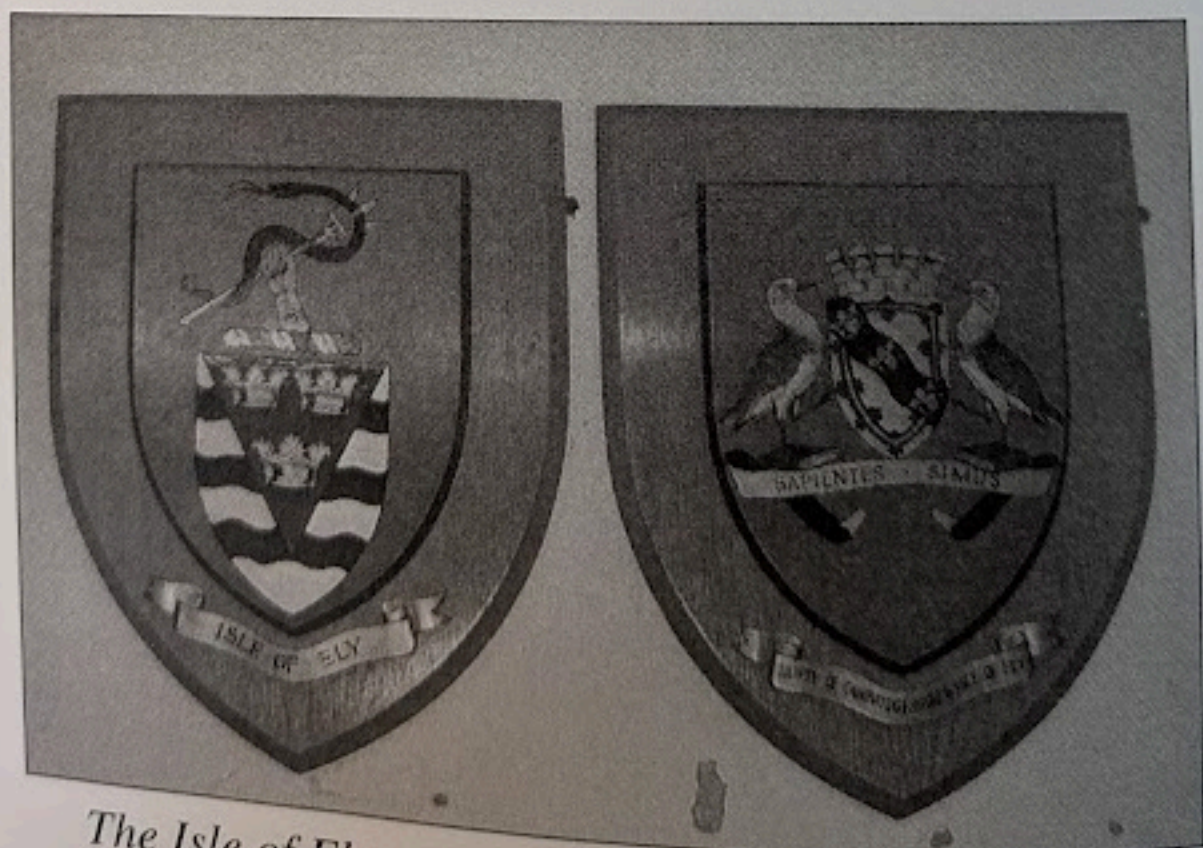
Yours faithfully

RICHARD DRAKE & SONS, LIMITED.,

H. Perkins

Handwritten notes:
12/2 1/2 1/2
342 6 32 3
// // // //

Bill heading showing that Sutton was in the admin area of the Isle of Ely (till 1965) and that the firm dealt in manure and coal as well as forage (Nosey).



The Isle of Ely and the old County of Cambridge.



This painting shows the intense cold of the 1880s; wind-power for drainage was replaced by steam during R's life then diesel was used; and now electric pumps do the same job to keep the flat fens clear of water.

Telegraphic Address, GRAVEN ELY, CAMBS.

James Graven
Telephone No.

ALL CLASSES OF ENGINES & MACHINERY
BOUGHT SOLD & EXCHANGED
OR LET OUT ON HIRE.

LICENSED
VALUER
OF
MACHINERY

James Graven
Engineering Works,
ELY, CAMBS.

AGENT FOR ALL AGRICULTURAL
IMPLEMENTS & MACHINERY.

ALL GOODS OFFERED SUBJECT TO BEING UNSOLD.

Dec 30th 1903

Geo Thomas Esq.

Bill heading dated 1903 when the Drake Empire was expanding (see magazine article at the end of this publication). The firm of Gravens supplied engines and other metal work to Drakes.



Date of Application, 19th Dec., 1895.

Complete Specification Left, 18th Sept., 1896—Accepted, 7th Nov., 1896

PROVISIONAL SPECIFICATION.

Improvements in the Arrangement of Riddles or Sifters in Chaff Cutters and Thrashing Machines.

I, RICHARD DRAKE, of the East Anglian Forage Works, Sutton, Isle of Ely, in the County of Cambridge, Machinist, do hereby declare the nature of this invention to be as follows:—

In a portable chaff cutter arranged in accordance with this invention, the riddle and the cutting mechanism are mounted upon a wheeled platform or frame in such positions that the chaff as it is cut falls upon the upper end of the riddle. This end of the riddle has a circular movement imparted to it whilst the lower end of the riddle is constrained to move nearly in a rectilinear path. This difference in the movements of different parts of the sifting surface is very conducive to rapid and perfect work.

The riddle is hung to the frame by straps near its four corners, at its upper end it receives movement from a crank and at its lower end it is controlled by a blade spring extending across it, one end of the spring being fixed to the riddle and the other to the frame. The crank shaft is vertical and the crank pin at its lower end steps into a block on the upper surface of the riddle at or near the upper end. The crank shaft is driven by a belt pulley upon it which receives a driving belt from a pulley on an horizontal countershaft. The main shaft or that which carries the cutter wheel is driven in the usual way and movement is transmitted from it to the countershaft by a crossed belt passing around pulleys on the two shafts which are parallel and run lengthwise of the frame.

In thrashing machines in accordance with this invention the shoe or riddle is similarly arranged or two riddles are provided one over the other and each of the riddles is driven and controlled in the manner already described.

An upright crank shaft between the two riddles drives them, it carries a crank pin at each end, one pin to drive the upper and the other the lower riddle.

Dated this 18th day of December 1895.

RICHARD DRAKE.

COMPLETE SPECIFICATION.

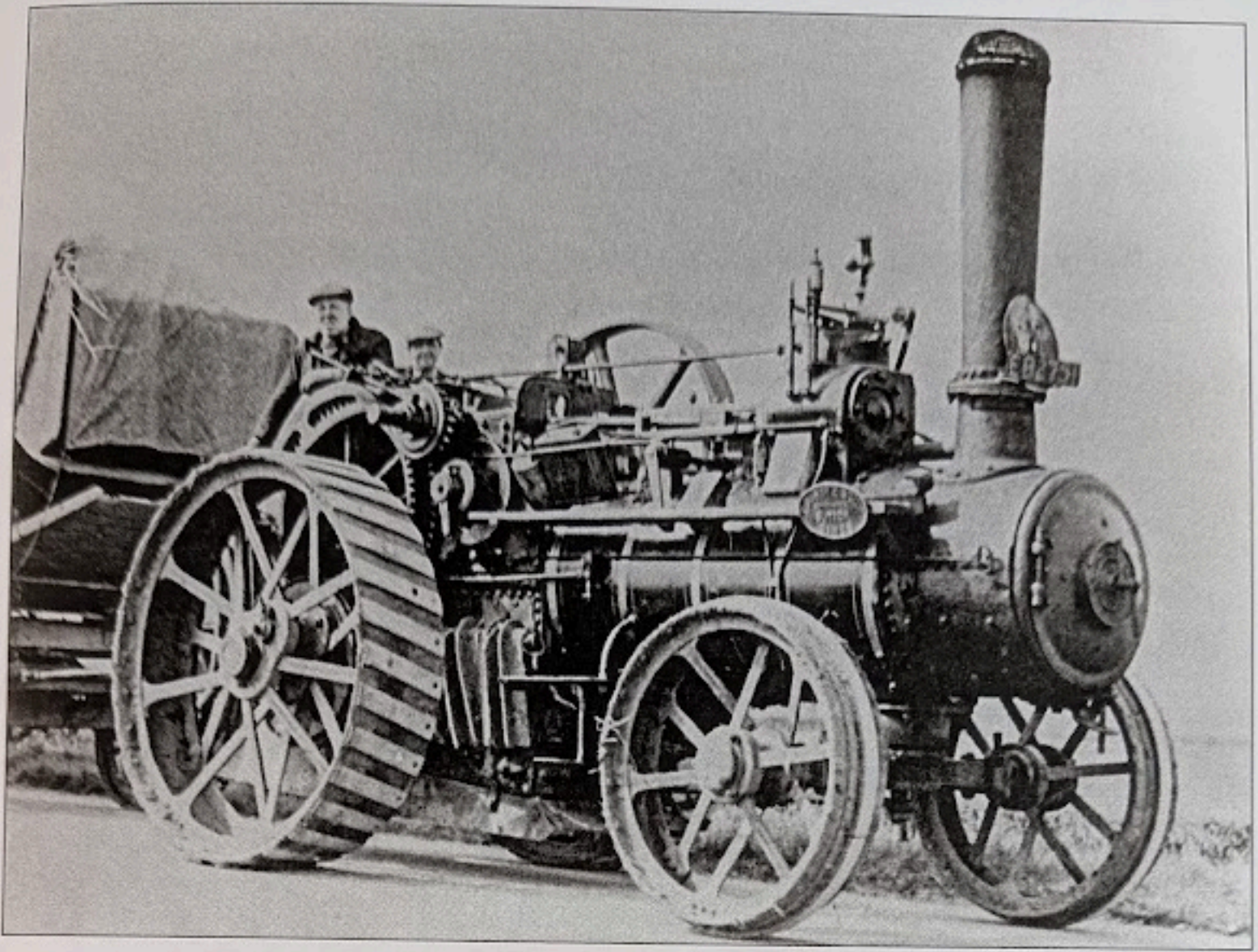
Improvements in the Arrangement of Riddles or Sifters in Chaff Cutters and Thrashing Machines.

I, RICHARD DRAKE, of the East Anglian Forage Works, Sutton, Isle of Ely, in the County of Cambridge, Machinist, do hereby declare the nature of this invention and in what manner the same is to be performed to be particularly described and ascertained in and by the following statement:—

In a portable chaff cutter arranged in accordance with this invention, the riddle and the cutting mechanism are mounted upon a wheeled platform or frame in such positions that the chaff as it is cut falls upon the upper end of the riddle. This end of the riddle has a circular movement imparted to it whilst the lower end of the riddle is constrained to move nearly in a rectilinear path. This difference in the

[Price 8d.]

Patent taken out in 1895 by Richard, often described as "a man ahead of his time" his son Henry Lavender was very inventive with a variety of designs.



Albert Baker from Pymore driving one of the five Savage engines; it was later sold to Darbys who became the hauliers/drainage engineers post Drakes and whose premises are now houses named Darbys Yard.



died on the 23rd day of April 1916
at Hickling House aforesaid

AND BE IT FURTHER KNOWN that at the date hereunder written
the last Will and Testament

of the said deceased was proved and registered in the Principal Probate
Registry of His Majesty's High Court of Justice, and that administration
of all the estate which by law devolves to and vests in the personal
representative of the said deceased was granted by the aforesaid Court
to Frederick Drake of 2 Columbia Place
Cheltenham in the County of Gloucester
draper and Henry Hasler Drake of
Railway Terrace Ely in the said County
of Cambridge Esquires sons of deceased and
John Stanley Milt of Chatteris in the
said County of Cambridge Solicitor the
executors

named in the said will

Dated the 19th day of December 1916

Gross value of Estate ... £ 5997-17-4
Net value of Personal Estate £ 3587-17-4

IA. F. G. Pendelwhite

(J 12397-30.) Wt. 13687-51. 15,000. 8/16 D & S

Probate for R was granted to HL Drake, the haulage owner at Ely and Fred,
the draper of Cheltenham, the only son to leave the area; surprising that value is
less than £6k.

Eric

Extracts from letters written by Eric Drake

(a Great Grandson of Richard, about his childhood of the Twenties spent in Sutton, Haddenham and Wayhead; the text is his and was sent to me in the 1990s)

Every drop of water for human consumption had to be filtered through charcoal and then boiled; water for washing was from the soft water tank or from the river; it was boiled in the copper and then on our return from school we used the cooled water for our weekly bath in the zinc tub

Hymns to the accompaniment of cornet, violin and assorted instruments were our Sunday evening entertainment; the Drakes had signed the pledge both at Sutton and Haddenham chapels. How I hated the PSA (Pleasant Sunday Afternoons at Haddenham where we lived in the old Baptist manse, a house behind the old Baptist chapel.....now both demolished)

Village Harvest Festivals were great events when everyone turned up for the evening service to sing with gusto "We plough the fields...." and admire the gifts from gardens and fields

I have a mental picture of my mother pegging away on a hessian sack to make a rug for the hearth or bedroomold clothes were cut up into strips and we children had the task of cutting the pieces, often making our fingers sore (note: recycling is not new)

Fishing at the Gault and at Mepal Bridge taught us a lot about natural history and I well remember dangling a rod near the Pickerels PH before the concrete bridge was built (1930 by the old Isle of Ely CC) Mrs Finch at the pumping engine there used to bake us boys delicious scones....boys are always hungry!

Birds nesting was a Spring past-time; we searched the hedges, blew the eggs and stored them carefully in cotton wool; robin's eggs were never touched and wild duck eggs and moorhens were taken home to be eaten.

Whip and top down Sutton High Street and marbles played in a hole in the gutter; hoops made both of wood or metal were popular as was skipping for the girls(to the rhyme "salt, mustard, vinegar pepper" turning the rope faster and faster); tag or "It" was an exhausting chase game....there were no "recreation fields/sports complexes" in the fens in the Twenties!

While living at Hill House I did experiments with acetylene by enclosing carbide in an old syrup tin, hammer the lid on and run like hell to see the explosion (very dangerous activity!)

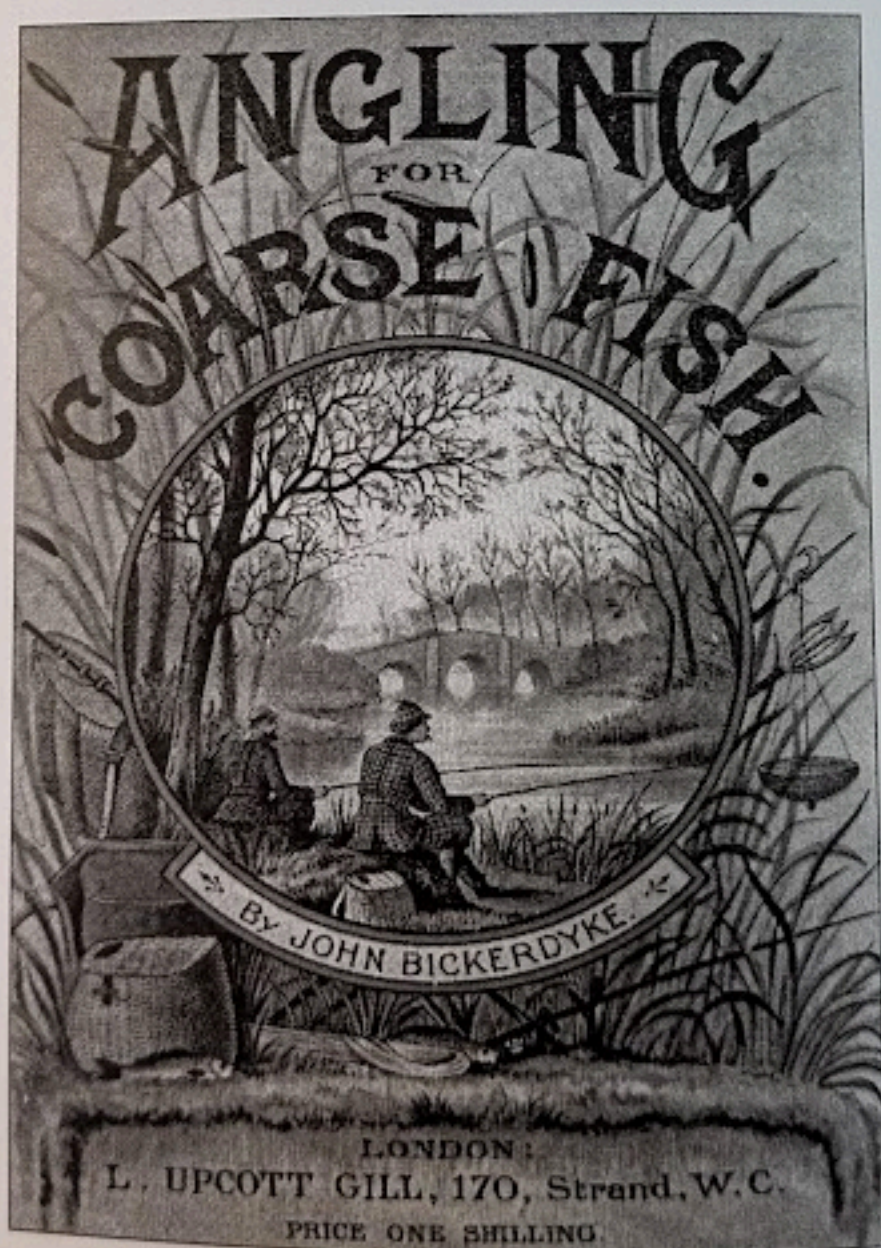
My mother was always busy; every evening she knitted socks; Tit Bits was a regular read and we were fortunate to have a cat-whisker wireless on which we listened to 2LO news

Fruit -picking for the older children brought in precious pocket money...I remember strawberry picking at Hinton Hall for my uncle, Charlie Morriss and plum picking at Wilbuton for the Norfolk family; our most remunerative work was mushroom collecting when the licensee of a Coveney PH would pay us considerably well (he was the agent for a dealer for dye stuff)

Meccano, fretwork, kite-making, wood work and jig saws probably influenced the young Eric; he became a crafts tutor at Loughborough teacher-training college (now Loughborough university) his brother was an art teacher at their former school, Soham Grammar, and several of the next generation of Drakes took up teaching posts, both locally and further afield



View towards Hickling House with bay windows is on the left; now Post Office and one-shop, the village used to have many shops.



Fishing at the Gault and Mepal was a popular pursuit of both generations of Drakes and rowing on the Ouse is recalled regularly in the diaries.



Eric watched this concrete bridge over the New Bedford being built in 1930; it is near the place where his Gt Granddad's barges were unloaded and the hay was then taken by traction engine and wagons up to Sutton Works.



A postcard from Eric (R's Gt Grandson) shows the territory round HICKLING BROAD where R had his headquarters for marsh/broad vegetation; all buildings were demolished by local farmers pre-WW2.

The Rise and Fall of the Drake Dynasty

Cambridgeshire local historian, Lorna Delaney tells the story of Richard Drake, whose success and failure in business reflected the development and decline of the traction engine. [Article taken from 'Steam Traction Engine', August 2005]



Foden 812 was built in 1904 and purchased by Drake in 1905. From the lettering on the side the engine appears to have been based at the Bow depot in London for local deliveries. There appears to be an extension chimney on the cab roof but not fitted. Photo: Cambridgeshire Libraries.

It was just before Victoria was declared Queen that Richard Drake was born in the Fenland town of Chatteris where his parents kept a pub and his father farmed. He attended the National school, leaving at thirteen to start an apprenticeship in metal work (interesting note, Chatteris has had a variety of metal-working businesses such as the traction engine builders Armitage & Ruston). He later served a "proper" training in Sheffield, quite an adventurous thing for a Fen boy to do in early Victorian Times!

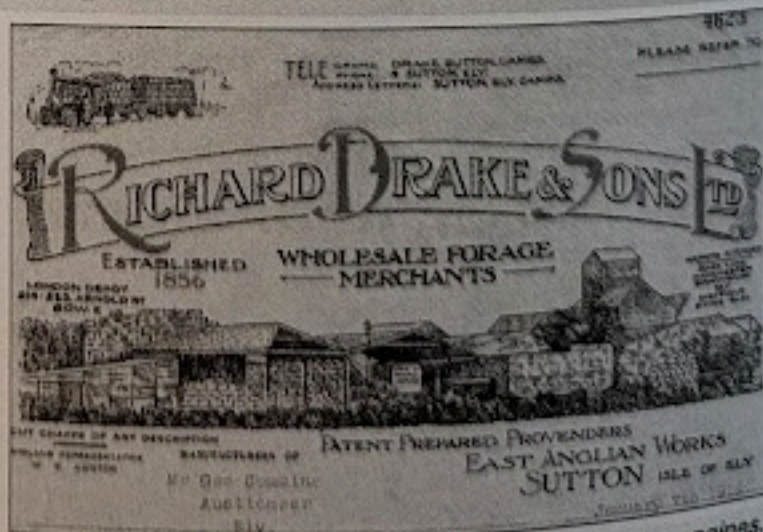
Memories of working men spending money on beer while their wives and children waited for them outside the

door (pubs in the nineteenth century were for "Men Only") made a lasting impression on young Richard and at

twenty one he signed the pledge and became a teetotaler all his life, as indeed did all his offspring. Richard died in 1916, having attended the Wesleyan Chapel each and every Sunday (he declared never to have worked on the Lord's Day) and many of the commemorative stones at the Sutton Methodist Church bear the name of DRAKE on them.

On his wedding day to Caroline in 1856, together they walked the six miles from Chatteris to Sutton-in-the-Isle (now the very busy A142) where he had rented a cottage which was to become their marital home, and with savings of ten golden sovereigns he set up in business, described in early directories as "Tinsmith".

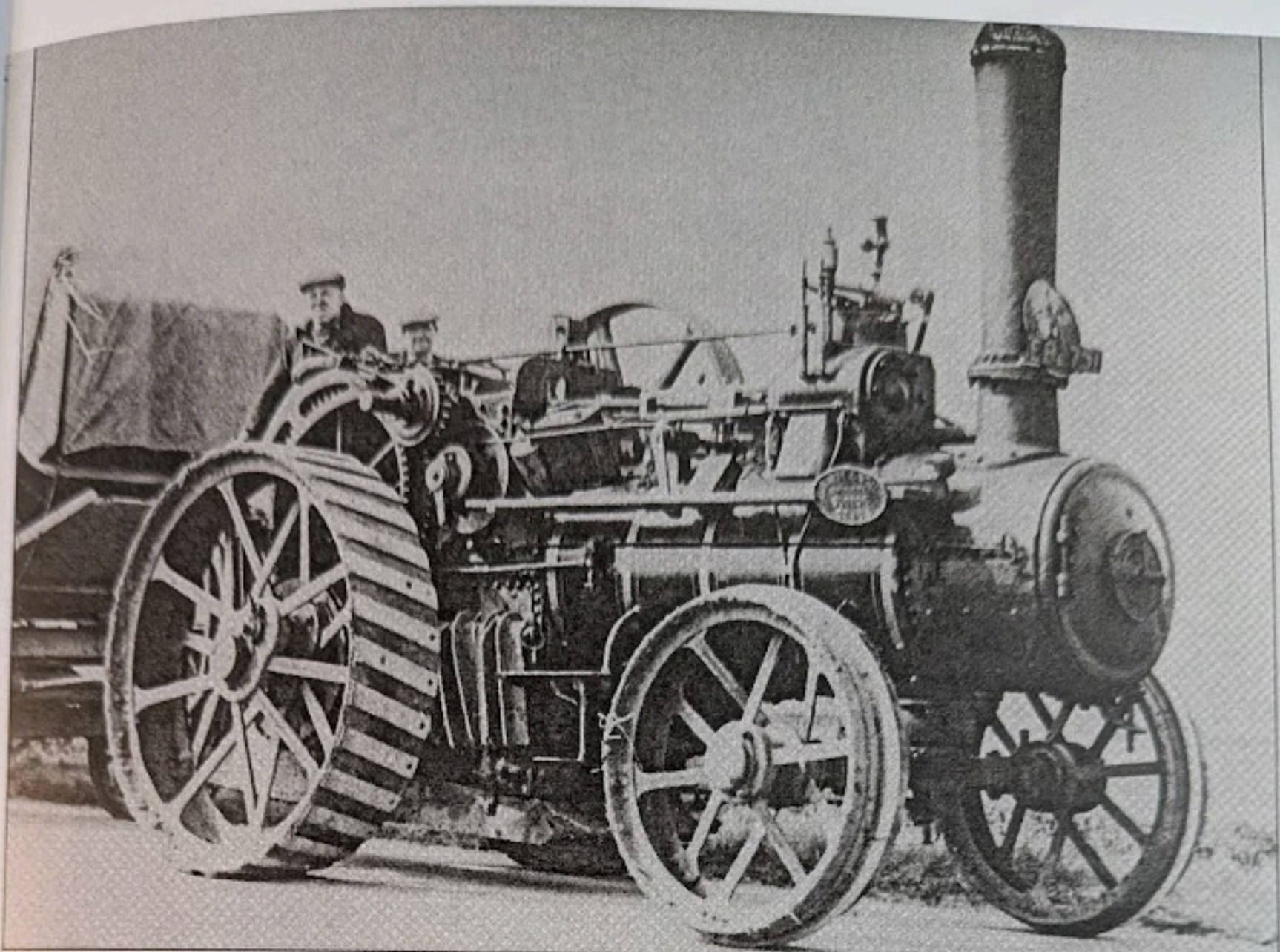
Richard was a man "ahead of his



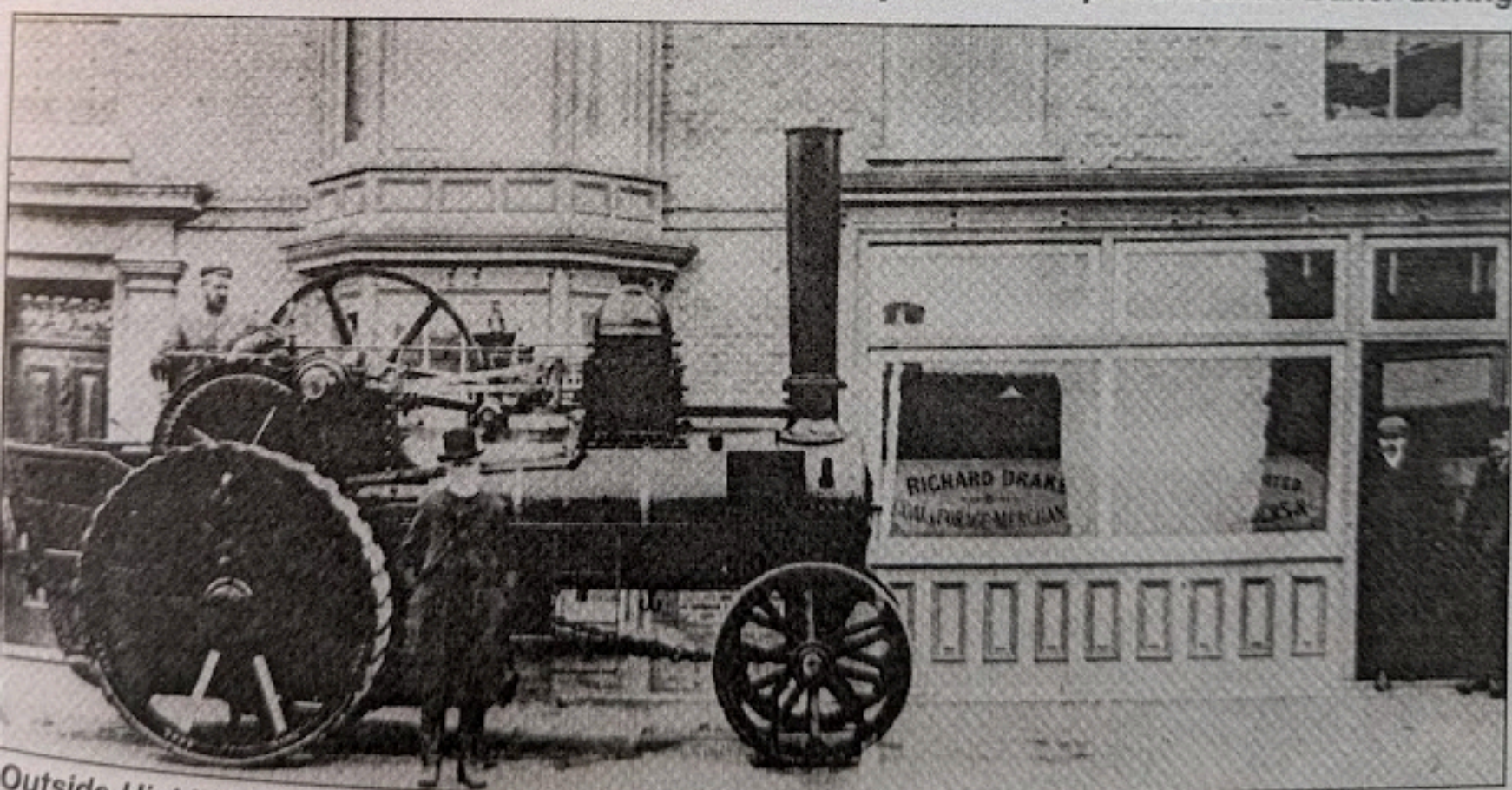
Letterhead of Richard Drake & Sons Ltd, which includes two traction engines. Farmland

Museum Collection. time" and although sometimes there was hardly enough money to buy food for his quickly-expanding family, he was

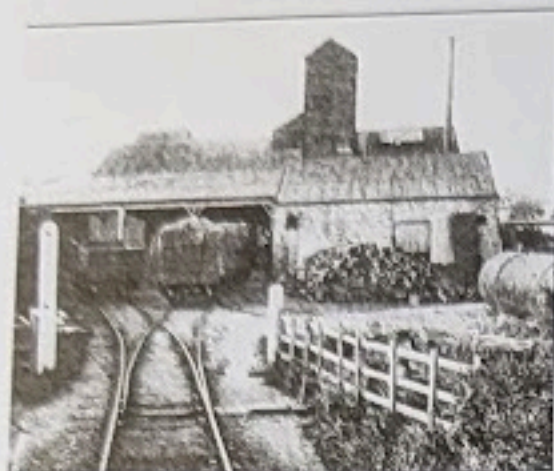
determined "to do well". An interesting anecdote is that when the first child was born, there being no spare money for a



An unknown Savage engine named Teutonic that remained with Drakes until it was sold in 1935 to Fred Darby. The photograph was taken in Darby's ownership with Albert Baker driving.



Outside Hickling House in Sutton is an early Fowler engine dating from the late 1870's. Richard Drake stands by the engine with his two sons in the doorway and Moses Skinner on the footplate.



Special sidings were constructed for the third site for the forage works.

pram, he built one himself in his little workshop in which he transported the youngster each weekend to Chatteris and back to visit his parents and Richard did the twelve miles on foot!

As can be seen from the bill heading the tinsmith business expanded to a range of trades including thrashing contractor. The name Richard Drake became one of the biggest businesses in the region.

Many local farmers wanted to have their corn thrashed but didn't want to pay for the work. Richard Drake would do the thrashing for no payment as long as he could have the straw. His main money-earner became preparing food for horses in London and Newmarket using the straw from his thrashing operations. It must be remembered that in those days the horse was the source of power not only on the farms but in transport (carriages etc) and even policing: all animals need feeding and Drake became famous for "nosey".

What is that? Basically it is chaff (chopped straw), hay and marsh grasses mixed with molasses and cooked under steam pressure. Huge vats were constructed at his High Street works and later at the Brook where steam was fed into them. Various mixtures were made according to the proportions of straw and hay and so different varieties were made. The sacks weighing 40lb

Below: To see three thrashing sets at work at once is an amazing sight. Drakes owned a number of Savage engines and this could well be three of them. Photo: Cambridgeshire Libraries.



Wallis & Stevens 3 ton tractor 2742 was supplied to the Rhee Valley Cement Manufacturers at Shepreth, south of Cambridge but was later purchased by Richard Drake & Sons.

each were loaded onto trucks in the railway siding and taken to Drake's depot at Bow, east London. The smell that emanated from the vats when the process was complete and the lids removed, was so bad that even the local doctor complained and tried to get the business closed down. However, it did provide work for over a hundred employees at a time when work on the land was hard to get and poorly paid. The philanthropical side of Richard was shown during the First World War when he continued to pay the wives of his employees who were fighting for king and country so that the families could maintain a reasonable life-style. In contrast, if one of his workmen was late in arriving for work, he was bluntly told to go home and return in time to "clock on" properly for the next hour! Richard worked hard and long and expected his men to work a full day for a full day's pay.

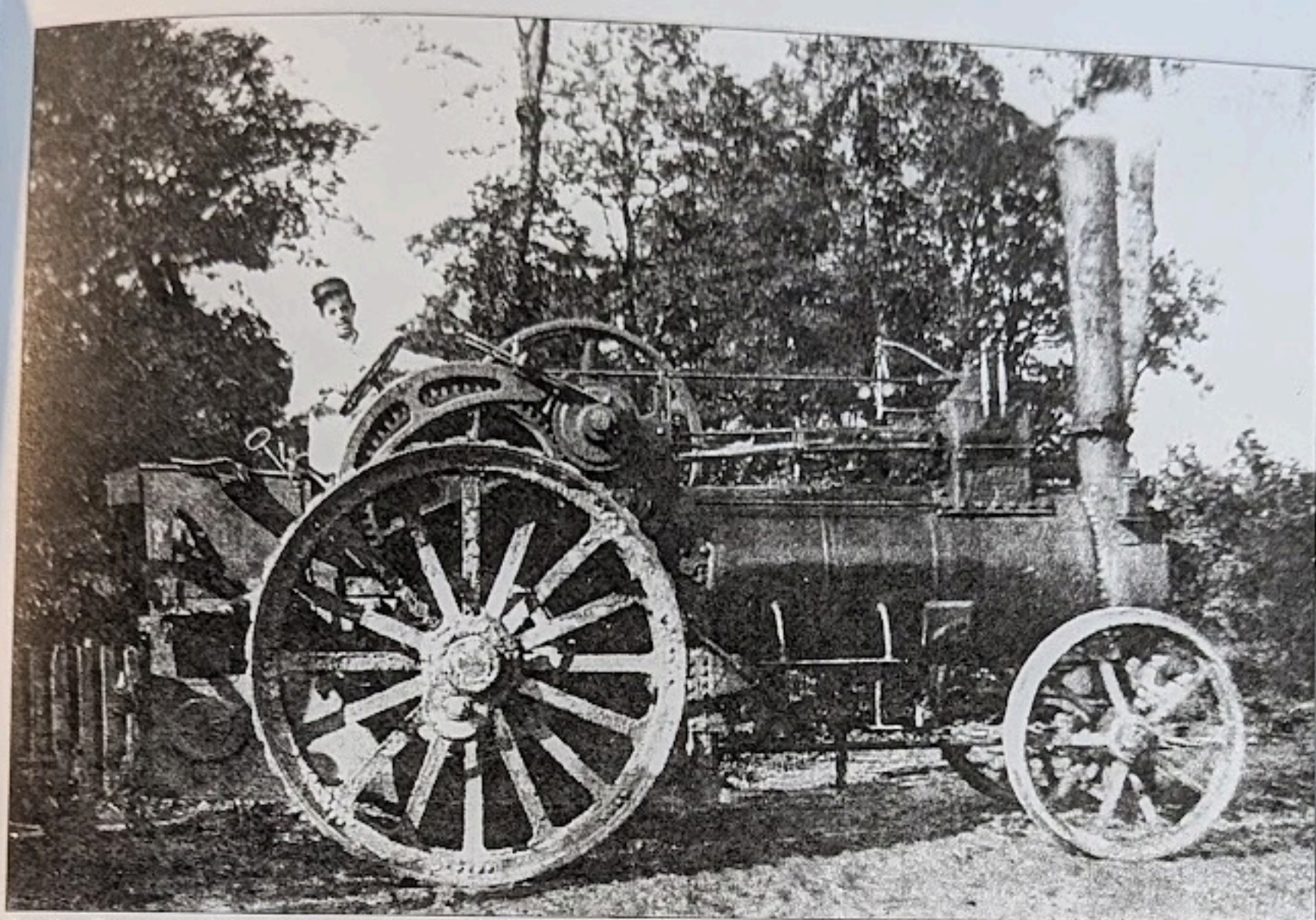
A personal note here: my Grandfather, who worked two miles away on the Earl of Hardwicke's Hinton Hall estate at Haddenham at the turn of the twentieth century told me that, having no timepiece of his own (farm

workers were poor in those days) he and his friends relied on hearing Drake's siren at 6 am, 8 pm and 8.30 pm in the morning together with the local train at other times going to and from Sutton, to know the correct time of day. The expression "Drake's time" is a local one.

The power of steam engines dominated the Drake Empire - and sadly was one of the reasons why that empire crashed in 1928. Richard insisted that "steam power was here forever". He took no heed from his sons ...or anyone else! His sons, especially Henry Lavender, realised that the internal combustion engine would soon overtake steam and horses would become redundant hence there would be no need for nosey.

Drakes Offices were in the High Street and the house there, Hickling House, was built with profits made from using the fodder from Hickling Broad in Norfolk. I was shown the site of "Tin Town" near the Pleasure Boat Inn by Eric Drake, Richard's great grandson. Here was an assemblage of large galvanized corrugated iron structures, having two steam traction engines with two chaff cutters and a full





Another Savage engine was Rattling Jack so called because of the noisy gears. This was driven by Tot Bell who drove the engine 12 miles to work, cut 12 - 15 tons of chaff and drove home again. That must have been a very long day!

steam tackle which could be hired out for threshing at local farms. A man from Sutton, Mr. Ambrose was in charge of the operations there and one of the engine drivers was Arthur Dove, also from Sutton. Marsh hay was hand-mown and transported to Tin Town on barges where it was sorted, cut and loaded on to rail at Catfield or Stalham stations. It was brought by train to Ely, and then pulled by the local Grunty Fen Express to Sutton station. The third site for the forage works was by the railway.

The importance of the main-line steam power was vital; not only were the raw materials brought to Sutton but the

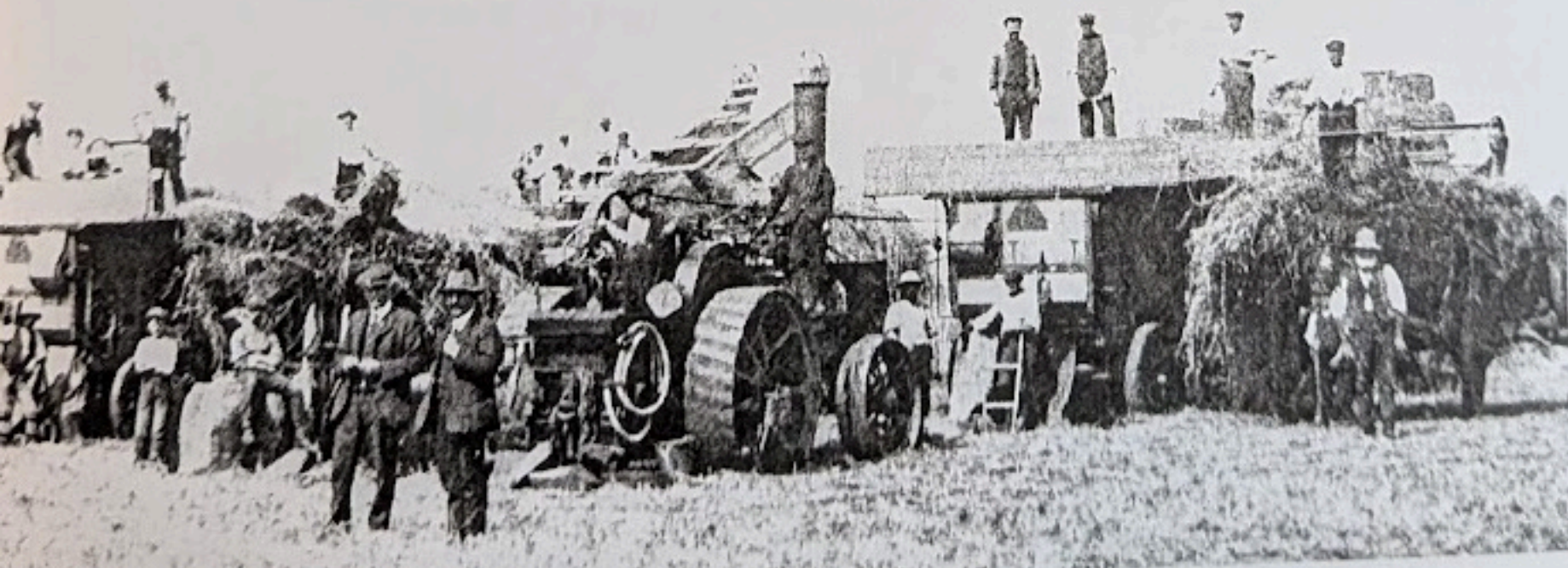
processed chaff was transported from there to London at the depot at Bow. Richard built cottages in Sutton for his workers and houses for his family and foreman.

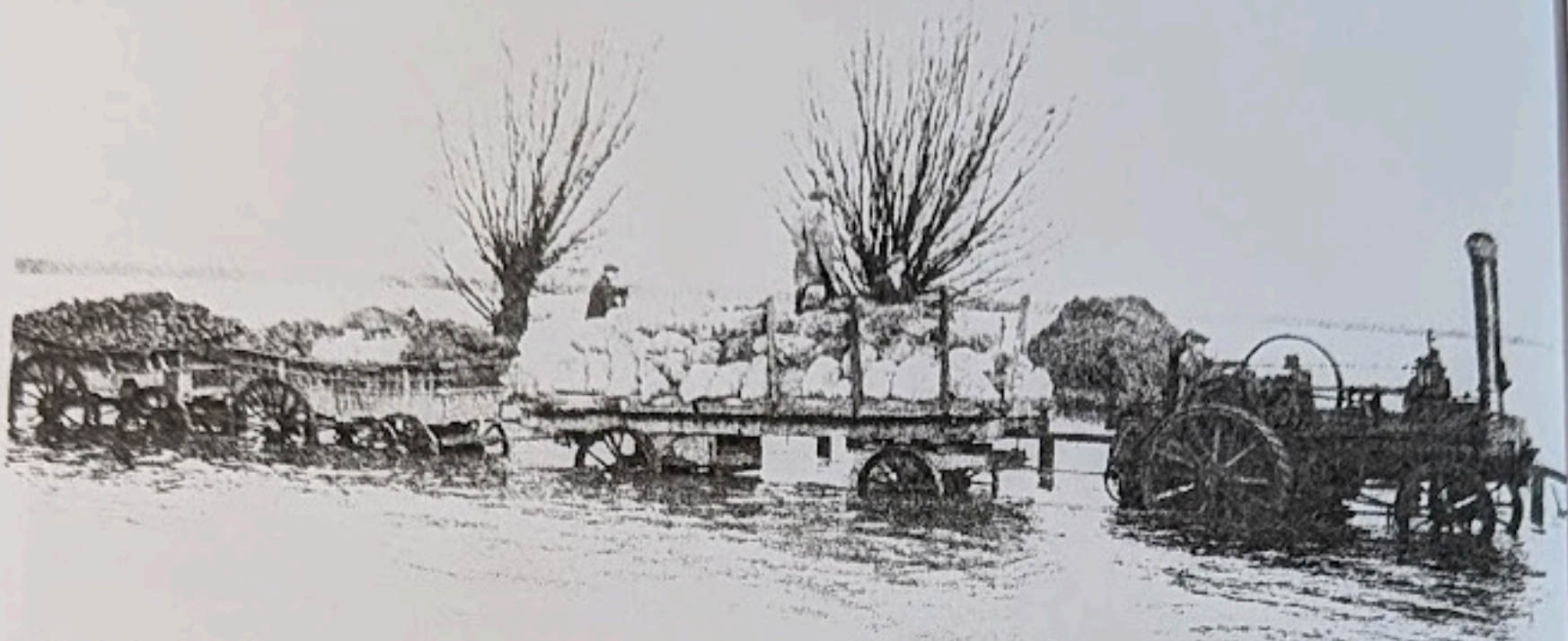
The Hickling Era lasted from the 1890's to about 1905 and was only part of the story... hay from the fens was brought by fen lighters to Mepal where it was loaded onto traction wagons and pulled up the hill to Sutton by traction engines. The loads were heavy (it was said the more muck and debris in the forage helped the weight!) and Richard Drake wrote a letter to the Commissioners asking for

the bridges to be strengthened.

Travel to and from Hickling was by traction engine and Henry, Richard's son, drove the engine from Hickling to Sutton each hay season, possibly making a number of trips, (often starting back at night to avoid traffic in Norwich)". This is a distance of around 90 miles and both water and coal would be needed en route.

Often raw materials were transported by road and it is said that when an engine needed to cross the flooded washes at Sutton Gault, it was necessary to get "a good head of steam" and then rush through the water ➡





Crossing the flooded washes at Sutton Gault called for considerable care by the driver.

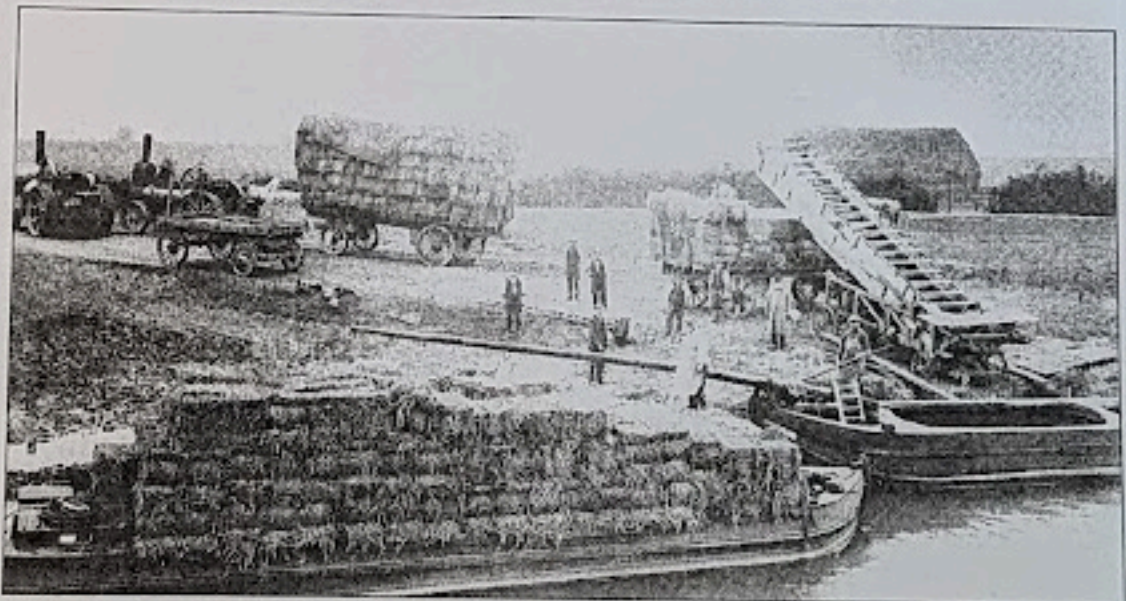
before the water got into the fire box and put the fire out.

Like so many family firms, only one son, Fred, left the security of the family business to work in Cheltenham and the story goes that Henry cycled there in a day to visit - using a specially-designed gadget which operated one pedal by hand due to one of his legs being straight - the Drakes were ingenious engineers! It was this handicap which prevented him going to war and gave him the nick-name Oppy Drake ...the letter h is often missing in Fen country. Richard did not take kindly to advice, particularly from the family and there were many disagreements. After an almighty row in about 1905, Henry left Sutton with his young family, to seek his fortune in London. Eventually it was he who returned to Ely and opened a garage specialising in internal combustion vehicles just as he had predicted to his father. However, from 1927 to 1932 he did operate four Foden wagons, one of which he purchased new in 1927, 6 ton wagon 12774 and sold to Drake & Co. in 1930. The lorry haulage business and taxi service flourished, his daughter Ethel became the very first woman driver in the district, in great demand for weddings etc. It was when Ewart Drake, Henry's son, was managing director after the Second World War that the fleet of 17 lorries was taken over by British Road Services and Ewart, grandson of Richard, became a broken-hearted man.

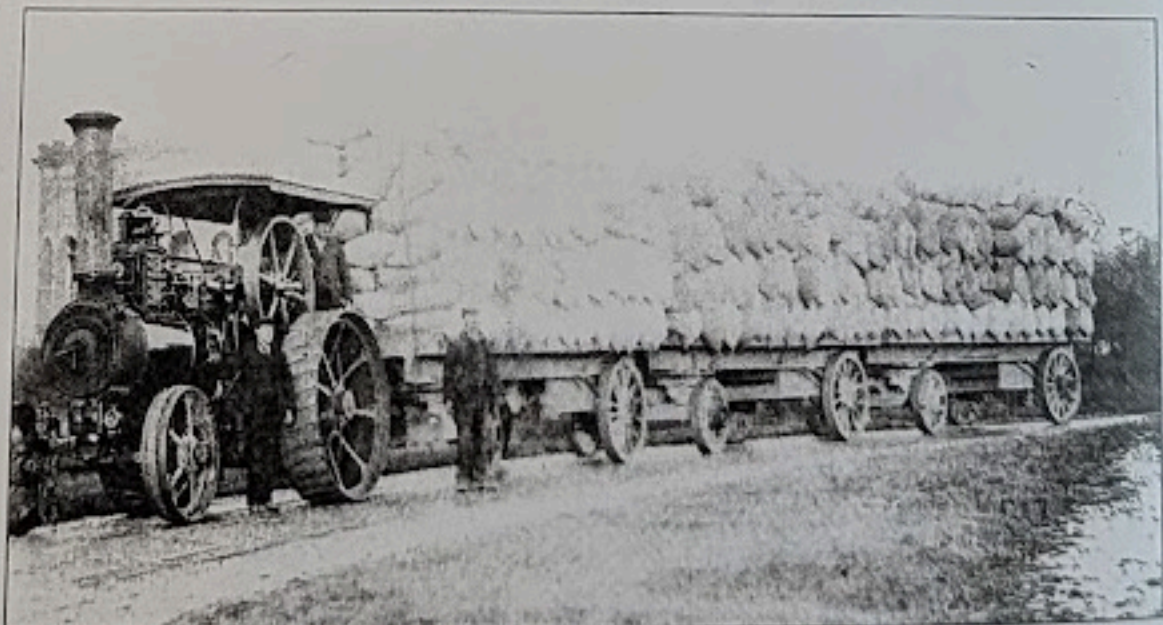
The Drakes owned so many Savage engines; seven at one point in time, that two mechanics came to live temporarily in Sutton from King's Lynn, to overhaul them. One stayed on to work permanently for the firm. In 1928 the business went into voluntary liquidation and continued to trade under name of Drake & Co. Eventually the business folded in 1935 with the Savage (number unknown) *Teutonic*, Wallis & Stevens

13151 and Foden 12774 were all sold to the local man, Fred Darby, who became the next big employer of men in Sutton... The former yard at the Brook became Darby's headquarters, latterly May Gurney, and has recently been sold for housing development.

One is filled with admiration for such men as Richard Drake who built up their empires through sheer hard work and being in "the right place at the right time" and again, like so many family firms, having sons who worked hard for little financial reward! STE



At nearby Mepal hay was unloaded from fen lighters onto traction wagons to be transported up the hill to the forage works at Sutton. Careful study of the second traction engine shows what might be a Savage with a most unusual chimney base.



Drakes owned three Burrell single crank compounds: 2236, 2250 and 3213. Positive identification has not been possible but the most likely contenders are 2236 or 2250 both of which were 7 nhp and were purchased new in 1899.

N.B.—Any person finding this Certificate is requested to forward it in an unstamped envelope to the Secretary (R.1.), Ministry of National Service, London, S.W.1.

Certificate No. **A 18890**

M.N.S. Form R 2079.

(WARNING.—If you lose this Certificate a duplicate cannot be issued.)

CERTIFICATE TO BE ISSUED TO A MAN IN THE ARMY RESERVE WHO HAS BEEN FOUND BY A NATIONAL SERVICE MEDICAL BOARD TO BE PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY UNFIT FOR MILITARY SERVICE.

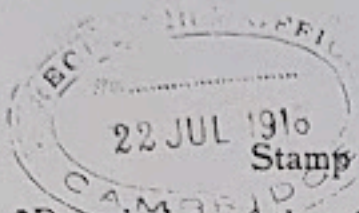
Region No. E.A. 0/5606 K.

Full Christian Name and Surname DRAKE, Henry Lavender.
of Railway Terrace, Ely.
(Registered Address as on Registration Card.)

A member of the Army Reserve was on the 19th day of July, 1918,
found by the National Service Medical Board at Cambridge.
to be permanently and totally unfit for any form of Military Service and it is hereby
certified that he is discharged from liability to be called up for Military Service.

Dated this 22nd day of July 1948

(Signed) H. Brifflesford - A.R.O.
Assistant Director of Recruiting.
For Minister of National Service.



Stamp of Area Recruiting Office.

* Description of the above-named man on the 19th day of July 1918.
Age 50 yrs 9 mths.
Height 5 ft. 1 in. Weight 114 lbs.
Marks or Scars _____

Signature of above-named man _____

* Should agree with particulars on the Medical History Sheet A.F.B. 178.

(1787) Wt. 11702/427. 2500 Bks.—200 21-12-17. J.R.&C.

HL Drake document re exclusion from service in WW1; due to his lame leg he was known as 'Oppy Drake' (the letter H is often dropped in these parts!)

Form A

3, the undersigned, hereby consent to act as Trustee to the
Methodist Trust Property situate in Chapel St Ely

As witness my hand this 11th day of January 1939

Full Name Henry Ewart Drake.

Present Occupation Haulage Contractor

Address 3 Railway Terrace

Station Road Ely Cambs

Methodist Publishing House, 25-25, City Road, London, E.C.1.

C.R. 258

HE Drake continued the Drake tradition re Methodism and remained a tea-totaller all his life, as did many of the family.

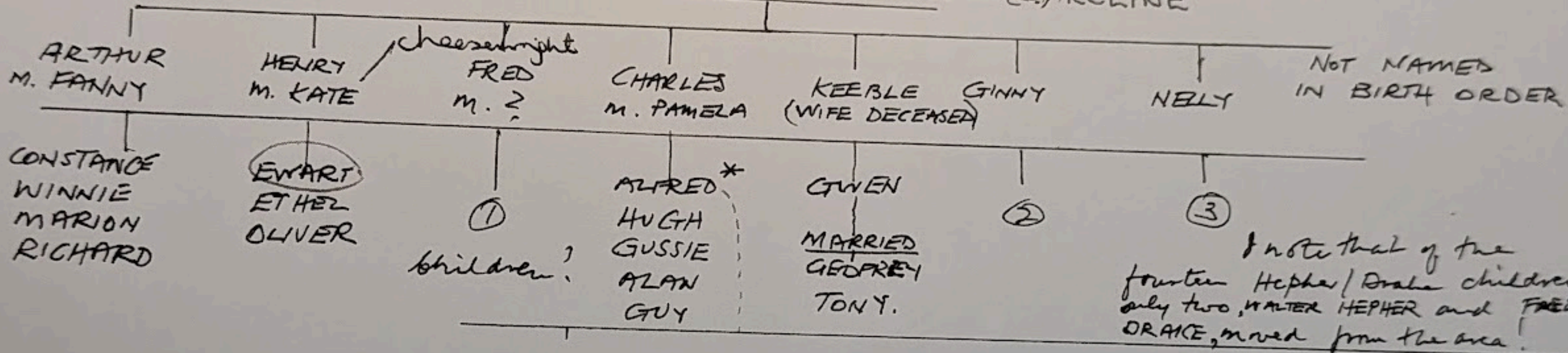


Another Savage engine this time crossing the Wash at Sutton Gault; it is reported that R travelled to King's Lynn and back the same day completing the business deals.



A favourite photo of HED showing the sacks of Nosey being transported to London by steam power; horses were the work power on the farms and in the cities in R's life.

RICHARD DRAKE AND CAROLINE



Charles (5) DRAKE b 6/1/1858 Post Master/Ironmonger d 13/12/1915 age 57	Frederick (6) DRAKE b 21/10/59 Draper d 17/10/1934 age 75	Q	Carry (7) (Carrie) DRAKE b 30/3/1862 Draper d 20/3/39 age 77	Mary Jane (8) (Jennie) DRAKE b 15/7/1864 Housekeeper d 18/6/1933 age 68	Henry (9) Lavender DRAKE b 6/10/1867 Motor Engineer d 23/5/1939 age 72	Sarah (11) Arthur (10) DRAKE b 23/1/1869 Draper/Grocer/Firm d 9/8/1939 age 70	Ellen (12) Elizabeth DRAKE b 21/12/70 Housekeeper d 5/11/1949 age 78	(Nellie) DRAKE b 21/3/1873 Housekeeper d c39-45	Herbert (13) Keeble DRAKE b 10/9/1879 Firm d 29/2/1928 age 48	
m1 27/5/84 Laura (38) Pamela BLAKE b 2/2/62	m2 1912 Agnes (39) MARSHALL b c1861		m 8/4/90 Edwin (41)	s	m 17/6/96 Kate (14) Mary CHEESERIGHT b 29/9/63	m 6/7/94 Fanny (37) Augusta ADCOCK b 24/4/70	m 20/9/94 s Annie (43) Alfred (42) ADCOCK b 1/7/68		m1 26/4/05 Ethel (44) Maria WEBBER b 13/3/07	m2 6/4/14 May HEIGHT b 6/5/78

Brian Gimbert was the last Gt Grandson of R to live in Sutton; his daughter Heather is now custodian of the pig trough with "A C Drake Sutton" on it which for over 20 years was an exhibit at the Farmland Museum at Hadnam.

FAMILY ADDENDA

The Three Drake "boys" having lived in the Fen Country for most of their lives, all retired to Norfolk; HED to Hunstanton, Dick to King's Lynn and Eric to Potter Heigham; each had daughters who took up the teaching profession and memorabilia is listed here. Have any of the present generation visited Richard and his wife's grave in the main area of St Andrew's graveyard or seen the inscriptions on the Methodist Chapel wall? Life moves on... and it is good that Dick took the time to rewrite the family diaries of when Victoria was Queen and life in a fen village was very simple; maybe someone will use them to make a more detailed book of the lives and dreams of a prestigious Sutton family, the Drakes. LD 2021

In Loving Memory

of

HENRY EWART DRAKE

who passed peacefully away

on 2nd February, 1986

"LIFE'S WORK WELL DONE"

Funeral Service at the Methodist Church, Hunstanton

on Friday, 7th February, 1986 at 1.30 p.m.

Followed by Cremation at Mintlyn Crematorium, King's Lynn

Donations if desired to Save The Children Fund

Extract from letter from Dick to cousin Ewart, dated May 16th 1972:

took an interest in keeping birds. On Jan 4th 1882 'Lizzie says "Henry is very bad today" then on Jan 5th "Henry had a bird given him last night." Then on March 14th "Henry and I went down to John Feast's to look at some pigeons, but he hadn't got any to suit Henry, so he bought some from Mrs Bedfords." There are lots of references to his doing things which all throw light on how the family lived and my difficulty is what to leave out of my book. Lizzie is very factual and very candid and I find these two sets of diaries most fascinating. RGD.

Note neat handwriting!

The Two Richards

THURSDAY, JUNE 2, 1977

TRIBUTES TO LAY

Mr Richard G Drake. — St Faith's Methodist church, Gaywood, Kings Lynn, has suffered a grievous loss with the passing of Mr Drake. He was born and lived most of his life in Sutton in Lincolnshire. An active member of the Methodist Church, he held office as Sunday school teacher and superintendent, as trustee and organist. For fifty-two years he was a local preacher, welcome in large church and small. His messages were most carefully and thoughtfully prepared and always well received by his congregations. He is especially remembered by a wide circle of friends for the Bible Class he held in his home. Christians from all the different denominations serving in the nearby RAF station gathered together for study and fellowship. He befriended prisoners of war who were billeted nearby and these friendships were not forgotten. From 1947 to 1955 he held his Bible Class for young people. He and his wife were gracious hosts and many people's faith was built on the strong foundations set forth in that class. On moving to Kings Lynn he continued his activity within the Church. He was a firm supporter of the scheme to enter into a Sharing Agreement with the local Church of England. It was his proud privilege to conduct the first Methodist service to be held in the parish church of St Faith's. Many friends from different parts of the country and from the different Churches joined with the family in the funeral service. In recognition of his long-standing interest in Christian Aid, donations were accepted in lieu of floral tributes and £80 was donated. This service was a joyous occasion and an affirmation of the faith by which Richard Drake had lived. — AW

MEMORANDUM.

FROM

~~Goal~~ R. DRAKE,
 Merchant, Ironmonger, Machinist &c.;
 SUTTON, ISLE OF ELY.

187

To *Godwin Archer Esq*
Esq

Dear Sir

I have enclosed petition which I want
 laying before the Corporation which I hope
 will meet with their approval

yours truly
 Richard Drake



Presented to

Mr. Richard Drake,

by the

OFFICERS, TEACHERS, and SCHOLARS

(PAST & PRESENT) OF THE

Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School,
SUGGON.

as a token of their appreciation of 43 years
faithful and devoted services as Teacher
and Superintendent.

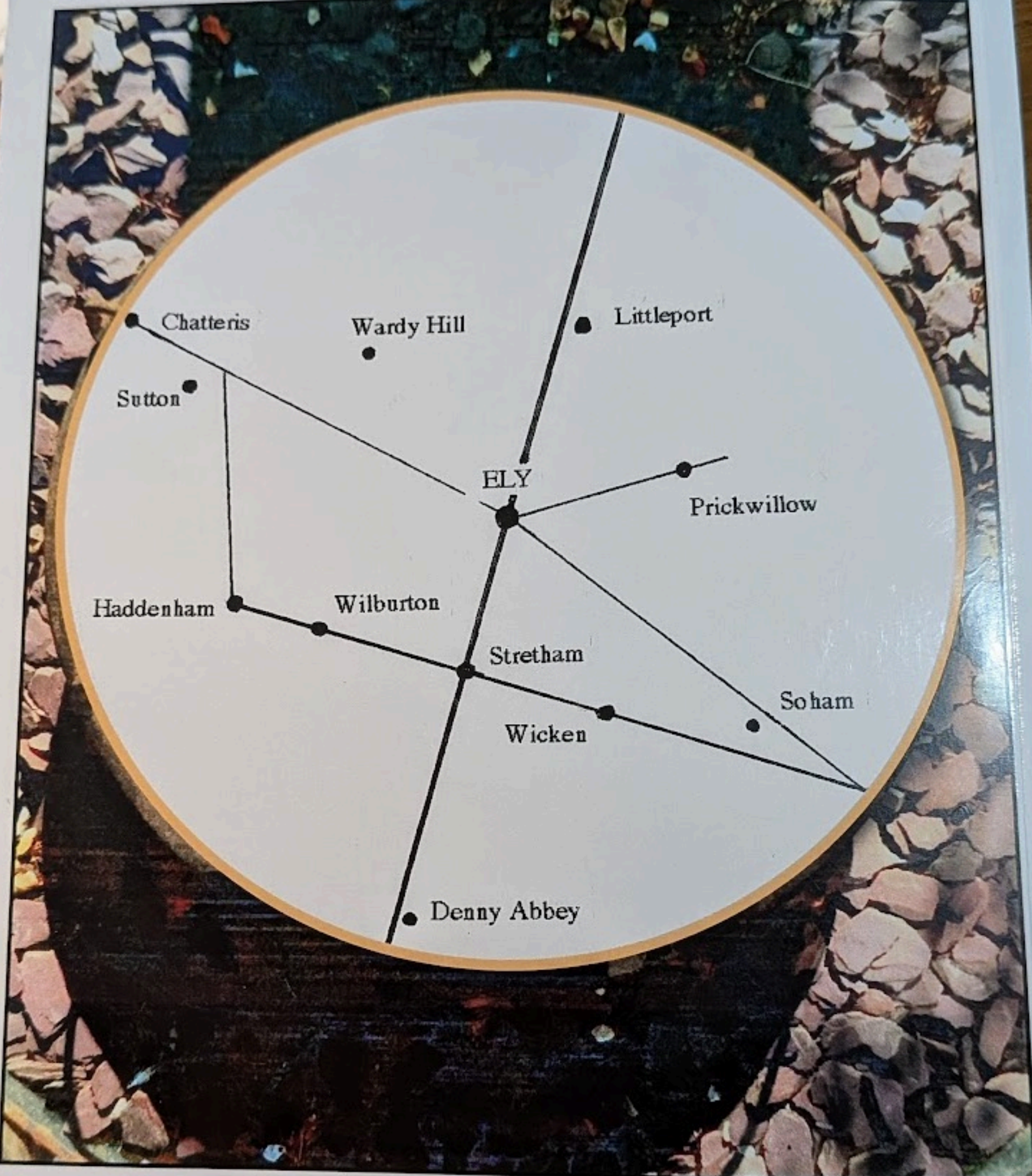
Stafford G. Wilkinson
Minister

Charles Drake
Secretary

Richard Dawey
Superintendent

H. J. Perkins
Treasurer

April 1902.



£4.00

For East Anglian Children's Hospice EACH

Printed by David J. Richards Ltd., Chatteris.