

History of Great Eccleston



Great Eccleston is of great historic significance. It appeared in the Domesday Book as “Eglestun”, and at the time was larger than the surrounding villages, with it being referred to in the eighteenth century as “Little London”. Eglestun” means “Church settlement” however there is no record of a Saxon Church.

Nowadays, with the agricultural changes and the development of communication the village has turned it into a commuter haven.

The population has soared from 600 to over 1,700 inhabitants (Office of National Statistics, 2011 census).

The Village is thriving and there are numerous businesses within the Village. There is The Village Centre, Health Centre, Dentist, Supermarket, Butcher, Post Office, Cafe and Tea Room, Estate Agent, Fish and Chip Shop and Restaurant, Italian Restaurant, Architects Office, Fruit and Vegetable shop, and three Public Houses, Bakers, three Hairdressers, Newsagents and an Off Licence. Ladies Dress Shop and Gents Outfitters, Gents Barbers and DIY Shop. There is also the Women’s Institute and three Places of Worship.



Great Eccleston also has a long sporting tradition and can claim to have had a bowling green since the 18th century. We have recently received a grant from Wyre Council who have upgraded the children’s play area on the playing field.

The Village has a long association with agriculture and it is fitting that the major event in the village is the annual Agricultural Show. In recent years the show has been well supported and attracts in excess of 40,000 visitors. The Great Eccleston Tractor Pulling Course, is rated as one of the best in Europe. This was the venue for last year’s European Championships.

The Square has always been the hub of the village, being a convenient gathering place. It was once the site of annual horse fairs and the pre-1914 Club Day gathered here. Until 1939, it also accommodated the fair each September at the time of the Agricultural Show. The weekly market takes place every Wednesday. We have an Annual Fun Day in August every year, this is organised by the Businesses with the help of the public. Although the Square is now macadamised, it was once cobbled.



Acknowledgments

I lived in Great Eccleston from the age of three until my marriage 18 months ago, but little thought I would one day write a book about it. Even when, three years ago, I collected some historical information for a journalist training project, the idea of a book was no more than a vague possibility for the future. Since then many inquiries about my research, and a lack of written information about the village made me decide to print this. I apologise for any omissions — I have tried to include all the information I could.

Thanking people is always a difficult task but without the support of my mother, Mrs. Doris Woode (who also did the illustrations), my husband John Miller, and my friend and one-time fellow journalist Miss Lyn Cobb, this book would never have got off the ground. While thanking the dozens of people it is impossible to mention, a special word of thanks must go to Miss Violet Hall, Mrs. J. Parkinson and Father Hampson. The staff of the West Lancashire Evening Gazette, the Lancashire Evening Post, the County Records Office and the Harris Reference Library have all been most helpful.

For anyone of an inquiring turn of mind, the main reference books I used were: *The History of Westmorland and the Hundreds of Lonsdale and Amounderness in Lancashire*, P. Mannex and Co.; *Lancashire and District*, P. Mannex and Co.; *Baine's History of the Fylde of Lancashire*; *Porter's History of the Fylde*; *History of the County of Lancashire*, Vol. 7; *Our Country Churches and Chapels*, "Atticus"; *Derby Household Books*; *Historical Notes of the Fylde*, Rev. W. T. Bulpit; *Notia Cestriensis*, Vol. 12, part 3; *More Windmill Land*, Allen Clarke; *Reports of the Charity Commission in Lancashire*, Vol. 8; *The Historical Notices of the Diocese of Chester*; *Victoria History of the County of Lancaster*, Peter Newby, Josephine Malone.



THE WEIND. This name was brought by the Norse invaders nearly 1,200 years ago and means a narrow street or passage leading from a main thoroughfare.

Great Ecclestone 1066-1970

Great Ecclestone is a picturesque village in the centre of the Fylde plain. Compared with Blackpool (10 miles), Preston (12 miles), and Garstang (6 miles), the village changed very little in the last century and it is hard to imagine how, in the 17th and 18th centuries it got the name "Little London" because it was a social centre.

Attractive country roads spread out from the village, with the main A586 going west to Poulton-le-Fylde and Blackpool and east to St. Michaels and Garstang, east and south are roads to Inskip, west to Little Ecclestone and the Over Wyre area, crossing the River Wyre by Cartford Toll Bridge, and south a road leads through Copp to Elswick and Thistleton.

The old Blackpool-Garstang road wound its way through Little Ecclestone and Great Ecclestone, but when the A586 was built more than 30 years ago the village was by-passed and for many years Blackpool-bound motorists hurtled past, often unaware that a village existed. Now times are again changing. When Great Ecclestone won the Community Council of Lancashire Best Kept Village Competition in 1965 many people came to see the village and explore the country walks which public footpaths provided. Each of the village inns — the Farmers Arms (which won the Best Kept Inn in Lancashire award in 1965), the Black Bull and the White Bull have their own atmosphere and country charm and draw people out from the towns for an evening drink.

VILLAGE INNS

Great Ecclestone has never been a "dry" village. Tales linger of two inns — the Red Lion and the White Lion, one of which was at the bottom of Barrows Lane, but all trace of these has vanished. The garden at the corner of Leckonby Street and Chesham Street was once the village bowling green and the house and supermarket on the opposite corner were once The Bowling Green — a popular village inn. There was a record of James Ogden, licensee, renewing his licence at the Kirkland sessions on Tuesday, 23rd September, 1823.

At the same sessions William Bennett renewed his licence for the White Bull and John Parkinson renewed his for the Black Bull. Each licensee was bound over in the sum of £30 to keep the

peace, with a second man standing £20. Among the things they promised not to do was "suffer any gaming with cards, draughts, dice, bagatelle or any other sedentary game . . . or suffer any bull, bear or badger baiting, cock fighting or other such sport or amusements on his premises; nor shall knowingly or designedly and with a view to harbour or entertain such, permit or suffer men or women of notoriously bad fame, or dissolute girls and boys, to assemble and meet together in his house . . . nor permit or suffer any drinking or tippling . . . during the usual hours of Divine Service on Sundays." They also had to undertake not to allow drinking late at nights or early in the mornings.

The Farmers Arms is also a very old inn and has grown in the last 20 years from a tiny one-room bar into a spacious place. The small room at the far end of the bar was once used for making beer — home brew being a feature of the inn for many years. The garden room, where there is a small fish pond and fountain, was, as the name suggests, once the small garden of the inn. Many local people still remember the place as Ann Garlick's as this lady owned it until 1927. That year she sold it to Mr. Dennis Wilbert, who 15 years later sold it to Dutton's Brewery.

The Black and White Bulls face one another across the village square, a focal point in Great Eccleston. Here the village gala queen crowning is held annually, and the roundabouts and side stalls of the fair have crowded onto the tarmac area for the agricultural show. In recent years the Parish Council have registered their ownership of both the square and the village pinfold, ensuring that they would be kept as common land for the village.

In a field to the right of Copp Lane, behind Leckonby House, is a small square stone building. There are no records of it, but it was once a dove cote, probably built about the 17th century, belonging to either Squire France (also spelt Ffrance and France) of Rawcliffe Hall, or the Leckonby's. In those days all cattle, except a few for breeding, were killed at the onset of winter, and the doves were used during the cold months as fresh meat. The bricks of the cote are set at different angles, giving the birds a roosting place in the wall. The lantern top, which opens, is probably of a later date — the old top being wooden slats through which the birds could fly in and out.

The village butchers started in a small wooden hut, but now a spotless modern brick building has replaced the hut and there are extensive buildings for the abattoir which provides meat for many of the Fylde's shops. Mr. William Ball and his son run the business — and in 1969 were awarded the Best Kept Shop in Lancashire award. The house to the right of the shop was once the village post office.

One relic of the past is the Pinfold, opposite the entrance to Butts Lane. For many years it was leased to the owner of the adjacent cottage and gradually fell into bad repair, but when the County Council took it over they repaired it (under pressure from the Parish Council) and fitted a green door with a notice "pinfold." Pinfolds were used by the Pinder to impound stray horses and cattle found on the King's Highway. (Pinfolds are also called Penfolds, or Pounds). Out of sight of visitors and residents alike is another relic, also in West End. The rear window of one of a row of cottages still has iron bars across it, an echo of the time when it was used as the village prison. The room is now a bedroom — I wonder how many other people, living at home, can claim to sleep in a cell?

EARLY BUS SERVICES

Newcomers may misunderstand or consider "quaint" a village habit of speaking of "going away" when they are going to Preston for a day's shopping, but looking at the story of the village bus services this is explained. There are few records of early bus companies, but in the memory of older residents buses out of the village were a twice weekly event, making a trip to Preston almost a journey to the unknown. In 1920, R. A. Tootell & Sons started a twice-weekly service to the village from Preston, and in May 1924 it became a limited company — Viking Motors Ltd. of Preston.

Five years later Viking Motors took over Royal Blue, a company which, owned by the Whiteside Brothers of Great Eccleston, ran services to Elswick, Preston and for a short time through to Fleetwood. West End House has a wider drive and larger garage than neighbouring houses in West End because Royal Blue's bus was kept there. Viking Motors gradually increased to an hourly service, and were taken over by Ribble Motor Services Ltd. in November 1952, the same year the 180 Preston-Great Eccleston service was started. Four years later this route was extended to Cleveleys. Since early 1970, buses to the village have been greatly reduced for economic reasons.

Mr. Ernest Smith, of Elswick, pioneered the route from Garstang to Blackpool before 1920 with his Pilgrim Motor Services. Ribble took over Pilgrim in July, 1927 and have operated the Blackpool-Garstang route ever since. A Mr. Ted Jackson and a Mr. Winford Titterton both ran services before Pilgrim, Viking and Royal Blue, but how frequently their services ran or where to is hard to discover.

Families and their Homes

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The earliest reference to Great Eccleston is made in the Domesday Book — the village is probably one of two places called "Eglestun" which belonged to the fee of Garstang or Wyresdale. In "The History of the County of Lancaster" is a reference to an Earl Tostig holding "Great Manors Eccleston, assessed as two ploughshares, as a member of his Preston Lordship," in 1066. The tenants in 1212 were Ralph de Eccleston, and Walter, son of Swain, Lord of Carleton. (Carleton is an area of Poulton-le-Fylde today).

It is hard to find any mention of the village in history books — only the Leckonby family (of which more later) were important enough to be written about at any length. Not only would the majority of the population be illiterate, but they were mainly farmers, concerned with tilling the land and growing their wheat, oats, barley, beans and rushes. Rushes were a staple commodity in this part of the Fylde, growing well in the marshy ground, and rush light-making was a local industry. A rush-bearing ceremony was held annually at Copp Church when the rushes on the floor were renewed. This custom combined the practical aspect of cleaning with thanksgiving. The thanksgiving service was revived a few years ago — a picturesque ceremony when the children carry symbolic bundles of rushes into the church.

Porter, in his "History of the Fylde of Lancashire" (1876) wrote that Great Eccleston was anciently held by William de Lancaster as an appendage of the fee of Wyresdale and then passed to Walter de Lindsay, the eldest son of his second sister, Alice. This line ended with Christina de Lindsay, living in 1300, who married Ingelram de Guynes, Lord of Coucy, in France. Their second and third sons, William and Robert de Coucy, held Great Eccleston as part of their Wyresdale inheritance in 1346.

Porter goes on to say that in about 1600 Thomas Stanley, an illegitimate son of the fourth Earl of Derby, settled at Great Eccleston Hall, which, together with the estate, was probably purchased. His descendants remained there until the death of Richard Stanley in 1714, when Thomas Westby, of Upper Rawcliffe, gained possession of the land. It seems probable that a family called Eccleston lived at the hall before the Stanleys, but no proof can be found of this.

In the Testa de Neville, Adam de Eccliston, William de Molineus and Hugh de Longford held the sixth part of a knight's fee in Eccliston, Leyrebreck (now Larbreck) and Kat'hale (now Catterall); and a Ralph de Eccliston held land in the two Ecclistons and Lairbrec. In the "Derby Household Books" a reference is made to a Mr. Eccleston of Great Eccleston, Esq., dining with Lord Derby, with a footnote: "Henry Eccleston of Great Eccleston, Esq., the head of an ancient house in the Fylde, and to be distinguished from the Ecclestons of Eccleston near Prescott, married Mary, daughter of John Osbaldeston, Esq., by whom he had issue five sons and four daughters." The remains of a moat can be seen around the farmhouse, which is still called Great Eccleston Hall. The estates were owned by a Jacobite in 1716, and were advertised for sale in 1796.

SECRET PASSAGES AND LEGENDS

Most houses in the Fylde of any antiquity lay claim to either a priest hole or secret passage. Many of these tales have no foundation in fact, of some only records remain, but a few are preserved to this day.

Great Eccleston is no exception and Great Eccleston Hall claims a secret passage running under the river to Whitehall Farm — about half a mile upstream from Cartford Bridge. In the cellar of the hall is the old passage entrance, bricked up many years ago when the river flooded the passage.

A tale still lingers of a man-servant of the Westby's, owners of Whitehall farm from about 1600-1857, who was involved in the Battle of Preston during the 1715 Jacobite invasion. Fleeing from the battle field on a piebald horse he passed through Great Eccleston, crossed the river, and vanished. His pursuers, who were close on his heels, searched without success while the servant hid close by in a secret stable — a kind of cave-cellar. From there he later used the secret passage to Great Eccleston Hall to escape from the area.

When the Westby's sold the farm in 1857, rumour has it the new farmer found a large tunnel leading underground while digging the foundations for a new barn. He went down a short way with a candle, but seeing no end to the passage came out and filled that end in.

There is a rumour that the paved floor of a small building which lies under a few feet of earth was once a cell used by the notorious Singleton witch Meg Shelton, but this would appear to be just a tale.

BONFIRE NIGHT 1874

A true tale of a young man in 1874 puts the exploits of today's hippies and skinheads in the shade. Young Squire France, son of Squire France of Rawcliffe Hall was known for his riotous and bawdy exploits, but Guy Fawkes night 1874 was his most outrageous. His 21st birthday was still a few months off — the following January — and until then he had little responsibility, so he decided to have a bonfire that would be remembered. Armed with 15 gallons of paraffin he, his friends and two young ladies from London (if they could be called "ladies") made their way over Cartford Bridge to a windmill which stood on a small mound close to Meagles Lane on the A586. The mill was owned by Mr. Crook, who also ran Wall Pool water mill at the bottom of the hill. He pleaded with the young men for 24 hours to move his sacks of corn and some new machinery, but the Squire was impatient and, igniting the mill, he led his companions in a dance round the burning structure.

In his book "More Windmill Land," Allan Clarke reports that Mr. Parkinson, then a resident of Wall Farm, remembered the fire and told how the flames could be seen as far away as Blackpool, Fleetwood and Preston, and it burned for three days. Of course, the miller had to be compensated and, as there are no records of court proceedings, it seems possible that Squire France, realising that publicity about his son would not be to the family credit, settled out of court. Mr. Clarke adds that nicknames for the young squire included "the Rawcliffe Infant" and "Mad Jack." The young man died 22 years after this exploit, aged 43.

CARTFORD BRIDGE

As the name might suggest, there was originally a ford at the site of Cartford Bridge. In 1829, a plan was made for a proposed stone bridge over the river, which would have required an Act of Parliament. This was abandoned, but in about 1831 the first bridge was built (without an Act of Parliament) by Squire France — a structure of asphalt and wooden sleepers with a metal cart track down the centre. In 1928, Rawcliffe Hall Estate was split up and sold by auction at the Metropole Hotel, Blackpool, and the part which included the bridge was bought by Mr. William Binks, a retired hay and corn merchant from Blackpool (and formerly of Ossett, Yorkshire). He floated a private limited company and in 1929 the decking of the bridge was demolished and replaced with a steel and concrete structure.

The tolls have remained unchanged since the company took over, but will have to be adjusted when decimal currency comes into operation.

THE LECKONBY'S

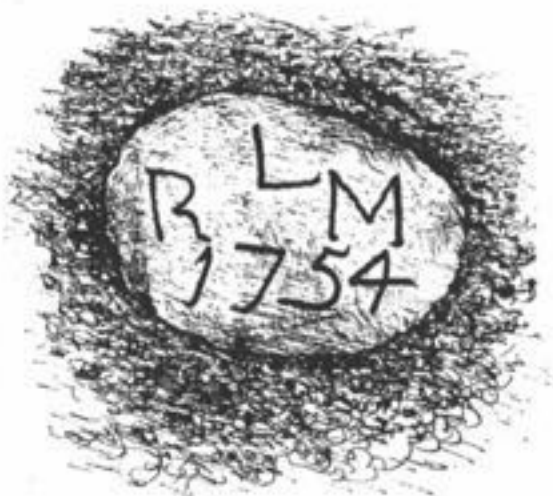
Just off the village square, in Leckonby Street, is Leckonby House. The present house was originally the stables of the home of the Leckonby family, who were great landowners until nearly 200 years ago. Their family coat of arms was a rampant black wolf between three green trefoils.

In 1641, the authorities decided to screen all Roman Catholics, and everyone was invited to sign a declaration that they would "maintain the Protestant religion against all Popish innovations." The Leckonby's were a strong Roman Catholic family but John Leckonby (the first of the family to live in the village, and recorded as a "free tenant" in 1621) and his son Richard signed. But Richard, a churchwarden, was a recusant — one who refused to attend Church of England services as the law required — and he had to pay a fine of £58 to keep his estate.

"Our Country Churches and Chapels" carries a reference to a village tradition that Leckonby House once sustained a siege. "Although few particulars are given, we may surmise that it took place during the passage of the Earl of Derby's troops through this part of the country in their march on Lancaster in 1643. John Leckonby, Esq., took a prominent part in the unfortunate wars which raged at this period and was engaged in the siege of Chester in 1643."

For five generations the Leckonby family lived in the village, great landowners, honoured and respected, but the last member of the family, another Richard, through sheer extravagance squandered the family fortune beyond recovery. In 1762, he was taken to Lancaster castle and imprisoned for debt — and he spent the 21 years until his death in that grim fortress. He was buried in St. Michaels Church with his wife, Mary Hathornthwaite, of Catshaw at the head of Wyresdale. Not long after Richard Leckonby was taken to Lancaster Castle, Leckonby House was broken into and ravaged. Then, four years later, in 1766, it was destroyed by fire.

The gateposts through which Richard Leckonby passed on his way to Lancaster Castle still stand today, built into a newer wall, and set in the wall of the present house is a plaque inscribed "RLM 1754" — inserted by Richard and Mary.



The Stone inserted by Richard and Mary

They had one son, William, but he died a year before his father while hunting in Wyresdale. William married the daughter and heiress of James Taylor of Goosnargh, and left three children — Richard, who died aged 15, James, who died in infancy, and Mary, the sole heiress, who married Thomas Henry Hele Phipps, of Leighton House, Wiltshire, and who was High Sheriff of Wiltshire in 1804. Among their children was Emma Mary Phipps, who lived for many years at Leckonby Cottage in Great Eccleston Square. The cottage, on the left of the White Bull, has now been divided in half, one half keeping the name Leckonby Cottage, the other called Rose Cottage.

Miss Phipps, following the family tradition, was a strong Roman Catholic and the cottages still reflect her influence on them. A front bedroom at Rose Cottage was once a chapel and has a polished wood ceiling and polished wooden panels round the room. There is a large alcove in the room, perhaps the site of an altar or image. Above the bend of the narrow stairs is another alcove, this time a small one with a wooden shelf for flowers or candles, and the uprights of the banisters, three circles of wood, represent the Trinity. The porch at Rose Cottage is tiled with the



POST OFFICE COTTAGE, LOOKING DOWN RAIKES ROAD
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LOOKING DOWN WEST END, WITH THE METHODIST CHAPEL ON THE RIGHT

parable of the sower, and in Leckonby Cottage tiles round the fireplace represent night and day.

CROSS HOUSE

Cross House, which stands on the corner at Lane Heads cross-roads, is supposed to be haunted by the White Lady. Legend exists of a lady, dressed in white, appearing at a small attic window overlooking the garden, and strange and unexplained noises being heard in the house, but the tale has never been substantiated.

It is possible that the tale arose because a family called White lived there. "A History of the County of Lancashire" refers to a John White, who died in July 1557, holding a capital messuage in Great Eccleston of the heir William Pleasington in socage by 4s. rent. Other sources refer to a family living there during the reign of Henry VII, and a Thomas White living there in 1757.

VILLAGE MEMORIES

The Hall family have long associations with the village and the memoirs of Mrs. Caroline Filmer (nee Hall) — which have never been published — give a vivid picture of village life in the 1800's.

She recalled Queen Victoria's Coronation in 1837 when all the pupils attending a "Dames School" were taken to the village square and given oat cakes and mugs of beer. (All the village children gathered in the Women's Institute Hall for Queen Elizabeth II Coronation and were given coronation mugs, but no beer — ice cream was the order of the day). During the harvest and potato lifting seasons village children did not go to school, wrote Mrs. Filmer, instead they had to stay at home and help.

Looking at the well-surfaced roads, and the large number of cars which a fine summer weekend draws to the village, Mrs. Filmer's description of travelling conditions seems unbelievable. The three most important people in the countryside were the parson, the doctor and the farrier, "the two latter were the users of the bad, dirty roads and each one travelled in a gig . . . down the cobbled street." In the winter of 1890-91, Mrs. Filmer travelled to Great Eccleston from the South. The 8 a.m. train was delayed by heavy snow and reached Preston at 5.30 p.m., where Mrs. Filmer caught another train to Kirkham, followed by a seven mile journey in an open trap. "The snow balled on the horse's feet so badly we had to get out and scrape it out from its hooves . . . every

10 minutes. It was getting on for midnight when we arrived home," she recalled.

Although the village is only 10 miles from Blackpool, a journey which takes 20 minutes in a car today, Mrs. Filmer had never been to the seaside until 1872 when she was taken there on the day of her grandmother's funeral.

The Hall Family owned land in the West End, including the local blacksmith's which they leased for 1s. 6d. per week.

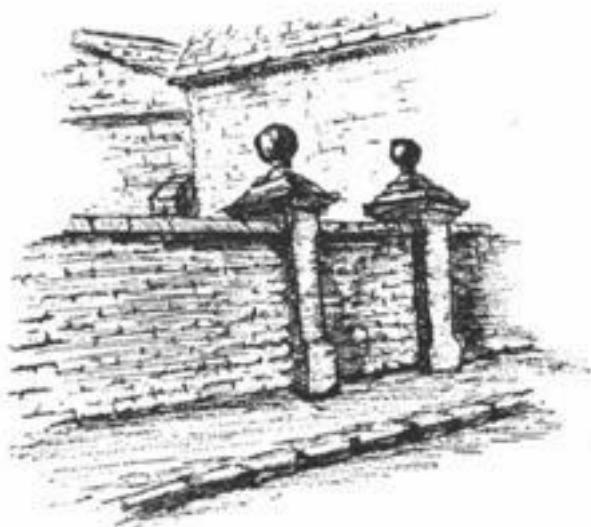
Mrs. Filmer's niece, Miss Violet Hall, still lives in the family house in West End.

THOMAS BARROW

A famous local painter, Thomas Barrow, was great-uncle to Mrs. Filmer. Born in the mid 1700's, he was a pupil of Romney's, and possibly married Romney's sister. Mrs. Filmer recalled a cottage called Barrows Cottage which had a well, "as well water and what could be caught from the roofs was all the water that was available." There is still a street called Barrows Lane.

Thomas Barrow painted a miniature of the 18th century poet and schoolteacher, Peter Newby. Born in Kendal, Newby opened a school at Burton-in-Kendal in 1773 and two years later moved to Great Eccleston, where he stayed until 1779-80, writing six of his poems in the village.

In her biography of Peter Newby, Josephine Malone throws some light on the life of Thomas Barrow. The son of Matthew Barrow, of Great Eccleston, he studied under Romney for a year in London, then went to Yorkshire to clean some paintings for a gentleman. He borrowed £15 from Romney for the fare, but on completing the work was offered only "washing, lodging and provisions." A lady in York felt sorry for him and commissioned a full-length portrait of her son, then gave a party to show the finished painting to her friends. As a result Thomas Barrow was offered more work and earned £300 in one year, sending some of it home to his aged parents in Great Eccleston. By 1818 he was back in Great Eccleston, and died there aged 84 in 1822.



*The gateway through which Richard Leckonby
was taken to Lancaster Castle*

Churches and Schools

From the St. Michaels-Blackpool road can be seen the Anglican church of St. Anne's, Copp, standing in a cluster of trees on a small hill overlooking the village. Just off the village square, in West End is the Methodist Chapel, but perhaps the most historic of the village's three churches is St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church which stands in a leafy glade by tree-lined Hall Lane, only a minute's walk away from the Square.

As other local history books testify, the Fylde was a very strong Roman Catholic area, members of that church withstanding all attempts to make them renounce their faith. St. Mary's Church and the Roman Catholic faith have a long history in Great Eccleston.

An old thatched building in Raikes Road (locally known as The Raikes) was the first Catholic Church in the village. A mass centre formed from St. Michaels, it opened about 150 years after the Reformation — probably in 1686. The first priest was the Rev. William Caton, the son of Thomas and Helen Caton of Upper Rawcliffe. He was sent to the English college in Rome on April 24th, 1694, at the age of 19. There he was ordained sub-deacon in February, deacon in April, and priest on May 24th, 1699. He left the college on October 1st, 1701, en route for Paris and shortly afterwards was appointed to Great Eccleston. There was a record of the thatched building in 1872 when it was being used as an outhouse by a local farmer, but today there is no trace of it.

In 1760, a new chapel was built and dedicated to St. Laurence in Barrows Lane. Later it was enlarged and a gallery added. This is now used as part of the present Day School. Sometime after 1795 the priest at the time, the Rev. Henry Parkinson, started a small school where his pupils included one or more of the sons of William Fitzherbert-Brockholes of Claughton Hall. (The Fitzherbert-Brockholes family now live at the re-built Hall, at Claughton-on-Brock, near Garstang).



OLD COTTAGES AT THE TOP OF RAIKES ROAD



THE SQUARE 1936

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ST. MARY'S CHURCH

Plans for the present church - dedicated to St. Mary - and presbytery were started in 1832 and three years later the building was opened. As with modern buildings, it appears that either the parish had under-estimated or the building fund had not reached its target when the new church opened, for in "Our Country Churches and Chapels" by "Atticus" is recorded that the accounts for January 1st, 1837, showed £1,107 15s. 2½d. had been received for the building fund and payments of £1,238 5s. had been made. An unremarkable brick exterior, the church contains many links with the past.

The Silician marble altar and reredos, erected some 14 years after the church was opened, was a gift from Miss Emma Mary Phipps in memory of her mother, the last of the Leckonby's. (Although all the evidence shows that Miss Phipps gave the altar, the inscription, in Latin, says "sorrowing sons" so perhaps her brothers shared the gift). According to tradition Mrs. Phipps had six sons named after the six saints who are depicted in the reredos.

The County Records Office now have care of some very old holy relics, which until a year ago were kept at the church. Perhaps the oldest are two portable altars, dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries when Roman Catholics were persecuted. One is a plain slab of stone, measuring about six inches square, with a small cross engraved in the centre. The other is wooden and has five crosses, one in each corner and one in the centre. These were carried from house to house secretly when mass was said. There are three chalices, the oldest in pewter with a matching paten probably dating back to pre-penal days. One silver chalice is probably late 18th century, while the other silver chalice, which is lined with gold and has a matching gold and silver paten, is probably early 19th century.

During 1968-69, the parish priest since 1943, Father F. E. Hampson, supervised £17,000-worth of alterations to the church. Dark brown oak and brown paint have been replaced with light paintwork, new pews and kneelers have replaced the old, rather unstable ones and a pulpit has been installed. The old doorway at the north end of the church has been made into an attractive baptistry, with a new stained-glass window with blue surround, with the font (dating back to the time the church was built) standing on white stone tiles. A new door with a pine-lined porch has been opened in the west wall, and three new windows put in.

17th CENTURY COTTAGE

The owner of a white bungalow in Raikes Road had always known it was old, but it wasn't until 1961 that alterations to the house brought to light a house within a house. Archaeologists identified the older structure as about 500 years old and of a design once common in the Fylde. Beneath the brick and plaster of the modern bungalow were hazel rods, clay and straw and six A-shaped crucks. (A cruck is an oak structure about 15ft. high, which formed the main supports of 17th century cottages). One has been removed from the cottage and is on display at the Harris Museum, Preston. A typical cottage of this design had a main living room, called the House, which was the centre of everyday life and contained the only fire which was used for cooking. Behind the fire was a parlour, also used as the best bedroom. Both these rooms were open to the roof. At the other end of the cottage were two small service rooms, side by side, over which was a small loft used for storage or sleeping and reached by a ladder.

Changes come gradually in such a small community (the estimated population in October, 1969, was 1,034). Only 15 years ago a newcomer was greeted by name only three days after moving to the village. "How did you know who I was?" asked the amazed lady. "Oh! easy," was the reply, "You're the only person I don't know here, so you must be the newcomer." Now a caravan site and new buildings have brought many new faces, but as they say in the village, "You're nowt a villager unless you're born here" — and one old gentleman of 70-plus still maintains he's not a villager although he has lived there from the age of three!

It was only a few years ago that the horse drawn milkcart vanished from the roads. The local milk lady, who wore long boots, woollen beret and overall, summer and winter alike, dispensed milk from a large churn with the aid of a pint measure, paying no attention to her horse which knew exactly where to stop next. I was lucky enough to be one of the local children who travelled part of the round on the cart.

I can also remember the roar of the forge and steady hammering of the local blacksmith, and spent many a happy hour watching the farmhorses being shod. But as the horses dwindled, so did business and now the hammering from the smithy building by Butts Lane is from the cobbler catering for a different kind of footwear to his predecessors.

GALLERY

Pew No.	Occupier	Place of abode	Owner
1	Thomas Booth	Copp Cottage	T. R. W. France
2	James Bamber	House	T. R. W. France
3	Joseph Tomlinson	House	T. R. W. France
4	James Gradwell	House	T. R. W. France
5	John Worthington	House	T. R. W. France
6	John Whiteside	House	T. R. W. France
7	William Shadley	House	T. R. W. France
8 & 11	John Gillow	Elswick Grange	Anne Wilson
9 & 10	Thomas Thompson	House	Joanna Wilson

GROUND FLOOR

1	Richard Harrison	Little Eccleston Hall	T. R. W. France
6	William Waring	House	R. Thompson
7 & 8	William Snape	House	Trustees of Fyld's Charity
9 & 10	James Cornall	House	Trustees of H. H. Bailey
11	Webster Hall	House	Webster Hall
12	William Whitehead	House	William Whitehead
14	John Porter	Cartford Brow House	T. R. W. France
15	Henry Wilding	Cartford House	T. R. W. France
16	William Gregson	House	William Gregson
17	Robert Sykes	House	Peter Carter
18 & 19	Robert Thompson	Thompson's	R. Thompson
24	Rev. T. Hathornthwaite	Vicarage	Rev. T. Hathornthwaite
25	Robert Shorrocks	Wall Farm	T. R. W. France
26	John Marsh	Bennett's	T. R. W. France
27	William Dobson	Dobson's	John, William and Mary Dobson
28	Henry Worthington and William Gornall	Two Houses	Birchall
29	Wm. & Richard Parker	House	T. R. W. France
31	John Raby	House	R. Noblet
32	Richard Redman	House	H. Copeland
33	Adam Carter	House	Adam Carter

Nos. 2, 3, 4, 5, 13, 20, 21, 22, 23 and 30 were unappropriated. There was also a pew at the west end of the north aisle for the Chapel Warden and Sunday School Master.



ST. ANNE'S CHURCH, COPP

Until 1841 the church had no burial ground and all burials were at St. Michaels, but during that year a yard was attached to the church and a tower erected at the western end of the building. In 1967 another piece of land was bought to extend the graveyard which then had only room for one more grave, and which also gave room for a garden of remembrance where cremation ashes could be kept. The graveyard won the Blackburn Diocese Best Kept Churchyard award in 1969.

A bell was bought from the churchwardens of Kirkham Parish Church in 1846 for £70 14s. 3d. — this is the "big bell." The smaller bell was probably the one used in the old chapel, but there is no trace of its origin.

It was 126 years after the chapel was built that it was made into a separate parish, although in all but name it had operated as such for many years. This required an Order in Council which was made on January 15th, 1849, at the Court of Windsor, under Queen Victoria, and made Great Eccleston, Elswick, Little Eccleston and Larbreck into a separate parish. In the church's Bicentenary booklet it says: "It is very probable that the whole of the Fylde (Deanery of Amounderness) received little attention from the Lord Bishop of Chester owing to the unwieldy size of the Diocese, roughly including the whole of Lancashire and Cheshire, with portions of five other counties." In 1847, the Fylde became part of the new Diocese of Manchester, and it was more recently that it became part of the Diocese of Blackburn to which it still belongs.

There is no trace of any musical instrument being used in the church until 1841 when 14s. was paid for a clarinet and 13s. for a bass viol. At a later date a harmonium was purchased, but it was not until 1886 that an organ was bought. It was a two-manual organ, and in 1909 several new stops were added and the keyboard moved to its present position.

The church was completely restored in 1884 when a new chancel was built and the old arch widened. Open benches replaced the closed pews and choir stalls were put in the chancel. The font was moved from the body of the church and put in the old vestry, which became the Baptistry, and a new vestry was built adjoining the chancel. The old structure was built over with Yorkshire stone parpoints and the tower raised to 45ft. The Caen stone and alabaster marble altar was given in memory of 12 local men who lost their lives during the First World War.

Residents of the parish paid a corn tithe to the Vicar of St. Michaels until 1820 when an Act of Parliament changed the law and a money tithe instead of corn was introduced, the money

being collected annually by the Church Wardens of Great Eccleston. Many residents in the villages covered by St. Michaels parish still pay a small sum annually, but others have redeemed the tithe. Originally this was the Vicar's stipend.

BEQUESTS

There were several small bequests made to the church and its school. In the will of William Fyld "of Great Eccleston yeoman" about £250 was left "for a master to teach poor children here or in some other part of this township" in September, 1719. In "The Historic Notices of the Diocese of Chester" there is also mention of Thomas Clitherall who left money for the vicar to "instruct 25 of the poorest children in Great Eccleston and Inskip-with-Crossmore." Reference is made to a school "erected long ago, called Copp school, but endowed till lately, viz by one William Fyld."

There was a school at Copp long before the chapel was built. The Bicentenary booklet refers to a deed, dated 1686, transferring a school known as "Northside" to Thomas Stanley, of Great Eccleston, Richard Longworth, of Larbreck, and Henry France, of Elswick, as Trustees for the inhabitants of Great Eccleston, Little Eccleston, Larbreck and Elswick. According to this document, John Leckonby, of Great Eccleston, and William Leckonby, of Elswick, granted the school and land for £6 per annum "on the understanding that English and Latin were taught."

In my research I found a reference to Lane Head School, built by subscription on the site of one that fell down. The only endowment was a rent charge of £5 supposed to have been given by Thomas Clitherall. No children were taught free at this school, which had 20-40 pupils. But all my attempts to substantiate the date or exact whereabouts of this school have failed.

A report of 1824 elaborates on the part of William Fyld's will stating that poor children in Great Eccleston, Little Eccleston and Larbreck could go to school free. The authorities had decided that people who were assessed for window tax should not be considered poor, and so were not entitled to the freedom of the school. (It is interesting to note that several of the old houses, including Wall Farm, still have bricked up windows — a way people avoided the tax).

Also under Fyld's will, dated 26th September, 1719, is provision for Fyld's Dole. This provided for the sum of 1s.-4s. to be given to the poor annually on St. Thomas's Day by the overseer and some of the older inhabitants. At first any poor people in the parish benefited, but later it was restricted to those who were "settled and living in the village."

William Gaulter left money — Gaulter's Charity — to be divided annually between two poor widows, but except for the years 1776-78 it was divided between seven to twelve women. This charity is still distributed today — in the region of £3 10s. annually just before Christmas.

Ellen Longworth, of Preston, in a will dated 19th November, 1789, left money, the interest to be used for buying and distributing bread on Sundays "for the use of the poor people attending divine service at Copp Chapel."

Jonathan Dobson the elder left £20 — Dobson's Dole — the interest to be distributed among the poor of Great Eccleston every St. Thomas's Day.

In 1827, the school at Copp was under government inspection, with an annual endowment of £50. Attendances varied from 70 in summer to about 95 in winter at the day school, with 50-60 attending Sunday School. In 1866, the school was transferred to the Vicarage Barn and continued there until 1871. The Rev. W. C. Dowding (Vicar) agreed to use the old school house as a barn and, considering its use, made no rent charge. This barn was pulled down in July, 1966. I believe it was also at one time the village tithe barn. The new school was opened in 1872, and a new classroom added in 1888. More recently the school was again extended and a kitchen added.

METHODISM

Wesleyanism started in Great Eccleston in a cottage in West End prior to 1827, moving to a house in Chesham Street and then to a building in Chapel Street which later became a cottage.

The foundation stone for the present chapel in West End was laid in 1870 by the Rev. Chas. Williams of Accrington, who preached at a service in the Club Room at Great Eccleston. When completed it held 130 people. The cost of about £330 was raised on the opening day — October 19th, 1871. The site was given by Baron Chesham, a landowner in Great Eccleston, and Chesham Street was probably named after him.

The chapel was built by the Baptists from Inskip, but shortly afterwards was taken over by the Methodists. It had no regular minister, the minister from Inskip keeping the two churches, preaching at Inskip in the morning and Great Eccleston in the evening. Even now there is no resident Methodist minister, and the minister from Pilling takes the Sunday services.

Only a few years ago, when renovations were done to the chapel, a bottle containing old newspaper cuttings was found in a wall. This was replaced with a bottle containing details of the proposed amalgamation of the Anglican and Methodist churches, a plan of the Garstang Methodist Circuit, and the church's diary of events for that year.

Village Life, Yesterday and Today

Until more recent years people born in the village lived and worked there all their lives. Great Eccleston still has no railway, and, as mentioned before, only during the last 50 years has had a bus service, so all entertainment was made by the people. There is still no gas in Great Eccleston, and electricity only came in 1932, the first consumer being connected on December 18th that year, just in time for Christmas. (Preston Corporation, who built the first Ribble Power Station in 1921, were responsible for electricity until it was nationalised in 1947).

Even today it is still very much a rural community, with church events — whist and domino drives, coffee mornings and rose queen crownings — playing a large part in community life. The Women's Institute caters for the women, while the menfolk have their own organisation — the RAMS (Rural Arts Men's Society).

The Women's Institute was formed in January, 1931, with 60 members and meetings were held in the Methodist Church. Right from the start members launched a building fund and in six months had collected £57 2s. 8d. Dances, concerts, sales of work and many other events raised the money for their own hall which was built in Chapel Street and opened in 1939.

The RAMS was not, strictly speaking, a village organisation. It was formed about 10 years ago by lecturers from Blackpool Technical College and met in the White Bull. Fresh bread, baked at the college, butter, cheese and pickles were a main feature of the monthly meetings as well as a local speaker. From an initial membership of 10 the society grew rapidly, with many of the village men seizing the opportunity to join. (More recently the meetings have been held outside the village).

A meals-on-wheels service is run by the local Women's Royal Voluntary Service, providing a cooked meal for the elderly and housebound and young children are catered for by a pre-school playgroup. For sports fans there are football and cricket teams, a very active athletic club and a bowling club. The Bowling club, who have their greens down Hall Lane, have recently admitted lady members.

By custom three cattle fairs were held in the village square on 14th March, 14th April and 4th November — the village Agricultural Society show, which was held until the 1950's, was probably formed by amalgamating these three fairs. Held annually in late September, the last was the 99th. In 1969, local people reformed a show committee and plans are under way for holding the 100th. At the time of the last show the programme included horse and cattle classes, sheep dog trials and horse jumping.

GALA DAY

Galas are still popular in country areas and have been revived in some towns as big business, with firms entering decorated floats, and "professional" morris dancers who tour the north to win medals. Great Eccleston's gala has avoided this trend and kept its essentially village character. The morris dancers are young people who live locally and train for their one big annual event — and if there is someone out of step, well that's just part of the village. Sad to say the old shire horses have now gone, and tractors draw the gaily decorated trailers. Most of the village children (and many of the adults) take part either on one of the floats, in a fancy dress section or as part of the rose queen retinue.

The crowning ceremony is held in the square, then the procession moves up West End onto the main road — and it is refreshing to see the Blackpool-bound traffic halted while the procession moves into Little Eccleston and back through the village to the square.

Sports have always been a feature of gala day and the youngsters have always taken the opportunity to win some of the small cash prizes to supplement their money to spend on the fun fair.

The village square, hub of village life, is not a true square. In the 18th and early 19th centuries houses were built on the edge of it, encroaching onto the common land and changing the shape to an irregular oval. From the square a narrow footpath, the ginnel, runs through to Chesham Street, along one side of which is a very old piece of wall. According to some of the older residents this was one side of an old, narrow street, which had a coaching house.

17th CENTURY COTTAGE

The owner of a white bungalow in Raikes Road had always known it was old, but it wasn't until 1961 that alterations to the house brought to light a house within a house. Archaeologists identified the older structure as about 500 years old and of a design once common in the Fylde. Beneath the brick and plaster of the modern bungalow were hazel rods, clay and straw and six A-shaped crucks. (A cruck is an oak structure about 15ft. high, which formed the main supports of 17th century cottages). One has been removed from the cottage and is on display at the Harris Museum, Preston. A typical cottage of this design had a main living room, called the House, which was the centre of everyday life and contained the only fire which was used for cooking. Behind the fire was a parlour, also used as the best bedroom. Both these rooms were open to the roof. At the other end of the cottage were two small service rooms, side by side, over which was a small loft used for storage or sleeping and reached by a ladder.

Changes come gradually in such a small community (the estimated population in October, 1969, was 1,034). Only 15 years ago a newcomer was greeted by name only three days after moving to the village. "How did you know who I was?" asked the amazed lady. "Oh! easy," was the reply, "You're the only person I don't know here, so you must be the newcomer." Now a caravan site and new buildings have brought many new faces, but as they say in the village, "You're nowt a villager unless you're born here" — and one old gentleman of 70-plus still maintains he's not a villager although he has lived there from the age of three!

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