

1. Introduction

About thirty years ago Mrs. Marshall, of Sherrington, was dusting a large old book, when there fell out of it some yellowed papers covered with faded handwriting. These she brought to the notice of Mr. Robertson Scott, the Editor of *The Countryman*, who soon realised that they were a diary, "intermittently kept, but continuing over some seventeen years, from 1814 to 1831". "The handwriting and orthography," he wrote, "are those of a person who seldom writes and never reads," though this is hardly correct, as the diarist evidently read the *Northampton Mercury*. Soon afterwards, in 1929, he published extracts in four successive numbers of *The Countryman* under the heading of "A Grave-Digger's Diary : 1814-1831". Some of the extracts were copied into the *Beds. Times*, but, so far as we know, the Diary has never been published in its entirety. A few years ago Mr. Scott kindly deposited it in the County Record Office (A.D. 1714) and he has consented to its publication here. In consequence of information supplied to him by interested readers, he readily acknowledged that the writer was not merely a "grave-digger", but the parish clerk of Felmersham, Beds., from 1824 to 1834. He was certainly not very erudite; but obviously he was able to fulfil fairly satisfactorily the ordinary duties of a parish clerk.

Felmersham, a small village on the river Ouse, is about seven miles north-west of Bedford. Its church, founded in the twelfth century, is avowedly the finest village church in the county, and at this time the living was in the gift of Trinity College, Cambridge. The name Orpin has been fairly common in north Bedfordshire since the end of the seventeenth century, especially in Harrold. About the middle of the eighteenth century some members of the family seem to have migrated to Felmersham and Pavenham, which then formed one parish; for Edward Arpin (the name is also spelt Orpin), our diarist, was baptised at Pavenham in 1756, the son of William and Elizabeth Arpin. In 1777, when living at Radwell in Felmersham, he married Rachel Dawson of Stagsden, and their four children were baptised at Felmersham between 1778 and 1787. Their names were William, Aga (?Hagar), Arabella and Abassinia.

Perhaps the most notable characteristic of the diary is its objectivity. He never criticises the actions of the people he mentions, but simply records facts. But he is wonderfully interested in unusual phenomena, such as Hoods, droughts, storms, snowfalls, and monstrosities. His notes about these can be read in the text; but many of them go to show that in Arpin's day winter often began earlier and ended later than now. For instance, on 21 October 1819 it snowed, he says, for three hours. On 11 June 1821 snow and hail fell to the depth of three inches in the Northampton district. Professor Gordon Manley of London University, sometime President of the Royal Meteorological Society, tells us that the frequent unseasonableness of the weather of 150 years ago is a recognised scientific fact.

The diary was written during a very critical period in English history. The country was recovering but slowly after twenty years of war following the French Revolution. The enclosure movement was still in full swing, causing discontent and unemployment among agricultural labourers. Prices were high, and the labour-market was overstocked, largely owing to the rapid increase of population. Thus employers were able to keep wages down to a mere subsistence level, which often had to be supplemented by allowances from the rates. In many villages emigration, sometimes paid for by a special rate, helped to relieve the congestion; but from Felmersham, as Arpin tells us, 39 people left for the U.S.A. in 1829 without, apparently, greatly affecting the growth of population, which rose from 329 in 1801 to 448 in 1831. In any case the prevailing poverty and wretchedness inevitably led to acts of violence and intimidation, and even murder.

As a background to the diary, we have quite a quantity of contemporary literature bearing on the state of the country. The Rev. John Webster Hawksley, rector from 1792 to 1856 of Souldrop, a village only three miles distant from Felmersham, wrote two pamphlets, in 1825 and 1833 respectively, showing that the village was still suffering from the effects of its enclosure, which had taken place as far back as 1770, and suggesting means of remedying them. He regards the new class of "big" post-enclosure farmers as responsible for much of the distress of the agricultural labourers. Indeed he accuses them of wasting their substance on the purchase of guns, wine, and hunters, regardless of the welfare of their dependants. He tells us that on enclosure many cottagers lost their commonrights and privileges, which had enabled them to keep a few sheep or a cow, and to get fuel. Large proprietors bought up small freeholds, cottages, and common-rights, and attached them to their farms. The money received by the small owners soon dwindled to nothing, especially as they could not apply for relief till it was all spent. Thus they soon became landless labourers. Hawksley points out that the "new" men soon discovered that they could manage a much larger farm with the same number of men and horses. Thus often two farms were laid into one, the consequence being that one tenant was turned out, while his farm-house was pulled down or turned into barns. This caused more unemployment, and the dispossessed farmer became a day-labourer. The rate of wages was deplorable. Men earned only 9s. a week. The only meat they and their families could afford to buy was "occasional pork". After they had bought bread and fuel, and paid their rent, what, he pertinently asks, was left for clothes, boots, cheese, candles and sugar? Could farmers be surprised if their game-preserves were invaded, the taverns crowded, and the village lads became "corrupted and debauched", often ending in gaol?

Hawksley has practical remedies in mind. He suggests the division of some of the large farms into small holdings financed by a parish fund, and he says that he has already begun to set an example by letting off plots of arable and meadow from his glebe for the benefit of his poorer parishioners. Judging by the diary, conditions at Felmersham must have been very similar, though neither the clergymen nor Trinity College seems to have possessed the large-hearted imagination of Hawksley.

A pamphlet published in 1830 by Thomas Potter Mac-Queen, entitled "Thoughts and Suggestions on the Present Constitution of the Country", amply confirms Hawksley's conclusions. MacQueen had been M.P. for Bedford, and Chairman of a Parliamentary Poor Law Committee.

He gives various reasons for the degradation of the poor. Owing to the high price of food, farmers, he thought, had become "luxurious". Labourers who had "lived in" were driven out, and married prematurely. Married men were entitled to more parish relief than single ones, and this enabled farmers to pay lower wages, partly at their neighbours' expense. Thus large occupiers prospered, while small yeomen died out. The poor, demoralised by constantly applying for relief, looked on

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the overseer as a distributor of goods to which they had a vested right. One result of this demoralisation was the "enormously augmented number of natural children". These must be supported by the parish, and thereby the rates were forced up. Crime increased, for a poor fellow whose children cried for food was almost compelled to break the law.

These facts led MacQueen to criticise the criminal law of his time. The number of crimes punishable by death was 233, the result being that a large proportion of capital sentences were never carried out. For instance, out of 553 criminals condemned to death in 1815 only 57 (about 1 in 10) were executed. Between 1821 and 1827, out of 998 burglars sentenced, only 7 were sent to the scaffold. This, he remarks, encouraged crime. Arpin mentions several instances of lawlessness which resulted in capital sentences. Practically all of these were commuted to transportation. The remedy for this state of affairs proposed by MacQueen was emigration to Australia, on the ground that in that continent convicts by their own efforts could become independent citizens and an asset to the Empire. He did not recommend emigration to America, though we find Felmersham people settling in the United States and the West Indies.

The petition, presented to the House of Commons in 1829 by the Marquess of Tavistock on behalf of the magistrates, farmers, overseers and labouring poor of Redbourn-stoke Hundred confirms, if confirmation were needed, the contentions of Hawksley and MacQueen.

According to the petition the lace and straw-plaiting trades were in a very depressed condition, while the population was too large for all to find work. The farmers refused to employ their proper proportion of labourers and threw the burden of their maintenance on the overseers. During the past ten years £15,714 had been spent in relief, and in consequence the overseers had had to employ large gangs on the roads. The sum of £4,558 per annum had been spent on this unprofitable work, of which nine-tenths had been wasted. The petitioners considered that the paupers could be distributed among the farms, where they would do profitable work. In this way the enormous sums could be made to yield some return without injuring the farmers or degrading the "small" husbandman to pauperism. To this end they requested that legal action might be taken, for they regarded the evil moral effects of the prevailing system as more important than any pecuniary loss it

entailed, adding that many men refused to work at all, preferring a bare subsistence on half the current wages to hard work on full pay. The employment of large and useless gangs produced an atmosphere of discontent which led in time to poaching on a large scale, tree-felling, sheep-stealing, and highwayrobbery. Intimidation made detection of crime well-nigh impossible, and in some places it had been necessary to appoint night-watchers. Arpin describes the same state of affairs existing at Felmersham.

Extracts made by Mr. A. F. Cirket of the Record Office from the Quarter Sessions Rolls for the years 1819-1836 complete the background of our Diary. In 1819 four Marston men were sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment for refusing to work for the current wages. In 1821 three Milton Ernest and three Oakley men suffered six weeks' imprisonment for a riot at Milton in which the parish constable and his assistants were roughly handled. These comparatively unimportant incidents foreshadow the lawlessness of the "twenties" and especially the "thirties". The records of this period tell of outrages and disorders against which authority was almost powerless. Both men and women were prosecuted for intimidation, damaging parish property, rioting by as many as 100 people, assaults on overseers, parish constables, and even High Constables of Hundreds, rick-burning, damaging fences, refusing to work in work-houses, sheep-stealing, and highway robbery.

At last authority became thoroughly alarmed, and the Minister of State in a circular letter of 1830 exhorted magistrates to act with "promptitude, decision, and resolution". Most of the trouble occurred in mid-Bedfordshire, especially at Ampthill and Stotfold. In the Ampthill area in 1835 there were assaults on the new relieving officers and the guardians. To restore order a body of Metropolitan policemen were sent down from London, four troops of yeomanry were called out, and more than 150 special constables enlisted.

The Felmersham of Arpin's day seems to have been no better or worse than most north Bedfordshire villages, though violence was very common.

Arpin's text consists of irregular jottings, out of chronological order. For convenience, chronology has been restored in this publication.

2. TEXT

[Page 23]

Edward Arpin I do Remember in the year of 1763 that Bread was Sold at one shilling one penney the peck

in the same year ann Juiels come to keep my Fathers house and she was with child and in august next she was Brought abed of a male child and she had it named William Juiels, [Note: 1] that had 4 Eyes 2 in the face as others have and 2 upon the head a double hairstraw [Note:] in the upper lipe but one noastil and but 3 toes on the right foot

in the year of 1780 a peck loaf for 1s - 2d.

in the year 1800 a peck loaf is 6s - 2d.

in the year 1801 a peck loaf is 6s - 6d

in the year 1806 a peck loas [sic] is 3s 6d

In the year 1812 a peck Loaf is 6s - 4d

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Remarks

in the year 1800 August great Thunder

at Regiment their was hail Stons Found Mesured 12 inches and on Christmas day the Bird that is call'd Cuck-oo was Seen and heard to sing By manny Folks at willsead

In the year 1801 near Stone Stratfad there was an hawe Thorn Bush upon the Full Bloom January the 12 Northampton news

In the year 1801 July there Fell in Iterley A hail Stone that Wayed 16 pounds and a half Northampton news

Feb 28 a Miss Wooded the church Minestr Mr Woodods Daughter was deliverd of a fine Gearl that 6 fingers on Each hand 6 tows one Each foot and Like Birds Clause

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In the year 1813 John Miller of Felmersham Made an End of Wheat seeding January the 5

October 3th 1813 I and my Famley had Green Pease Both Blue and Rouncfirs5 for dinner

Octr, th 20 1813 I had 3 pounds wight In money for helping caring the Raimens of Mr. John Greey to the Church of Felmersham

Decmbr. th 10 1813 A peck Loaf was 3[s] 6[d] ditto 17 3[s] 8[d] 1814 Janry. th 7 A peck Loaf 3-9

Out of 26 Famlys thiris 10 widows in the parish of Felmersham Names Susanah Lee Eliz Church Sarah Drage Mary Brown Mary Dotson Mary Groves Ann Brooks Sarah Broatfield Ann Hickman Sarah Arpin it never was known in the oldist Age

Mutton one shilling and tow pence a pound

In the year 1814 January the 6 A Snow fell and Lay untill the 3 of April

the 19 of April the Sold onions At 4 pence Each

1814 the 28 of April i had some Boild Butter milk for my ddener In this parish of Felmersham there is But 38 houses and their is ten

old Maids and a leven widdows December 17 1814

1815 January th 3 A peck 3 - 4

d 4 d 4

Mutton is 9 2[½d.] A pound 9- 2[9½d.]

Febry. the 7 A peck Loaf 3s - 0

Febry. the 9 A peck Loaf 3-3

Feb the 19 1815 Felmersham Ann Baber was Ravesh'd by Robert Smith pavinham6

April the 18 1815. A flock of Whildgeese was seen it never was seen in the oldest age

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1812 November the 7 William Hannahs Got hearvasthome

January the 1 1816 A peck Loaf was £0 - 2s -10d

May the 28 1816 A peck Loaf was £0 -4s-3d

August 27 1816 I went Weeding oats

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Septr. the 1 1816 I went into my Month to harvist[;]7 it was never so Leate in the oldest Age

Sepbr. the 18 1816 I am Beetween Sixtey and Seventey year old And i threshit 9 duzzon of Wheate Sheaves For 3 Bushel of wheat

November the 7 1816 I Whent Agleaning Beans and it snow'd

the 8th we got harvist home and Their is a great Maney Beans and Oats to Com home in the parish

A peck loaf is Novr. 1816 (0-4-7)

Wheat is 15 shillings a Bushell

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November the 16 1816 Joseph Swannell At hardwick made an End of Caring Beans and oats

December the 21 1816 the had harvist home at Ensbuary [Eynes-bury] St noas [Neots]

Felmersham Parish Land Lett in the year 1764 for 14 shillings the Acer 1816 at 14 shillings a Rood

1 Rood to the Church

3 Acers to 12 widdows

2 Acers to the poor men8

6. Robert Smith was sentenced to two years' imprisonment at Lent Assizes 1815 for rape of Ann Barber, spinster, at Felmersham.

7. During harvest month men received double pay, but had to work from dawn to dusk.

8. Felmersham Parish Land or Poor's Estate was 5a. 1r. 11p., the income from which went to poor widows, poor men, and the church fabric.

Mrs. Swannell of Odell After Beining in Larber from december 1816 the 26 to January 1817 the 11 was delivered of her 15th Child Elizear is her name

A peck Loaf is £0 - 5 - 2d.

June the 30 A peck loaf £0 - 6s - 8d

Sept'r the 19 A peck loaf £0 - 3s - 8d.

- 1817 Octr. the 30 John Bull Radwell Charge 7 pound for douin Josephs Swannells volte and 20 shillings
For ale the Whole was £8 - 0 - 0d6 p. 17
- 1818 February the 16 Begin to cutt stone May the 20 the Begin to bild Felmersham New Bridge 18187

June the 13 turned the First Arch of the Bridge

June the 16 1818 the Begin to make A new Bake house for Mr Brown

June 27 the turnd the 2 Arch

Mr payen Begin harvist July the 23r 1818

A peck loaf was 4s - 4d

In the year 1783 July the 18 we Begin harvist A peck loaf Is - 4d August the 3 turnd 3th Arch

August the 14 Edmand Lodlow had his First hearvist Supper After Buyin Williams hannah Land

August the 22 turned the 4 Arch of the Bridge

June the 6 1818 Thos Eyels of Carlton went over the Bridge with a cart

p.16

Octr the 1818 turnd the 5 Arch of the Bridge

November the 14 1818 Finished the Bridge

Novm. the 14 i had A Cowcumber Grow'd in my Gardin Measured 5 inches Round as good as if it had been in the middle of summer and the vine growd upon Goltey ground8 it never was known in the oldist Age hear Before

November the 29 1818 i had sum Kiddney Beans for my Dinner fresh got off the vins such thing was Never known in the oldist Age

December the 3 1818 Smuell Swannell the son of Will Swannel Mixt his wheat Among his Barley for the For the hogs Charls neal had it Ground

Bread is 4s a peck 4s.

p. 15

January the 5 1819 Richard Wills9 is 68 years the parish Clark was Married to M; Ann arch she is 26 years old

Charles Bonnor of this town was Married to his Foath wife in the Sixth year he had three in the Forth teenth Munths10

January the 27 A Great Flight of doves went to Radwell Chappell Between 6 and 7 O Clock at night

Feb 24 part of the First And Last Arch Fell down

Octr. 141819 the turnd the second Arch that Fell down

Octr, the 21 1819 it snow'd 3 hour

A peck Loaf is £0 - 3s - 6d

Nom. the 5 i Got A Cow Cumber 7 inches round 1819

In the year 1795 An ice flood it Blown up the poasts and Rayels of Harrod Bridge & 1820 a great ice Flood But not so Large as that A 14

After 1 years and 19 weeks Labour the Fineched the Broken Bridge July 8 1820 '

Octr. the 12 1820 will winsail was Married to Diana hutchins he was 65 she 62 years

Octr. 22 the 1820 Thomas the son of Joseph and Mary Payen was Baptized

1821 June th 10 their was Snow and hail the houses was cover'd 2 inches deep

A peck loaf is £0 - 3s - Od

June 11th snow 3 inches deep Round about Northampton

November the 17 1821 I heard William Norman Srives [Shrives] say he should Like to go heaven And sit upon a white horse And Ride about heaven

Bread is 3 a peck £0 - 3s - Od

dec 25 Bread 2 - 10 A peck loaf £0 - 2s - IOd p. 13

- 1821 Decmr. 23 i went to get prim roses upon the full Blow A clove pink Also upon the full Blow on Christmas day 25 which had never seen the sun for 2 months more over We have such A Great water that all the Arches of the Bridge was all coverd with water

Janury 2 1822 A peck Loaf 2s - 3d

January the 6 it was Froast and Snow it Rain the 9 an 11 and one the 16d the Dust Browed [blowed] about one the 17d Day Froast an snow

Febrerery the 4 1822 william swanel Begin to sow Lamouse [Lammas] Wheat

William Eddin of Odell to his wife the next morning at 3 oclock had a child

William Drage of Felmersham the same ditto

William solsbuary [Salisbury of] Milton his was Born in 3 hours time

Jeames Harrsons of pavingham was Born at 10 at night

- 1822 Novm 10 Edward Arpin Bought Mutton at 3 pence a pound

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Decmbr 10th 1822 Thomas Barber 72 year of age went away For Deboacheary with Mary ann Drage 14 year of age

January 26 1823 thomas Barber com home again

Thomas Barber went away agan

Febr 4 Muton 4 pence a pound

March 1 Thomas Barber come home again Mutton was 6 pound [sic]

October the 31 1823 it was the Greatst Flood that Ever was Known it Drove the walls down From the Bridge

Bread was 2s : 6d a peck Mutton is 6 pound

April 24 John Brooks was sent Away transported For 7 years Beyond the Seas 182411

Bread is £0 - 3s - 2d a peck Loaf

In the Month of march was found A stone coffin with a Body in it

Bread was £0 - 3s - Od a peck Loaf

[Page 11]

Augst 10 1824 Radwell Feast tusday morn in the hour of two i heard 3 Battels Fought Bettween A man and his wife Before she would hould her peace the Blows was as if the was Rending of wood that was Dickins Prigmoore and his Wife But she was in fault

the Next day the Bould [bowed] For tea And Suggar Bread and Buttel and snuff

Thursday Joseph Swannails Hay cock on Fire at the Barsens [parson's] Barn 1824

On Sunday Next we had a mob of 30 of our men Rison upon the ireshmen1213 all our Men had Bludgins in their hands. But our Farmers— Joseph payen Samuel Swannell William Swannell joseph Swannell Made pease

August 15 1824 Bread 3 a peck Loaf

[Page 10]

Septr 15 1824 Charls Bonnors Wife Kicit the Skin of all down his shinns the Blood Run and his Stockin stuck all the Next day

Septr 18 1824 Edmond payen Gott his First harvist inn at Milton Earnest

A new house Bulte at Radwell Moored End

A new Gearley [Gallery] Bulte at Sharn Brok 1824 And opned Octr the 3 1824

Dec th 17 1824 samuel Swannell was Mareid to Mis Street (Bread is 3s - 6d a peck loaf [])

Jany. 24 1825 John hannah Jintell Man Born Born [sic] Come to work on the Road For his Livin18[.] Bread 3s 6d peck loaf

Febr 10 1825 Robert Costin and James Hulet sent prison For sheep stealin14

Feb: 13 1825 Joseph Payens Barn at Hardwick was set willfully on Fire

Feb 18 Benjmin Parsons Sent to Goal Beatin Joseph Wills one of the waches at the above fire15

March 22 James Pain went away for stealing flower [flour] from [William Brooks : bottom of p.11]

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March the 11 1825 Robert Costin and James Hulett was condde to Be hanged But was Reprevd But was transported For Life

March 16 George Costin Dickins prigmore was sent to the Goal for setin fire to Mr. pains Barn at Hardwick and Sheep Stealin16

April 15 Vear Alston17 Give Ann prigmore Is

March 17 Francis Hulett was sent to Goal for the fire and sheep stealing

April 25 James hulet and Robert Costin was sent Beyond the seas for sheep Stealing

April 15 Vear alston had Ann prigmore into his own Room and Give her one Shilling

July the 15 George Costin and Francis Hulet was conmd to be hangd But was transported For Life Dickins prigmore turnd Kings Everd.

Octr 11a flood

21 snow and Very could

[Page 8]

Octr. 20 1825 Gott A cowcumber Mesured 9 Inches and a quater Round

Feb 1826 we had 15 Floods Salt is one penny apr Pound Bread is 3 shilling a peack Loafe

one Monday 27 A Great fire Brok out at Kemptstone 40 houses Burnt Burnt18 [sic]

March 9 3 Flood a[...] we had 14 Floods

This winter Bread 3s A peck Loaf

We have had A Peacin cold spring

In July A Great tempast Burnt farm and wheat hovel at Harold 1826

And A Very Forward harvist Mr. Chapman Gott harvist home at Oakley the 29 day of July 1826

A great tempast July 31 thrown Down Rushdon spire and shiverd all the whole Church so that the Estya Mation of damage is to Be Fore 4000 pounds to repair it again 1826

[Page 7]

1826 Robert Hulett at oakley Gott Harvist home August 5 and his pease and Beans was Lite and he sode 6 Bushels of salt upon his Benans to keep the straw for his Kittel [cattle] to Eat 1826 it was never known in the old Aig Samuel Swannell this Last seedin sod 20 Bushels of salt upon 2 Lands of Barley and its not better But Rather wors August 16 the gott Harvist home Joseph pain samuel Swannel 1826

20 Bread 3s peckloaf

At samuels Ann Doltan was Drunk and Found in Humphreys payens straw hovel her daughter Elizabeths was drunk and satt upon Marroiats Stiale 1826

Felmersham Church the tower has Been new timbered and thier was a Brace put up in the tower to supporte the Old timber in the year of 9-8-4 that is Laid up For a Side plate in the Portch which is Built new From the Ground Octr 7 1826

Octr 22 1826 it thunderd Most part of the day

[Page 6]

1826 the Revd henery Davice Ward19 Prech'd his First searmon at Pavinham Chappel of Ease Deem. 24

the Revd Henery Davice ward Priched his First Sarmon at Felmersham Mother Church one Christmas day 1826

June 12 1827 was Found the part of the in side of some woman in the well against Thomas Geeves house it was pind up into a napken

July 26 William Edmund Low and Edward Arpin, Clerk paid the poor in the Church pprch it was never known in the oldist Age Before

16 of July the Begin to Bulde the work house20

A peck loaf is 2s 10d pence 1827

James truit went away Octr 28 1827

[Page 5]

August 21 1827 Samuel Swannell Sent a wagin Load of wheat ["new wheat" written above]to Stoke mills21 it Never was knowed so soon in the oldist Age

June 23 william Brezyer had his Neck [broken] and James how settit again 1828

we had a mids [midsummer] Flood 25 days it was never Knowd in the oldist Aage

Bread was 2 [s] 8 [d] peck Loaf 1828

Octr 2 agreat Flood

peck Loaf is 4s 1828

Octr. 20 A Great Froast an ice Bread is 3s - 10d A peck 1828

Novm. 12 Robert toll sent Goal for Steal An Apple tree from william dennis 182822

Novm 18 Robert Smith for Robbin harrsions hen ruste23

22 of June Bread 4s peck

Janry 15 Revd. henery davice Ward Marriad

Bread 3s 8d peck loaf

15 will dix cald a fool But gott a garl with Child and he her Is 6d to be aste at Church when she had sooarn her Child to Daniel howe 1829

John turnor to North amereca

[Page 4]

29 June 1829 39 men women and Children set off to go to Boston in Massachusetts in the united states of North of America24

Sept 21 1829 My daughter Hagar in her 49 years was Married to William Leighton Aged in his 81 he is 32 years oldist

Bread 3 shillings a peck £0 - 3s - Od

Octr. 7 it snowd an Raind 1829

8 9 days and very cold

Peacin cold winds with Froast ice

January 10 1830 Joseph Swannell Set Sail to the west indes

Nov 25 1829 it snowd very cold and the Snow was upon the Ground the 12 d of March 1830

May 8 John Hannah [and] Charls Bonor sailed to west indeas 1830 P-3

1830 King George 4 died June 26 he was Buried on st swithins day25 at ten at night and i knold the Bell 14 hours in the time And William [IV] Sucsead

Jany. 11 1831 Mr. h. ward Appointed Jeustice of the peace

Robert truit the First as went to him

Jany: 24 Thos Ashpoals widow a great Decenter was put to Bed of a garl unknown Whos

1831 Feb 8 A very Great Flood and 2 Bakers went with a cart and Bread to Milton ernt. and man a blacksmith named Pruddon to Bletsoe to work untill night and he went to milton to come home with the 2 Bakers and the all come togather and come down the Flood to Radwell Bridge Foot and the over turnd the cart Smith got out of the cart to Swim over But he has not found yet thar 2 Bakers Got out the horse and cart was By water sent into perry's Meadow it was never knowd in the oldold Aage

Sepr. 15 1 Berried an old woman 87 years of Age catterine tite 1831 PP-1,2

Blank

1

William, illegitimate son of Ann Jewell, was baptised 1 August and buried 7 August 1764 at Felmersham, and on 1 October following William Orpin, widower, married Ann Jewell (B.P.R.ix).

2

Hairstraw : cleft lip.

3

Arpin was a witness to the marriage of Jos. Mason of Felmersham at Wilstead 25 December 1800.

4

The Rev. Robert Woodward was Vicar of Harrold, 1799-1817. Caroline, daughter of Sarah Woodward, was baptised at Harrold 28 February 1806, (B.P.R.xxxiv). In 1817 Woodward and his two daughters were gaoled for conspiracy. This and similar following references are taken from a register of prisoners in the County Gaol, Q.G.V. 10/1.

5

Rouncival: large variety of pea.

6

Joseph Swannell of Radwell, founder of the Methodist chapel there, 1807, mentions the chapel in his will, proved 31 December 1817, and “ a piece of Garden Ground lately used as a Burial Ground

7

Felmersham bridge was erected in 1818 by the parish at a cost of £600.

8

Gault: clay ground.

9

Richard Wells was parish clerk, 1780-1824.

10

On 17 August 1811 Elizabeth, wife of Charles Bonham, was buried at Felmersham, and on 12 October following he married Elizabeth Ward (B.P.R.ix).

11

John Brooks of Felmersham was sentenced to seven years' transportation at Lent Assizes 1823 for “cutting and maiming a cow” belonging to John Hannah of Felmersham.

12

The Irishmen were no doubt bands of labourers hired to help with the hay and corn harvests.

13

cf 8 May 1830.

14

At the Lent Assizes 1825, Robert Costin and James Hewlett, both aged 29, were sentenced to death for sheep-stealing. The sentence was commuted to transportation.

15

At Lent Assizes 1825 Benjamin Parsons was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment for a violent assault on Joseph Wills, and at the Summer Assizes 1825 to death on a further charge of being an accessory to arson. The sentence was commuted to transportation.

16

George Costin and Dickins Prigmore were committed on a charge of sheep-stealing. Prigmore turned King's Evidence and was discharged. Costin, aged 17, and Francis Hulett, aged 25, were sentenced to death at the Summer Assizes 1825 for sheep-stealing and arson, but the sentences were commuted to transportation.

17

The Rev. Vere Alston, Rector of Odell 1833-63.

18

For an account of the Kempston Fire see the Cambridge Chronicle for 10 March 1826.

19

The Rev. Henry Davis Ward, Vicar of Felmersham 1827-46.

20

Felmersham workhouse, now Dropshort cottage.

21

Sharnbrook Mill.

22

Robert Toll of Pavenham was committed on 7 January 1829 for stealing five sacks from George Swannell of Pavenham, and was sentenced to three months in the House of Correction.

23

Robert Smith was sentenced at Epiphany Quarter Sessions 1829 to three months imprisonment for fowl stealing.

24

Nothing can be found about this party which was presumably from Felmersham. In April 1831 eleven adults and twelve children emigrated to America from Oakley, at the expense of the parish.

25

15 July.