



Above: High Street Surfleet c.1910.

# SURFLEET

*The Story of a Fenland Village*



by RUBY HUNT

*our grateful thanks to all who kindly  
loaned photographs for this article*

Home keeping hearts are happiest,  
For those that wonder they know not where  
Are full of trouble and full of care.

Longfellow

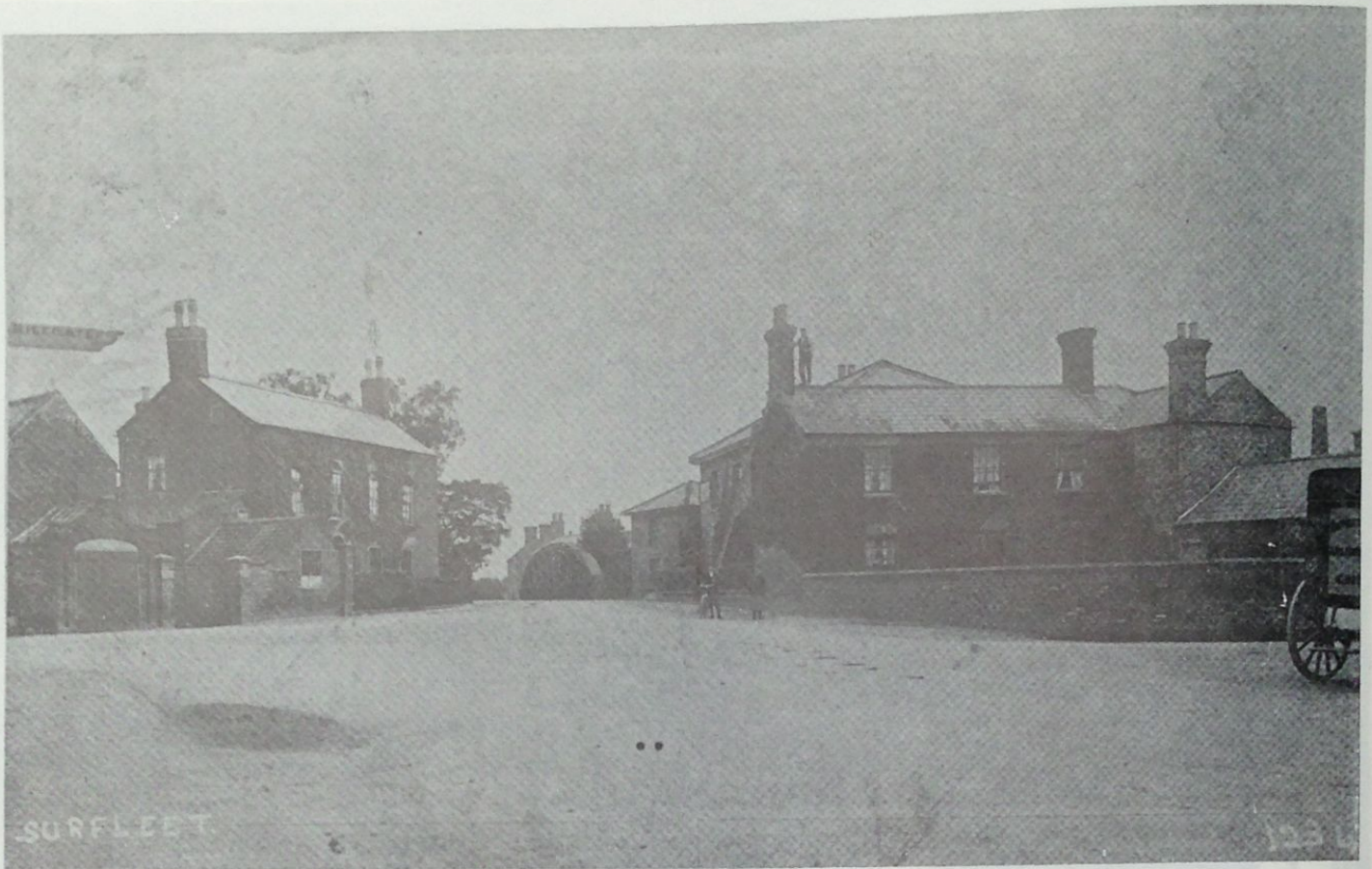
SURFLEET, a fenland village on Spalding's northern side, is dominated by its river although it is the sentinel-like poplars, silhouetted against the flat, open landscape, which first catch the traveller's eye.

In the centre of the village, a sign—*Surfleet Seas End, 2 miles*—pinpoints the one-time nearness of the sea and, indeed, as late as 1738, the River Glen was a tidal stream emptying itself directly into the Wash at a point close to today's derelict Railway Station. Domesday mentions two salt pans in Surfleet ('fleet' indicates a tidal creek)—these salt pans whereby marine salt was obtained by evaporation were much prized and a source of income to those dwelling on various coastal margins of the fens.

The River Glen, once known as Bourne Ee, rises near Boothby Pagnell and after a meandering journey of some 30 miles joins the Welland on the sea-side of the Surfleet Sluice Outfall. Both rivers were once important means of communication, the Glen affording an excellent waterway between the Welland and the old Car Dyke.

For centuries Surfleet's inhabitants were engaged in avoiding floods which constantly threatened from sea marsh and river bed for the sea banks and drainage established by the Romans had, on their departure, been allowed to fall into dis-repair. During the Middle Ages, the economy of the Fenland relied on the good condition of its sewers and drains, for upon the strength of the sewer banks the existence of the summer pasturing

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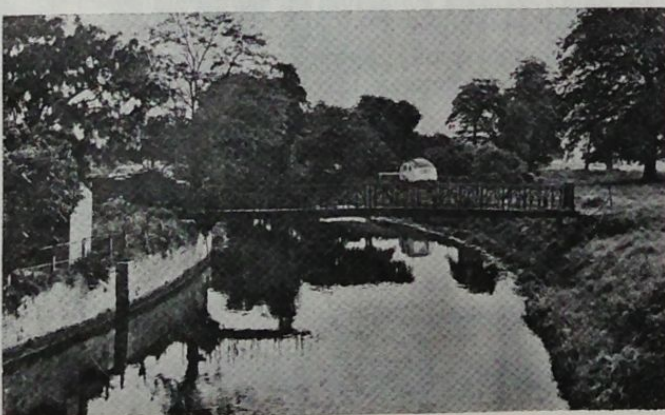


Above: Mr. Flowers, Surfleet bricklayer repairing chimney of Ivy house (now part of the Mermaid Inn).

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grounds—wherein Pinchbeck, Gosberton and Surfleet shared a 'common' fen-depended. In spite of this, wrangles and disputes between neighbours as to responsibility often prevented proper execution of the work—obstructions over the important Beche sewer which used to flow from Gosberton Clough into the Glen were a source of contention for many years. As early as 1362 the Riding Jurors reported that Surfleet sea banks were too low and in the 19th century, after the great storm of 1810, when sheep were swimming in the pastures, the Jurors decreed that level stones be fixed with figures denoting that the height of the bank should be two feet above that reached by that year's phenomenal tide.

Below: The River Glen, the bridge leading to the park.



### SIR THOMAS LOVELL

The deepening of the Glen formed part of Sir Thomas Lovell's fenland reclamation scheme—silting up had proved a great hazard in all the local waterways. In the early part of the 17th century the Welland was found to be so choked for want of dyking that travellers were forced to carry their boats by cart for 3 or 4 miles to Fosdyke and a few years later there was 'not so much water in the Welland as would drown a mouse'. Over 600 men were employed to make the river more navigable and drains were scoured and roded. A 1752 Dikreeves Account Book tells of annual payments to the 'Five Town Works' and the 'Two Drain Works' and speaks of constant expenditure for roding the sewers—an operation to which, strangely enough, Captain Perry, Engineer to the Adventurers, was greatly opposed. The constant struggle against the elements is shown in two of the entries:

1753—For securing the Jetty that was blown up by the tide—16/6d and

1767—Paid the Pinder for Mending the Marsh after the Great Tide—6d.

The Black Sluice Act of 1765 proved of great benefit to the fen dwellers but, even as late as 1828, parishoners were resisting payment out of marsh rents of money for the Black Sluice Drainage!

At the present time the Glen is Surfleet's most attractive asset. The beautiful, tree-shaded water course is glimpsed by travellers on the A16 which spans the river by means of the structure once known as Surflete Brigge. The semi-circular iron work of the present bridge—one of seven over the River Glen—was constructed at County expense about 1844, replacing the one erected by the Adventurers in 1774 who were, in turn, substituting their version for an earlier one.

Summer time finds rowing and motor boats scudding

lazily along the water, rousing the placid fisherman before reaching Surfleet's well known summer retreat, the Reservoir, known once as 'the grand Bason' when, in 1739, a sluice was built here "By order of the Honourable Adventurers of Deeping Fen according to the model and directions of Messrs. Smith and Grundy". This gate, inscribed, W. Sands, bricklayer, Samuel Rowel, 1739, was, in 1879, replaced by a more up to date version.

First time visitors to the Reservoir are surprised to find a colony of weekend homes dotting the peaceful river bank. These bungalows have multiplied since the 1920's when the late Mr. George Samuel Kingston of Spalding, appreciating the quiet oasis, erected the first dwelling. A few steps away, on the seaward side of the sluice, vessels at anchor not far from the Ship Inn, await the incoming tide before setting out on a watery route which takes them 'below' to the Deeps.

Mr. Kingston also played a large part in the organisation of the first Water Sports at the 'Res'. These Annual Sports, begun in the 1920's, attracted hundreds of people, trainloads of whom were conveyed from Spalding. Alas, Surfleet's Great Northern Station, opened in the 1800's, is closed but the name is perpetuated in the hotel run by Mr. and Mrs. Swan. Here parties of fisherman were wont to partake of a hearty meal before going 'down below' while the less venturesome toyed with a dainty tea after an afternoon's row on the placid river.

#### PUFFING STEAMBOAT

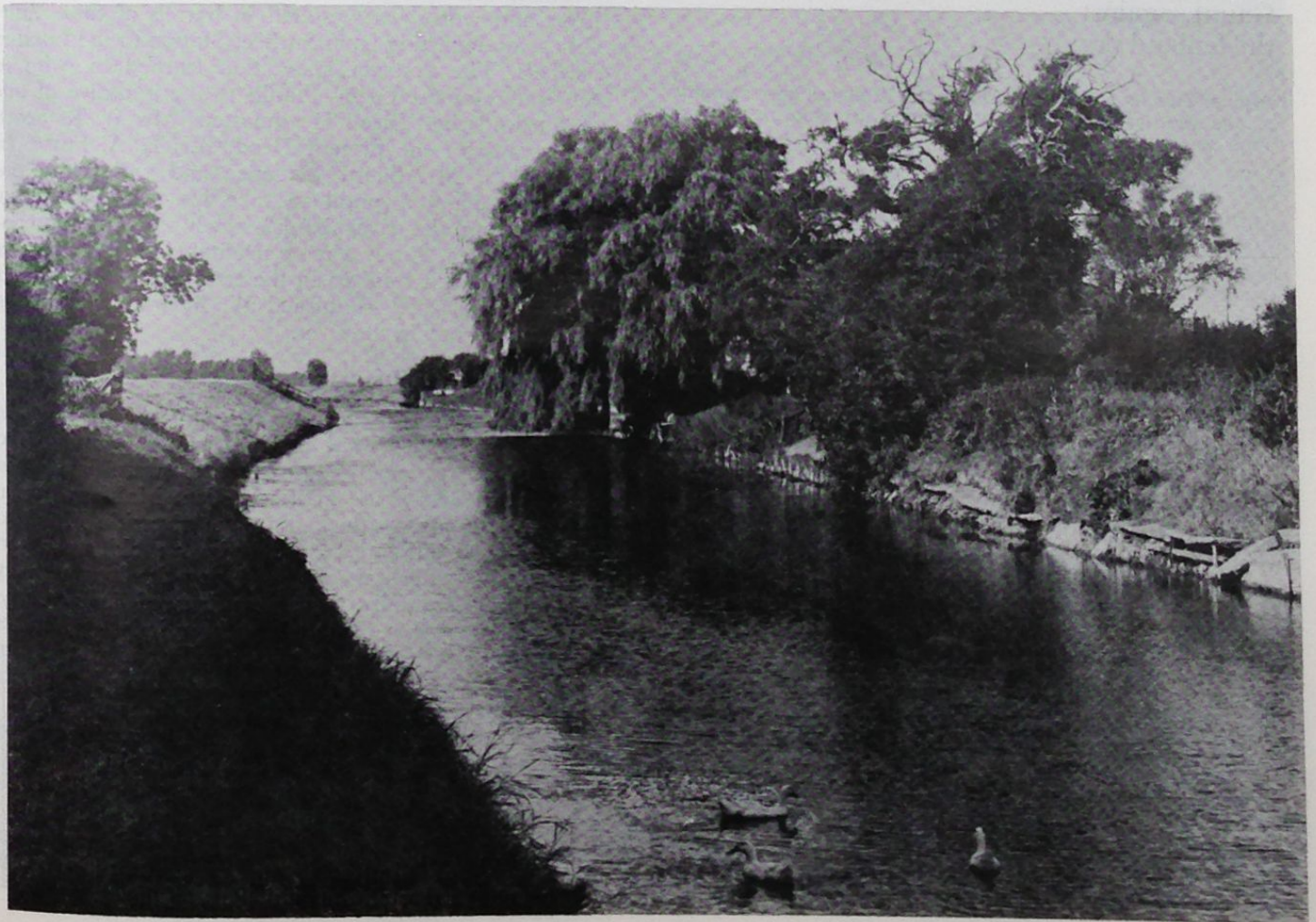
At the beginning of the 1900's, Mr. Herbert Leverton, an enterprising engineer whose name is perpetuated in

Below: The Glen, tree lined and beautiful.



Above: The Rev. H. Law James c.1921.

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Gaunt, against  
the fenland sky . . .

Above: This lonely oak stands by the Welland, grim reminder of the murder committed near this spot Hootons Gibbet, once occupied a site nearby.

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the Spalding firm of H. Leverton and Co., ran a steam boat on the Glen. This boat was a source of great delight and the novelty of this mode of transport proved a great attraction. At that time, the Rev. Law James was Surfleet's energetic Vicar and Sunday School Treat days found the two men, grimy and soot-stained, happily helping the excited children from bank to boat. The children had first of all attended Church Service—doubtless with much fidgeting—before being driven by pony and trap to the embarking point near the Station where—each clutching a bag of sweets—they eagerly transferred from trap to barge. The older ones—accompanied by the local Brass Band—swung along the riverside on foot, eagerly anticipating the delights in store at the Park where Barwicks Amusements were ready to entertain and a large tea awaited. The enthusiastic Vicar augmented his congregation on many a Summer Sunday by arranging for those living some distance away to be ferried to church by a barge yoked to the puffing steamboat.

Wintertime occasionally found the Glen providing a venue for local ice enthusiasts—today the river water is used to flood the artificial rink at Baston Fen. Matches in which many of Spalding and Cowbit's

principal skaters competed took place while in warmer weather, eel fishing—from local 'shouts'—using wicker hives and worm bait resulted in barrels of these slimy delicacies departing from Surfleet Station to the London markets. The younger generation learned to swim in the waters of the Glen—thanks to the initiative of one of Surfleet's best loved Headmasters, Mr. W. R. Scott, predecessor of the present Head, Mr. E. A. Furse. In the 1930's, Mr. Scott's patience and enthusiasm encouraged many a pupil to take his first floundering strokes from the river bank's newly constructed concrete platform. Surely a more profitable use of the water than that which resulted in the terse entry in an earlier Head's Log: 1899—Punished W. Brown for throwing his exercise book in the river.

### **SURFLEET MALTINGS**

For years the river provided an easy method of transporting agricultural produce to the Station and many loads of locally grown barley were landed at Surfleet Bridge for use at the Surfleet Maltings which, at one time, were attached to the riverside Mermaid Inn. A waterside arch, topped by an old stone jar, reminds us of the days when, during the long tenancy of the Smith family, beer was brewed in quantity. Sampling was done by imbibing from long, glass tubes inserted into the barrels. Surfleet barley and water from the Glen made a potent brew—as many an old employee could testify! Today's proprietors, Mr. and Mrs. J. Manning, are, through their outstanding catering ability, fast establishing the Inn as a gourmet's delight.

The nearby Crown, on whose courtyard the Lincolnshire Morris Dancers recently gave a colourful display, is another survivor of a number of inns and beer houses long since gone. Indeed, 17th century Surfleet boasts an Official Ale Taster among its Parish Officers.

## BOARDING SCHOOL

It was near these two Inns that, in the late 18th century, a Mr. J. Savage established a Boarding School for Gentlemen where, he claims, 'Gentlemen are liberally boarded and expeditiously forwarded in those branches of education their future prospects may require, on terms so reduced as to meet the views of the most economical'. Evident the school fell on hard times, for some years later Mr. Savage became schoolmaster at the village school which, in 1764, had been founded and endowed by Dame Ann Fraiser, daughter of Sir Heney Heron of Cressy Hall. Dame Ann, who lived to the ripe old age of 92 and died 'full of days and good works', left instructions that a schoolmaster be appointed to instruct 20 poor parish children in the three R's and to supply them with paper, pen and ink. She also added the interesting rider to the effect that the parishioners "should keep the school room in good order and sufficient repair" or the children of the parish were to be excluded and scholars chosen from Gosberton, Algarkirk and Pinchbeck. The first master, Mr. Timothy Cuney was succeeded by Mr. Thomas Meredith—a butcher—who only stayed a few months. The school, which stands in the churchyard, continued until 1878 when a new building was erected on the Seas End Road. Mr. John Cadman, Headmaster of the Fraiser School, carried on as Principal at the new school where he remained until the beginning of the first World War.

The School's endowment money was invested in the Turnpike Road Trust, first mooted in 1759. The Turn-

pike, part of the present Spalding to Donington route, was surfaced with stones, gravel and shingle brought up the Glen. Various charges for use of the road—Horse or Bullock drawn cart 3d, Drove of Oxen 10d per score, Drove of Lambs 5d per 20 etc.—were paid at the Toll House. The old-time custom of 'encroachment' would find no favour on this new road. For many years Surfleet's poor had clung to the erroneous belief that any building erected on the public highway and left unchallenged for such time as it takes for smoke to issue from the chimney belonged to the builder. Indeed, as late as 1826, a Thomas Sansam was charged with an offence of this nature. Although the new Turnpike was a vast improvement it would prove of little use to the Surfleet transport firm of G. W. Machin, whose massive lorries pound up and down the Seas End Road providing a country-wide lifeline 'twixt fen and far-flung township.

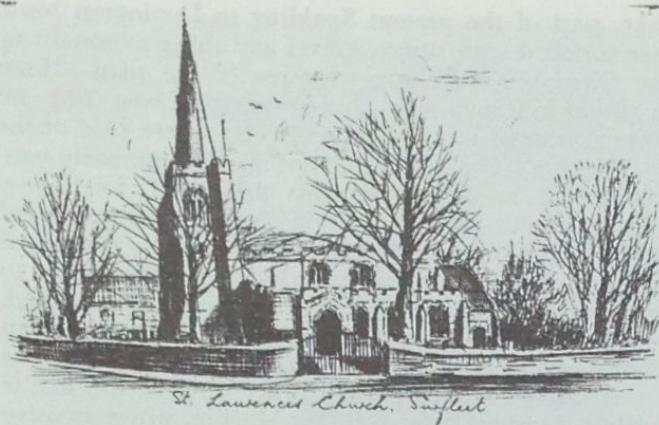
## ANTIQUATED MAIDENS

Today the Fraiser schoolroom—Built 1764 and restored in 1900—is used as the Parish Hall where fund raising events take place for various charities. Surfleet's old-established charities date from 1644 when Zachary Burton (joined later by brother Joseph), Thomas Briggs, William Briggs and Richard Searle endowed a sum to be used for the benefit of the local poor. These men are eulogised in a long, descriptive poem by Samuel Elsdale who describes therein the Surfleet of long ago when £25

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Below: Old Post Mill Surfleet, property of the Noble family demolished in 1912.





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paid a curate for the year and the workhouse, long demolished sheltered the luckless ones. It speaks of the 13 free tenements wherein dwelt widows and spinsters, "antiquated maidens", who "all day long turn the same droning wheel, tune the same droning song"—a reference to the flax spinning which thrived, fed by the local cultivation of the plant. As far back as the time of Edward III the Commission of Sewers decreed that "neither flax nor hemp should be watered in the sewers on pain of forfeiture thereof". The flax, usually sown in May, was pulled up at Old Lammas, bound in sheaves, soaked in water, laid out on the dish for 2 or 3 weeks, broken and swingled and sent to the market. The industry fell into decline but a revival was attempted in 1876 when a limited company, headed by the Hon. M. Finch-Hatton, M.P., was formed. Hopes ran high—the new railway was regarded as a valuable ally—but, alas, 1892 found the local advertising the Sale of Surfleet Flax Mills and today's only reminder of a former thriving industry is on the name-plate of a house along the Reservoir Road.

The workhouse inmates (once kept for 2s. 6d, per head), along with the 13 tenements have long since departed but four cottages, subsidised by a parcel of land in Wyberton and bequeathed in the 1920s by the Parkinson Trust, still survive and are administered by Trustees of Surfleet United Charities.

In 1810 Samuel Elsdale added his contribution to the Surfleet Feoffee Charity—a benefaction which provided blankets, meat and bread for the body and Old and New Testaments for the edification of the mind. On Christmas Day of that year, Samuel distributed coats, gowns, 'hightops', loaves and 16lb of mutton costing 10s. 8d. Three years later the Workhouse inmates received Bible, Testament and Prayer Book while Philip Jackson, pupil of the Fraiser Foundation, was presented with a Prayer Book for 'special effort'.

Times were hard—some years earlier, cattle plague, destroying over 500 beasts, ravaged the village. The people were in dire straits and in 1836 every industrious family was to be provided with a rood of land on which to grow vegetables and keep a pig while ratepayers agreed to give labourers more work rather than risk them being forced to take to the roads.

### POOR MANS FRIEND

The Elsdale family was noted for its generosity. In 1788 an earlier Samuel died at the age of 83—a successful farmer, he not only looked after a large family but provided for over 60 orphans. His obituary noted that

he was "never intoxicated with liquor"—a noteworthy achievement in any brewing village!—while a tablet in the Church Vestry refers to him as the "poor man's friend". A solid citizen, he had, in 1777, been elected a commissioner of the Court of Requests. This Court, set up in the reign of George III, was intended for the recovery of debts too small to engage the attentions of the County Court and included 14 parishes in the Kirton Wapentake. A product of the Small Debts Act of 1774, it met alternatively at Gosberton, Kirton and Donington and had, among its commissioners, Matthew Flinders of Donington, father of Captain Matthew Flinders, the famous 18th century explorer. Samuel Elsdale's grandson, the Reverend Samuel, eventually became Headmaster of Moulton School.

Thomas Ash, another of Surfleet's benefactors, was born in Holbeach of very poor parents, apprenticed to a blacksmith in Surfleet and eventually prospered so well that in the South Lincolnshire Election Returns of 1841 he is listed together with other well known local families—the Muxlows, the Inkley, the Flowers, the Smiths etc.—as Free-holder. The remarkable thing about Thomas Ash is that he was unable to read or write until he was 70 years old but, having enlisted the help of the village schoolmaster, mastered the art in three short months. A keen Methodist, he provided land for the building of a new chapel, the corner stone of which was laid by Mrs. Temple in 1869. Buried on the day of the Sunday School Anniversary, he commanded such respect that the entire school followed the cortege to the graveyard. After his death in 1871, a memorial booklet appeared in which the author wrote: 'I know of only three kinds of men in the world—the wills, the won'ts and the can'ts'. It is not difficult to decide to which category Thomas Ash belonged.

### MARBLES AND CHUCK

The following years witnessed a decline in Surfleet's religious zeal—a zeal which had earlier suffered a setback when the deprivations of the Napoleonic Wars had resulted in a disgraceful disregard for the Sabbath when the village constables were "allowed one guinea for putting a stop to the nuisances on a Sunday by boys and men playing at marbles and chuck and the people getting drunk". In 1881 the Lincolnshire Free Press published a Religious Census Table in which Surfleet's sabbatical attendances left much to be desired. In a chiding footnote the paper lugubriously records that 'Surfleet certainly compares unfavourably with neighbouring parishes'. In the 1890s there were four places of worship in the parish—the Wesleyan Chapel in Seas End, the Baptist, the Methodist in Station Road and the Parish Church—of these, only the Methodist Chapel and the Parish Church still remain.

Dedicated to St. Laurence, the church carries aloft its spire a griddle—grim reminder of the flames which engulfed the martyred saint over 1700 years ago.

'Gosberton Church is very high,  
Surfleet Church is all awry'

so runs the old rhyme and, indeed, the ancient church's most arresting feature is its 600 year old tower which leans westward at an angle so perilous as to put the tip of the spire over six feet out of the perpendicular. Travellers experience a certain amount of trepidation when approaching the awesome 'lean'—horse riders were once wont to dismount, cars drivers suspect the onset of vertigo and one lady confessed to 'revving up' on passing under its menacing shadow. The explanation lies in the boggy marshy land resulting in foundation sub-

sidence, rather than in the scurrilous tale of the tower's obeisance to the riding by of an honest lawyer—once wrongly deemed a rarity!

Although mainly 14th century, the church structure embraces work of the earlier Decorated period while traces of Norman work are to be found in the pier bases. The interior owes its present spacious appearance largely to the enthusiasm of the Reverend H. Law James, vicar from 1898 until 1932, who persuaded willing helpers to sweep away all the ugly Victoriana. In 1899 the Marquis of Exeter opened a two day Bazaar at the Park in what proved to be a successful bid to raise £2,000 for church restoration. Two steamboats met trains arriving at Surfleet Station and conveyed passengers up river to the beautiful parkland where the Spalding Alexandra Brass Band beguiled the milling crowds. A notice in the Bell Tower speaks of £20 granted by the Inc. Church Building Society in 1899 towards the re-seating, "upon condition that all the seatings are for the free use of parishioners". The walls still bear traces of early wall paintings while an earlier cleaning revealed the presence of scarlet painted Maltese Dedication crosses.

### MUSKET SHOTS

Much damage was done to churches during the period of the Commonwealth. The South Window now contains a medley of painted glass dug up from the churchyard while the musket shots on the outside of the North Door are believed to testify to the presence of the Cromwellian soldiery. The chancel, with its fine, hammer-beam style roof, was once much larger than it is today. In the early 1400s—around the time of a national slump—Roger Denis, a London mason, was engaged on the re-building of the chancel. Although the Poll Tax of 1397 reveals Holland to be the Wealthiest part of England, money was getting more difficult to come by and as late as 1429 the unfortunate man was still locked in legal argument over payment for the contract with Master Adlard Welby, parish priest.

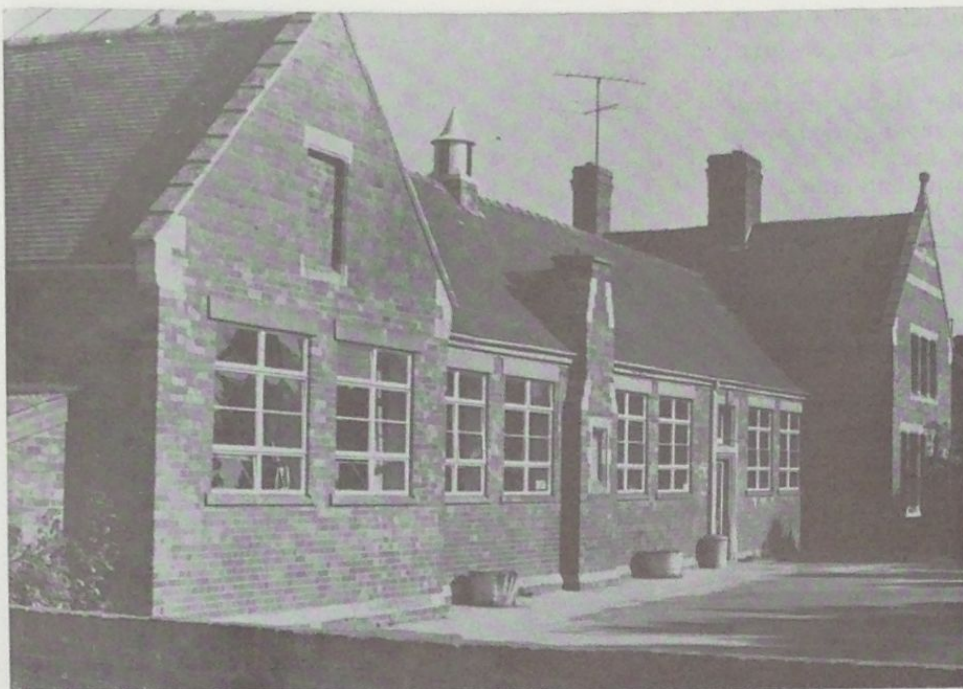
In the North Corner of the Sanctuary—its feet unusually placed under a cinque-foiled canopy—lies the figure of a chain and mail clad knight. This effigy is reputed by some to represent Sir Roger de Cressy, although others declare it to be that of his kinsman, the 14th century Sir Hugh who—in a long, complicated will—expressed a desire to be buried near the High Altar in Surfleet Church. The de Cressy family—one of whom, in Edward I's reign obtained a charter for a market and fair at Surfleet, exerted great local influence. Branches of the family resided at Gosberton, Surfleet and Moulton—in the will Sir Hugh leaves his horse "Grisel of Sempringham" to Hugh Cressy of Moulton—and their chief Lincolnshire seat was the Risegate manor of Cressy Hall. The Hall, originally deemed to be in the parish of Surfleet was, with the rest of Risegate, first transferred to Gosberton Parish at the 1912 adjustment of the ecclesiastical boundaries—a decision upheld by the 1932 Alteration of Parish Boundaries Order. In the 17th century Cressy Hall came into the ownership of the Heron family—Surfleet Church contains several memorials to its illustrious members one of whom, Dame Ann Fraiser, exerted such long lasting influence in the neighbourhood. The Church Marriage Register of the period records the nuptials of the wealthy Herons alongside entries into wedlock for those of lesser degree—the chandlers, the yeomen and the weavers of the parish. The autocratic Herons

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Above: Surflete Brigg, as the bridge was formerly known. Note the westward leaning tower of St. Laurence in the background. Below: The Post Office.





Opened  
in 1878

Left: Surfleet village school, opened in 1878 replacing the Dame Fraiser School which was built in 1764 and which now serves as Parish Hall.

### Going Down Below

Below: Small boats at anchor in the tidal reach of the glen—awaiting high tide before proceeding down to the Wash.



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mellowed with the years—the 18th century tablet eulogising the generosity of Henry Heron signifies a character in sharp contrast to that of Sir Edward who, in the 1600s, was fined £100 “when he caused a man who repaired to Surfleet with letters patent for a contribution to Rye Harbour to be whipped as a rogue”.

### FUNERAL HATCHMENT

The handsome 15th century Font stands at the South End while over the South Door hangs a hatchment bearing the arms of the Buckworths—a family once prominent although without mention in the Hearth Tax Return of 1662. This tax—unpopular and abolished 27 years later—was enforced by the use of ‘chimney men’ who were responsible for the bi-annual collection—with certain exceptions—of 2s. per hearth per home. Surfleet possessed 109 ‘liable’ dwellings, fluctuating between the 15 hearths owned by Sir Henry Heron to the one humble fireplace claimed by a man with the curious name of REPENTANCE GIMBER!

The only 12 bell peal in the fenland hangs under the Church Tower which, owing to its westward slant, causes two of the bells to be hung, technically speaking, ‘outside’ the church. This peal originally consisted of five bells which, through the years, have been augmented to the present number, the last two being added in 1933 by the Lincoln Diocesan Guild of Bellingers “in remembrance of the Rev. Law James” who, after his induction in 1898, supervised the clearance of 10 feet of rubble from the belfry floor thus once more bringing the ringers down to ground level.

Bells have played a large part in parish affairs since the days when the ‘Common’ bell warned of flood or invasion and the Churchwardens paid for ‘ale and meat on Ringing Day’. The Tomlinsons and the Richardsons have, for many years, been prominent in the art of bell ringing and in 1947 an extra bell was added to the peal at Lincoln Cathedral in memory of Mr. Rupert Richardson who, from 1933-1947, had been Master of the Lincoln Diocesan Guild of Ringers. Two poignant entries in Surfleet Peal Book occur within a few short



months when the bells which celebrated a young man's wedding were later tolled to mark his untimely death in World War II. A happier occasion was the peal in 1975 marking the birthday of the Captain of Ringers, Mr. Charles Rawding, whose generously shared knowledge of his native village has earned him the well deserved title of "Mr. Surfleet".

#### DATED 1719

The Parish Chest is dated 1719 and bears the names W. Obrey and R. Eakland, Churchwardens of the era. The Accounts span the time between 1669 and 1715 and, after a gap of some 40 years, continue to the present day. From these we learn that the Church Yard Dog Whipper was once paid a guinea a year, that the Marshreeves made varied charges for Common Rights before the 1777 Enclosure and that sparrows were purchased at 4d an old bird, 2d each for the young.

Not that the Churchwardens were themselves always blameless. In the late 19th century one of them took soil from the churchyard to enrich his own land—land on which a parishioner later found human bones which she declared had come from the graveyard. A heated exchange with the sexton—who, incidentally, always refused to dig graves more than 18 inches deep—led to his reprimand and fine in a court of law. Years later, the Reverend Law James and his sexton were chastised with churchyard bones by two elderly ladies who later appeared at Spalding Court where they were sternly ordered to keep the peace!

#### HUNG IN CHAINS

A 1790 Accounts Book entry, "For Boat and Fencing near Hooton's Gibbet—15s." revives memories of a dastardly crime, details of which are to be found on a churchyard memorial. "Erected to the memory of Mr. Samuel Stockton, late of Ashley in the parish of Leigh and County of Lancaster, who was most barbarously murdered near this place on the 8th day of December, 1768, for which murder one Philip Hooton was tried and condemned at Lincoln Assizes and afterwards executed and hung in chains on the very place where the horrid deed was committed". Stockton, a wealthy North Country dealer had been inveigled into visiting the corn markets of the fens by Hooton who, with robbery in mind, persuaded Stockton to ride the lonely river path and there attacked and murdered the unfortunate man. Retribution followed and for months the



Above: The Great Northern Hotel is run by Mr. and Mrs. Swan, the hotel stands beside the now closed railway station.

riverside gibbet creaked under the weight of its gruesome burden. Eventually the bones became much sought after mementoes—even used as tobacco stoppers by some phlegmatic fenmen!

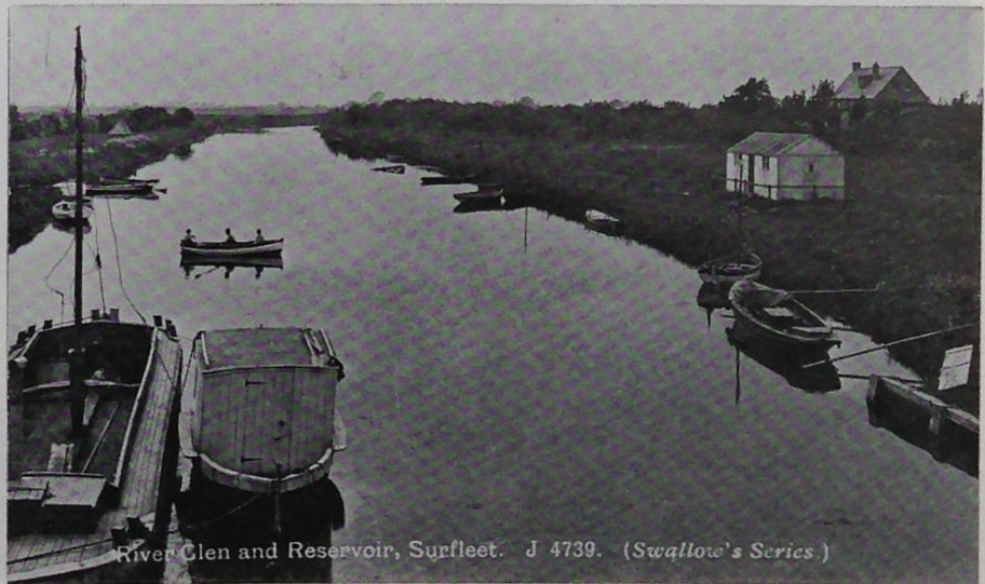
The gibbet irons were once to be found at Welland House Farm, home of the Bealby family. These irons were eventually sold to a Boston scrap dealer but the gibbet posts were put to use in the farm's crewyard. Mr. David Bealby who, with his wife and family, lives in an attractive modern farmhouse adjacent to his father's old home, still possesses a piece of the evocative post. Incidentally, the Church Burial Register records the date of the murder as the 9th rather than the 8th day of December.

The Bealby name is well known to students of 18th century fenland, for in 1896, Mr. J. T. Bealby wrote a novel, 'A Daughter of the Fen' which vividly depicts the life and custom of the times. The author's nephew, Mr. Charles Bealby, lives in that part of Surfleet known as the CHEAL, referred to in the 852 A.D. land book of Peterborough Abbey as cegle. Cheal, derived from the Old English word cegel, means a 'pole or a post' and is thought to record an ancient marking of a boundary or indeed, the crossing of a water course for the Cheal is on a stream which, according to early records, was known as Cheylebecke.

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Glen and  
Reservoir  
c.1920

Right: River Glen a  
Reservoir, before the  
building of the weekend  
bungalows.



River Glen and Reservoir, Surfleet. J 4739. (Swallow's Series.)



On the banks  
of the  
River Glen . . .

Left: The Mermaid Inn  
(proprietors Mr. and Mrs.  
J. Manning).

Close by  
the Reservoir

Right: The Ship Inn (with  
its Ships lamps) stands  
close by Surfleet Reservoir.



Where Morris Men  
perform . . .

Left: The Crown Inn (run  
by Mrs. Audrey James)  
on whose forecourt the  
Lincolnshire Morris Men  
perform in the summer.

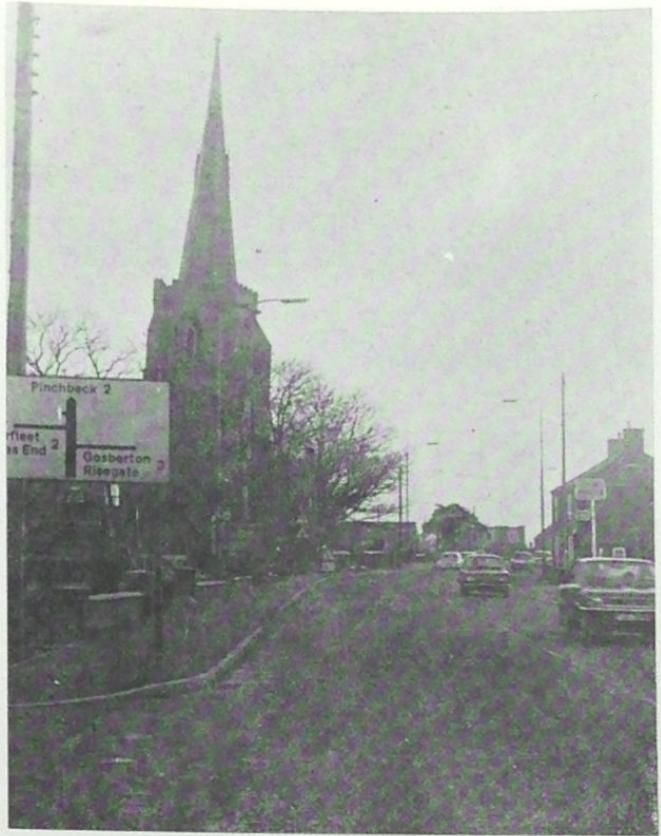
### LINCOLNSHIRE TRUST RESERVE

The old Post Mill was once a familiar landmark on the Spalding Road. Demolished around 1912, it was the property of the Noble family which, for many years, not only ground the corn but provided the village with its daily loaf. Across the road, is the watery plot known as the Surfleet Lows. Now a Lincolnshire Trust Nature Reserve, it was once a skaters' venue where the prize for a well run race was a loaf of Noble's bread!

According to E. Godwin's book, *The Land Our Larder*, Surfleet was once the scene of an interesting agricultural experiment between the two world wars when Captain R. G. Wilson, owner of the newly created Icen Estate sought to increase crop production by methods revolutionary to the Fenland but today the well known Golf Course once more overlooks the more orthodox scene. The only reminder of a former local crop is the name of Woad Farm in Surfleet Marsh where plover netting was once a favourite pastime. Mrs. Inkley senior of Birds' Drove remembers not only the time when violet growing was a commercial proposition but vividly recalls the backache engendered in harvesting the fragrant crop!

Today, large scale farming precludes the cultivation of the piecemeal plot but—methods apart—the fenland farmer would wholeheartedly agree with Cicero who said:

"Of all occupations from which gain is secured, there is none better than agriculture, nothing more productive, nothing more worthy of a free man".



Above: The sign "Surfleet Seas End" pinpoints the one time nearness of the sea.

Below: Surfleet St. Lawrence Change Ringers in the 1920s.

