

THE OPEN ROAD . . .

In search of Tongue End

Written and illustrated by DAVID KAYE

FOR many years I have heard my father-in-law talk about his days living at Tongue End in the years leading up to 1942. But I must confess until last year I had never actually visited it. Why? Because you wouldn't go to Tongue End unless you intended to go there.

Our search starts at Bourne, leaving the market town along the A151 Spalding road. Be careful how you drive if there is a cross wind, for the dyke on the left is deep. At least the height of the tarmac road across Bourne North Fen does give you a grandstand view over the surrounding countryside, with glimpses of the sugar beet factory and the Chatterton Water Tower at Spalding in the distance some eleven miles away. A variety of types of farming can be viewed, including a stud farm on the left. A little distance further on to the right is the Fenside School of Equitation, one of a number of such centres that are beginning to appear in the Fens.

The first hamlet along the road is Twenty. What's in a name? Until 1977 you could say that the Lincolnshire Road Car Company's route 20 had to slow down to 20 mph to negotiate the sharp corner at Twenty! But that is modern reasoning for something that happened over a hundred years before. In October 1853 solicitor Francis Thomas Selby had proposed the formation of the grandious sounding Spalding, Bourne and Stamford Railway and Waterworks Company. The tracks and a water pipe would run side-by-side over the Fens between Spalding and Bourne, and then the rail-

way would continue across the G.N.R. main line at Essendine and down into Stamford. As it happened this last section was constructed by the Great Northern and opened in 1856, whilst the Bourne to Essendine portion was built by another group and opened in 1860. This left the Bourne to Spalding part to be constructed jointly by the Great Eastern Railway Company and the Midland Railway Company. It was decided to have three intermediate stations, mainly for the transit of agricultural produce. Since these would be well outside village centres, names had to be invented for them. It so happened that the first station out of Bourne happened to be sited near the milestone along what is now the A151, proclaiming 20 miles to Colsterworth—hence the name Twenty.

The train service began on 1st August 1866, with trains running through to Essendine in one direction and to King's Lynn in the other. But as from May Day 1894 they were able to travel through to Melton Mowbray, when the new line west of Bourne was completed. Passenger services ended on 2nd March 1959—one of the pre-Beeching closures. If you turn down Station Road (on the right) you can still see the station house and the remains of the two platforms. Next to it is the recently closed stock-brick school and schoolmaster's house, whilst on the other side of the road is the handsome modern village hall. As you emerge onto the A151 again, look out for the interesting weather vane, at the farm on the right, showing greyhounds in



Right: Former school and school-house at Twenty.

Opposite below: Former Twenty railway station.

Below left: St Bartholomew's church, Pinchbeck West.

Below right: Keystone of Sharp's Bridge, now at Pote Hole.



action. On the left is perhaps the best example of how skilfully planted trees have provided all-round protection for Grange Farm.

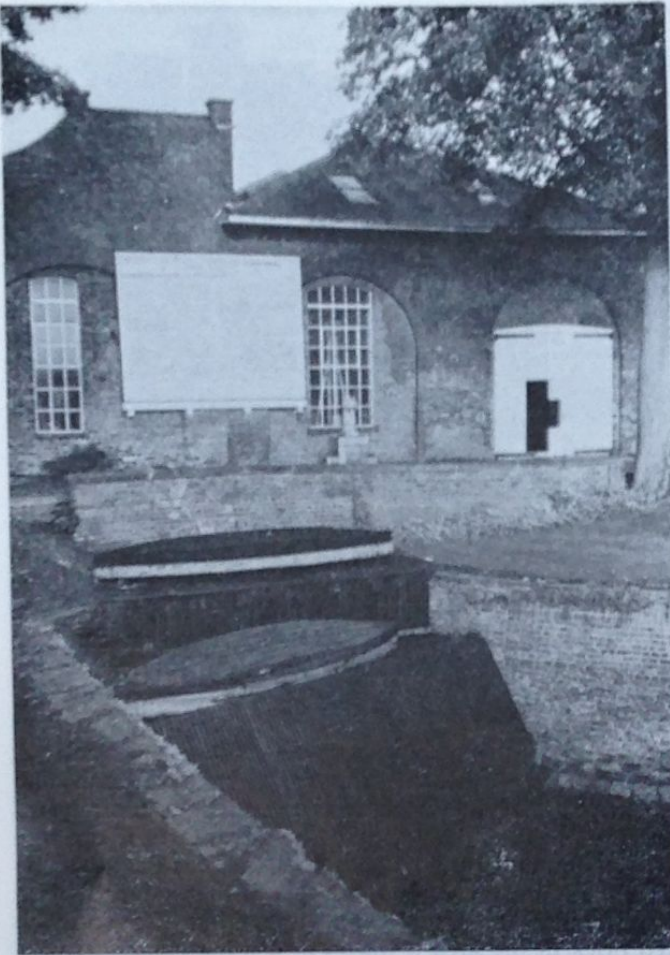
As the River Glen swings in to meet the road, you can see how generations of cows browsing on its banks have left their sure-footed tracks along its steep sides. Until 1974 Guthram Gowt marked the county boundary between Parts of Kesteven and Parts of Holland. At this point for some years the independence battle was fought with boards bearing such slogans as "HANDS OFF HOLLAND". The name Guthram Gowt applies to the sluice whereby the water of the South Forty Foot Drain flows into the Glen. In 1822 an Act of Parliament was passed to establish a turnpike trust to construct a road from Guthram Gowt into Spalding, with a toll-bar situated at the junction of Winsover Road and Hawthorn Bank in Spalding.

Perhaps of all the rivers in the area, people are most vague about the Glen. How long is it? Where is its source? And where does it flow into the Wash? It is approximately 36 miles long, rises near Boothby Pagnell (south-east of Grantham) and joins the Welland at Surfleet Seas End, some seven miles short of the Wash. Amongst the villages that are situated on its banks are Burton Coggles, Corby Glen, Creeton, Little Bytham, both Careby and Carlby, Essendine, Greatford and Wilsthorpe.

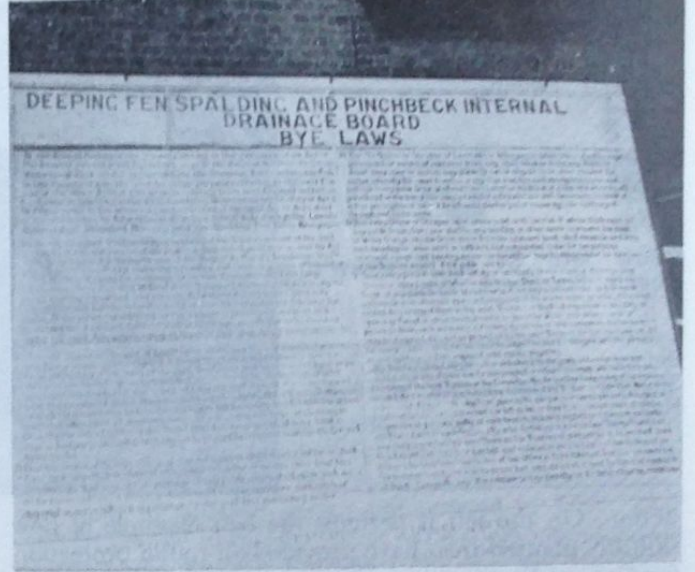
As you approach the crossing of the Glen at Pinchbeck Bars, turn sharp left onto Six House Bank to see the one and only parish church along this journey. West Pinchbeck was created an ecclesiastical parish on 3rd March 1851, its church of St Bartholomew being

consecrated on 9th July the previous year. Presumably this dedication was chosen as that particular saint was the patron saint of cattle drovers, his symbol being three fleshing knives. (According to tradition his fate was to be flayed alive). Interestingly enough, and in common with several of the drained fens in Lincolnshire, the Methodists had churches up and in use before the Anglicans. Here at West Pinchbeck the Wesleyans had one in 1829, while the Hosannah Primitive chapel was opened in 1845. Last year the dreaded Dutch elm disease caused all the huge trees lining the churchyard to be felled. But this has had the advantage of opening up the church to public gaze. Sir Nicholas Pevsner may have described it as 'not an interesting church' with its coursed rubble Gothic appearance, but after so much red brick in the area it makes a pleasing change. Inside I found a delightful window in the north aisle to the memory of the Dobbs family, and depicting a Lincoln-





Above: Old Pode Hole Pumping Station with wooden weed screens.



Above right: Drainage Board Bye Laws at Pode Hole.



Right: Modern Pode Hole Pumping Station.

Below: Pode Hole at the beginning of this century.





Left: Once Counter Drain railway station, now The Earl's Farm.

Below: The end of the search.

shire farm worker broadcasting seeds, with trousers tied up with cord around his knees. As on several recent church visits I was happy to find that the nave had been turned into a gallery for the display of work by the pupils of the local school.

West Pinchbeck actually has a Blacksmith's Lane that has a blacksmith's forge still in use. If you want to see this, then turn left into Glenside South, immediately after crossing the Glen, and then take the first lane on the right. This will bring you out onto the A151, only a few yards on from where you have crossed the river. Now drive on to Pode Hole. The name probably comes from the Middle English word for a frog. Some miles to the south, near Deeping St James, there is a place called Froggnall, where conditions back in medieval times would have been very similar.

At the beginning of the last century Pode Hole had three windmills assisting with the rather inadequate drainage of this vast, low-lying area. Often, as in 1798, there were disastrous floods. Amongst those whose advice was sought, was the Scottish engineer John Rennie, who suggested installing a steam engine there. This was duly done in 1825 at a cost of £26,673—a considerable sum in those days. The machinery was in use for a century and then laid idle until 1952, when it was removed and scrapped. However, the pumping station building still remains as a reminder of those far off days, looking across the road to its modern successor. In 1933 there was a Baptist chapel here, whilst Anglican services were held in St Matthew's School.

Turn sharp right along The Delph, the droveway that runs parallel to Counter Drain. After nearly three miles you will come across The Earl's Farm, one of a series on Pinchbeck Common belonging to S.M. Farms Ltd. Between 1866 and 1959 this was, in fact, Counter Drain Railway Station, and a quick glance at the farm gates will confirm this. The line, at this point, was able to negotiate the crossing of both Counter Drain and the River Glen within a few yards of each other. Indeed they were interconnected here at one time. The far bridge, that over the Glen is worth viewing.

Another mile and our search is ended. We have arrived at that most isolated of communities, Tongue End. Mentioned first in a document in 1781, it described the nature of the land at this point, where Baston Fen, Thurlby Fen and Bourne Norton Fen all converge, and where Bourne Eau flows into the Glen.

When the Religious Census was taken in 1851, Methodist services were held in one of the houses, according to Revd John Bowman of Bourne, who went on to report that it had "no title, being a dwelling house. Preaching every alternate Sabbath. The 31st (March) not being the Sabbath for service." In 1867 a

proper chapel was built with stone walls and a slate roof. However, this is now derelict. In 1933 there was still a Baptist chapel, whilst mission services were also held in the Public Elementary School. Presumably these have also now ceased. Fifty years ago Tongue End could also boast of two pubs—the Carrington Arms and the Boat Inn, the latter being run by Joseph Strickland. The School is still there, and the Eastern Counties Omnibus Company still run one bus on a Tuesday and one on a Saturday into Spalding. Indeed route 318 must have one of the oddest worded timetables of any service in Lincolnshire; Spalding—Pode Hole—Cuckoo Bridge—Counter Drain—Tongue End.

If you take the turning on the right, signposted Bourne, you will cover four miles packed with interest. That is if you are fascinated by how the local population earn a living out here in the middle of nowhere. Each field is different. Some were being ploughed, with the rich dark soil being turned over after harvest, whilst others awaited the collection of the over-large 'shredded wheats' lying at their edges. One had become covered by a huge scrapyard. Yet another was equally hidden by sheep. Other small holdings supported geese and goats. Another of the aspects which caught my eye was the different implements that can be fitted to a tractor, and along this drove I came across almost every conceivable combination at work, or awaiting work.

Finally you emerge into the Eastgate suburb of Bourne. If you continue over the crossroads, down Willoughby Road, you will eventually reach the A15 on the southern outskirts of the town. If you began this tour at some intermediate point such as Pode Hole, then turn right at the cross roads and proceed along Cherry Holt to the A151, thus avoiding the congested centre of Bourne.



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