

# EARSHAM

## SOME OF ITS HISTORY



Written by Ron Page

# Earsham

## And some of its History

### **Index**

1. The village of Earsham
2. Earsham School
3. Village of Earsham from about 1816
4. Earsham Church
5. Church Path – It's history
6. Earsham Mill
7. The Village Hall and War Memorial
8. The Waveney Valley Railway
9. Earsham Dam
10. Bath Hills, Earsham
11. The Otter Trust
12. Useful information on Earsham
13. The Rearing Field
14. Earsham Hall
15. Earsham village life during 1939 – 1945
16. Earsham Fen
17. Earsham old and new Rectories
18. Earsham Playing Field
19. Bath Hills Gravel Pits and the “Osier Bed”
20. 1927 Village Magazine
21. Earsham School Pupils in 1939
22. Farms and farmers before 1940
23. Village sounds we used to hear
24. Church Road – Old Thatch Cottage and the modern house
25. Two local boys – harvest field catch

# 1. The Village of Earsham

**Earsham**, in the Domesday Book called “Hersham”, meaning “The Station of the Army”.

The Romans had a large encampment here and many coins and urns along with other roman items have been found in the village, some of which are in the Bungay Museum.



This is how Earsham looks today; the house on the bottom right of the road was the residence of the village policeman for many generations.

## 2. Earsham School



This picture was taken in 1994

The building of the school started in 1875 at the cost of £545-13s-0d and was opened in 1877.

The toilets were outside, and it was not until 1989 that indoor toilets were installed.

In the early days, teachers were helped by the local vicar and his wife, and other village ladies helped with such things as sewing etc. School monitors were appointed to help the teachers, and they were paid approximately 1s (5p) per week. There were as many as 100 children on the register, attendances were very varied with many children marked as being absent because they didn't bring the school fee, which was:-

Fee for the eldest child was 3d

Fee for the second child was 2d

Fee for remaining children was 1d

The school fees were done away with a few years later. Other reasons for absenteeism were illness with mumps, measles, chickenpox, whooping cough, flu, scarlet fever, colds, sore throats etc. Another reason for absenteeism was the Bungay Races, children helping in the fields at haymaking, and at harvest time, and stone picking, the stones being used for repairing the roads in the village, which after a short time, the County Council took the responsibility of the roads. Another reason children stayed away from school was because in the Autumn, they were collecting acorns which would be fed to the pigs.

In the old days many children would be sent home from school because they were dirty or infected with lice etc. In very bad weather many children would not attend school as they had a very long walk from their cottages, as most of their families worked on outlying farms, because in those days, farm work was the employment of the majority of the people. Also at Michaelmas, farms changed hands with the workers moving with the farmers. School days up to 1939 were different from today, in that there could be up to 120 children on the register.

No mobile classrooms existed in those days, with that number of children; the whole floor space was crowded with desks. There were three classes, the infant class – one teacher with about 40 pupils, aged between 5 and 8 years. The second class was situated in the big room, again with one teacher and about 40 pupils aged between 8 and 11 years. The room was separated by a large curtain and that class would be for 11 – 14 year olds, again with one teacher. School started at 9am until 12 noon and 2pm to 3.45pm in the summer and 1.30pm to 3.30pm in the winter.

There were no school meals then, those that stayed had to bring their own dinner.

The infant room was heated by a large combustion stove; the big room was heated by an open fire with a single hot water pipe which ran around the outer wall of the room.

Teaching was basic by modern standards, Reading, Writing and Arithmetic were the main subjects, but Geography, History, Drawing and Religion were also taught.

At the age of 11 years, the pupils would take an exam for vacancies at Bungay Grammar School for boys and the girls at Sir John Leman School. Very few pupils passed, those who did not pass would stay on at the same school until the age of 14 years.

Discipline was pretty strict; the cane was often used as punishment.

Attendance was looked upon as being essential.

Attendance Officers would soon appear and thereafter prosecution for those families whose children failed to attend school regularly.

### 3. The Village of Earsham from about 1916



Picture taken in 1994

**Big House** – if Rich

**Cottages** – if Poor

Mainly tied cottages owned or rented by farmers, or as domestics in the big houses, and to displease their employers could result in losing their jobs, or even worse, they would probably lose their house as well.

**Transport** – Horse and Carriage for the Rich

**Walking** – for the Poor

Housing changed little in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the poor people living in their tied cottages built mainly of clay.

In 1925 the first council house was built in the village, a bath would hang on a wall outside, the water would be heated by a copper which was situated indoors or in an outhouse, and mostly Saturday nights the bath would be placed on the kitchen floor in front of the fire, and filled up with a hand cup (a bowl with wooden handles). The family would take turns at having their baths (once a week); the same water would be used by all the family, hot water was added when needed.

The copper would be again in use on Monday, as it was the day everyone did their washing. This took all day as the washing and rinsing was all done by hand (mangles were used). A mangle consisted of two wooden rollers and a handle which was mounted on an iron stand, and this was used to squeeze the water from the washing.

Tuesdays, the mothers spend all day ironing, the irons were a triangle shaped box with a sliding door at the back, a small triangle shaped fire-brick was placed in the fire with a pair of tongs, when the fire-brick was hot enough, it would be placed in the iron, it would have to be heated many times before the ironing was finished.

The first council house was occupied in 1926, two more were built about 3 years later, and in the mid 1930's five more were built. Further brick houses were built just before the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Following the war Kingsway, Queensway, Dukesway and Princess Way came into being.

The estate of bungalows was built near the station in 1935, these being built on the site of the old Earsham Alms Houses, which housed the very poor families. Approximately 70 council houses and 36 bungalows were built in the village between 1925 and the late 1970's. The following years saw more houses and bungalows being built including two more estates, Elms Close and Waveney Crescent.

Another change in housing was the introduction of the improvement grant which resulted in many houses being retained instead of being demolished.

Electricity came to Earsham around 1935. Council houses had 3 lights, 2 downstairs and 1 upstairs, plus 1 socket in the living room.

Mains water came to Earsham about 1954/55. A sewerage plant came soon after that.

Street lighting along the main street came in the late 1960's.

## **VILLAGE SERVICES IN THE 1930's**

14 working farms – employed approximately 50 people

2 General Stores – employed 5 people

1 Post Office – 1 person employed

1 Radio Shop – 1 person employed

1 Butchers Shop – employed 3 people

1 Blacksmith/Wheelwright – employed 2 people

1 Flour Mill – employed 25 people

1 Factory (Mr. Roberts) – 1 person employed

1 Garage – employed 3 people

3 Public Houses – employed 3 people

Earsham Hall – employed approximately 18 people

3 Gamekeepers + 1 Assistant employed 4 people

1 Hurdle maker/Thatcher – 1 person employed

1 Railway Station – employed 2 people

2 Gate Houses – employed 4 people

Our own Vicar – 1 person employed

Roadman to Village – 1 person employed

Earsham Estate – employed 4 people

Our own Policeman, with Denton and Alburgh – 1 person employed

## **Population of Village**

**1821** – 750

**1971** – 576

**1991** – 750

**1904** – 560

**1981** – 581

**1969** – 700

**1986** – 722

## 4. Earsham Church



Picture taken 1994

Earsham Church is dedicated to All Saints and its 14<sup>th</sup> century tower was crowned with a wooden spire. The spire was originally made of windmill sails but in more recent years it has been renovated and has a new weather vane.

The church has some lovely stained glass windows which have some very old scenes from the bible.

The church has three bells. In earlier years the bells would be rung by one man, he would hold a rope in each hand and the middle rope would be longer with a loop at the end in which he would place a foot. This may sound difficult, but the man performed this feat with ease. The bells could be rung by hammers which would strike the side of the bell. These hammers were attached to cords which hung by the side of the wall, this method of ringing the bells could be performed by one of the choir boys if

the main bell ringer was absent, as the method of using the hammers didn't require any strength.

The church had a fairly large choir in the 1930's made up of men, boys, women and girls amounting to about 30 in all. The boys had white surpluses with a white frilly collar, and a maroon cassock, the girls had mortar board hats. The church organ at that time had to be pumped by hand, and was a task undertaken by one of the village boys.

Sunday School children would be given an album, which had 52 spaces with a bible story beside it. It meant that if the children wanted to complete a set of stamps to fill the spaces, they had to attend Sunday School every Sunday.



The extension to the church is almost finished; this picture was taken in February 1995.

## 5. Church Path or The Ashes – its History

Church Path runs through the “Ashes Estate”, it was made in the early 1920’s for the many servants of Earsham Hall, as in those days, the servants would attend church services at least twice every Sunday. They walked all the way from Earsham Hall, and when they got to the street near the shop, they would then have to continue down the street and past the school, so the owners of Earsham Hall had the path made to make a short cut for their employees.

The path was made from cinders and ashes carted from Bungay Printing Works, by horse and cart, as it was steam in those days and factories used a large amount of coal.

Although most of the local people still call it “Church Path”, many of the older generation called it “The Ashes” for many years, it’s my theory that the estate which is named “The Ashes” probably got its name from the same path, I’ve made many enquiries but so far no one has been able to tell me if this is so.



This picture was taken about 3 years before “The Ashes” was built; it was taken from Church Path.

It also shows Lodge Farm in the background.

## 6. Earsham Mill

This picture was taken in 1995



The picture above shows Earsham Mill in rather a rundown state, until 1962 this was a very fine building. It was one of the last working mills in the Waveney Valley, and it only stopped flour milling in 1962. The Mill existed before the Normans came, it produced mainly flour and animal feed stuffs for the farms.

In the 1930's, it employed between 20 – 30 workers, most of them lived in the village. For many years, the mill was owned by a Mr. Charles Marston, who, with his wife, lived in the premises now called "The Moorings". When Earsham Mill was owned by Mr. Charles Marston, eels were regularly caught there, at times up to two or three hundredweight would be taken in one night. They were packed in ice boxes and sent to Billingsgate Market. It was not unusual for eels up to three feet long and bigger round than a man's wrist to be caught.

Young eels, or elvers, used to be put into the river in spring; I can recall seeing the sluice gates walls black with elvers on their way up stream.

The sluice gates were a very important part of the mill in those days, as they could be opened or closed to raise or lower the water level as required. The sluice gates were a manual task, undertaken by one of the employees of the mill. Today, the sluice gates are automatic and require no assistance by man.



The sluice gates shown on Earsham Fen, this picture was taken in 1994.

## 7. The Village Hall & The War Memorial



Around 1914, Earsham had no village hall, the school being used for meetings etc. In 1920, a piece of land was purchased from the Trustees of the Earsham Town Estate Charity for £12-10s-0d for the purpose of erecting a War Memorial. At the same time, a corrugated building was erected as a Red Triangle Club, mainly for the use of ex-service men.

The building was later upgraded, it was made with wood and it was called "The Hut". It then became the village community centre where meetings, choir practice, library etc. were held. The building was extended by the erection of a larger wooden building to commemorate the Silver Jubilee of King George V. In 1935 "The Hut" became the Village Hall.

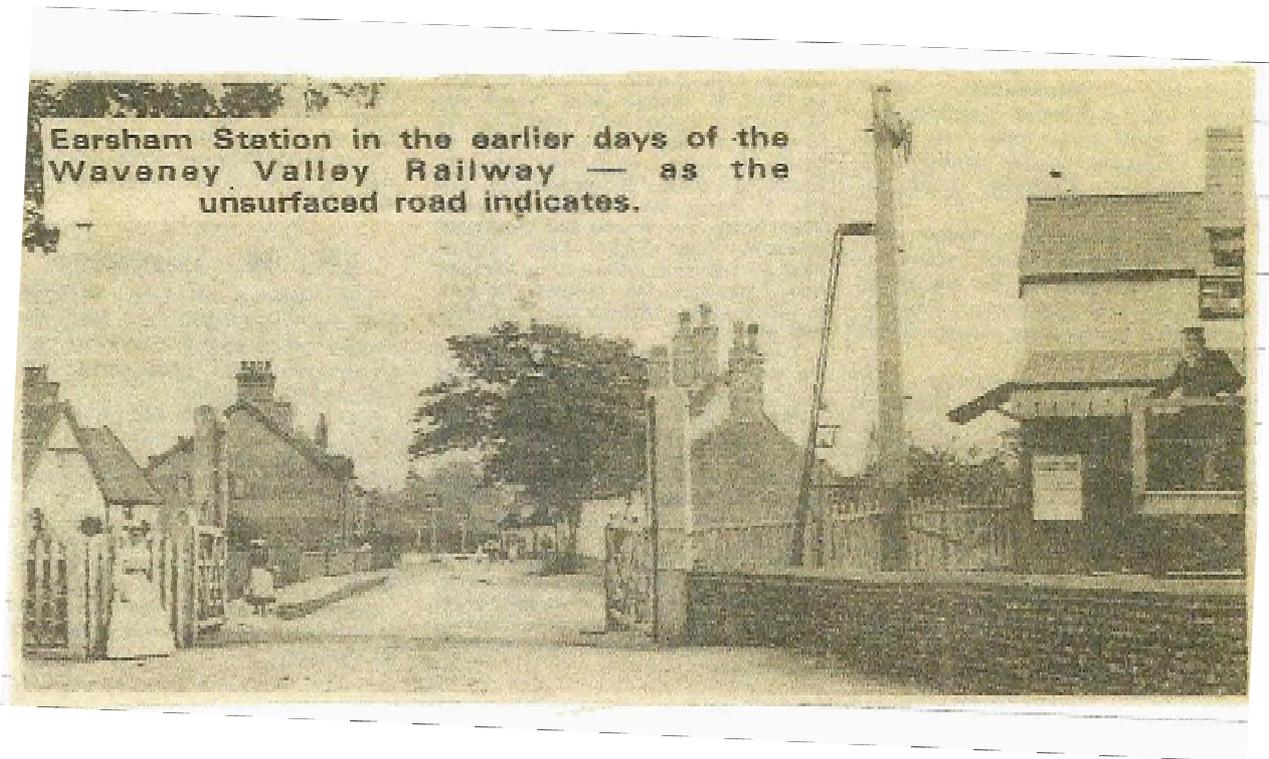
In 1960, the old 1920's building became badly in need of replacement, a committee was then formed to raise funds to replace the old building and in May 1970, the new brick building was opened by the Chief Education Officer of Norfolk. A few more years passed and the 1935 building was replaced by the completion of the brick building which is the one we see today.



The picture above was the allotments; they are now part of the village green and car park for the village hall.  
This picture was taken about 3 years before the “Ashes” came into being.

## 8. The Waveney Valley Railway Line

This picture shows Earsham Station at the beginning of the 1900's, the ladies dress indicate it was around that time. The "Old Earsham Alms Houses" on the right of the picture were replaced in 1935.



This picture shows the station as it is today, over recent years it has been converted into flats.

This picture was taken in February 1995

The Waveney Valley Railway Line opened December 1<sup>st</sup> 1855. Possibly for the first time, the village residents had the opportunity to travel beyond walking distance of the village.

The line ran from the main line station at Beccles with connections to Great Yarmouth, Lowestoft, Ipswich and London, and stations at Geldeston, Ellingham, Ditchingham, Bungay, Earsham, Homersfield, Harleston, Pulham St. Mary, Pulham Market, Tivetshall, through to Norwich.

The line was a single track, trains running in both directions, having to cross at either Harleston or Bungay before the trains could pass on to the single track. Goods trains were also very much used on the lines with goods yards at Bungay and Harleston. Goods trains conveyed all types of merchandise including coal, corn, wood, and beet.

The railway must have brought about one of the major changes to village life.

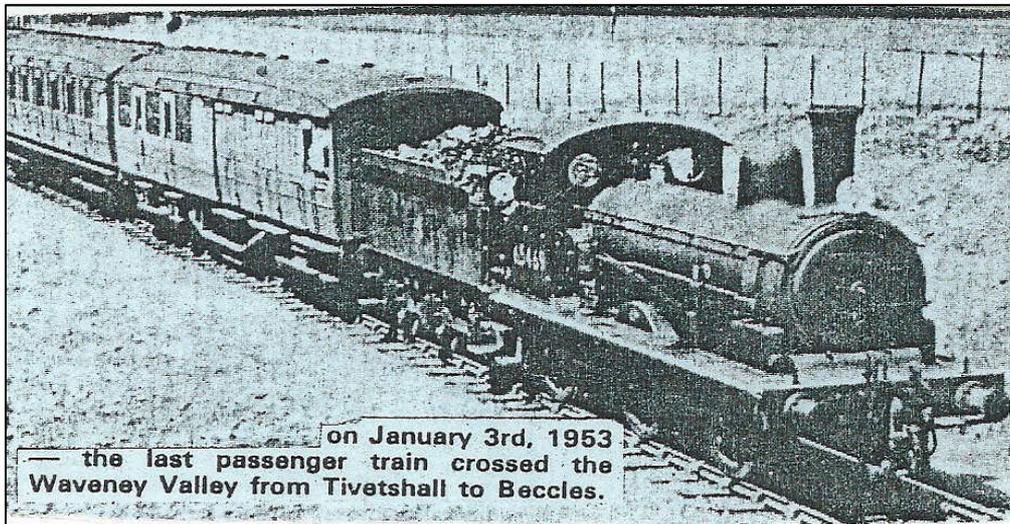
The railway played a big part in the Second World War (1939-45) as a siding was built at Earsham near the "Black Hills" which is just beyond the Otter Trust, and it was used for unloading bombs which were stored in the woods by American Troops.

The railway brought employment to the village with a railway station at Earsham and a gate house at 5 Acre Lane, and another gate house near the "Black Hills". All gate houses were built where the railway line crossed the road. All gate houses were painted black; I do not know the reason for this.

The residents of the gate house would be man and wife. The wife would be responsible for the gates, she would know the times the trains passed, and would open the gates and operate the signals to inform the train driver it was safe to pass.

The husband would be employed by the railway company as a porter at Bungay railway station or in the Goods yard, or some would be employed as linesmen and would be responsible for a length of railway of approximately 2 miles. He would cover the track daily tapping back the wooden keys which held the rail in sockets which were fixed to wooden

sleepers as the trains passing along the track could cause the keys to work loose. He was also responsible for keeping the weeds down along the track and making sure the fences were intact. The last passenger train passed through Earsham Station on January 3<sup>rd</sup> 1953.



This picture was a common sight in the village in the first half of the century



This picture shows the Earsham By-Pass built over the old railway line; it was opened in November 1983. The picture was taken from the bridge that leads to the Golf House, and Bungay Common.

Elms Close is at the far left hand side of the road. This picture was taken in February 1995

## 9. Earsham Dam – some of its History



A winter scene from Earsham Dam, the path on the left of the river, leads to the “Wolds”. It is also part of the “Bigod Way Footpath”. This bridge used to be all brick and was named the “Roaring Arch”.  
In the far background is Flixton.

When Earsham Dam was made in the early 1800, a very large part of the expense was paid for by the Windhams, who at that time owned Earsham Hall.

The bridge between Earsham and Bungay, known as “Cock Bridge” taking its name from a public house which stood near it, its grounds going down to the river.

The bridge was built in 1737 for the sum of £17.

Earsham Dam, until recent years, was a very twisty road, which would often flood in the winter months, sometimes it would be impassable and the people who worked in Bungay would have to be taken to work by tractor and trailer, but when the flooded marshes froze with thick ice, a very large number of school children would spend a lot of time skating.



Earsham Dam in Flood



Earsham Dam in less wet conditions

## **10. Bath Hills – Earsham**

About 1700, a Mr. King, a very prominent and wealthy figure of Bungay, tried to make Bungay a spa, pointing out that a spring in the castle grounds possessed valuable medicinal properties but this proved a failure.

After searching for a spring in many places, he at last found a spring in Earsham. A cold bath was made 16ft x 10ft and at each end he built a dressing room, at that time mixed bathing was not allowed.

For many years it became a resort for the gentry claiming the water had many cures – particularly in cases of rheumatism. Bath House, which stands just inside the Ditchingham border, was built in 1728 and was the home for many years of Sir Ryder and Lady Lillian Haggard, both famous authors.

Bath Hills is part of the Bigod Way Footpath; it's a very pretty walk of about 3 and a half miles, a walk I take at least twice a year.



This picture shows Bath Hills Road, the cottages were built by two local men in 1927.

Bath Hills is a by-road and is not suitable for cars.

## **11. Earsham Otter Trust**

The Otter Trust was formed around 1960 by Mr. Wayre. Its aim is to breed otters and then release them back into the wild as otter numbers have declined so much in England and Wales, that it is now a protected species. The otter has a healthier distribution in Scotland.

The otter is a very strong swimmer, just before it dives, it takes a very deep breath and because its lungs are large in relation to its body, that single breath will allow the otter to stay under water for three or four minutes to allow the otter time to catch a fish or to escape from danger.

Otters breed all the year round having 2 – 3 cubs at a time and the place where an otter lives is called a “holt”.

The otter’s main food is fish, mainly eels; also they feed on small mammals and birds. Some otters have already been released into the wild very successfully as it’s been reported that already some of the released otters are now breeding in the wild themselves.

Earsham Otter Trust has other attractions, including a large picnic area, children’s play area, also there are golden pheasant; deer and many different kinds of water fowl. In the early 1900 it was “River Farm”, a smallholding, in the early years even a small farm offered a reasonable standard of living.



This picture was taken in February 1995



The Otter Trust residence of Mr. and Mrs. Wayre. The picture was taken in 1994.

## 12. Useful information about Earsham

- The School House was built in 1875 and opened in 1877 at a cost of £545-13s-0d
- The church dedicated to All Saints is 14<sup>th</sup> century
- Earsham Mill was built before the Normans came. It stopped flour making in 1962
- Earsham Hall is part Elizabethan and part Georgian and served as a boy's school in the 1950's
- Village Hall was built in the early 1920's and later upgraded. The War Memorial was built around the same time
- First council house was built in 1925/26. The rent was 7s6d – 37.5p in new money
- Waveney Valley Railway opened in 1855 and closed to passengers in 1953
- Electricity came to Earsham around 1935
- Mains water came about 1956/57
- Sewerage came just after the mains water
- Street lighting (Main Street) came in the late 1960's
- The first playing field was in the early 1950's



Looking towards the ex-village shop from the road which is now called "Milestone Lane".

This picture was taken about 3 years before "The Ashes" came into being.

### 13. Earsham Rearing Field



The Rearing Field was very much part of Earsham's rural life in the early 1920's until 1939. As its name suggests, it was the field in which the gamekeepers used to rear their pheasants.

At that time gamekeepers would go round the village, and buy as many broody hens as they could possibly get. In those days, almost every house and cottage would keep hens. The hens would then be taken to the Rearing Field and put into coops (small huts) to incubate between 13 and 15 eggs.

It was a very busy time for the gamekeepers as the hens had to be fed and given fresh water every day, after the chicks hatched out the gamekeepers would have to move their coops to fresh ground every day.

Many people including "country dwellers" are surprised to learn that the pheasant is really an intruder to our countryside for the pheasant is not a native bird of the British Isles, nor even of Europe. It was introduced into this county about a thousand years ago, but it is now so numerous that it is accepted as a British bird.

The Rearing Field was also used to graze large flocks of sheep in the early part of the century when the ewes lambed in the spring. The shepherd and his dog would live in a little wooden hut for about six weeks or until the lambing time was over.

The Rearing Field was also used as Earsham football pitch in the 1930's.

The Rearing Field stands on the east side of Pheasants Walk.

Access to Pheasants Walk is to take the first left turn up Hall Road or by Five Acre Lane.

The Rearing Field is now excavated for gravel by Earsham Gravels Ltd, so like so many other things, the Rearing Field has become another victim of progress.



Perhaps this gnarled old sweet-chestnut tree, in the parkland of Earsham Hall, has seen better days — and survived a storm or two — but I have never seen a larger one. It still produces chestnuts.

This artist's sketch of the old sweet chestnut tree, is the same one in the picture on the next page, it appeared in the local newspaper recently.

## 14. Earsham Hall



Earsham Hall is in the background, the sweet chestnut tree in the foreground has been a popular venue for school children for many generations, there are other chestnut trees in the parks.

This picture was taken in February 1995

Earsham Hall, being a very fine building, is part Elizabethan and part Georgian. It employed many of the village people in the early 1920's until 1939 or just afterwards. The people would be employed as grooms, gardeners, chauffeurs, kitchen maids, cooks, butlers etc. It later served as a boy's school for a number of years. It became the property of the Meade family in 1864 for about 50 years. In the springtime, the parks would look like large yellow seas with the many thousands of cowslips which grew on them. Since modern farming came along using sprays and other chemical means, there are few cowslips now. Children would also gather primroses, violets and other wild flowers in the parks and in the autumn gather sweet chestnuts.

## **15. Earsham Village Life during 1939 – 1945**



The building between the Queen's Head and the ex-village shop, used to be the village Blacksmiths for many years. This picture was taken in February 1995

There were ration books for food, clothes, meat, and many other items, as meat was rationed and very scarce, it was just as well that there was a very large population of wild rabbits in and around the village, as these supplemented many tables in the village.

Earsham had its own Home Guard which was made up of men in the village who were too old to be recruited into the Army. They each had a uniform and a rifle, did their training at weekends and were on duty during the week. Considering these men all had full-time jobs, it meant very little free time for them. Their Headquarters were at a little cottage next to the Queen's Head, which has since been pulled down.

Also it was a time of darkness as every house in the village, and all other premises had to make sure their windows were blacked out. If the tiniest chink of light was seen, the village policeman or a warden would be round to the house to warn the occupants with a threat of a heavy fine.

The Rev. E. Thompson OBE, the rector of the village, was Chief Warden at that time. All forms of transport had to have their lights masked and it

was almost like driving in total darkness, just as well there weren't as many cars on the roads as there are now.

Farm workers had a very difficult time, as 2 or 3 men had to hand milk about 40 cows every day, morning and afternoon. This task was performed with hardly any light.

During these years, everyone was supplied with a gas mask which had to be carried at all times. The school children had their gas masks checked every week to make sure it fitted properly.

It was also a difficult time for education, as children would sometimes spend more time in an air raid shelter than in the classroom, even at night we would be called from our beds to spend even more time in the air raid shelter.

During those years, everyone had to carry an identity card, as everyone had to prove their identity for a number of reasons.

Earsham at that time, had a number of visitors from London and such places, they were called evacuees (people moving to a safer place for the duration of the war). These people soon adapted to the ways of country life, in fact some like it so much, they decided to stay, and they and their families are living in Earsham to this very day.

At that time, Earsham had three large air fields, Flixton, Hardwick and Seething. These were situated on each side of the village, it seemed the sky was full of aircraft every day, but people soon got used to them, and after a while people wouldn't take too much notice of them.

Also at that time, Earsham had a large encampment of American soldiers who were situated in the parks behind Earsham Hall; these soldiers were responsible for the many hundreds of bombs which were stored in the woods.

During those years, all school bells and all church bells were banned from ringing by the Government of the day; they were only to be rung in the case of enemy invasion.

The only bombs to fall locally were on Earsham Dam and some on Bungay destroying one house and damaging Wightmans shop.



Church Road, Entrance to "Moorings" on the left.

## 16. Earsham Fen



This picture – taken about 1983 – shows children on their summer holidays enjoying a swim, the picture shows after many generations the fen is still very popular with children.

This part of the river is known as “Sandy”

Earsham Fen has been a favourite place for local people for hundreds of years; until recent times, swimming pools were unheard of, it meant that all children had to learn to swim in the local rivers. Many children became good swimmers through going on the Fen and learning to swim in the river in the above picture, often leaving Earsham school for the Middle School, it was known then as the Area School, we held our swimming lessons in the river Waveney on the Falcon Meadows. In the old days, when people only bathed once a week, they would take a bar of soap with them and have a bath as well as a swim.

After sixty years of walking round the fen, I still enjoy it as much as ever, there is an abundance of wild life, including many flowers such as the Marsh Marigold, Water Iris, and many others, also many water fowl including the Kingfisher. The Fen also has dragon flies, butterflies, damsel flies and many others.

In the very early years, the fen would be used by wild fowlers as people in those days were very poor and would rely on wild ducks or wild geese to supplement their tables.

Also for hundreds of years, the Fen has been fished by men and boys; it is still very popular with anglers today.

In the early part of last century, many mothers took their children on the Fen for a picnic and a paddle in the shallow part of the river; this was looked upon as a real treat, one we all enjoyed when we were very young.

The next two pictures were taken in 1994 and the first one shows the path on the right of the picture leading on to the Fen, it is part of the “Bigod Way Footpath”





The view one gets when leaving the Fen



This is one of the many lovely views taken from Earsham Fen; it shows Church Farm in the background.  
This picture was taken in 1995 and was taken by the sluice gates.

## 17. Earsham's Old and New Rectories



The old Rectory above was the home of Rectors of Earsham for many generations, in the early days every village had their own Rector who knew every one of the villagers by name. The church always had three church services each Sunday, except for Holy Communion, then there would be four services, and the church bells rang three times every Sunday. The Rectors had part-time domestics and gardeners.

Now Rectors have up to five or six villages to carry out duties for and a modern Rectory to make life easier.



This picture shows the new Rectory in School Road

## 18. Earsham's Playing Field



This picture was taken in 1995

Up until 1950, Earsham had no real playing field, so as a result a Playing Field Committee was set up. Earsham Hall Estate was approached and the present day playing field (next to The Elms) was laid down in the early 1950's. A prefabricated building was erected, and the area is used by the Bowls Club, Earsham Football Club and more recently a children's play area was installed. The Parish Council are Trustees of both the Playing Field and the Village Hall.

## 19. Bath Hills Gravel Pits and “Osier Bed”



This picture taken in 1995, shows Bungay Common in the far background, the part of the wood shown on the right of the picture is named the “Osier Bed”

The pits above are just part of an area that was excavated for gravel. Earsham Gravels Ltd excavated these pits for over fifty years and over the years, massive bones have been found, thought to be of prehistoric mammals, or even dinosaurs. Mammal tusks have also been found. Some of their bones are on display at Bungay Museum with other items found in the village, including roman coins and urns. These pits are now filled with water and left to nature, they have been taken over by water fowl including swans, geese, ducks, coots, moorhens, grebes and others. These pits have been stocked with fresh water fish over the years, and the fishing rights are held by Earsham Angling Club.

The wood on the right of the picture shown above, named the “Osier Bed” was a very well-known and rather an important part of the village, as this wood had a fresh water spring, which produced a large pool of crystal clear water, in which a large bed of young and tender watercress grew. This would be gathered in baskets and bunches of watercress would be

sold to the people in the village for a few coppers. In the early summer, most cottages would have a bowl of this watercress on their tables to supplement their salads, sadly the spring and watercress have now disappeared due to the gravel pits having obtained most of the water from the wood.

Bath Hills was also a favourite place for the school children to take their home made sledges in the winter time after a heavy fall of snow.



Another view of the exhausted gravel pits

# 20. Village Magazine – 1927

An extract of a 1927 Earsham Magazine, rather primitive compared with the 1995 village magazine

## Loddon Deanery Magazine.

Harvest operations are being attended with some anxiety in consequence of the weather but God will not fail us. At the time I write the ingathering has already commenced and by the blessing of God and in answer to much prayer we shall again meet to praise Him.

I greatly long to see a fuller recognition of His Day and His House of Prayer on the part of those who own and work the Farms. "Them that honour Me I will honour," saith the Lord.

## ALL SAINTS, EARSHAM

**Students' Missionary Campaign.** We would remind our readers of the announcement made in the July Magazine that we are to have a visit at Earsham at the end of September (24th to 27th) from two members of the four hundred Student Messengers who are taking part in a Campaign to make known the meaning of the World Call to the Church. Full details of the services and meetings to be arranged in connexion with their visit will be made known by a printed notice which will be distributed in the parish in due course. Meanwhile we ask for your personal interest in this important matter and your prayers that it may lead us all to a fuller understanding of God's purposes of Love for the whole world.

The Summer School Treat was held on August 10th on the Rectory meadow. The afternoon was spent in various games and on the swings. After tea at 4 o'clock there were a number of races for various sections according to age.

The weather was fairly good for this summer, though there were occasional sharp showers in the evening.

Some Barrel Organ Music and an ice cream stall were a source of interest and attraction, new on this occasion. Our best thanks are due to all who helped in the treat, to those who kindly gave subscriptions, and to Miss Ivy Chatten for so ably acting as Collector.

It is hoped next year if sufficient funds are forthcoming to arrange for an outing for the children to the seaside.

**Mothers' Union Summer Festival.** The members of the Earsham Branch of the Mothers' Union held their Summer meeting on Thursday, August 18th. There was a service in Church at 3 o'clock, when the Rev. J. H. Bailey, Vicar of Hoveton, gave the address.

In consequence of the stormy character of the weather it was not possible to have the tea and

## Woodton.

A meeting of the Parochial Church Council has been called to consider what is best to be done in the way of cleaning and colouring our Church, we all wish to see it improved. The Churchwardens have the matter in hand.

Our Choir Outing to Lowestoft was much enjoyed although we did not entirely escape the usual bad weather of most outings this Summer.

meeting in the Rectory Garden as arranged. The Village Room provided a welcome alternative. Here, after tea, Mrs. Bailey gave a little talk to the members.

The outstanding feature of the afternoon was the pleasure which it gave to all present to welcome Mr. and Mrs. Bailey at Earsham again, and to have the opportunity of both seeing and hearing them once more.

**Choir Outing.** The adult members of the Choir had their Annual Outing on Saturday, August 20th. It consisted of a visit in the morning to Fritton Lake and Gardens; and for the afternoon and evening to Yarmouth. The weather was unkind. Soon after arriving at Fritton it began to rain and it did not cease raining until after tea. In spite of this a cheerful spirit was manifested by the whole party, and on reaching home about 10.30 they all declared that they had thoroughly enjoyed their outing—Bravo!

**Correction.** Miss Maddie writes to say that she was not the judge for the Fancy Dress Parade at the Women's Institute Fête on July 19th. Miss Alice Needham kindly acted in that capacity on that occasion.

**Hearty Congratulations** to Mr. A. N. Wright on his appointment as one of the Directors of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows. This is an office of great importance and opportunity. We feel sure that the Manchester Unity have secured an excellent man for the post.

We are very glad to be able to report that in consequence of his work in the County Junior Scholarship Examination Walter Manning has been granted a "free place" at the Bungay Grammar School.

## BAPTISMS.

August 7th—Ronald William Page; William James Remblance; Iris Maud Wood; Albert Stanley Woodrow; Kathleen Maud Woodrow.

## 21. Earsham School Pupils in 1939



This school photograph was taken at Earsham School in 1939

### Top Row

John Archer	Wally Bayfield	Jack Trudgill	Lew Skipper	Eric Gilding	Jack Remblance	John Gilham	Peter Lawrence	Miss Brown Teacher
----------------	-------------------	------------------	----------------	-----------------	-------------------	----------------	-------------------	-----------------------

### Middle Row

Arthur Southgate	Ivan Remblance	Pauline Frost	Peggy Earye	Joan Skipper	Muriel Gooch	Doris Francis	Cliff Brown	Jack Page	Peter Brown
---------------------	-------------------	------------------	----------------	-----------------	-----------------	------------------	----------------	--------------	----------------

### Bottom Row

Ilien Ryan	Joan Purcel	Joyce Davidson	Peggy Alexander	Jill Page	Violet Longshaw	Connie Scarsbrook	Betty Eade
---------------	----------------	-------------------	--------------------	--------------	--------------------	----------------------	---------------

These children are now grandparents themselves and some of them have grandchildren attending Earsham School this very day.

Jack Page and Jill Page are my brother and sister – they are also twins

## 22. Farms and Farmers before 1940



Church Farm opposite Waveney Crescent



Marsh Farm in the background

## Farms in the Village up to 1940 and the farmers

Tithe Farm	}	
Lodge Farm	}	Farmed by Mr. F. Snelling Snr.
Church Farm	}	
River Farm	}	Farmed by Mr. N. Walpole
Valley Farm	}	
Park Farm	}	Farmed by Mr. Meade, Earsham Estate
Camphill Farm	}	
Denton Road Farm	}	Farmed by Mr. R. Revell
Victoria Farm	}	
Hall Farm	}	Farmed by Mr. F. Cheney
Hill Farm	}	
Rookery Farm	}	Farmed by Mr. F. Snelling Jnr.
Marsh Farm	}	Farmed by Mr. G. Hancy
Ivy Farm	}	Farmed by Mr. R. Turner

There were eight farmers, some farming more than one farm in the first half of the century, now there are only about two.

Farm workers worked long hours for very little pay in those days.

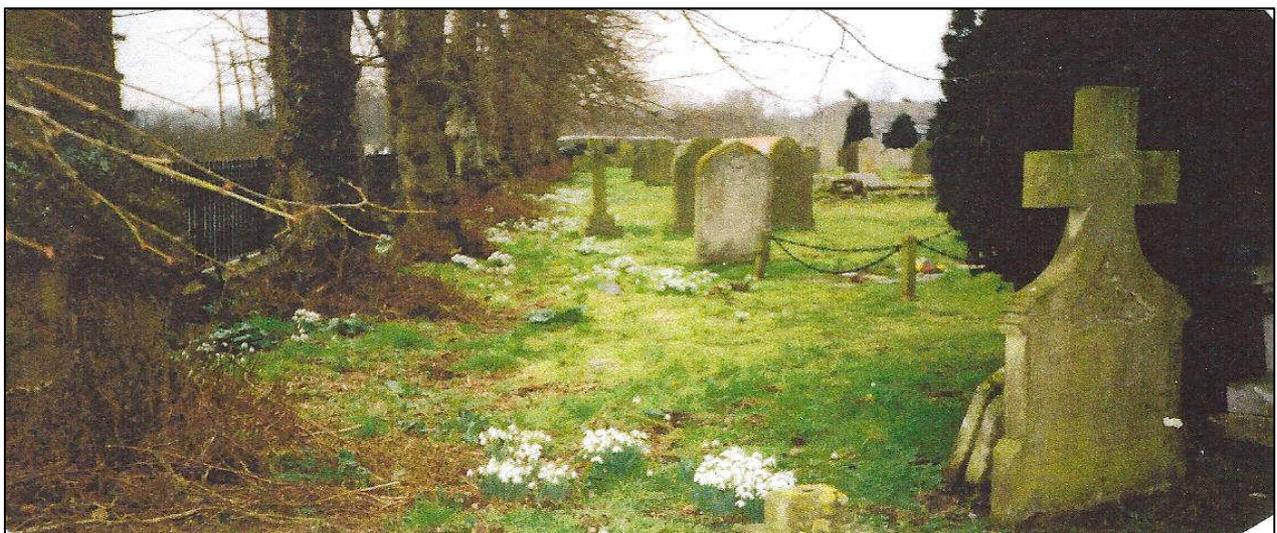
## **23. Village sounds we used to hear**

Up until 1939, one of the sounds heard twice a day in the village was the steam hooter at Clays Printing Works in Bungay. It sounded for a full minute at 7.50am and again at 1.20pm to inform the employees that they had 10 minutes before starting work. It could be heard in many surrounding villages as there wasn't T.V.'s or many radio's and people used to check their watches and clocks by the hooter which was very accurate.

Another sound sadly missed today is the village blacksmith's hammer ringing on his anvil. It was a sound we heard on our way to school. Quite often, we would stop to watch him put new shoes on the heavy farm horses.

Another sound we heard quite regular was the steam trains pulling their many wagons full of merchandise on the passenger trains with their many carriages, also a the train whistle, the men working in the fields would know the time by the trains.

Another very pleasant sound was the church bells ringing 3 times every Sunday, it made Sunday feel like the Sabbath for everyone, no supermarkets open in those days!



First sign of spring in Earsham Churchyard – picture taken in February 1995

## 24. Church Road – Old Thatched Cottage



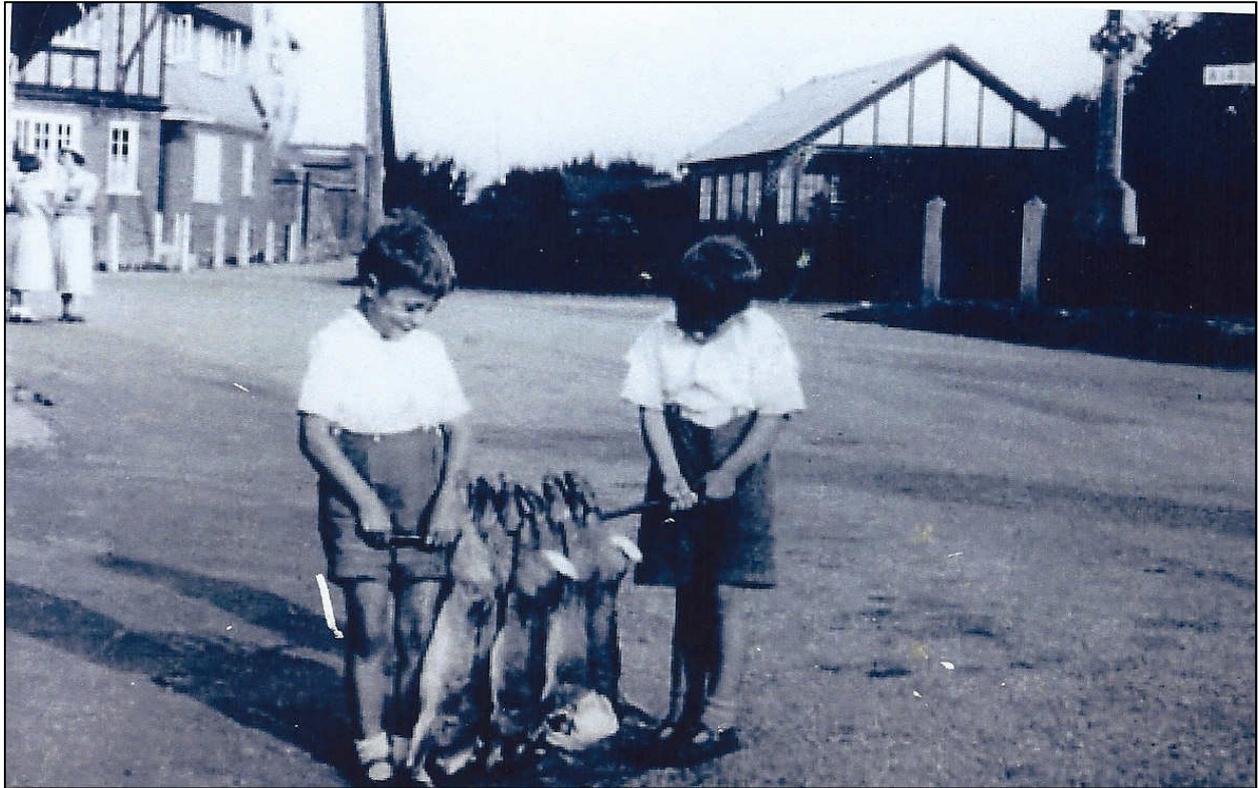
This picture of the old thatched cottage was taken about a hundred years ago, a village man and wife raised 10 children in their cottage.

He was a thatcher and hurdle maker and a fine craftsman. They lived there until around 1960.



This picture show the modern day house, built on the site of the old thatched cottage, with all its modern conveniences.

## 25. Two Local Boys – Harvest Field Catch



This picture of two village boys displaying their catch from a local harvest field.

This picture was taken around 1938.

Rabbits were the main source of meat for many families in those days.

Now the old SELF BINDER has been replaced by the COMBINE HARVESTER scenes like the one above will never be seen again.

The village hall is seen in the background, with the house on the top left being the home of the village policeman. His beat also included Denton and Alburgh. The Memorial can be seen at the top right of the picture.

-ooOoo-

**-ooOoo-**

This book  
**“Earsham -  
some of its History”**  
was given to  
Earsham Parish Council  
by the author  
**Mr. Ron Page**  
**May 2012**

**-ooOoo-**