

ARCHWAY HOUSE¹

Herman Biddell (1832-1917) - its builder

Built for his retirement from farming in 1892, Herman Biddell lived at Archway House for the last 25 years of his life. He had been born in Playford at Hill House, the youngest of ten children, and



Herman Biddell (1832-1917) who built Archway House for his retirement. Reproduced by kind permission of Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch, qS Playford 9 www.suffolk.gov.uk/sro.

took over the tenancy of the farm on his father Arthur's death in 1860. While he was a recognised authority on agriculture within the county and a frequent correspondent on the subject in the local press, there is some doubt as to how much his heart was really in it.^{2 3} A man of huge energy and great intellect, much of his time was spent away from home serving on committees and rubbing shoulders with the great and the good of the county. Farming had enjoyed ten rewarding years after the death of his father, but the opening up of the American prairies to cultivation in the 1870s brought about a dramatic fall in grain prices that reached their nadir some 20 years later.⁴ While most farmers at that time died in harness, Biddell had already turned to a more secure source of income. Retiring quite young, still a little under 60, he worked from home as an estate agent until his death. Precisely what this entailed can only be imagined but,

with the big estates beginning to break up as a result of the prolonged agricultural depression and domestic properties increasingly being bought rather than rented by an expanding middle class, his many contacts would have provided him with plenty of work to which he would have been admirably suited.

¹ The caption to a 1912 photograph of the house written in Herman Biddell's hand reads 'Fynn Brook Manor commonly called Archway House', a *portmanteau* name combining that of the river flowing through the parish with one of its tributaries in the adjoining field. The reason for the change and the significance of the name Archway is not known.

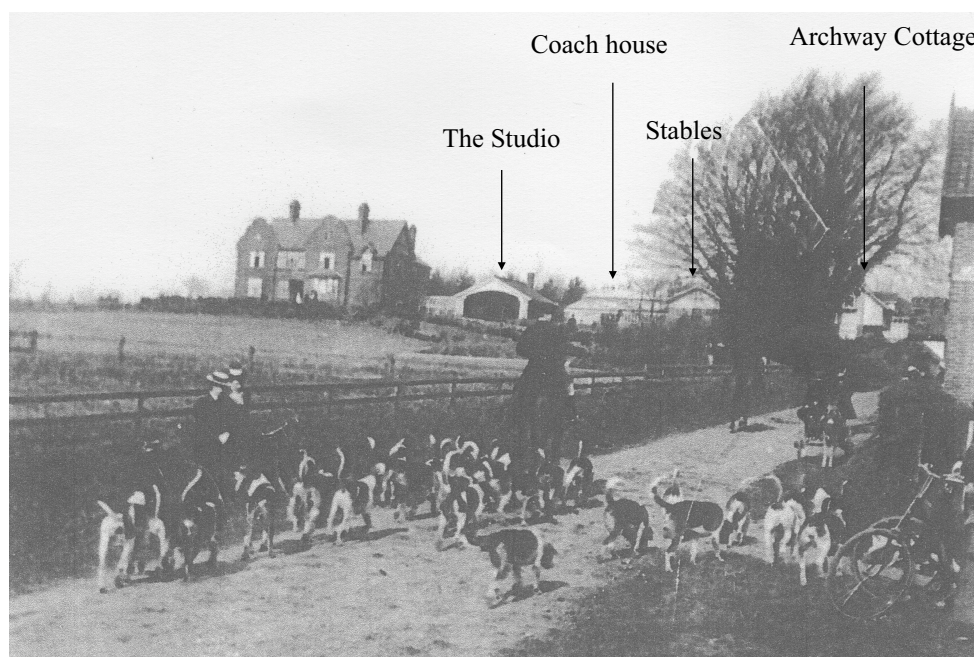
² *Victoria History of the County of Suffolk*, Vol. II, (London, 1907), 382-402. Biddell edited the section on 'Agriculture'.

³ George Ewart Evans, *The Horse in the Furrow*, (London, 1960), 182. His husbandry did not always command the full respect of those who worked for him. One of his old workmen commented that: 'He wasn't much of a man about the farm; they used to call him a spear-grass farmer'.

⁴ Freight rates across the Atlantic plummeted. The price of wheat fell from 55s a quarter in 1870-74 to 25s in 1890. By 1894, by which time Biddell had retired, it had sunk to 22s. With the exception of the war years of 1914-18, farming was to remain in recession until 1939.

The decline of Biddell influence in the village

This instalment will cover Herman Biddell's years at Archway; his earlier life, and that of his three illustrious brothers, will be dealt with separately under Hill House. His retirement marked a watershed in village history and spelt the beginning of the end of the standing that the family had enjoyed in the parish for, two years after his moving house, his elder brother Manfred died while still tenant at Lux Farm. The two of them had farmed not only all the acres in the parish but had been the employers of practically every able-bodied man and boy.⁵ No sons were to follow either man in farming and so, for the first time in nearly 100 years, the farms were let out to newcomers.⁶ Political forces were also at work. The Local Government Act of 1894, which introduced elected councils at parish level, relieved church Vestries of their civil responsibilities and, as churchwarden, put a further curb on Herman's influence. His self-esteem suffered another blow when the left-



The completed house, 1890s. By the time of the sale in 1934 the coach house had been converted into a garage for three cars; in the 1970s a new house was built where the '3 box stables, harness room and loft' had stood. Biddell collection

leaning Francis Seymour Stevenson became the Council's first chairman and brought with him four farmworkers to sit on the Council. Stevenson, the Liberal MP for Eye, had bought Playford Mount in 1890. He had published a scholarly book in 1892 on Parish Councils and had helped Gladstone bring his Local Government Bill to the Statute Book. Herman Biddell's final blow came in 1904 when the newly licensed vicar, the Revd Clement Wright, insisted on there being two churchwardens for the parish rather than one. Biddell had been sole churchwarden for 44 years, the same length of time as his father before him and, considering the post too narrow a platform to share with others, took umbrage and played no further part in church affairs.

⁵ Census 1871. After Thomas Clarkson III's shameful departure to Jersey in 1867, the land belonging to Playford Hall Farm was shared out between Hill and Lux Farms; Herman and Manfred Biddell then farmed 1,530 acres between them and employed 62 men and 21 boys.

⁶ Hill Farm was occupied, very briefly for four years, by a man called Shewell. He was followed in 1896 by George Fiske from Bramford who stayed for 50 years until he died in 1946. From 1895-1928 Lux Farm was rented by Sam Sherwood who came from Hazlewood near Aldeburgh.

Herman Biddell: his outside interests

But while his standing in the village had suffered a series of setbacks, his reputation within the county remained as high as ever and he carried on energetically with all his good works. Among his many interests he was Chairman and then President of the Suffolk Horse Society whose stud book he had written in 1880.⁷ He was an Alderman on East Suffolk County Council. He was a Governor of Woodbridge Grammar School (now Woodbridge School). He was Chairman then President of the East Suffolk Chamber of Agriculture. He was a member of the Diocesan Conference at a time when Suffolk was in the Diocese of Norwich and meetings were held in the Norfolk capital at one of which he spoke with Clare Sewell Read, the first tenant farmer Member of Parliament, on the plight of farmers in the depressed 1890s. He was Playford's representative on the Woodbridge Board of Guardians which held fortnightly meetings and monitored the workings of the local Poor Law Union Workhouse at Nacton. He gave a paper to the British Association on their visit to Ipswich. He was everyone's after-dinner speaker of choice whether it be the local cricket club or a luncheon for honoured guests at the Suffolk Show. He was highly active in the Conservative cause writing frequently to the press and often sharing platforms with visiting politicians. It was often wondered why he never became an MP like his brother William as it was considered that he could have won the local seat with ease. And while still farming he painted for relaxation and exhibited at the Ipswich Fine Art Club 1881-1885 but in retirement in 1897 he allowed his membership to lapse.⁸

The Biddell family at Archway

Herman came from the 'harder' side of the family: opinionated, a strong Conservative with a fighting character 'always ready to break a lance with the most formidable opponent' yet also a zealous churchman. He 'did not manage money well neither did he enjoy the business side of farming'. In 1870 he had married Harriet Barlow, 15 years his junior, when he was 37. Their first child died aged four and it was to be six years after their marriage that their family really began. Retiring just before the age of 60, his children grew up mainly at Archway rather than at Hill House as might be imagined. Harriet was the only daughter of the rector of Burgh, a devout and homely type who took no interest in public affairs. This contrasting couple influenced their children's lives in differing ways: one of the daughters worked in London among the poor, the son went into the church while two daughters stayed at home doing good works in the village but to the detriment of their own financial position. Herman died in 1917 aged 84; Harriet lived on in the house for another eight years dying in 1925 at the age of 78.



Harriet Biddell (1847-1925)
wife of Herman Biddell and
daughter of the rector of Burgh
Biddell collection

⁷ 'A History and Register of the County Breed of Cart Horses', *The Suffolk Stud Book*, 1880, Volume I. Herman Biddell had been the Society's first Secretary and his brother Manfred its first Treasurer. Manfred was also a breeder of international repute winning first prize at the Royal Agricultural Society Show in 1856. Atop the village notice board is the figure of a man ploughing with a pair of horses, a reminder of the connection that Playford once had with the breed.

⁸ <http://www.suffolkpainters.co.uk/index.cgi?choice=painter&pid=71> Suffolk Painters. It was Herman Biddell who painted the two cottages in Hill Farm Road that are shown under 'Glenham', page 4; the mystery of the signature 'Fenton' however remains.

Juliana (1883-1965)

A fourth daughter Juliana married a GP, Owen William Dyne Steel, and went to live on the other side of the country. Little is known about either of them beyond the fact that Owen Steel came from an established family in Abergavenny, Monmouthshire, where both his father and grandfather were general practitioners in the town and active at high level in the Territorial Army. By the outbreak of the First World War the young Owen had completed his medical studies and by 1915, at the time of his marriage, was a captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps. In a non-combatant unit, he survived the carnage and took up practice in Leominster, Herefordshire, where the couple lived out their lives.

Dorothea (1876-1965)

Dorothea, the eldest of the siblings, left home in her twenties and spent her life in London working among the disadvantaged. She was known to be still in Stepney at the outbreak of the Second World War but it can be presumed that she was there much earlier than this as no less a figure than the Bishop of Stepney wrote to the Biddell family in 1917 apologising for his absence from her father's funeral.⁹ Significantly, too, the organist at that service was an Ernest Hodgson, a godson of Herman Biddell and regular organist for the Eton Mission Church in South Hackney a parish that all but adjoins that of Stepney.¹⁰ It was in Stepney too where in 1911 Dorothea's future brother-in-law Owen Steel was sharing a house with other medical students who were no doubt attending nearby Bart's Hospital. Such an encounter would provide an explanation of how her sister Juliana came to meet a young man from the far away Welsh Borders. Dorothea never married. Towards the end of her life she returned to Playford living in spartan accommodation at The Brook.¹¹ She died in St Mary's Hospital Tattlingstone, the former workhouse, in 1965 aged 89 and leaving just £346. She is buried in Playford churchyard in an unmarked grave but her name is recorded on the entrance gateway at the top of Church Hill, a gift from an admiring friend in grateful memory of her charitable work in the East End.¹²

Amy (1880-1959) and Rachel (1885-1970)

The other two daughters Amy and Rachel continued to live at home and, while their sister Juliana can be described as conventional in that she married a GP, this couple were anything but orthodox. Their nephew described them as eccentric; a cousin was less polite. Both women shuffled around the parish in their gym shoes giving the impression of a family in steep decline. Rachel played the part of a younger sister and, although she was on the Church Council for a great number of years,

⁹ 1939 Register. *East Anglian Daily Times*, 8 March 1917.

¹⁰ Ernest Hodgson was the son of the Revd Christopher Hodgson, Perpetual Curate of Playford & Culpho, 1857-71. Ernest was born in Playford in 1860, the same year that Herman became churchwarden on the death of his father.

¹¹ She lived in the first cottage on the right adjoining the brook where Mary Woby had once kept the school. The semi-detached property was converted into a single dwelling for her use. Both it and the cottage next door belonged to the West family who lived very briefly from 1887 to 1890 at Playford Mount and were considered to be 'some relation of the Biddells'. A Miss West of Sandy, Beds, owned the properties at the time of their demolition in the 1970s.

¹² SROI FC 22/A1/7, Playford Parish Records, PCC Minutes 1965-82, 13 February 1966. The friend, Mrs Gilmour, had sent a cheque for £200. She was from the United States but not from Arizona as stated on the plaque.

did little in the village beyond play the piano at social events.¹³ Amy, by contrast, was always the extrovert; she had a high profile and involved herself in most aspects of village life. She became the first woman chairman of the Parish Council from 1928-1935¹⁴, with her sister Rachel she ran the Sunday School and organised its annual outing, she put on plays at Christmas time for the children, took violin lessons and organised a weekly library in the Village Hall.¹⁵

The cousin writes: 'She was very knowledgeable and cultured.... She could see visions and dream dreams and live in another dimension. But in this world she was completely at sea. She had no sense of business and how to conserve money was completely beyond her'. In 1923 she married her first cousin Arthur Blencoe Biddell when she was 43 and he was 67; sadly he died from natural causes little more than three months after the wedding but managed in that short time to change his will in her favour. In the ensuing years she ran through not only all her own money but through his as well and was eventually declared bankrupt. Village people attributed this to her filling a temporary vacancy at the shop and being too generous with her customers but there was more to it than that.¹⁶ There were 'completely mad schemes' that she started up and even with the library that she got under way 'she would get any book, fetch it from any distance and deliver it to whoever asked for it. But she did not have a car, nor could she drive and had to hire both car and driver to do so. Soon all Arthur's money followed hers down the drain. She also went into photography in a big way buying very expensive cameras and equipment without.... having any previous experience. It is a pity that she did not try journalism as she was full of ideas and could express herself well.' Her bankruptcy caused considerable embarrassment in the community and, even 60 years later, was still talked about only in whispers. Despite all her good works, her stock took a tumble and she was never again so active in local affairs. Rather than showing sympathy, the village seemed to turn against her; for a woman in her position her profligate ways were not how to behave. She stood again for the Parish Council in the first election after the war but failed to get elected.¹⁷ The church however was more charitable and, despite never having previously served on the Council, she took office for the first time becoming churchwarden.¹⁸ As with most women of her generation, she never earned a penny of her own and survived on what she had inherited. Yet she turned her back completely on everything that her family had stood for stating that they had accumulated their wealth by paying low wages without enduring any corresponding hardship themselves.¹⁹ But

¹³ Rachel Biddell served on the PCC for over 30 years from its beginnings in the 1920s until 1957. No records survive of the earliest meetings but she is likely to have been a member from the outset.

¹⁴ She was also a radical and persuaded her gardener Alfred Dunnett to follow her when she stood down. He lasted two years during which time Amy stayed on the Council to hold his hand; they came off together in 1929. It must have been daunting for him at that time as his predecessors were all men of high standing: Francis Seymour Stevenson MP (with a First in Greats from Balliol); Sam Sherwood, nationally renowned farmer from Lux Farm and the vicar, the Rev Clement Wright, a Cambridge graduate. His successor was the Rev Daniel Ambrose, another Cambridge man.

¹⁵ *Christmas Time, a Fairy Play for Children*, Amy Biddell 1914. Amy Biddell wrote the play herself and had it printed and published in London. *Suffolk Chronicle*, 16 December 1946. A typical concert that she organised received a good press; it involved the 'village violin class' and the 'village singing class' each conducted by an ARCM.

¹⁶ Another example of her generosity was that on her husband's death she inherited a sizeable property in Foxhall which in 1929 she gave to her sister Dorothea whose needs she assumedly considered were greater than her own.

¹⁷ SROI EG 94/B1/1, Playford Parish Council Minute Book, 1895-1948, 11 March 1946. Nine candidates stood for five places.

¹⁸ SROI FC 22/A1/5, Playford Parish Records, PCC Minutes 1927-54, February 1946. She was elected in succession to Col Freeland who had died; she remained churchwarden for ten years.

¹⁹ SROI HD 436/4-18, Letters from Amy Biddell to Eric Wolton, 22 May 1948.

whether her aberrant ways could be put down solely to mad behaviour or to a deliberate ploy to rid the family of its ill-gained wealth is hard to tell.

Amy and Rachel stayed on at Archway for another nine years after their mother died in 1925, and while no precise date for the bankruptcy has been found, the money was running out fast. They went to live in two of the cottages that they had inherited from their father: primitive accommodation in the extreme. Amy went to live at Branson's while Rachel moved to a single bedroomed cottage of wooden construction at the back of Archway House.²⁰ It marked a huge comedown for a family that had once occupied two of the largest houses in the parish. With the house, they had inherited a share of 43 acres of land and a total of six cottages that their grandfather Arthur Biddell had bought following the death of William Branson in 1818. They had survived on the rents that these properties produced until in 1934 they were forced to sell. Such was considered Amy's plight around this time that Harold Burch, tenant of The Old Post Office on the corner of Hill Farm Road, was instructed to pay his two shillings a week rent not to Bertha Taylor his landlady but direct to Amy her cousin as she had 'come down in the world'.

Amy died in 1959 aged 79 and is buried with her husband in Playford churchyard. Rachel, the last of the family, died in 1970 aged 86 in St Audry's Psychiatric Hospital in Melton; she is also buried in Playford but in an unmarked grave.

Amy took a great interest in the history of the village, albeit in an ambivalent way: proud on the one hand of what her forebears had done but critical of the means by which they had achieved it. But it was to her that her father left all his and other family and business papers for safe keeping for which future generations must be grateful. They are now in the custody of the Suffolk Record Office in Ipswich. The collection is extensive and, surprisingly, includes records relating to Playford Overseers and Surveyors.²¹ There is also a manuscript treatise that he wrote which, although entitled 'Thomas Clarkson and Playford Hall', covers many other matters of general parish interest.²² It is of note that much of the material that Amy deposited before the war was sold to Ipswich Library rather than donated as is usual.

Herman Masterman (1878-1946)

Herman and Harriet's only son, christened Herman Masterman, pursued an entirely different track. He went up to Cambridge, was ordained for the priesthood and held various curacies in the socially diverse parishes of Fulham, Hampstead and Millwall before becoming Vicar of Southwark in 1912. For two years before that he was curate at St Clement's in Ipswich. He later moved to Cinderford in Gloucestershire before taking the living of Sandown in the Isle of Wight where he died in 1946. In 1912 he married Violet Bickersteth whose grandfather had been Bishop of Exeter from 1885-1900. Herman Masterman continued a family dynasty that was to serve the Church for another 100 years. His three sons were all ordained: John Herman Biddell (1915-2005) served in Nottinghamshire, Hugh Bickersteth Biddell (1918-1980) was Vicar of Selston, in the same county and Christopher

²⁰ Contemporaries differ as to which sister lived in the Gardener's Cottage; neither is recorded there in the List Of Electors.

²¹ SROI HA2, Biddell Family Papers. Arthur Biddell was Surveyor 1810-43, his son Manfred from 1843-92. Manfred was also Overseer 1847-93 and was succeeded by his brother Herman.

²² SROI qS Playford 9, *Thomas Clarkson and Playford Hall* by Herman Biddell.

David Biddell (1927-2016)²³ was Vicar of Stockport, Canon Emeritus and former Vice-Dean of Chester Cathedral.

Servants' accommodation



Archway Cottage was built for David Amoss, coachman for Herman Biddell. Biddell collection

At around the same time that Herman Biddell put up Archway House for his own use, he built Archway Cottage for his coachman David Amoss and a little later Lower Lodge for the family's one-time nanny Caroline Pipe. By that time both were already faithful family retainers and were to remain with the Biddells until they died.

David Amoss (1843-1930)

David Amoss came from a family whose members had all left their mark in the parish. Of his three uncles, Elisha became bailiff at Lux

Farm under Manfred Biddell, Elias gave evidence to the Select Committee on the Malt Tax in 1868 and Elijah, the highest profile of them all, ran the village shop for over 30 years and who later in life became tenant of the four acre market garden between what is now The Courts and Butts Hill. David's father had lost a leg and drove around in a donkey cart; his opportunities for employment were therefore limited but he ended his days as a carrier in the village. His disability apart, he was by all accounts 'not of too sterling a character' and it was deemed desirable to take the young David away from him and into the care of Hill House where from the age of seven he began by doing odd jobs for old Arthur Biddell. Not wanting to move on or better himself in any way, his responsibilities increased as he grew older and he became firstly groom and then coachman for the family. Arthur Biddell had come from West Suffolk; his brother still lived there and David, while still a boy, would make frequent trips on horseback to Bury taking and delivering messages between the two locations. Born at Gayfer's, he married Charlotte Reeve, a dairymaid at Hill House whose father was steward for Manfred Biddell at Monument Farm, in Foxhall. Until their move to Archway House, the couple had brought up a family in the right hand half of Hill Cottage next to the school. When Arthur Biddell died in 1860, David was kept busy driving Herman to his many social, sporting and political meetings in both East and West Suffolk. But, after 1923 when the



David Amoss (1843-1930) who worked for three generations of the Biddell family over a period of 80 years. *East Anglian Daily Times*

²³ *The Times*, 23 February 2016. Announcement of death.

coach no longer appears to have been used, David now 80, stayed on to work for the two sisters Amy and Rachel.²⁴ On his death in 1930, aged 88, they wrote a glowing if somewhat unctuous obituary in the local paper.²⁵ He had been with the family for 80 years.

Caroline Pipe (1852-1943)

By 1881 Caroline Pipe was already installed as 'nursemaid' at Hill House but it is most likely that she arrived sometime after Herman and Harriet Biddell's first baby was born in 1874. She never married and, being a domestic servant, 'lived in'. And as with so many nannies at that time, rather than leave when her charges had grown up, she stayed on with the family but with inevitably changed responsibilities. By 1901 she had become cook and in Harriet's years of illness and widowhood after 1917 she was referred to as 'my nurse'. But Caroline had developed medical problems of her own and was confined to a wheel chair; she had a weak heart and it is likely therefore that the single storey accommodation in Brook Lane was specially built for her because she could no longer manage the stairs at Archway. A fuller story on Caroline Pipe and her background will appear separately under Lower Lodge.

Other staff

Other servants employed by the household were Alfred Dunnett the gardener and two women who worked indoors. Alfred Dunnett was an elder brother of Walter whose family were to work on Hill Farm for three generations and who was the grandfather of Basil and Geoffrey Dunnett of modern times. As a young man, Alfred lodged with Mary Woby who had run the school at The Brook before it moved up to Hill Cottages in about 1866 and, after he married, their roles were reversed and Mary Woby in her old age came to live with him and his wife. He married Annie Noller, the sister of William Noller who until 1946 ran the one-acre market garden where the Church Lane Council houses now stand.²⁶ Although a long serving employee, there is no indication that he ever lived in the 'Gardener's Cottage' at the back of Archway House and the only tenant known to have done so was a Mrs Eliza Reeve, a relative of David Amoss, who died there in 1936.

The Biddells leave Archway: the 1934 sale

When Amy and Rachel could no longer afford to live in the big house, they put it, the six cottages and the 43 acres up for sale in 1934.²⁷ The property was offered as a whole or in four lots comprising firstly the house, outbuildings, Archway Cottage, the Gardener's Cottage and two paddocks of six and three acres. The other three lots were Branson's House with its farm buildings and 26 acres; the three nearby cottages; and Meadow Cottage all of which will be covered separately when the history of Branson's is discussed. It is of note that Lower Lodge, built for Caroline Pipe, was not included in the sale as it had been sold earlier to her family and has remained in separate possession ever since.

²⁴ Dorothy Read, ex. inf. Her father ran the shop from 1923. The use of the coach may well have finished with the death of Herman Biddell in 1917. The coach at Playford Hall was last used in 1925 the year before Threadkell the coachman died.

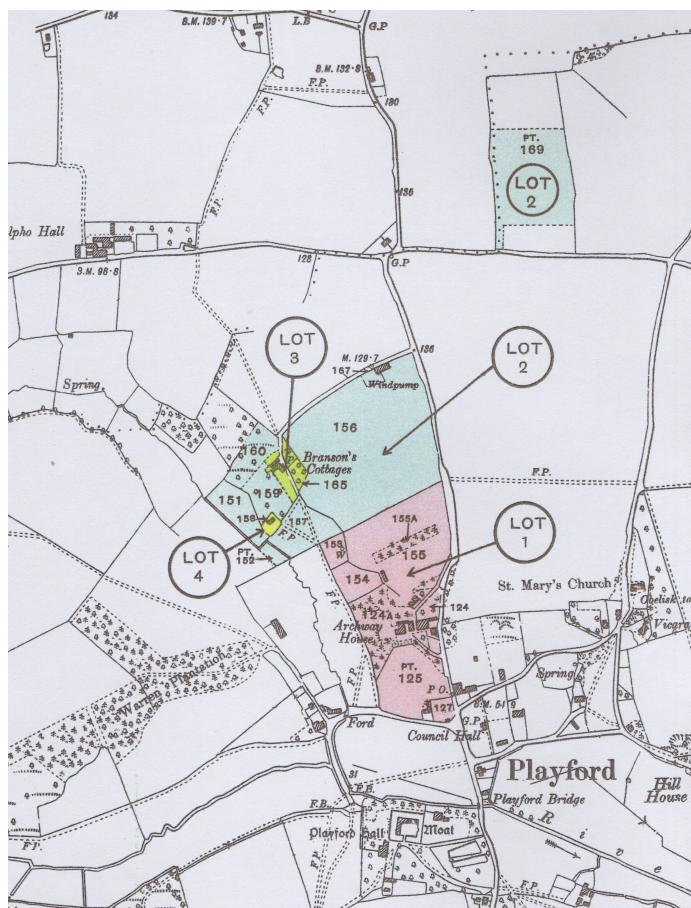
²⁵ *East Anglian Daily Times*, 16 December 1930.

²⁶ See Glenham in this series, 3 ref. 13.

²⁷ Sale catalogue, private possession. The sale was by Messrs. Bidwell & Sons at the Crown & Anchor Hotel, Ipswich, on 8 May 1934.

Newcomer Henry Bond (1893-1938)

The buyer of Lot 1, the main house and the Cottage together with the fields both in front and behind, was Henry Fielding Bond, owner of a large engineering business on the Woodbridge Road in Ipswich. His firm, H F Bond & Co Ltd, is still running (2016); it is still under the same name and



**‘The Archway House Estate’. Map from the sale catalogue
8 May 1934. Private possession**

still independently owned but now operating out of Clopton Commercial Park. Bond’s elder daughter Daphne Yetton (1919-2009) came to Archway as a girl of 15; she qualified as a physiotherapist in 1939 at Guys Hospital and spent the war years driving ambulances and troop carriers.²⁸ She then worked in many places throughout the world before returning to Playford in 1963 where she lived at Mill Cottage until moving away in 2007.²⁹ Her father died suddenly in 1938 at the young age of 45. Her step-mother continued to live on in the house; within three years she had married Charles Bristo, owner of a Vauxhall dealership on the Woodbridge Road, but on her death in 1963, the house was sold and it was then that Daphne Yetton bought Mill Cottage. Bond also bought Lot 2 which included the land around Branson’s cottages and up to Butts Road. He sold the building plot where David Ransome built Stoneylands (later Nightingales Hill) while his widow, now Joan Bristo, later sold the remainder of the main field to George Ditton in 1960. Intriguingly, Lot 2 included a parcel of some six acres of land in Westrups, the field to the north of the

Tuddenham to Bealings road between Culpho Corner and Clematis Cottage. The six acres were part of William Branson’s original farm that Arthur Biddell had bought in 1816, some of his land still lying in scattered medieval strips of which these still retained their original names.³⁰ For many years though, perhaps decades, there had been no identifying marks on the ground to show exactly where they lay. They had become fully integrated into the rest of the field with the appropriate measurements no doubt being held in the owner’s possession. The rent for the land was paid on a nominal acreage as appeared in the Tithe Apportionment Map of 1844.

²⁸ *The Benefice Newsletter of Great & Little Bealings with Playford & Culpho*, February 2010. Obituary, Daphne Yetton.

²⁹ While in Singapore she met and married Bill Yetton who had been captured by the Japanese when the city fell in 1942 and had worked on the Burma-Siam Railway. Daphne was widowed in 1953 when he was mysteriously lost at sea when traveling from Nigeria to England. Their son Rex is an anaesthetist in West Sussex.

³⁰ Until 1960 when it was bought by Charles Lofts, at £40 per acre, it was well known by all those connected with farming in the village as Aylescroft, a corruption of Alice Croft, the name that appears in the Tithe Redemption papers.

Electricity in the village, 1937

Emma Crisp's death in 1936 ended her family's 58 year tenancy of Playford Hall. The Bristol Estate then set about a major programme of refurbishment that included the installation of mains electricity. Playford Hall and Archway House were the first two connections in the village but due to the outbreak of war in 1939, with the exception of The Ridge which was completed that year, the supply went no further than the corner of Hill Farm Road. In May 1937, on a tiny TV screen and with a very grainy picture, Henry Bond and family were able to watch the Coronation of King George VI but in order to do so he had had to pay for the electricity poles himself. Only two other families are thought to have had a television in Ipswich at that time. The 1937 Coronation was the big event of early television and was its first true outside broadcast. It was the first programme of any kind to be viewed in the village and, followed by six years of war and a long period of austerity, it was to be 1953 before most people were to see television again.³¹ Elizabeth II's Coronation on 2 June that year was the tipping point for TV's popularity with millions watching it at home and millions more crowding into other people's homes to watch it there. In Playford a large numbers of villagers were invited up to Hill House for the occasion, Charles Lofts being among the very few to have owned a set at that time.

The Playing Field

Henry Bond's arrival in the village came within months of the death of Mary Kate Stevenson, the wife of Francis Seymour Stevenson, the former MP. She had owned both the Village Hall and the field in which it stood and in her will bequeathed.... 'the Hall and its contents.... for the benefit of the inhabitants of Playford' and for.... 'Special Trustees to hold [it].... as if they were absolute owners....' In a village bereft of leaders, within weeks of his setting foot in the parish, Bond was seized upon as one of those first Trustees. He was young, energetic and a successful businessman.³² At the same time as the Hall was donated to the village, Mary Kate Stevenson's executors put Playford Mount up for sale and with the property came what is now the Playing Field. This had been given over to allotments but they had dwindled in number and no more than six were thought to be remaining.³³ The buyer of both the house and the field was Gerald Benjamin, an estate agent and valuer from Ipswich, who in 1936 offered the field free of charge for the use of parishioners as 'a recreation ground or allotment land' for a period of five years.³⁴ Some arrangement must have been made with the dispossessed allotment holders as Bond took swift charge of reclamation and reseeded. A bowls green was laid out immediately to the north of the vehicle entrance where the car park is now.

³¹ Among invited guests in 1937 was Annie Page (later Anne Woods of Playford Corner) who was then eight years old. On leaving school in 1943, she went into service at Archway House.

³² The three other Special Trustees were George Fiske (farmer of Hill House, aged 66), Emma Crisp (of Playford Hall, aged 76) and Anna Airy (aged 53). Emma Crisp died within ten weeks of her appointment and was replaced by Col. Freeland of Bridge Cottage while Henry Bond, who died in 1938, was replaced by Gerald Benjamin the buyer of Playford Mount following Francis Seymour Stevenson's departure to Felixstowe..

³³ See Glenham in this series, footnote 10. A document listing the names of the tenants was lost about 20 years ago but Will Grimsey, father of Jean Durrell, was one of the last. He worked on Hill Farm for 52 years.

³⁴ Letter from Gerald Benjamin to Anna Airy, Secretary of the Parish Hall Committee, 5 August 1936. Events were to overtake Benjamin's generous offer which was not due to expire or be renewed until 1941. With the passing of the Physical Training and Recreation Act of 1937, which allowed local authorities for the first time to acquire land for playing fields, the Parish Council decided to purchase the field. This they did in 1940 paying £150 for it.

Preparations for war

With comparable speed Bond also found himself in charge of Playford's Air Raid Precautions (ARP) which were being co-ordinated across the county by East Suffolk County Council (ESCC). One of their early tasks was to get parishes to complete a large form in which names of volunteers had to be assigned to a list of needs such as first aiders and stretcher bearers. No fewer than 49 villagers came forward. The form was initially addressed to Col Freeland of Bridge Cottage, a

EAST SUFFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL.			PF/1.
Air Raid Precautions.			
Name of Parish.	PLAYFORD	Name of Sub Centre.	WOODBIDGE
Name and Address of Parish Representative.	H. Bond Esq., Archway House, Colonel J.G. Freeland, Bridge Cottage, Playford.		
Parish Headquarters during Air Raids.	Archway House, Playford	Telephone No.	Kesgrave 41
AIR RAID WARDENS.			
NAME.	ADDRESS.	LOCATION OF WARDEN POST.	Telephone No. of Post (if any).
F.C. Bays	Playford	Hall Cottages	The Hall Kesgrave 89
W.C. Grimsey	Playford		
J.F. Wyart	Playford		
CASUALTY SERVICES.			
Location of First Aid Post.	The Studio, Archway House, Playford		Telephone No. Kesgrave 41
Proposals for Supply of Hot Water.	Hot water for Archway House. Excellent supply of cold water from rain.		
FIRST AID PARTY.			
NAME.	ADDRESS.	Particulars of First Aid and/or Anti-Gas Training.	
Superintendent. Mrs Bond	Archway House, Playford (Kesgrave 41)	Fully qualified nurse.	
Deputy Superintendent. Mrs Goldsmith	Garsfords, Playford. (Kesgrave 34)	Attending A.R.P. Cadets.	
2nd Deputy Superintendent. Mrs P. Fisher	Hill House, Playford (Kesgrave 46)	Gas Cadets. Attending A.R.P. Cadets.	

In June 1938 the Studio at Archway House was designated Playford's First Aid Post with Joan Bond, a fully qualified nurse, as the superintendent in charge. Her husband, H F Bond, was given overall responsibility for Air Raid Precautions for the parish. Biddell collection

recently retired Indian Army officer, whose wife was a sister of Irene Fiske of Hill House.³⁵ He had been appointed Air Raid Precaution Representative at a meeting of the Parish Council in September 1937 but, in completing the form, Freeland's name had been deleted and replaced by that of Bond. It was Bond who signed it off in early June 1938 but within a matter of weeks he was dead.³⁶ It was announced by Capt Goldsmith, then Chairman of the Parish Council, that he had reappointed Col Freeland in his place.

³⁵ See Bridge Cottage in this series, 7.

³⁶ His widow Joan became chairman of the Parish Council for the first year of the war from 1939-40.

Archway House: Playford's First Aid Post

At a meeting of the Parish Council in May 1937, the Village Hall was designated the Minor Aid Post while on the completed ARP form that was sent to ESCC a year later the Studio at Archway was declared the First Aid Post with Joan Bond, 'a fully qualified nurse' as the Superintendent in charge. Whether either place was ever used as such is very much in doubt. Of the many incidents that occurred in the parish during the war years when the facilities might have been put to the test, the evidence is that they never were. All except two of these incidents happened away from the village in open countryside and caused little damage but in the bitter January of 1940 an RAF Hurricane, flying low over Archway and rapidly losing height, clipped its wing on the massive elm tree that stood at the bottom of the Playing Field causing it to spin round and crash into the upper story of the first council house in Hill Farm Road. It finally came to rest on top of the brick pillars at the southern entrance to the Village Hall. The pilot miraculously was unhurt having merely broken his nose; his only request was that Martlesham be informed of his plight. An ambulance was however called and had to battle through the snow to reach him but, while he waited, he was attended to by the Pilbrow family then living at Gayfers in Church Lane. The occupants of the council house, the parents of Will Grimsey who worked at Hill Farm, were out at the time but their home suffered extensive damage and remained unoccupied for the rest of the war. The rebuilt upper section remained clearly visible until about the year 2000 when the whole house was newly colour washed but the line between the upper and lower pebble-dashed west wall can still be made out today. The other house to suffer damage was Playford Mount which took a direct hit from an incendiary bomb; again there were no casualties but the house was also rendered uninhabitable for the duration.^{37 38}

There was a near miss close to the village. An RAF plane flying from the direction of Little Bealings crashed to the east of the church. It ploughed through the thorn hedge at the western edge of Home Field leaving a gap that remained visible until a few years ago. Again, there were no serious injuries. The crew were helped to evacuate by Fred Dunnett who at the time was picking apples in the orchard for his employer George Fiske; they were taken down the church steps to be attended to by Anna Airy at The Cottage.

One other plane crashed in the parish. An American aircraft exploded on landing on Stony Warren killing the pilot and leaving a massive hole in the ground that was not filled in until well after the war. Body parts were blown into trees and the Home Guard blocked off Warren Lane to ward off sightseers; all that villagers saw were the remains of the aircraft being taken away on a low-loader. While aircraft fell out of the sky all too frequently during the war, only five V2 rockets impacted on Suffolk soil. The second such missile to do so came down in Clappetts, a field immediately to the south of New Buildings on Lux Farm. The blast set alight half a dozen nearby corn stacks and blew in all the windows of the cottages there. Even down in the village half a mile away windows were

³⁷ *Air raids on Ipswich WW2*, a website that has now been taken down. The incendiary attack on 3 November 1943 followed a major raid on Ipswich at 1905 hrs. Returning aircraft jettisoned bombs on the way home in a line from Culpho Corner to Boot Street, those falling on Common Field providing a 'fireworks display' for the youth of the village two days before Bonfire Night. Those that fell in Boot Street appear not to have detonated and were collected the next morning by black segregated US servicemen stationed at Debach, an airfield that did not become operational until April the following year.

³⁸ War Damage Commission, Regional Office, Cambridge. File No. 4/2/1891, 4 December 1943.

also broken at both Archway House and at the shop but no injuries occurred.³⁹ A high explosive bomb also fell in Road Field to the east of New Buildings.

But the greatest number of bombs fell on the Heath and were most probably intended for Martlesham airfield. One fell in the corner of Valley Walk opposite Playford Corner cottages at the junction of Doctor Watson's Lane and Playford Road. It left a hole about 20 feet deep and blew out the windows of Sink Meadow cottage in the middle of Playford village more than half a mile away. It was the last in a string of bombs that fell along the Martlesham Road in an afternoon raid the first having been dropped in the garden of the bungalow that now adjoins the Woodbridge bypass. On a separate occasion two others fell in the wood to the west of Heath Cottages the sites of which are still visible today. Yet another fell in the field behind the carpet shop opposite Kesgrave Bell but failed to explode; it became entangled in Jim Woods' plough and was dealt with by the bomb disposal team. Many years later William Stennett ploughed up an incendiary bomb on the Martlesham side of the track just past Heath Cottages and as recently as 2006 two 1,000 lbs bombs were discovered when an archaeological survey was being carried out at a time when Kesgrave High School was extending its playing field area westwards into land previously part of Lux Farm.⁴⁰

The 1960s and the division of the house

When Joan Bristo died in 1963 aged 54, the house and grounds were put up for sale. Her death came at a time of great change in housing across the nation. In Playford all the cottages in the centre of the village were soon to be demolished to make way for Spring Meadow and those that remained on the periphery were converted from double into single dwellings. A degree of 'levelling' was also taking place up and down the country with many large houses being pulled down, owners citing war damage, high rates of death duty and a decline in domestic service as reasons for their fate. Many less substantial houses were split up and it was at this time that both Archway and The Mount were divided in two. Having been a former estate village, nearly all the original cottage properties still remained in a single pair of hands and the change from agricultural village to middle class dormitory or retirement home was in consequence rapid. In other more open communities which enjoyed a greater spread of ownership, redevelopment followed a more piecemeal course.

Archway House was bought as a whole by Louise Hobbs, a doctor at the Lattice Barn Surgery on the Woodbridge Road. She undertook the conversion and sold off the western side while retaining the field in front of the house and living in the eastern half herself until she moved in 1982.⁴¹

³⁹ V2 rocket.com Internet website. The rocket was launched from Rijsterbos in the north of Holland at 1419 GMT on Wednesday 11 October 1944. First hand accounts came from Jim Woods and Frank Mann who were ploughing in an adjoining field, from Annie Page and Jean Grimsey who were in service at Archway House, from Susie Gray the shopkeeper who was thrown to the floor and from José Burch who was in the outside 'bumbie' at the Old Post Office when the door was blown in.

⁴⁰ *Ipswich Evening Star*, 3 April 2006, 2-3. The bomb disposal officer described them as the most effective type of bomb that the Germans used to attack runways during the war. Kesgrave School and its grounds were in Playford parish until the boundary changes of 1984. With the exception of a very narrow strip of land, a mere 125m by 12m immediately to the east of Doctor Watson's Lane, the old A12 trunk road from London to Yarmouth (now the A1214), formed the dividing line between the two parishes. But with the expansion of Kesgrave and the corresponding enlargement of the school and its playing fields, some 60 acres of Playford parish were transferred to Kesgrave.

⁴¹ Following the chronic food shortages after the Second World War, the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union had by the 1970s and '80s led to serious overproduction. Such were the subsidy incentives that practically every acre of grassland in the parish was ploughed up including the three acre paddock in front of Archway House where a farmer from Rushmere grew barley and sugar beet. Charles Lofts cultivated the even smaller area behind the house.

During her time in Playford she had, in 1972, sold off land immediately behind the house to Charles Lofts while ten years later the new owners of the eastern side and the field were Hilary Birkin and Trish Laws, both headteachers in special education, with Mrs Laws' daughters Karen and Tracey.



Coronation Day, 2 June 1953. Over 160 residents of Playford and Culpho were treated to a sit-down meal in The Studio at Archway House. Archway provided a regular venue for fetes and bowls in the 1950s and '60s. Private possession

Their side of the house was changed to Rookwood, Archway House. Both Hilary and Trish were to play a central role in the remodelling of the Village Hall in 2002. While they have been resident for over 30 years, the western side has seen many changes of occupant.

Archway Field⁴²

Herman Biddell had chosen what was undoubtedly the best site in the village: an elevated position, south facing over the Fynn valley and with ample acres around the house to ensure a degree of privacy. With the exception of the one small plot in the south-east corner of the field on which the Barrack Cottages stood, all the land from Brook Lane to the top of Butts Hill belonged to the Bristol Estate. But Biddell had inherited adjoining land from his father that was once part of William Branson's 'little farm on the Butts Road' and he was therefore in a position to do a swap. He exchanged his $7\frac{3}{4}$ acre arable field named Back Harrow (at Culpho Corner) together with a $3\frac{1}{2}$ acre pasture field to the west of Meadow Cottage with the Marquis's $15\frac{3}{4}$ acre field on which he proposed to build his house.⁴³ That the acreages are not equal is because the value of Biddell's land was rated more highly than the light sandy soil of Archway Field. Interestingly, this private and logical arrangement required approval from the newly formed Board of Agriculture; it had to be

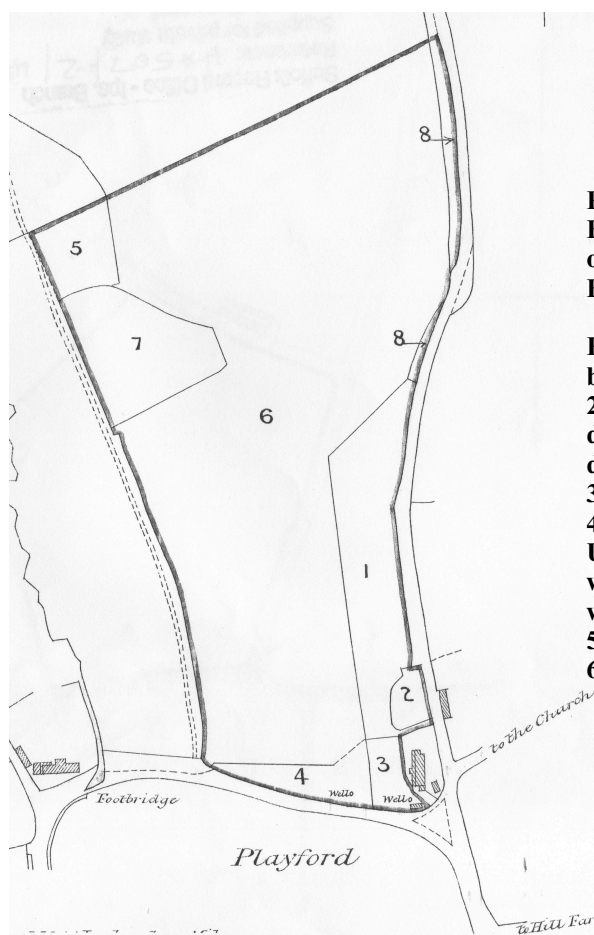
⁴² Previously Burnt House Field.

⁴³ SROB HA 507/2/490.

advertised on three successive weeks in the local press and a period of three months had to elapse to allow time for dissent.⁴⁴

The cottages that were demolished

Until the later years of the 19th century this south-east corner had contained at least as many cottages as there were down at The Brook but, unlike at The Brook, the majority were in terraces so that they were crammed together in much less space. But by the time of Biddell's acquisition of the field only the Barrack Cottages remained, the others having been pulled down in the preceding



Plan of land acquired by Herman Biddell from the Bristol Estate in 1891 in exchange for some that he owned and which had previously belonged to William Branson. Biddell collection

Key: 1. The two acre strip of land that Robert Davey bought from William Branson in 1793.

2. Site of John Mann's Cottages, birthplace of his daughter Lucy who left £100 to the church on her death in Fulham in 1904.

3. Site of Abraham Mann's three-dwelling terrace.

4. Site of Playford Hall Farm's bailiff's house.

Until 1901 sites 1-4 had been given over to allotments which were then transferred to the Miller's Field where the Playing Field now is.

5 and 7. Meadow land already in Biddell's possession.

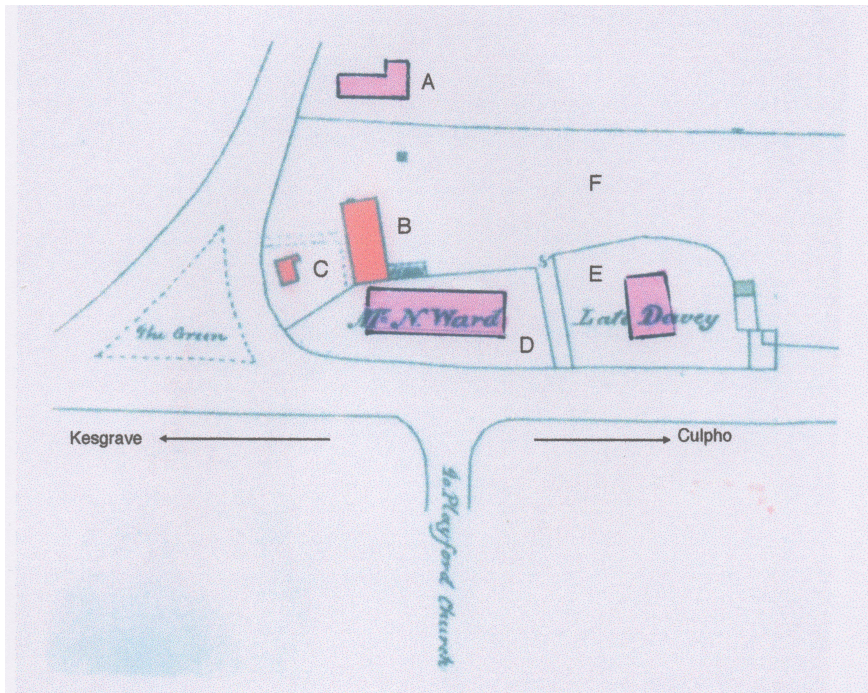
6 Burnt House Field.

10-20 years. All except one had been copyhold properties and, in an attempt to improve the housing stock in the parish, had been enfranchised and bought back by the Estate with a view to replacement and upgrading.⁴⁵ It is because of their former copyhold status that so much documentation is still to be found among the Bristol archives in the Bury Record Office but only a little survives that throws light on their actual origins. Sufficient evidence exists however to give an interesting glimpse into a side of 19th century Playford history that would otherwise have been missed.

⁴⁴ *Ipswich Journal*, 13 June 1891.

⁴⁵ The replacement and upgrading never took off until the 1870s and '80s when it proceeded apace. Altogether the Estate pulled down some dozen or so old cottages. Three replacements were made in 1878 at the mill after the machinery had been removed and a second storey added to the adjoining stables. A further nine were built in the early 1880s closer to where they were needed: two at Lux Farm, two at Playford Corner, two at New Buildings, two at the entrance to Playford Hall and also the single dwelling of Dairy Cottage at Hill Farm.

The Abraham Mann (B) and John Mann cottages (E)



The south-east corner of Archway Field, undated but between 1845-1858.

A: Playford Hall Farm bailiff's 3-bedroomed house. B: Abraham Mann's 3-dwelling terrace with later added 4th dwelling coloured black.

C: Shoemakers' workshop belonging to Robert Davey (d.1829) then Abraham Mann (d.1848) and then to his son William (d.1887). D: Barrack Cottages. E. John Mann's double cottage. F: The two acre strip of land running parallel with Butts Road. Biddell collection (adapted)

A narrow two acre strip of land, less than 40 yards wide parallel with Butts Road and running from Brook Lane almost to the top of the hill (F), had at one time belonged to the Fuller family, the same Fuller family of carpenters that in 1843-44 had sold George Biddell Airy his cottage at the foot of Church Hill. At some time during the 1700s the Fullers sold out to William Branson who in turn sold it on to a Robert Davey in 1793. Davey was a shoemaker who had rented one of Branson's three terraced cottages (B) which stood at the bottom of this two acre strip and which faced SSE overlooking The Green where the telephone kiosk now is. He was an

astute man and had obviously made money for just three years earlier he had bought two other cottages down at The Brook and was later to buy a further two on the Butts Road (E). By the time of his death in 1829 he had become the owner of a considerable amount of property.

Abraham Mann, shoemaker

Dying childless, he left instructions that after his widow Betsey's death all his property was to pass to the two sons of his great friend Abraham Mann, Abraham junior and John.⁴⁶ Out of the two acre strip, in 1814 he had sold off two building sites: one for the Barrack Cottages (D) opposite the entrance to Church Lane and one to the north of it just a little further up the hill (E).⁴⁷ It is probable that he sold the first site to some 'cottage jobber' who 'put up cheaply and at great speed and who then let for maximum rent'. Ownership, as far as is known, was outside the village. The second site was bought by a William Durrant, a labourer in the village who, on completion, sold his finished cottages back to Davey. Betsey, Davey's widow, inherited everything but on her death in 1833 four years after that of her husband, her estate was split up. Abraham junior inherited the principal property, namely the three-cottage terrace plus the remnants of the two acre strip of land (B and F) as well as the cottage in which he was living at The Brook (Journey's End on the corner of Brook

⁴⁶ SROI IC/AA/249/103, will of Robert Davey.

⁴⁷ SROB HA507/2/477. Robert Davey sold 10 perches of land to William Durrant, 13 May 1814. No records exist for the sale of the lower Barrack site but, as the building materials were available between 1813 and 1816, it is presumed that the land sale was at or around the same time. The entrance and upper boundary to the higher site can still be made out today by the off-set north-east facing gateway in the road hedge just below the entrance to Archway.

Lane and Warren Lane) and the one immediately to the north of it while John was left his cottage (on the higher site on Butts Road) and the one next door (E).⁴⁸ These four cottages were retained within their respective families and passed down to the next generation but on the death of Abraham junior's widow Susan in 1854 the three-cottage terrace had to be sold in order to pay off a debt of £99 plus interest owed to Abraham's main supplier, Walton Turner, a currier and leather cutter from Ipswich.⁴⁹ The terrace was put up for sale by auction at the Great White Horse but failed to meet the reserve. It was later bought privately by the Estate for £210 while the remainder of the two acre strip, after the two building plots had been taken out of it, was absorbed into the rest of the field (Burnt House Field) which the Bristol family already owned.⁵⁰ Some 16 years later the terrace was still standing and received a damning report in the survey that Lord Bristol himself instigated in 1870-71. It was demolished very shortly afterwards.⁵¹

Both Mann brothers served apprenticeships as shoemakers under Robert Davey but thereafter they and their families were to lead very different lives. Abraham and his family hardly ventured from home, rarely more than one village away. His eldest son William in fact stayed on in Playford and continued the trade until he died. Furthermore two of his sons became third generation shoemakers though they drifted away while still young men. The shoe making business had been carried on, ever since Robert Davey's time, in the shed (C) that stood in front of the three terraced cottages on The Green. When the terrace was sold to the Estate, the shed was included in the sale but was not demolished with the cottages in the 1870s as it was still in use; it was still standing long after William's death in 1887 and in fact is recorded on the OS map of 1926-28. The Bristol family thus became the proud owners of a tradesman's old workshop for which they received a rent of two pounds a year.⁵² William's two daughters remained unmarried and continued to live at home with their ageing parents: Elizabeth the elder was disabled while Emma became the school mistress when the Hill Cottages were made available in around 1866.⁵³ William's youngest son Philip was a pupil teacher and he too stayed at home until he found employment elsewhere.

John Mann, his brother

By contrast John married a girl from Dedham and left the trade while all his children moved away to London. And while Abraham got into trouble with debt, a debt that was repaid on the death of his

⁴⁸ SROB HA 507/2/747.

⁴⁹ Walton Turner is much more widely known as the founder of E R & F Turner, the internationally respected firm of flour and provender milling engineers that operated in Foxhall Road and which continues trading (2016) as Christy Turner in Knightsdale Road. He died in 1847 and Abraham Mann's debt was repaid to his widow. A son, Edward Rush Turner, took control of the engineering business while another son, also Walton, continued on the leather cutting side.

⁵⁰ SROB HA 507/2/477. The sale at the Great White Horse was on 6 February 1855. It would appear that between the deaths of Abraham Mann in 1848 and his widow Susan in 1854 the three-house terrace increased to a four-house terrace by the addition of a small extension northwards coloured black in the plan. It was most likely a one-up and one-down dwelling occupied by a Sam Scarlett and his 20 year old wife. In 1884 subsequent Scarletts became the first occupants of the new cottages at Playford Corner, a junction that was known by villagers for over 70 years as Scarlett's Corner.

⁵¹ SROB HA 507/3/747. The Bristol Estate carried out an inspection of all its Suffolk properties *c.* 1871 with a view to upgrading its housing stock. The three cottages in the terrace had just the single bedroom, a sitting room and a back kitchen. They were in poor condition: tiling was described as bad, chimneys not safe and the common well dangerous. At the time of the survey James Frost, great-grandfather of José Booker, lived at the western end with his wife and four children. Although Thomas Clarkson III had left the village in 1867 and the land apportioned between the other two farms in the parish, the terrace was still listed under cottages belonging to Playford Hall Farm.

⁵² SROB HA 507/3/747, Bristol Estate Survey, *c.* 1871.

⁵³ See Glenham in this series, 9-14. When the school closed, Emma did go as housekeeper for her uncle in Wolferton.

widow, John or at least his family got into trouble with the law and spent time in custody.⁵⁴ His three daughters went into service in the more upmarket parts of the capital and found work in Hammersmith, Kensington and Fulham while the two boys took labouring jobs in Stepney and Mile End, a snapshot of the migration from the countryside that was taking place right across England at that time.⁵⁵

John married a Sarah Pilkington in Dedham 1815.⁵⁶ He had met her through her brother who was for a while stationed at the artillery barracks on Norwich Road in Ipswich, and had married a Playford girl.⁵⁷ John became one of the first tenants of the the cottage on Butts Hill and, on Betsey Davey's death in 1834, he became the owner but by 1841 he and his family had gone.⁵⁸ John and Sarah had moved back to Dedham where in 1849 John died. Both Abraham's and John's families held on to their respective cottages: Abraham's passed to his son William who continued to live in the family home while letting out the one next door while John's passed to his five children who, if they had not already left the area, were soon to do so. As absentee landlords, the maintenance of their cottages was grossly neglected such that by 1871 they were described as 'unoccupied and in a dilapidated state'. By this time three of the five siblings had died and had passed on their share to a third generation but, unable to find tenants for such rundown premises, the scattered owners decided to sell. Unsurprisingly, there were no buyers and it was not until 1879 that the Estate took an interest. An understanding to buy had been registered but it took until 1883 to track down all the owners and for the legal situation to be properly established. By this time the cottages had been demolished and all the family had to show for their inheritance was the £60 that they had been paid for the surrender of their copyhold. The village received a small memento of these properties when John Mann's youngest daughter Lucy died in London in 1904 leaving £100 to the church. Born in 1827, she had been brought up there as a young girl when they were nearly new.⁵⁹ The money appeared separately in the annual accounts for many years under the heading 'Mann Trust 3½% War Stock' but was merged with the General Fund in 1976 and lost its identity.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ SROI 106/3/8.4, 132, Woodbridge Gaol Books. In 1838 John's two sons James (aged 21) and Laurence (aged 14), both then shoemakers, stole fowls in Playford and were remanded in custody until discharged at Assizes.

SROI 106/3/8.3, 92, John himself may also have served a term in prison. In 1827 a John Mann of Playford was sentenced to three months hard labour for 'stealing a quantity of Tare Straw the property of Arthur Biddell'. Had his age in the Gaol Book been given as 39 rather than 29 there would be no doubt as to his identity but no other John Mann is known to have lived in the village at that time and his recorded age could well have been a clerical error.

⁵⁵ The population of Greater London was increasing at a rate of 20-25% each decade between 1841 and 1881.

⁵⁶ Essex Record Office, D/P 26/1/10.

⁵⁷ SROI FC22/G2/9, Playford Parish Records. The brother died in 1811 in Celorico, Portugal, Wellington's headquarters in the Peninsular War; he was serving with the Royal Military Artificers, a forerunner of today's Royal Artillery. News of his death came in a letter from Woolwich addressed to his father-in-law [William Rainbird then of Ipswich] and marked 'concerning John Mann. To be left at The Dove in St Helen's Street 'till cald for'.

⁵⁸ SROI FC 22/D1/4, Playford Parish Records. It is to be presumed that he was in Playford for the christening of three of his children in 1837. SROI FDA 196/41/19, Tythe Apportionment Map of 1844. John Mann is confirmed as the owner but not as an occupier.

⁵⁹ SROI FC 22/L1/3, Playford Parish Records. Miss Lucy Mann's legacy. 1901 Census: Lucy Mann had married Alexander Young and the couple in fact shared a quarter part of the £60 from the sale of the copyhold. Yet 20 years later she was living 'on her own means' in upmarket Fulham having reverted to her maiden name and describing herself as single rather than widowed.

⁶⁰ SROI FC 22/A1/7, Minutes of Playford Parochial Church Council, 1965-82, 2 June 1975.

Barrack Cottages

The four-dwelling terrace shown in the photograph was built in around 1816 as a pair of semi-detached cottages and subdivided at a later date.^{61 62} In a surrender document of 1858 it is also clear that at some time in its history an extension had been added, most likely to the north end, so that as



Barrack Cottages (left). Built as a pair of semi-detached dwellings from materials out of the Woodbridge Road barracks c. 1816, they were later modified into a 5- cottage terrace. The landlady of the Kicking Donkey lived in the bottom cottage which in 1871 was amalgamated with its neighbour to accommodate the new beerhouse. The whole row was pulled down in 1892, the last of the properties in Archway Field to be demolished. Private possession

many as five separate families once lived in the block and, as a Robert Hustleton was one of these, such changes had to be made before 1836 the year in which he died.⁶³ The timing accords precisely with similar alterations made to other cottages in the parish and coincides with a period of steeply rising population. The 1811 Census, taken just prior to the Barracks' building, records 189 people then living in the village but by 1821, with the ending of the wars with France and men returning not only from the military but more so from the garrison town of Ipswich, numbers had risen to 264. By 1831 they

had peaked at 299, a rise of over 50% in the twenty years. Clearly, the construction of these and three other stand-alone properties was insufficient to meet demand and subdivision of existing dwellings was carried on across the village.

It is not known who bought the site from Robert Davey nor who were the first owners or occupiers of the property. A Mr Dunnett was in possession at the time of the Tithe Apportionment in 1844 followed by a Noah Ward, a yeoman from Melton, who held it until his death in 1858. It was then acquired by the Bates family of Blaxhall who owned it for over 30 years until its demolition in 1892. The Bates were a family of considerable standing. They farmed the 500 acre Blaxhall Hall Farm and, when her husband George died in 1858, his widow Mary moved with her younger son out of the big house to Wilford Lodge in Melton. The elder son, George Waller Bates, stayed on at The Hall to run the farm and it is this elder son and his mother who bought the Barrack Cottages.

⁶¹ SROI HD436/3, 17. Manfred Biddell writing in 1882 relates that the four cottages near the little green were built with materials from the barracks on the Woodbridge Road when they were taken down in about 1817.

⁶² *Ipswich Journal*, 13 March 1813, 22 June 1816. The first sale of building materials from St Helen's Barracks took place on 16 March 1813 before the war was over and the last on 8 July 1816.

⁶³ SROB HA 507/2/491. 3 March 1858 '.... all that messuage formerly divided into two dwellings then lately made or converted into five tenements....'

He became sole owner on his mother's death in 1870. George Waller Bates did not stay at Blaxhall Hall for long. By 1871, when he was 41, he had moved to Aldeburgh perhaps leaving a bailiff to look after the farm but in 1881 and '91 he is recorded as living in Bury St Edmunds as a 'retired farmer'. For his last 20 years he was back in East Suffolk living just outside Halesworth. By any standards he enjoyed a long retirement. With the ownership of Hall Farm in Blaxhall went the gift of the rectory which in 1865 the family used to advantage. The younger son, following Ipswich School and Trinity College, Cambridge, went into the church. He was ordained deacon in 1855 and, while still living with his mother at Wilford Lodge, became curate at Melton. Following a brief spell at St Matthew's, Ipswich, he was presented by his brother George to the living of Blaxhall and Wantisden where he stayed for 21 years. There, with his wife and six children, he enjoyed the fruits of his office: a resident governess, a cook, a housemaid and a nurse. There were also no doubt others who came in from the village on a daily basis. The lives of the Wallers, not to mention that of the Bristol family owners of the adjoining terrace, stood in stark contrast to those of their tenants.

The Kicking Donkey

The terrace is best known for having housed the village's last pub. There had been another in Church Lane, the Eel's Foot, and as soon as that closed in 1871 the Kicking Donkey opened.⁶⁴ Like the Eel's Foot, it was really a beer house licensed to sell only beer and cider rather than spirits. Both



Mary Ann Mann (b.1831), who kept the Kicking Donkey from 1871 until her death in 1887; her husband James Mann, right, carried on until it was pulled down in 1892. In 1948 their son, also James, who became Ipswich Parks Superintendent, donated the church lychgate in memory of his mother. Lyn Smith

premises came about following the passing of the Beerhouse Act of 1830 whereby the government

⁶⁴ The Eel's Foot, formerly known as The White Horse, was in one of a pair of cottages that were demolished in the 1870s. They stood end-on to Church Lane immediately opposite the present entrance to The Courts in a one acre piece of land that served as a market garden until the Council houses were built in 1948.

attempted to wean the nation off cheap gin and on to something less harmful to health. Almost any householder could open a beerhouse upon payment of a fee whereas full licences were granted and controlled by magistrates. The premises were run by Mary Ann Mann who with her husband James, an agricultural labourer, occupied the lowest of the cottages nearest The Green but in order to make way for her pub her cottage was linked with the one next door and her neighbour, George Page, had to move to New Buildings. Mary Ann kept the pub going until her death at the age of 58 in 1887 after which it was carried on by her husband until demolition in 1892. Living there throughout this time were their son James junior and a daughter also Mary Ann who in the later years kept house for the family. James junior first took a gardening job at Playford Hall before moving to St Edmund's Road in Ipswich where he worked as a coachman. By 1901 he had been appointed Head Gardener at the Upper Arboretum in Christchurch Park and in 1927 he became the Corporation's Parks Superintendent, a responsibility that covered all the parks, gardens and open spaces in the town.⁶⁵ In 1948 he erected the lychgate at the foot of the path to Playford church in memory of his mother 'Mary Ann Mann who worshipped at Playford church and was interred in the churchyard July 1887'.⁶⁶ James' father sadly died in the Woodbridge Union Workhouse at Nacton in 1893 little more than a year after the beerhouse and all the other cottages in the terrace had been pulled down.⁶⁷

The Bailiff's House

The one remaining house in the south-east corner of Archway Field that has not so far been discussed is the bailiff's house. Belonging to Playford Hall Farm, it features in the Estate Survey of



Standing where Lower Lodge now is, the 3-bedroomed house (right) was the home of Playford Hall Farm's bailiff. It was demolished in the 1880s. In the background are The Brook cottages. Biddell collection

1871 from which, and from the accompanying painting, can be seen that it stands in a class of its own and comparable to Hill Cottage when that was first put up as a single dwelling in 1815. With its three bedrooms, two sitting rooms and a back kitchen it is a world away from the adjoining hovels and gives an indication of the importance that was attached to this key position on the farm. That it managed to escape the division that befell Hill Cottage and many other such premises in the early part of the 19th century can only be put down to favouritism and that a very close link existed between Hall

⁶⁵ David Miller, *Ipswich Arboretum: A History and Celebration* (London, 2014), 84-87.

⁶⁶ *The Benefice Newsletter* of Great & Little Bealings with Playford & Culpho, April 2009, 17-18.

⁶⁷ James Mann junior died without issue in 1954. His sister Mary Ann had a son who went on to become Company Secretary at Ransome's; his only child, Lyn Smith, became Secretary of the Ipswich Institute in Tavern Street. Her son taught music at Amberfield School, the former workhouse where his great-great-grandfather had died in 1893.

Farm and its key employee.⁶⁸

When Clarkson first came from Bury to Playford in 1816, he was keen to bring his own bailiff but the house was already occupied by his predecessor's man and he was reluctant to throw him out of work. Nevertheless this is what happened and, in correspondence with Arthur Biddell who was overseeing the change of tenancy, it can be seen how good a relationship Clarkson enjoyed with his



Betsey County (b.1811), an elder sister of William Sheldrake the farm bailiff. She worked at Playford Hall as a girl of 13 and, dying in 1894, was the village's last link with the Clarkson family. Biddell collection

man. Such closeness continued through the inevitable changes in staff and, in the 1830s at a time when many houses in the village were being subjected to partitioning, a young William Sheldrake became bailiff. The family had come from Creting⁶⁹ and in about the year 1824 three Sheldrakes worked on the farm: father William senior, his son William junior then aged 15 and a nine year old brother Samuel. A 13 year old sister Betsey worked in the house as a servant girl.

The Sheldrake family quickly became an indispensable part of the Clarksons' lives. William junior married a Mary Harvey from Pettistree in 1831 and it is probably soon after this that the couple moved into the house in Brook Lane. They were certainly there by 1841 and, with no children after ten years of marriage, they were not short of space. A large talented man of some 19 stones he had done well to reach such a position so early in life. He was also by all accounts a gifted violinist having been taught by Nursey of Little Bealings.⁷⁰ By 1841 too a 16 year old sister, Phoebe, had become a resident servant at The Hall while in the months leading up to September 1846 it was William's elder sister Betsey who nursed Thomas Clarkson in the weeks before his death. But in 1848 a great

tragedy befell the household: William Sheldrake junior, still under 40 years old, died suddenly. To outsiders the cause might have been connected to his fathering a child with a girl in the village only 12 months before but there were sound medical reasons: he had died of inflammation of the lungs. Catherine Clarkson, only recently bereaved herself, was distraught and immediately brought in his father to fill the gap but he too died within the space of four years. Farming at The Hall then went

⁶⁸ The division and extension of copyhold properties in the first half of the 19th century brought in additional rents to their various owners. But the bailiff's house was owned directly by the Estate who would appear to have eschewed the extra cash in favour of supporting Thomas Clarkson in his wish to provide special accommodation for a key servant.

⁶⁹ Endearingly, written on occasions as Creaton in the Census returns.

⁷⁰ Perry Nursey lived at The Grove, Little Bealings. He was a friend of Sir David Wilkie RA (1785-1841) and Edward Fitzgerald (1809-1883) of Boulge. He is remembered as a landscape artist of some repute and the teacher of Thomas Churchyard. He was also an accomplished violinist.

into sharp decline. And immediately following William junior's death Catherine, by now 'confined to the couch of an invalid',⁷¹ took his widow Mary to live with her as companion; on her death some eight years later she was left £250 in her will. William had been buried in an honoured spot adjoining the Clarkson and Airy graves, his headstone of such high quality that, despite its inscription, could not possibly have 'been erected by his widow'. Mary never remarried and died in 1883; she had spent the rest of her life with her sister-in-law Mary Woby in one of the cottages at The Brook.

It was the death of William Sheldrake's sister, Betsey County, in 1894 that moved Herman Biddell to write a long and moving obituary. She was the last link with the Clarksons and, although she had 'lived in' only briefly after the death of her first husband, she had been with the family for far longer than her sister-in-law Mary Sheldrake. She had started as a girl of 13 and had witnessed all the sadnesses that the family had endured. She was there in 1837 when news arrived of the death by accident of their only son; she had nursed Thomas Clarkson in the weeks and months before he died in 1846; she had been at The Hall when Catherine died ten years later and stayed on when the scandalous grandson took charge of the house attending his restrained funeral that followed his death in Jersey. She spent the remainder of her life in one of The Brook cottages taking in laundry. 'And now we have no one left to tell from personal knowledge' wrote Biddell 'of the little things that make history, the sayings and doings which give insight into the family life of the Clarksons of Playford Hall'.

⁷¹ *Bury Post*, 6 February 1856. Obituary, Catherine Clarkson.

