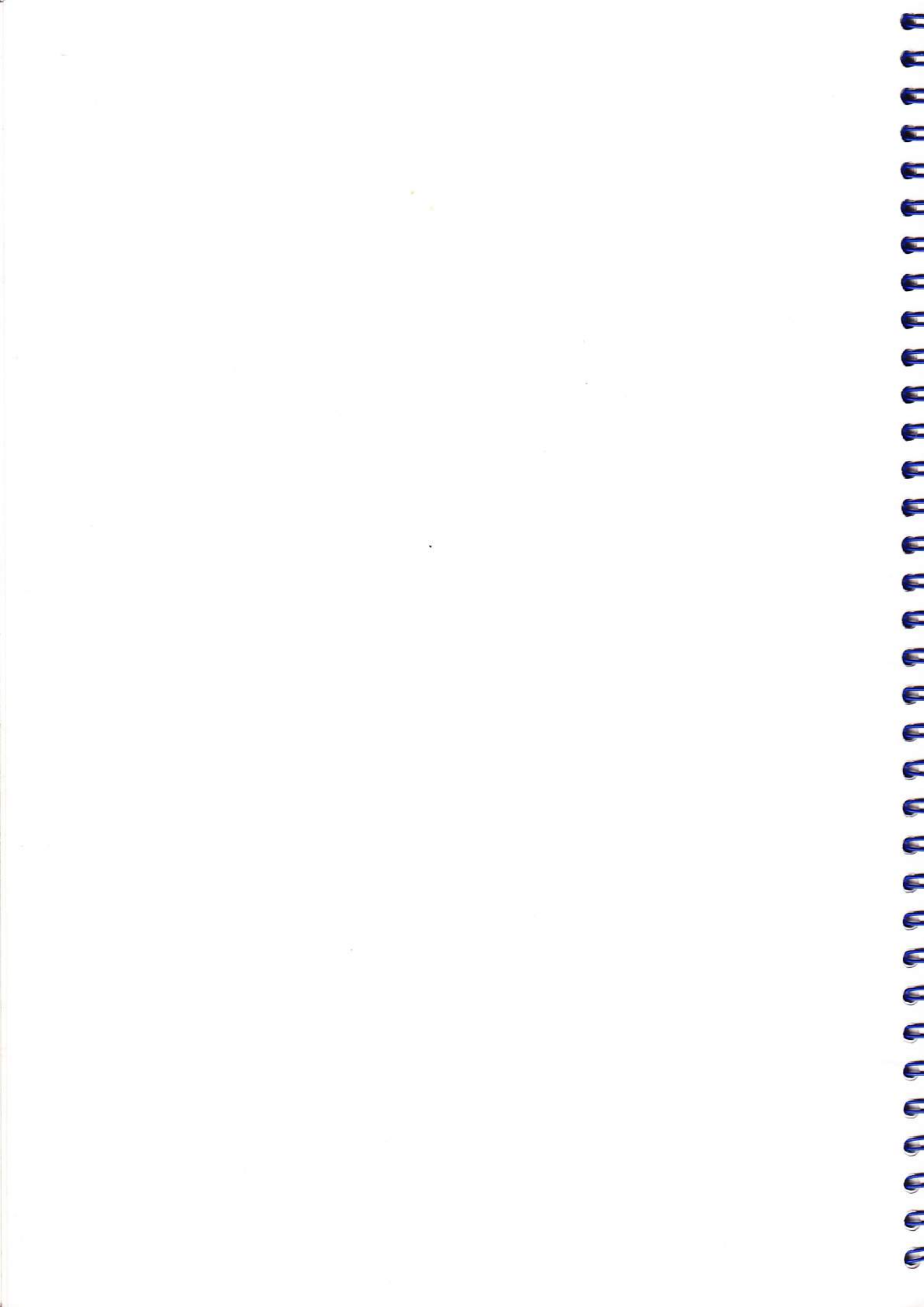




PARISH APPRAISAL





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Preface

There was some doubt about whether a Parish Appraisal would be acceptable to parishioners and also as to whether there would be sufficient volunteers to carry out the process, which could be quite demanding if done in a proper fashion. It was agreed to take soundings in the parish early in 1996. This was done by circulating 200+ households with a copy of the Norfolk Rural Community Council (NRCC) brochure explaining the process and including a request for volunteers as well as an invitation to the Annual Parish Meeting in March, where Geoffrey Leigh (Field Officer/ NRCC) would talk on the subject. From individual responses, phone calls, and checking out the likely response on the various village grapevines, it was clear that the appraisal process would on the whole be regarded favourably. Some 30 people attended the parish meeting and agreed that an inaugural meeting to set the process going should be called. This took place on 30 April 1996 and a Working Group was set up with a plan of action, a list of aims and a tentative timetable.

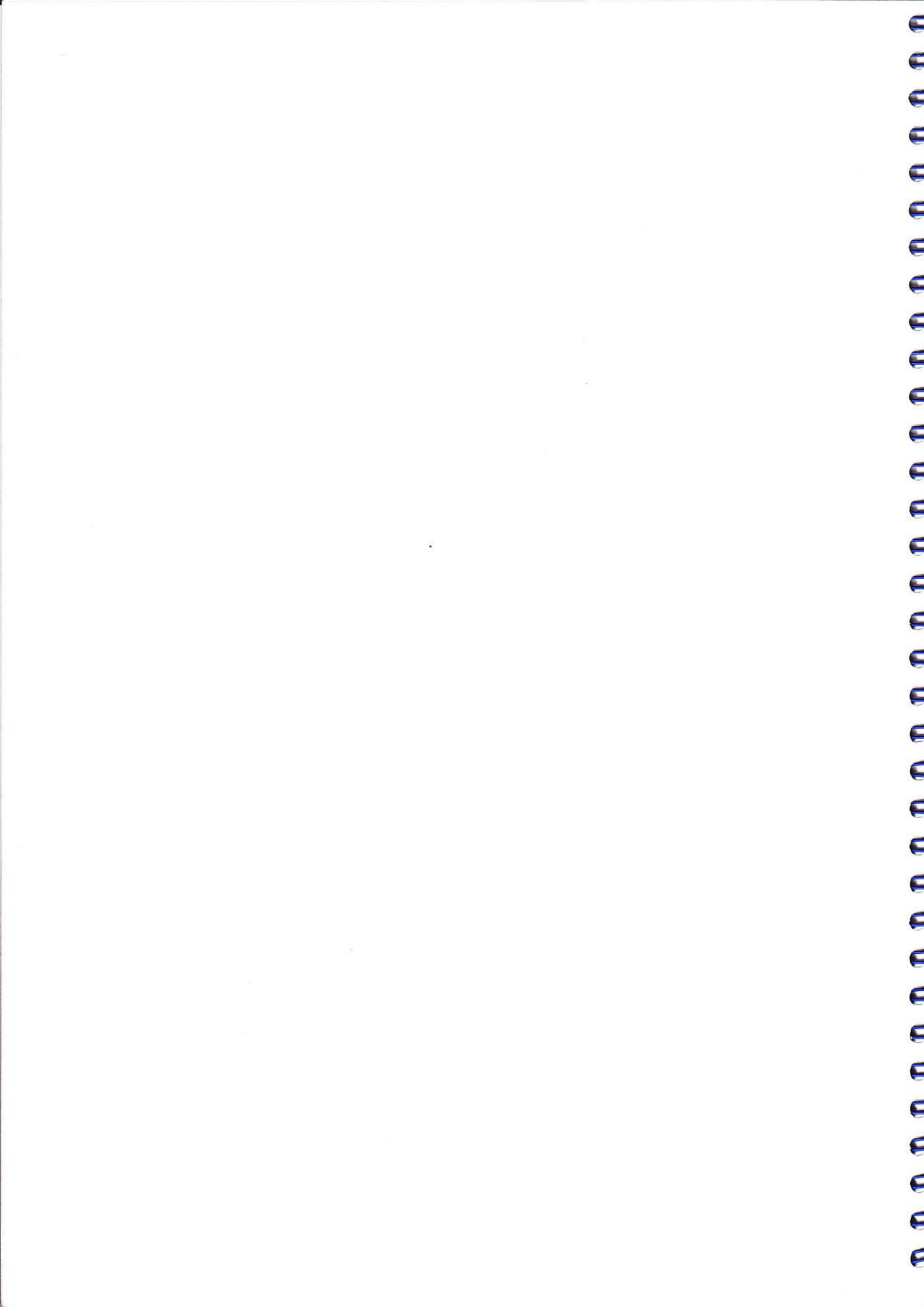
Central to the whole process was the formulation, distribution, collection and analysis of a questionnaire. Fortunately we were able to adapt a previous questionnaire (from Methwold - due to their generous cooperation) and using this as a model, a number of group discussions quickly produced a questionnaire form suitable for Welney, by means of amendments, additions and omissions. The questionnaire was finalised and distributed and collected by a team of people between 24 May and 7 June 1996. It was decided to include a few extra households both at Tipps End and at Bells Drove. These houses are not strictly in the parish, but lie across the Cambridgeshire boundary, but nevertheless identify with the community in many ways.

The questionnaire process had measures built-in to achieve maximum confidentiality and ultimately achieved an 89% response from parishioners. The overall response was of a very positive nature, thus giving a good measure of validity to the appraisal.

Members of the Working Group and others have given much thought, help and assistance in producing sections of our Report under various headings. Whenever possible we have attempted to work on a group basis, as this has the potential for developing cooperation, communication and interest within the community. However it has to be noted that a number of individual members of the Working Group and one or two dedicated people outside the Working Group, took on responsibilities for drafting significant sections of the report and we have recorded these in our acknowledgements. We have also been dependent on the enthusiasm with which many local people have freely shared and communicated their knowledge of the parish. Firms and organisations have also given willing cooperation where it has been sought and we have had particularly good support from the Borough Council Community Liaison Section.

What should we expect as a result of the appraisal? Probably the most important thing is that people should think more deeply about and become more aware of the community in which they live. People will always be aware of shortcomings, but it is easier to list them than to act upon them and thereby solve the problems on a sustainable basis. Parishioners have to keep in mind that the resources for promoting community development in a small parish such as Welney are limited. This applies whether we are talking of human resources, finance, skills, etc. People want to do all sorts of things and if these are not well planned, schemes often cut across each other and across existing schemes. This can only be avoided by looking ahead at priorities, planning, maximising discussion and using team and cooperative effort to put into effect projects that can be sustained financially and if necessary, staffed in such a way as to maintain continuity of management and operations over a long time. The parish ought also to be more aware of what other schemes are being run elsewhere in the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk and of the assistance that can be obtained from local authorities, district and county, as well as organisations such as the Rural Community Council, The West Norfolk Federation of Helping Agencies, local businesses, and funding agencies, including Welney's own Marshalls Trust. First of all one has to decide what to do and also how to do it in a proper business fashion, trying to keep within existing resources and maximising voluntary effort.

Tom Fisher
Chairperson of the Working Group
January 1997



Acknowledgements

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Active Groups which met: Environment Group , convener P Rix ; History Group, convenor H Barry

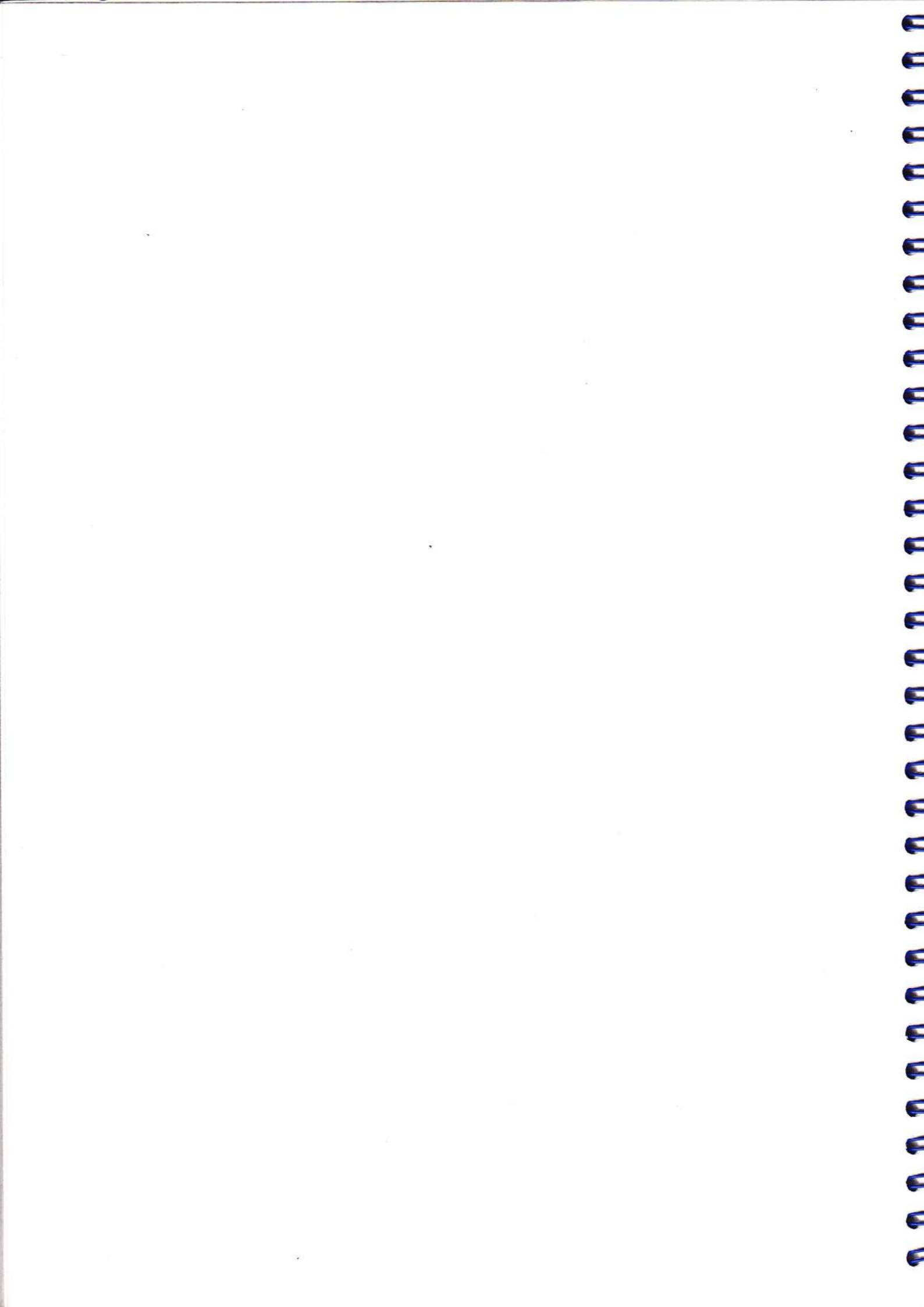
Sources of information: Tony Smart, Brian Turner, Mrs Golson, various parishioners

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Thanks to Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council, Norfolk Rural Community Council, and Welney Parish Council for funding the Appraisal.



1. Introduction

Printed below is the draft of possible aims for the Welney Village Appraisal which were adopted at the inaugural meeting on 30 April 1996. Time will tell whether they have been or can be achieved and whether they should be built on in order to further community development.

1.1 Aims

1. To consult the community on a range of matters that affect their living and way of life in Welney Parish.
2. To seek a high level of discussion and participation in making the appraisal, by and with individuals, clubs and groups, business interests, institutions, in order to lend the appraisal reasonable validity.
3. To identify, promote and tap skills within the community for the purposes of the appraisal and possibly to create general awareness of what skills are available.
4. To identify basic information and statistics which will show the present shape, form and character of the community, as well as the social and physical environment in which we live.
5. To identify individual and communal attitudes to a wide range of matters that affect the community by means of a questionnaire of about 60 questions, which will be distributed, collected and analysed, in order to allow presentation of the appraisal as a printed report.
6. One copy of the report to be made available to every household, to councillors and to various local authority and community bodies..A small surplus stock to be retained for disseminating information to any future bona fide interests.
7. To use the the report to make outside interests, bodies and individuals in the surrounding Borough and Counties more aware of Welney and its advantages and disadvantages and hopefully to make use of the details to enhance the advantages and reduce the disadvantages.
8. To help the community to identify trends and changes and to encourage positive attitudes in trying to cope with change.
9. To provide a basis or benchmark with which comparisons could be made in the future.
10. To protect confidentiality of responses and aim to be cohesive and constructive at all times.

1.2 Other Concerns

The Working Party were also concerned to make the final report interesting and readable, rather than just a conglomeration of dry statistics and so a brief history of the parish has been incorporated as a separate section as well as historical and contemporary reference to village life and parish affairs in individual chapters. Wherever feasible, writers have read their drafts to and received comments from other members of the team. By minimising the editing of contributions we have attempted to retain the flavour of individual drafts as much as possible. If this shows as some kind of unevenness or clash of styles, readers are reminded of our attempt to involve as many writers as possible. It is also evidence of our aim to encourage both individual and collective effort. By its nature and also because the report has had to be produced relatively quickly, it has to be accepted that there are limits to the amount of information included and there can be inconsistencies and possibly some incorrect details. In this respect the working party craves the indulgence of parishioners.

Writers have attempted to be as objective as possible, though from time to time local opinion is quoted to show a trend, reflecting the returns to the questionnaire. Readers have to be aware that opinions are not necessarily factual or true and can be challenged. If this leads to discussion and constructive criticism it is to be welcomed.

In addition to this booklet we have compiled a separate A4 size document of detailed data, statistics and individual comments arising from the questionnaire. The Working Party agreed that this should be a limited edition, available to councillors, local authorities, businesses, institutions and local libraries, as well as to all those who participated in the work of

the appraisal. It should , however be easy to make the document available to anyone wishing to see it.

2 History

2.1 Village of Fens and Wash

Welney is a village of the Fens and the Wash.

Its site, its people, its prosperity, its very existence through thousands of years, has always been governed by water; by the flow of rivers through it and the inland flood of the tide nearby.

Nature, history, weather and man's artificial interference has changed the course of rivers and the lie of solid land in the Eastern Fens. But through the ages, that point of land which can still be called Welney, has adapted itself to river and dyke flow, to farming and the fashion in crops, to trade and navigation by river and road, and survived.

Today as European history approaches the third Christian millenium, Welney still sits on and lives on water; still straddles three rivers and covers almost a mile of washland, which floods to divide it, weeks at a time, each winter. A yearly flood which reminds the divided parish of the power of water and of its place in its history. Even the modern technology of the motor vehicle must make a twenty mile detour when the water rises.

Welney is a community of people that has survived as a settlement on a long tongue of land which originally wound through the Wash from Lincolnshire to Littleport. This sliver of silt took shape in the Iron Age. It increased and strengthened to provide for the Welney villagers of the first century AD, a firm foothold in their Romano-British settlement which was built just north of the present Littleport/Wisbech road (A1101). It provides our first visual proof of a village at Welney nearly two thousand years ago.



*Romano-British Settlement, Welney
Courtesy of the Ashmolean*

2.2 Early Times

Welney's Romano-British ancestors lived in apparent peace on that site for nearly three hundred years. Their rivers ran through different courses then but, even in Roman Britain, dykes were built to control the flow and drain the land. Then after three hundred years came a flood they

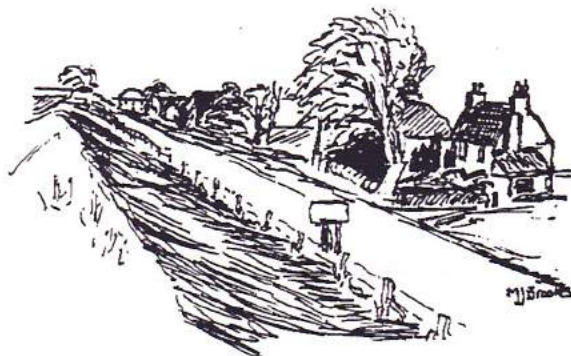
couldn't control. It is marked and measured today by six feet of silt on top of the remains of their buildings and it overwhelmed them. It must have been a deep and vicious flood to create that much silt and it came from where? Possibly in the last years of the fourth century a huge tide and extreme weather created similar conditions to those witnessed in living memory in 1947. Perhaps those ancient villagers too - those that survived - looked out on the deep expanse of water, on a flood such as had never been seen before. The Roman village on the edge of the Wash was overwhelmed by floodwater. The present village which over the centuries had moved slightly westward to higher ground, stood safe in the Spring of 1947 whilst young and old gazed at the flood waters.



The Romano-British rebuilt their Welney settlement after their catastrophic flood. We know that today from the evidence we dig out of the soil they lived in. But we have precious little factual evidence of the life of Welney through the next thousand years, except that the lie of river beds and that tongue of silt probably gave the villagers a living in fishing, transport, access to the sea and fertile land for crops. We know that the main site of the village/parish moved westward and eastward to straddle the Wash and take up its present position on higher ground. The Norman church of the eleventh and twelfth century stood centrally in the larger settlement, within the same ground as our present church. Its foundations can still be seen through the grass in dry summer weather.

2.3 Middle Ages

We can perhaps speculate that Welney men and women in these times, were much of a muchness with all Fen people who knew their waters and swamps and high ground and who made their livelihood there. In the centuries of the Dark Ages, Norman Conquest and Medieval times, England was essentially a place of feudal loyalties and close communities. Travel was difficult and the Fens notorious for their enclosed and sometimes mutinous settlements. The great Saxon Fen leader, Hereward the Wake was still fighting the Normans in 1070, four years after the defeat of Hastings. Facts about this whole period are scarce but myth and legend abound. Do the nearby



Gold Hill and the Golden Square

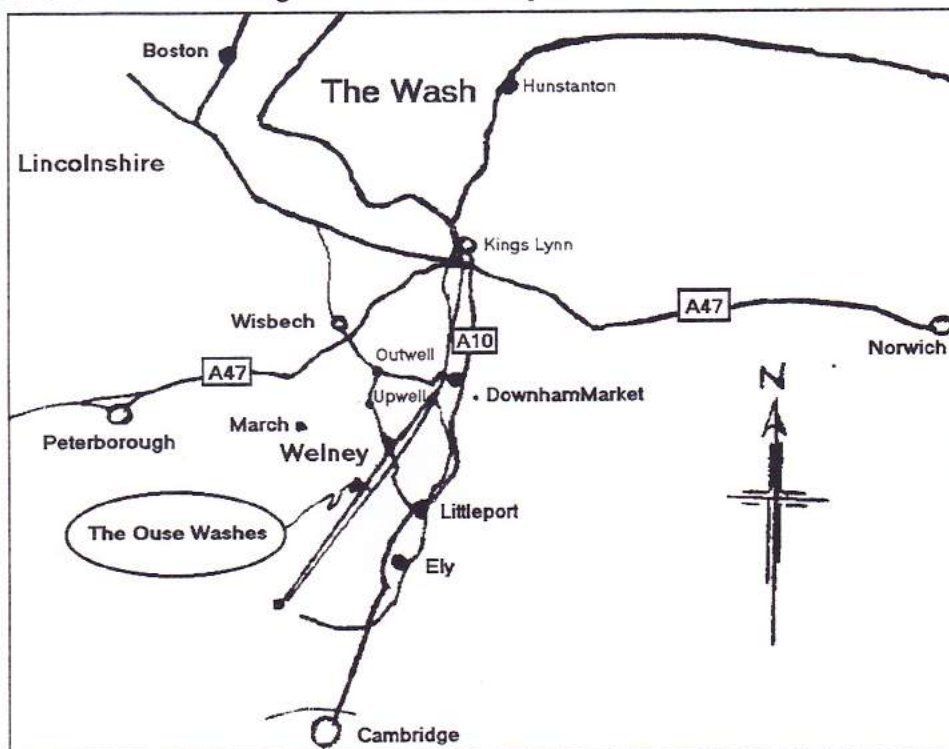
From Hereward's Way towards Suspension Bridge and The Crown

names of Gold Hill and The Golden Square relate to the burial of some of King John's treasure supposedly lost in the Wash in the early thirteenth century? Are they deep in the soil near Welney? Certainly, nearly a thousand years after the Roman influence, Welney would have known the obvious and national power of the monasteries at Ramsey and Ely. Welney's river, known as The Croft, but in medieval times as the 'Aqua de Welle', transported the stone from Barnack quarry, near Stamford, to the site of the building of Ely Cathedral.

The monastic abbots ruled huge tracts of land and had great territorial powers as town landlords and dictatorial farmers and landowners, as did the Bishop of Peterborough. Bishop Morton of Peterborough later became Chancellor to King Henry VII. He would be a dream employee of the Inland Revenue today. His method of collecting taxes was known as 'Morton's Fork'. He would visit you and if you lived in affluent comfort would assess that your riches indicated that you could well afford high taxes to the King; if you lived frugally, he would assess that you had huge savings and could afford high taxes to the King. He was a favourite of the King, but not, presumably, elsewhere. However there is no factual evidence that anyone in Welney was rich enough to tempt him and likely that the Fenmen were as wily as he.

Morton's name is important not because he taxed Welney, but because he represents the powerful Lords and vested interests which surrounded the village for centuries. Welney has always been a village on the edge of interested parties: Ely and Cambridge encroaching northward; the Lincolnshire stability of Peterborough pushing its influence westward; the trade link to the seaward-looking ports of Wisbech and Kings Lynn, and the homing instinct of the village itself to be part of the county of Norfolk.

It is amazing that Welney has retained an individual identity whilst being chopped up between different centres of church and state control. The ecclesiastical history of the village, given elsewhere in this appraisal, shows how the village parish has been divided between Upwell and Ely, and in civic terms, even today, most of the post comes on a Cambridgeshire postcode to households who pay council tax to Norfolk and it requires the three modern telephone directories for Peterborough, Cambridge and Kings Lynn to trace correct numbers within a fifteen miles radius of the village. Look at it on the map. Throughout the centuries it has been a point of fertile land on navigable water between important land centres and the sea.



When we come to the time when the well documented history of the village begins, the seventeenth century and the great construction of the dykes, you recognise again the importance of the relationship between Welney and its rivers.

Like all Fen villages, its future and its prosperity at this time hung upon decisions made far away and at different times in Cromwell's office, in the Monarch's office, in the Duke of Bedford's stately home and on Vermuyden's drawing board. But Welney seems to have held a pivotal position. As drainage weakened the Old Croft river and its link through Upwell with Wisbech, so the Old Bedford and Delph and the New Hundred Foot rivers became more important and the shorter link through to Salter's Lode, Downham Market, Kings Lynn and the Wash prevailed and prospered. Much of village life centred on the water and so cottages and pubs began to line the route of the Old Bedford river, the tracks which are now called Bedford Bank East and West. But still, the village stretched across the Wash to the point now at Suspension Bridge, where a healthy community stayed in contact by ferry boat when the waters ran high. Called Welney (Norfolk), it was a robust community which later had its own school and chapel. It was west of its main influence of Littleport and Ely, but east of its own village across the Wash. Vermuyden's plans made stronger dyke and river divisions between the two arms of the village but never separated them.

2.4 Draining the Fens

However, whatever the arguments for and against Vermuyden's plans for the Fen drainage in the seventeenth century, Welney records a very particular financial bonus which supplements villagers and village life to this day. Vermuyden's works brought in huge numbers of workers: Dutch and Scottish craftsmen and labourers, descendants of whom are now Fenmen and Fenwomen. It also brought in professional workers, among them a London lawyer named William Marshall. Like many other professionals it appears he was given land in lieu of payment, but unlike many others he formed a special link with Welney. During work on the Bedford Level, William Marshall was apparently taken ill in Welney; he was housed and tended in the Lamb and Flag public house, and received such kindness from the villagers that he left extensive land in his will in 1661 to provide an income for charitable work among church and school, young people and widows and village life as a whole.



Bridge of Suspension,
Courtesy of Cambridge Central Library

Since that date hundreds of thousands of pounds have accrued and been spent. They commemorate the Welney villagers who, it seems, befriended a lone and sick lawyer engaged in the Vermuyden drainage in the seventeenth century, and has been a sign for more than three hundred years of his generous recognition of their Christian help.

The Charity has had a vital and visible effect upon life in Welney. People, particularly the young and old were given help. Apprentices had their tools paid for and young people helped in their school and training, widows were given pensions, and even today each widow in Welney receives a quarterly grant from the Charity. Buildings too, drew the Charity's support and in 1848 a village school and a new village church were both paid for by the Marshall Charity. Both still stand and are in use today. Earlier in 1832 the Charity paid for the New River Delph Bridge.

Like many villages in the Fens, Welney had need of good bridges and the generosity of another man, William Townley, paid for the first Suspension Bridge which provided a partial road link across the Hundred Foot Drain (New Bedford River), which flowed between the two halves of the village. A ferry had previously linked them but now the ferrymen were only needed to cross the flooded Wash in winter. But those Wash ferrymen were still necessary and plying their trade until the middle of this century. The mail got through and the children got to school well into the 1940's by ferryboat.

Vermuyden's drainage dykes provided useful transport canals for commercial traffic which became very important in Victorian times with the onset of the industrial revolution. Cottages, mills and pubs converged on the Old Bedford River. The Three Tuns, The Eagle Tavern and The Welney Hotel were all within a mile of each other, and each in their time offered not merely drinking parlours but accommodation for the men who sailed the dykes with their barge loads of bricks and iron and coal and all the other necessities of life and trade. Down Bedford Bank on land now riverside fields, there were dozens of cottages housing large families. A modern bungalow, 'Mill Row', covers the land of a mill and five cottages. It is said that as late as 1947 there were forty children attending the school from Bedford Bank West where now there are merely seven or eight homes - two of which are former public houses.

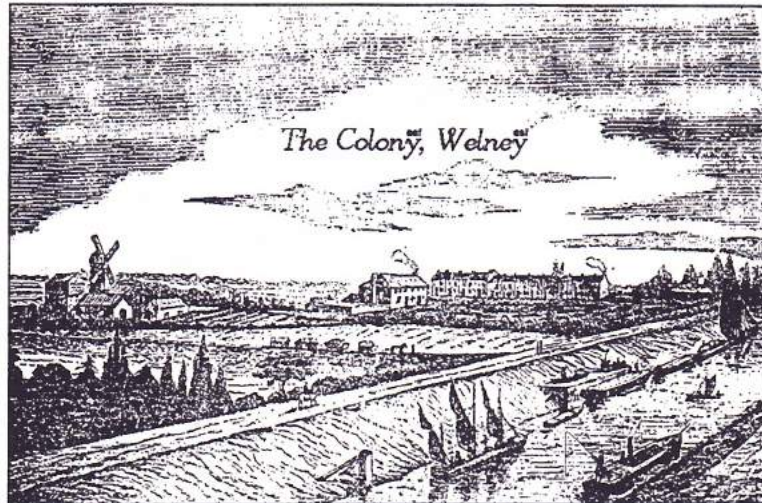


*"Sunday turning out time"
Eagle Tavern in full swing (1922)*

2.5 Victoriana

In Victorian times Bedford Bank was thriving. In the first great census of England in 1851, the Welney population was 1206 souls. A few decades earlier in the 1830's, on the edge of the parish further down the Bedford Bank towards Manea, there was started one of the earliest communes on record in this country. A philanthropist from Upwell - another generous William surnamed Hodson - set up The Colony in which poor men could own and till their own acre whilst sharing alike in communal housing, windmill and mooring facilities on the river. The idea was that men would work for their own food but share in the community needs, housing, milling corn, selling surpluses, transport and some simple administration.

It is likely that this is an artists impression of the hopes for The Colony rather than what was achieved because, like many optimistic, philanthropic ventures, it lasted only five years. But the idea was adventurous and you can still see bits of brick turned over by the plough in the fields that now cover the site of their hopes and dreams.



Welney seems to have prospered in Victorian times. In 1864 it became a separate church and civic parish and a Rectory was built in 1864; six almshouses had been provided by the Marshall Charity in 1848 and the Charity built a 'Mission' school for 80 children at the Suspension Bridge end of the village, which indicates how that was thriving too.

But it was not all good works, communes and charity that brought Welney to the notice of the country as a whole in Victorian times. The village was a national, and indeed, world centre for ice speed skating championships. Ice skating in the Fens seems to have been given a boost in popularity by the enthusiasm of the Dutch immigrants who followed Vermuyden and worked and settled here. Conditions were similar to the lowlands in Holland and then in the nineteenth century, when frozen winters seemed regularly to follow each other, competition hit the national consciousness rather like football euphoria today.

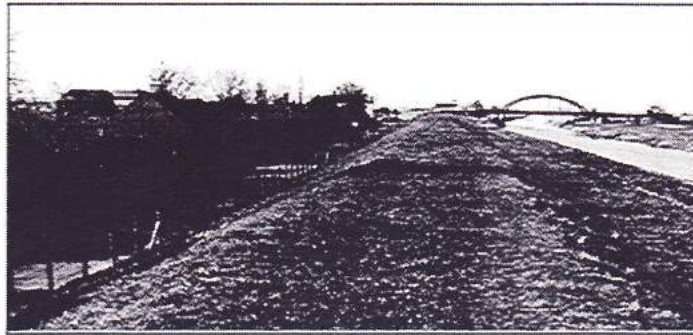
Each year when the shallow waters on the Wash and then the rivers and dykes froze over, Welney men took to their skates and outshone all others, it seems. In the 1880's Welney was called 'The Metropolis of Speed Skating,' when six of the top ten fastest skaters in the country were Welney men: G Smart, G See, H Carter, A Hawes, T Watkinson and J Smart.

The ice speed champions were stars in their day. Many had nicknames - William Smart, champion from 1854 - was 'Turkey', possibly from the dominance of news from the Crimean War at the time of his greatest fame. His style was reported in the "Boys Own Paper": 'the power of his stroke was enormous, delivering it with the strength of an ox, and from it he flung himself fearlessly forward like a bird of prey in full flight.' Turkey's cousin 'Guttapercha' See was named for one of the toughest materials known in his time. George 'Fish' Smart did the mile officially in three minutes in 1881 and his younger brother James was acclaimed as World Champion in 1888 when he beat the Dutch champion in Amsterdam. The late Victorian times were the heyday of national championships, but Welney men stayed at the top in competitions well into this century. Ernie James, who still lives in the village reports in his book 'The Fen Tiger', on his successes in the 1930's, and Welney man, Reg Scott, was national champion from 1947 to 1952.

2.6 The Twentieth Century

Welney in the twentieth century has both suffered and prospered in much the same way as throughout the county and indeed throughout the country.

The First World War claimed the lives of 22 villagers and 7 Welney men died in the Second World War. The village seems to have joined the technological age slowly having but 5 subscribers to the telephone in 1933 and only coming off a three figure local exchange in 1995. It made the national newspaper sports headlines by dismissing Friday Bridge CC for 0 in 28



*Suspension Bridge No 2, including the hamlet of Suspension Bridge
June 1996*

deliveries in 1928, and the village postman, Horace Kimmons, featured on BBC Radio in 1937 with his photograph in Radio Times rowing across the Wash floods to deliver his mail.

The villagers survived the 1947 floods and have had to come to terms with all the changes of the late twentieth century. No more cycle shop, petrol station and butcher in the village - just one general store and post office. Few bus services and little work for young people. But a thriving commuter life to outside work and still a village spirit and pride. The parish hall, rebuilt in 1929, is still host to community life, the doctors surgery three times a week, whist and bingo and a senior citizens club. There is a playbus for small children on Monday and a monthly mobile library for their elders. The village school thrives and has an excellent standard and the village church has a hard-working and popular woman vicar. The Water Gala still brightens up August Bank Holiday with raft races on the Old Bedford and the Playing Fields Committee still supports a cricket team and Welney United football team.

The village is nationally known for the Welney Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, established by Sir Peter Scott and opened to the public in 1970, under the management of its first warden, George 'Josh' Scott, a Welney man born and bred. Both the Trust and the coarse fishing season bring us many visitors each year. Welney villagers, born and bred or recently come to roost welcome them.

3. Land

3.1 Features

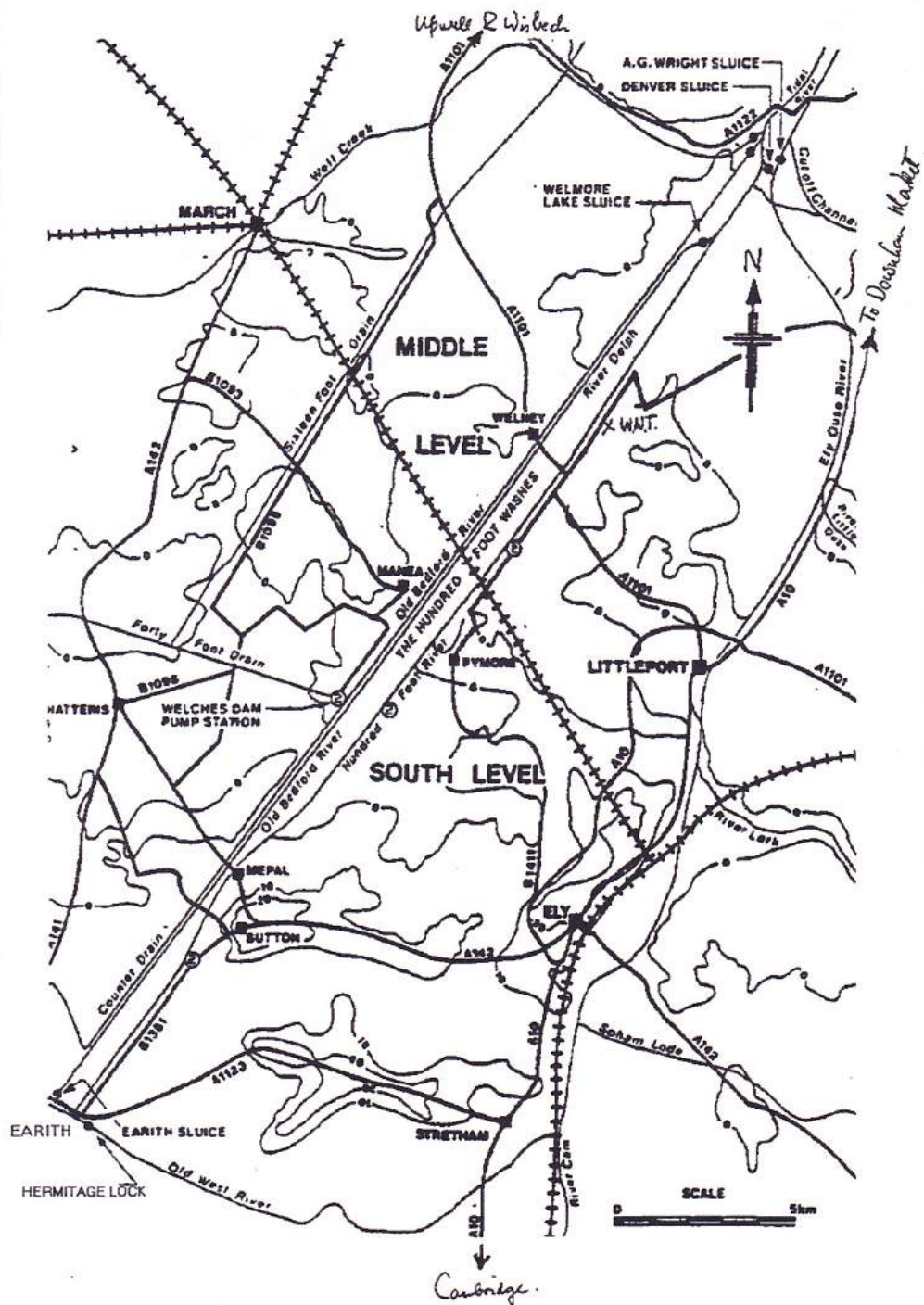
Three geographical features have a determining influence on the character of Welney parish.

1. Welney lies in the heart of the Fens.
2. If one looks on a map at that remarkable feature, The Ouse Washes, it will be seen that Welney lies almost in the centre of this strip of wetland which stretches about 20 miles long and half a mile wide, running from Earith in the southwest to Denver at the northeast end. The Washes put their stamp on Welney and its inhabitants.
3. Welney also lies on the A1101, which, where it crosses the Ouse Washes is locally referred to as the Welney Wash Road. The A1101 in conjunction with the A10 from Cambridge forms a transport spine connecting Cambridge, Ely, Littleport and Wisbech, a factor which is crucial in terms of travel-to-work and other issues.

The EC Single Programming Document for East Anglia says;

"The Fens have never been heavily populated and the uniformity of the flat landscape is broken only by the varied crops grown on small farm holdings and the straight ditches and drains which criss-cross the fields. Vast, open, treeless landscapes provide distant views to "island" settlements and isolated agricultural buildings.

Location of the Ouse Washes



Courtesy of The Environment Agency



'The Grange' Farm in the Village

The majority of the Fens lies below sea level, the landscape is continually changing, due to variations in water levels and shrinkage of the peat, and the land has long been associated with drainage difficulties and risk of flooding."

And further:

"Agriculture"

"Of the 3 rural areas within the Objective 5(b) East Anglia area, the problems facing the agricultural industry in the Fens are unique due to the combination of economic decline in conjunction with geographical decline."

3.2 Number of Holdings

"In 1992 there were 1195 holdings within the Fens 5(b) area. 645 holdings were classified as full-time, 550 as part-time. Over the 10 year period between 1982 and 1992 there was an overall decline of 20.5% in the number of holdings (15.6% decline and 25.6% decline respectively)."

3.3 Work Force

"In 1992 there were 4162 people directly employed in agriculture, representing 13.4% of the total work force. This figure has decreased by 37% between 1982 and 1992. The main areas of reduction have been within the seasonal/casual work force (48.3% decline) and within the full-time work force (33.5% decline), which includes managers and hired workers (43.8% decline)."

3.4 Farm Size

"The average farm size within the Fens 5(b) area is 51ha (128 acres) ... 88% of farms are, in fact, below 100ha (250 acres) in size, of which 29% are part-time holdings, thus exemplifying the fact that the majority of farmers within this area are full-time holdings but running as potentially unviable sized units."

3.5 Land Use

"91% of the area is farmed as crops and fallow, which includes horticultural crops."

3.6 Farm Type

"Cropping (after part-time holdings) is the most predominant farm type within this area, accounting for 32% of the number of holdings. 19% of the holdings are horticultural (vegetables, fruit and other stock, ie. nursery, bulbs etc.), although between 1982 and 1992, this sector of the industry has suffered a decline of 28% in the number of holdings."

3.7 Land (Welney)

The land in and around Welney has long been regarded as some of the most productive and profitable in Britain, and as regards cropping, probably the best in Europe, much of it Grade 1 and Grade 11 quality. While land prices fluctuate from time to time, prices continue to rise over the years, so that today it can change hands for as much as £4000 per acre, though European Community overproduction in the past has had some effect on price. The land asset only exists today due to the efforts of the Internal Drainage Boards (IDB's) and river authorities (now renamed The Environmental Agency), who maintain the land above water level. For the future, forecasts of climatic change see the salvation of the fen land, only through efficient drainage combined with improved sea and river defences. Maintenance and heightening of river defences and improvements in drainage efficiency have been and are being currently undertaken on the Ouse Washes, including around Welney.

A significant feature is that the nature and quality of the land differs geographically. Much of the land to the west of the Washes has a large component of silt, being part of what is known as the Middle Level. To the east of the Washes on the South Level the land is mainly dark peat, though in some parts it has been denuded. These variations in soil type have a bearing on the kind of cropping and the yield.

3.8 Production and Techniques and Technology

The farmers in the area produce prodigious quantities of sugar beet, potatoes, cereals, carrots, onions and oil seed rape. Not far outside the parish some farms have incorporated the production of packaged vegetables and other produce such as lettuce and celery for supermarkets and the like. After the cereal harvest is in, Welney becomes a hive of activity for farmers and hauliers involved in the harvesting, transportation and merchandising of potatoes, onions and sugar beet. Indeed the sugar beet season carries on through the winter, with all manner of vehicles and plant invading and traversing Welney parish as sugar beet is being shipped to the sugar beet factory at Wissington.

Mechanisation, chemical fertilisers and selective weed control have revolutionised farming. For example, 40 years ago onions were largely produced by smallholders, as they were labour intensive production requiring hoeing and harvesting by hand. Now they can be grown on massive fields with land preparation, sowing and drilling, fertilising, weeding and harvesting all done by huge machines. Nowadays, nearly all crops get the attention of large pieces of plant and equipment throughout the process including loading and transportation in bulk at fantastic speed.

In addition to traditional methods of ploughing, harrowing, pulverising and rolling, in some instances, for particular crops the technology exists to break down and refine soil structure as well as controlling moisture content. A fairly new phenomenon seems to be the subcontracting of work, allied to the hiring of high output agricultural plant, with a tendency for farms themselves to hold only the necessary plant for routine jobs. When the big 'pushes' are required at sowing and harvesting, by calling in plant hire/subcontractors with their massive machines, elevators and fast track tractors etc., these main processes can be accomplished in a matter of a few days. In some instances we see a type of 'prairie farming' using several combines working together. Night working with floodlights on tractors has become a regular feature, presumably related to carrying out specific processes when the combination of the state of the land and the state of the weather, not to mention the signs of the zodiac, the conditions of the labour market and the season of the year are all in conjunction.

Deterioration of the soil and bad drainage on parts of the land where clay has come to the surface and old drains no longer function have been counteracted by complete new drainage systems installed by great drainlaying machines. Farmers are also realising the need to put material back to replace some of what is lost. This often takes the form of residues from the sugar beet factory or litter from pig or poultry farming, the latter at times causing odours in the area which can be extremely irritating if not harrowed or ploughed into the soil immediately. With the refurbishment of land drainage, the ultimate is reached when existing dykes/ditches are deepened or widened and maintained to accept irrigation water provided from the local rivers by the IDB's. Crops are then sprayed in dry weather to maintain growth and increase yield and whilst there are large evaporation losses, surplus water can drain back into the system to help maintain the cycle. There have been cases of farmers being prosecuted for extracting more water from local rivers than is legally permissible. These techniques are usually only practised by the larger landowners and farmers, the small farmers tending to look to the Almighty when it comes to weather.

Other new features include large landowners who rent out land to farmers who carry out the farming process and in many cases subcontract various parts of the process. Food wholesalers, distributors and merchants also have increasing influence in deciding what is to be produced and when, and how much the market is willing to pay, depending on yield, quality, supply and demand etc. Naturally MAFF (the Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food) has a strong advisory and control influence as has the EU Common Agricultural Policy with its system of subsidies and grants.

3.9 Grazing

Right in the middle of this area of cropping we find that other phenomenon which sets Welney apart. The parish, in terms of households, is geographically divided by the Ouse Washes, with almost one fifth of the parish lying east of the Washes and the majority four fifths on the west side. The washland between the 2 parts is also split by the Wash Road, ie the A1101. South and west of the road, the land is owned largely by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, whilst to the north and east of the road the land is largely owned by the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, with the Ely Wildfowlers Association having a small tract bordering the road. Both the RSPB and the WWT provide land and shepherding for large herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, brought in from elsewhere, sometimes as far away as North Yorkshire to the north and Kent in the south. Whilst one or two local farmers have diversified into cattle rearing, this is mainly an external activity, which can give the false impression of their being a local agricultural balance between stock farming and cropping. Shepherding and grazing do, however, provide funds for the bird and wildfowl conservation bodies.

3.10 Farm Type

Apart from grazing on the Washes and river banks, land in the parish is exploited mainly by a few large farmers. Their main farm buildings may be outside or bordering on the parish, such as Headings (Tippsend/Manea), Hartley (Lakesend) and Lee (Ely), but they farm large amounts of land within the parish boundary. The only sizeable farm with its main buildings within the parish is Harvey of Welney House Farm, though the land holding appears to be of intermediate size.

After the large farms come a number of small private farms which at one time were given to a mix of cropping and horticulture with some fruit farming thrown in. Some of these have either dwindled, or the land has been consolidated, rationalised or taken over by larger units, or some may have diversified like Copes Hill, where about 15 acres have been planted with broadleaved trees.

Finally there are about a dozen or so farmers or smallholders renting or tenancing land from Norfolk County Farms, whose district office is in Kings Lynn. In some cases the farm house is in the parish and therefor belongs to Norfolk County Farms but part of the holding, especially where the farm borders on Cambridgeshire, may be rented from Cambridgeshire County Farms

Estate, and for farms on the Cambridgeshire side of the parish boundary the reverse may be the case. The Cambridgeshire Estate comprises 45000 acres (approx. 18000 hectares), let to some 800 tenants and in the past has been used to give newcomers to farming a start on the land. Norfolk County Farms, approx., 23000 acres (9300 hectares), let to about 401 small farmers performed a similar function

In some cases the holding of County Farmland is of the order of 120 acres (plus), whilst at the other end of the scale a smallholder may rent as little as 12 acres. In the past another source of renting has been through the Marshall Trust.

An oddity which lends much character to the village is the small farm in the middle of Main Street, Welney, an added feature here being the tending of cattle, which in the season, graze on the Wash and river banks. So from time to time the populace are regaled with the sight of cattle being driven along the roads, sometimes to the consternation of traffic and community alike. But what a rare sight in these 'modern' times!

4. Population

It seems likely from what aerial photographs and excavations tell us that there has been some kind of continuous occupation around Welney since at least Romano-British times. However before the drainage of the Fens in the 17th Century, a site a little to the east of the present village, on the Washes between the Old and New Bedford rivers, would have been inhabited (ie. on the old dry course, or 'roddon', of the Great Ouse or one of its tributaries. Ernie James, who was born in 1906, (in his 'Memoirs of a Fen Tiger') remembers a family still living on the Washes when he was young. Apparently they regularly had to move upstairs when the Washes, and their house, flooded.



4.1 Growth

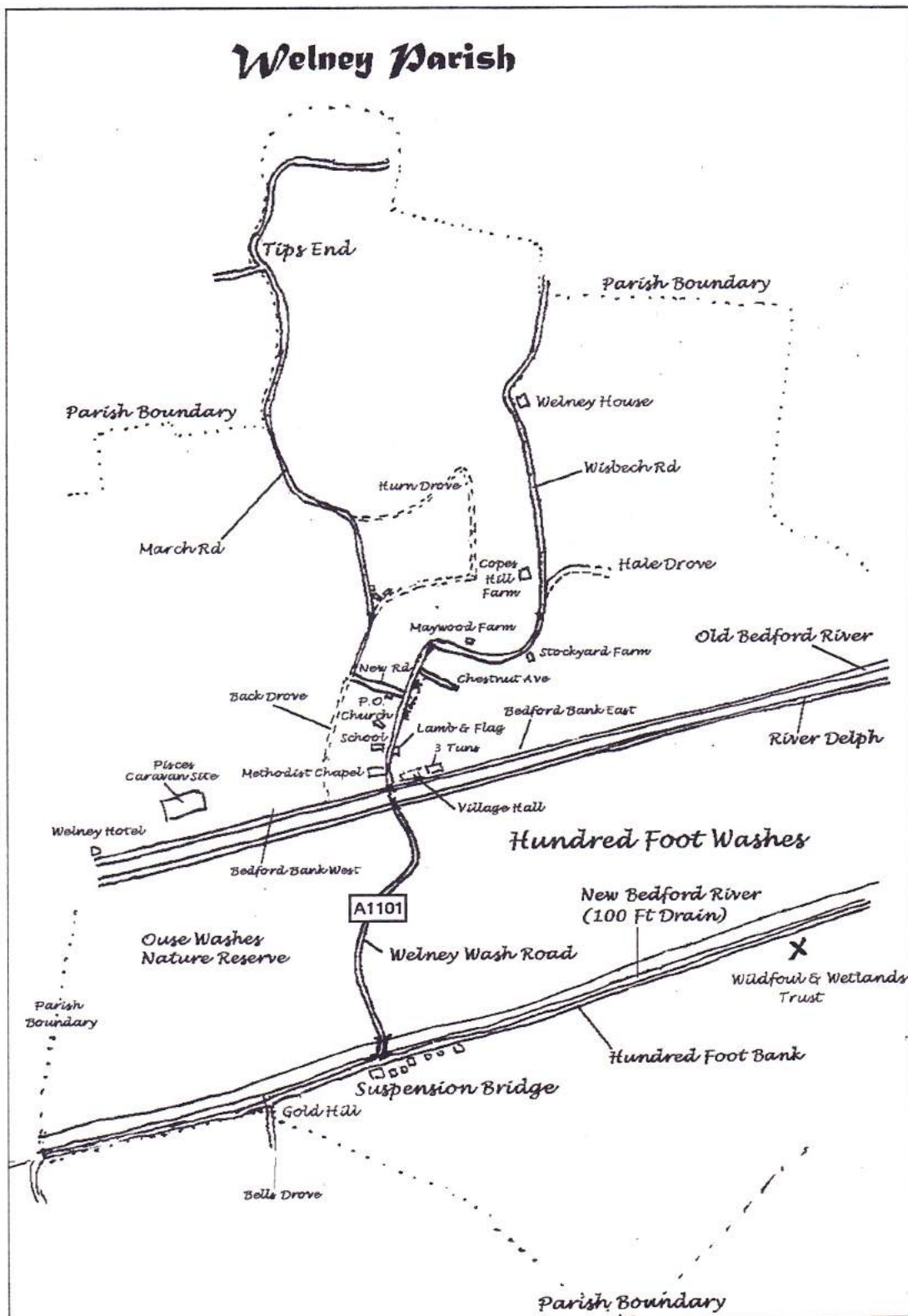
It was not until 1801 that we have census returns for the population of Welney; Welney Suspension Bridge was then in Norfolk and West Welney in Cambridgeshire. In 1895 they were both assigned to Norfolk, though still counting as two parishes until 1935 when they were amalgamated.

In 1801 there were 222 people in Welney (Norfolk) and 265 people in West Welney (Cambs) - 487 in total. By 1811 the combined total had decreased to 442, the reduction more marked in Welney (Cambs). 1821 saw a substantial increase (706), and from then onwards the village grew apace, reaching the astonishing high of 1206 inhabitants in 1851.

A census of houses was recorded in 1841 for the first time. There were 256 occupied houses in 1851, plus 25 houses unoccupied. Until 1891 - with the exception of 1801 - Welney (Norfolk) had had a larger population than Welney (Cambs). Then, for the first time, West Welney (Cambs) was more populous and has been ever since.

4.2 Decline

From 1851, there has been a steady decline in the population, with slight upward blips in 1871 and in 1991 - the year of the last census - there were only 515 people living in Welney (Suspension Bridge and West Welney combined). These 515 people lived in 204 houses, i.e. 2.5 per house. In 1951, it was still 3.1 per house, ten years later 2.97, then 2.9, then 2.8. Connected with the reduction in the size of household is, of course, the number of children. From the records of the William Marshall School we



learn that in 1878 there were as many as 128 school children on the roll, and 130 in 1886. Thereafter, numbers fluctuated, but since 1913 never topped even 90 again; they went down to 60 in 1926. In 1927, the transfer of 78 children from the 100 Foot Bank School, which was closed, swelled the ranks again; but in 1937, the 100 Foot Bank children were transferred to the Ten Mile Bank School, because of the floods. In common with many rural schools, ours has seen a decline in numbers ever since. Not so long ago the school in Lakesend was closed and the children from there are brought to Welney by bus. Even so, the number on the current roll is only 41.

Comparing Statistical data (1991 Census) for Welney with the national average is quite revealing.

	Welney (%)	National Average (%)
Aged under 16	15.7	20.1
Of pensionable age to 74	15.0	11.7
75 and over	10.9	07.0
Households with no car	18.0	33.4
Households with 2 or more cars	37.3	23.1

4.3 Shifting Houses



Bedford Bank West

The location of houses in the village has changed even within living memory. Many people once lived along the two banks on the Old Bedford River. Ernie James can recall 30 houses plus the 'Three Tuns' on Bedford Bank East and remembers the names of the inhabitants. Now there is only one house made out of two cottages. Most of the houses and cottages were taken down in the thirties. On Bedford Bank West, there were about 20, plus Welney Hotel and the Eagle Tavern. Most of these seem to have been lived in till the fifties and 6 plus Welney Hotel are still occupied. The village now consists of (West of the Washes) Main Street and Wisbech Road, New Road, March Road, Chestnut Avenue, Bedford Banks West and East, Back Drove, and Tips End (2.5 miles to the northwest). To the East of the Washes are Suspension Bridge, part of Bell's Drove, Hundred Foot Bank

4.4 Work

Whereas Welney used to be a farming village, self-contained with all the shops and tradesmen needed, there are now only a few working farms and 1 Post Office Stores. With increased mechanisation of farming, there is now only seasonal work on the land for some people, with most villagers having to go outside for work.

4.5 Family Names

Names from Kelly's Directory 1904 that are still around include;

Bedford, Carter, Clayton, Jacobs, James, Kent, Loveday, Scott and Smith.

4.6 Shifting People

According to the returns from the Appraisal Questionnaire, approximately one quarter of families living in Welney in 1996 could be regarded as original long-term residents. Almost two thirds of families have arrived in the parish in the last 20 years.

About 18% of the population left the parish in the last 10 years from households still living in the parish, the main reasons for leaving being, in descending order:

- a) lack of suitable employment (or in a few cases, transfer of employment),*
- b) lack of suitable housing,*
- c) change in family circumstances (marriage/divorce).*

The above figure does not take account of whole households who have moved from the parish in the same period. Therefor the exodus of population is likely to be somewhat higher, possibly around, say 25%. Counterbalancing this exodus from the parish are those newcomers moving in during the same period, being of the order of 50(plus) households. Since between the 1981 and 1991 Censuses the population only decreased from 528 to 515, it is likely that influx has roughly been balancing outflow of residents, though the population trend has been slowly downwards.

Main reasons for newcomers coming into the parish are, in descending order:

- a) attractive peaceful area,*
- b) cheaper cost of housing,*
- c) employment (most of which is probably outside the Parish.)*

4.7 Age Distribution

Summary of age distribution (approx. %)

under 20 years of age	24.5%
between 20 and 40 years of age	17.0%
between 40 and 60 years of age	36.0%
over 60 years of age	22.5%

The figure of 22.5% for over 60's roughly corresponds with the 1991 census return of 25.9% for Welney, but the very high percentage in the 40 to 60 years age group suggests that in 20 years time something like 36% of the population could be over 60 years of age.

The number of children under 5 years of age is only slightly less than those in the 5 to 10 year old age group, so the feed to the Primary School should remain about the same and provided there is a fair number of children under 5 years in Lakesend, the numbers entering the school may be sustained.

In 1996 out of a total of approximately 200 households, 20% ie. one fifth consisted of 1 person. (according to the responses to the questionnaire 7% of households consist of a single elderly person over 65 years of age, but as quite a number of persons in this category did not fill in the 'Personal' section, the percentage could be appreciably higher, possibly 10% at a guess).

46% of households consist of 2 people

(11% of households consist of 2 elderly people)

14% of households consist of 3 people

13% of households consist of 4 people

1% of households are "single-parent"

21% of households have children under the age of 16 years

It is obvious from the returns that a substantial number of elderly people live in households with younger people.

4.8 Identity, Stability and Change

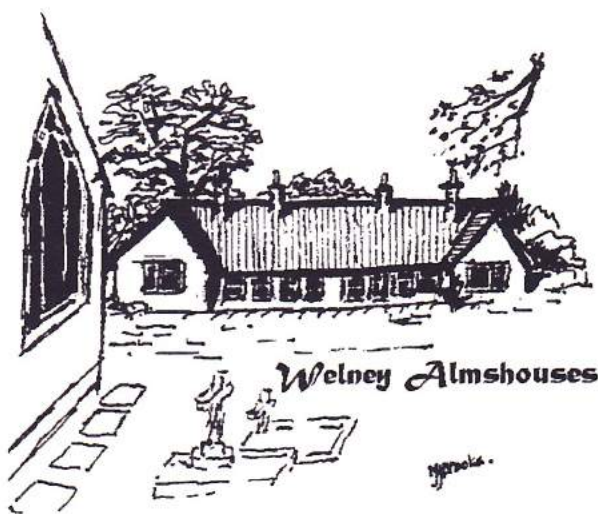
According to the official census statistics, there were 528 residents (257m/253f) in 1981 as opposed to 515 residents (257m/258f) in 1991. So the yearly trend appears to show slight decreases in total population. Our own survey indicates that probably somewhere between 18% and 25% of the population left the parish in the last 10 years (a very high rate). Yet the total population seems not to have decreased much, meaning that almost as many newcomers came into the parish in the same period. What we do not know, is the age distribution associated with this high turnover (inwards/outwards). Without that analysis it is difficult to predict the age distribution in the parish in the future. A further village appraisal, if carried out in say 5 years time (ie. 2001, the year of the next census), would give us a closer view of trends in age distribution. One thing is clear. The large turnover of population shows how the character of the village must have changed. While this could mean that the parish may be less insular and inward-looking than it might have been as a former close-knit rural community, it could also indicate an influx of more open attitudes and new abilities and ideas. This is not to suggest that the parish itself has not coped with and adapted to rapid change over the last 50 years. Whether the rapid turnover means that the village itself has difficulty in finding a stable identity is problematic. A very positive response to the questionnaire shows there are many of the population willing to participate in community affairs and possibly this is an expression of a wish to discover or create a new identity or identities for the parish.

5. Housing

There has been a settlement at Welney for over 400 years but none of the old dwellings survive. Over the years the older houses were either demolished or rebuilt and the few old houses that exist were built in the late 18th or early 19th centuries.

5.1 Almshouses

Most new building was of individual houses until the 1930's except for the Almshouses. The Almshouses were built in 1848, at the same time as the Church, School and Schoolhouse, by the Marshall Charity. Originally these were six dwellings but were severely damaged by fire on Christmas Eve in 1963 and were rebuilt as the four dwellings they are now.



5.2 Public Housing

In the late 1930's the first of what may be called small scale housing developments were built when the six Council houses at Hernside and the seven bungalows along the south side of New Road were built.

Shortly after the end of World war II the Council housing estate at Chestnut Avenue was built. This is the largest housing estate in the Parish, consisting of some 28 dwellings.

5.3 Private Housing

Taymor Place was opened in the early 1960's following the demolition of a row of houses, known as Church Row, facing the Main Street. Individual residences were built here over the years, the last being built in 1984.

At the beginning of the 1970's the bungalows along the north side of New Road from the Main Street were built on land which had been part of the former Rectory property. This was the last

of the small scale housing developments to be built and, if the Borough Council's currently proposed policy for the construction of houses in the Parish is adopted, it is likely to be the last.

Until 1994 the guidelines used by the Planning Department of the Borough Council allowed "infill" building, that is, the building of individual residences on available land along existing roads, and small scale developments, that is the building of small groups of houses, in the village.

However, in 1994 changes to these guidelines were proposed which will severely restrict the building on "infill" land and prohibit the building of small estates. The Parish Council objected strongly to these changes but no agreement with the Borough Council has been reached to date.



Chestnut Avenue

At the present time there are approximately 230 dwellings in the Parish of which approximately

44%	are detached houses,
28%	are detached bungalows,
24%	are semi-detached houses,
2%	are semi-detached bungalows, and
2%	are almshouses.

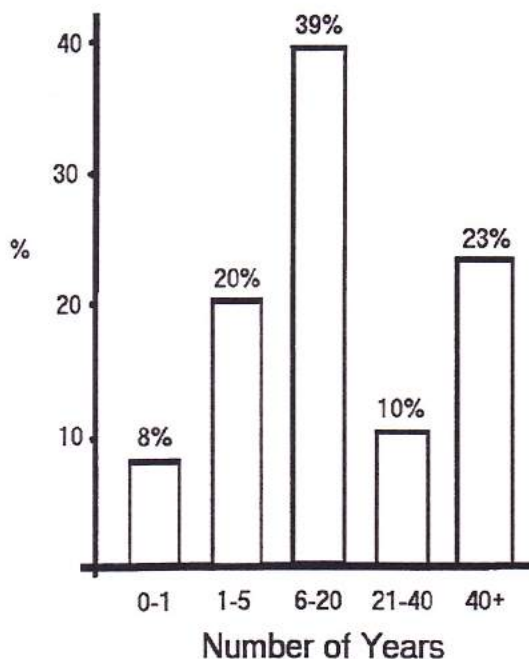
A very small number of these dwellings are currently unoccupied.

The replies to the questionnaire, representing about 85% of the total number of dwellings, showed the following:

77%	are owner occupied,
10%	are rented from the Council,
7%	are rented from private owners,
3%	are County Council farm dwellings,
3%	are tied dwellings.

The foregoing shows that by far the most of the dwellings in the Parish, some 84%, are privately owned, either occupied by the owner or rented to others, 13% are Council owned and 3% are tied dwellings.

There have been substantial changes in households over the years with people moving into and out of the Parish. The following chart shows the number of households, as a percentage of the total, and the number of years they have lived in the Parish.

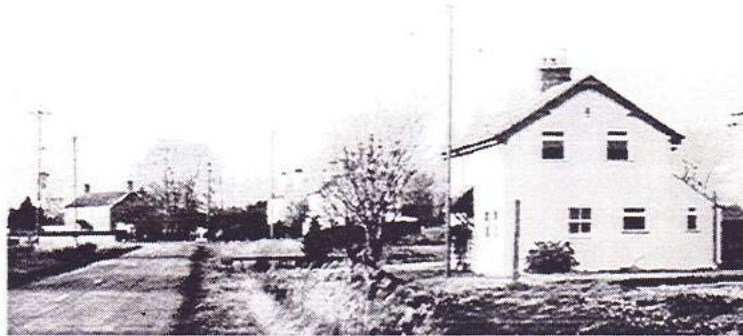


The chart shows that about one quarter (23%) of the households in the Parish could be considered as original, longterm residents, having lived in the Parish for over 40 years; about one third (33%) have lived in the Parish for over 20 years and about two thirds (67%) moved into the Parish within the past 20 years, indicating a substantial change in residents over these past 20 years.

5.4 Moving into and out of the village

Of the households that moved into the Parish during the past 40 years only some 30% previously lived in the area, having lived within 20 miles of the Parish. The other 70% previously lived over 20 miles away with by far the most of these, some 80%, having lived over 50 miles away. This is reflected in the change in the composition of the population, with fewer 'local' people living in the Parish, as is generally the case in most parishes.

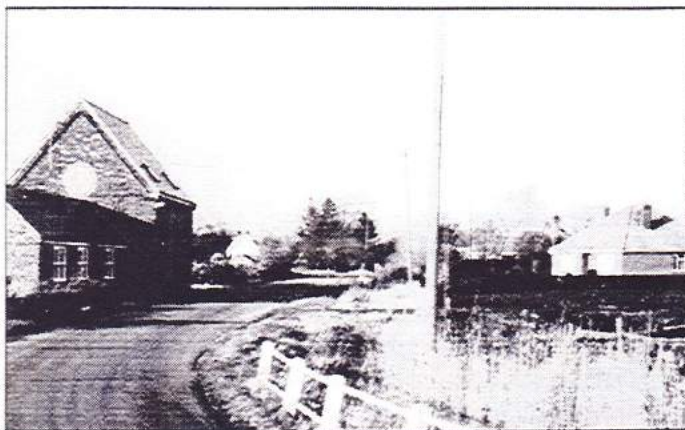
A variety of reasons for moving into the Parish are given in the questionnaire, the main reasons being the attractiveness of the area, the lower cost and attractiveness of housing, and employment in the



Houses at Tips End

area. Minor reasons include the availability of houses to rent, the peacefulness of the area, family ties and to take up farming

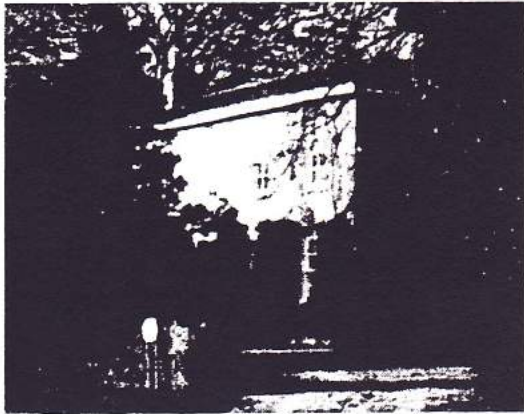
In the past ten years a total of 85 individuals are reported in the questionnaire as having left the Parish from households still living in the Parish. Reasons given for leaving include lack of suitable housing, marriage or divorce, transfer of employment and going on to higher education, but by far the major reason given is the lack of suitable employment in the area, with half of the persons having left for this reason.



Converted Chapel and houses at Tipps End

A number of households in the Parish are reported to be looking for alternative accommodation, either in or out of the Parish, within the next two years. Of those that wish to remain in the Parish most wish to buy a house or bungalow but anticipate a problem in finding a suitable property or are unable to

sell their existing property. Others wish to rent a Council house but are either unable to get on the Council waiting list or have been on the list for over a year.

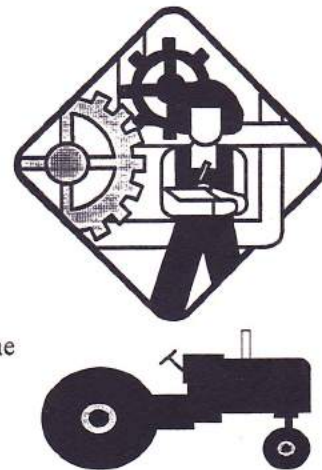


Welney House

Of those that wish to move out of the Parish, about half want to locate within 20 miles of the Parish and half want to move out of the area. Most are looking for rented accommodation but cannot find suitable accommodation at an affordable price. Those wishing to buy a property outside the area anticipate a problem finding a suitable property at an affordable price.

6. Employment

In the Fens 5(b) area, in 1992, almost 13.5% of the total workforce were employed in agriculture. The numbers had decreased by 37% between 1982 and 1992 as a result of mechanisation and consolidation of holdings. In the Fens in 1992, unemployment at 14% was well above the national average of 10.8%, with a key element being its persistence and long term effect. According to the Norfolk Rural Development Area Annual Review 1994/1995, (Welney parish being in the RDA as well as the 5(b) area), unemployment in the Norfolk RDA in January 1995 stood at 7.1% (not seasonally adjusted). This compared with an average rate in all RDA's of 7.9% and a comparable figure for England as a whole of 8.6%. The county's unemployment rate for January 1995 was 8% of the workforce. Responses to the questionnaire might suggest that unemployment in Welney is well below this level, perhaps nearer 6%.



The appraisal questionnaire did not include a section on which type of skills or employment were practised, since such information in conjunction with other household details would have gone counter to our aim of maintaining maximum confidentiality. Perhaps a future skills assessment survey could be of some use to the parish. It does seem however that a substantial number of people will be employed in agriculture or in related occupations such as vegetable packing and processing, agricultural machinery, manufacture and repair, distribution and haulage of agricultural products, etc..

Apart from farms there are only a handful of employers of 3 or more people according to responses to the questionnaire.

The major local firm is the Howard Kent Group, comprising Howard Kent (HK) Transport Ltd., HK Warehousing Ltd., HK Commercial Sales and Penroe Sales Ltd. The firm has a Registered Office and Depot (for Workshops and after hours) in the village. The company added a second depot plus offices and warehousing in Wisbech in 1994. "This came about mainly due to the problems of access to the village from the east side, caused by regular flooding of the A1101 (Wash Road) for many days each year." The company was established in 1970 as a wholly agricultural transport business dealing with local produce. Today, agricultural transport is still prominent with haulage of potatoes, onions, carrots, swedes, green beans etc., from field or store to packhouses and factories. The fleet includes temperature controlled vehicles suitable for plants, food computers etc. The business has diversified into other goods including tubes, steel, confectionery packaging, soft drink components, frying oils, stationery, automotive parts, prefabricated buildings; and this list continues to expand. The company employs about 5 drivers

and 3 full-time office staff who live in Welney within a total workforce of 59 full-time and 4 part-time employees, amongst whom many are from villages around Welney.

Giles Landscapes is another local firm who employ around 6 workers and several staff and whose work area covers SE England. Clients include the Highways Agency, Local Authorities and Building Developers. The firm have recently carried out work on the Royal Estate at Sandringham.



*The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust
Welney Centre*

The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust employ several people from Welney and a few more from adjoining areas. The Welney Centre has a shop and teasshop and draws in large numbers of visitors throughout the year and especially in winter when thousands of arctic swans overwinter here. Very recently they featured in a series of extended programmes transmitted on BBC Television, publicity from which may add to the influx of visitors in the near future. The large numbers of visitors, however, do not seem to

impact very much on facilities or trade in the village itself. Perhaps the village needs to present itself as a focus of genuine fenland interest?

Marifa Lodge, on Wisbech Road in the village, is a retirement home for elderly people and employs a few local people. The building is one of the more architecturally interesting in Welney, having previously been the Rectory.

John Loveday
Engineering is a small concern on March Road, dealing in structural steelwork and the like and employs few people.

The returns to the questionnaire regarding main place or base of work show an interesting pattern of thirds. Approximately 34% of respondents are



Marifa Lodge

employed in the parish or neighbouring parishes. Another 35% are employed in the surrounding small towns, which are fairly quickly accessible by car. The spread of this group is interesting, with Cambridgeshire taking the majority; i.e., Ely (30), Wisbech (23) and March (12), a total of 65 persons, whereas only 15 are accounted for in Norfolk viz., Downham Market (12) and Kings Lynn (3), though the latter low figure is understandable, KL being much further afield. The remaining third, approx., 31% represents a total of 71 persons who work further afield, 27 of whom work in the Cambridge area.

The conclusion has to be that nearly two thirds of the working population travel a fair distance to work. Among the 71 who work 'further afield' there is a second group of 27 who are classed as working more than 30 miles away. Since the question did not specify daily travel, this 27

could include some who have Welney as a second home and also some who travel and stay away from home according to the nature of their work.

As regards individual employment;

For those over 21 years of age,

180 are in employment including:

- 4 employers of 3 or more people, (a family counts as one employer.)
- 39 self-employed, (of whom 13 are female.)
- 103 full-time employed (of whom 37 are female.)
- 30 part-time employed (of whom 23 are female.)
- 1 on a training scheme (female)
- 3 in full-time education

There are 14 unemployed in the above age group.

(10 male and 4 female)



For those in the 17 to 21 age group

- 13 are full-time employed. (of whom 6 are female)
- 3 are part-time employed (all male)
- 2 are on training schemes (one female)
- 20 are in full-time education

There are 4 unemployed in this age group

Unemployment

Of the 18 persons unemployed

14 are male and 4 are female

10 out of the 18 ie., more than 50% are in the 40 to 59 age group.

9 out of the 18 ie., 50% have been unemployed for more than a year.

About 50% of the unemployed found job centres to be helpful

Recently the government has introduced its job seekers allowance scheme ie., after our survey.

Employment being the basis of most incomes and therefor related to the well-being of the community, we were interested to give a voice to those who for one reason or another find themselves in the category of benefits claimants. We therefor tagged on to this employment section, though strictly it does not belong there, a question regarding whether during the last 3 years, claimants had found the DSS to be helpful in regards to providing benefits. Of the 56 households who had been involved in the last 3 years, 12 were fully satisfied, 22 reasonably satisfied and 20 were dissatisfied.

7. Shopping and Postal Services

The Annual Review 1994/95 of the Norfolk Rural Development Area, reported that a second Rural Services Survey was carried out in 1994, in communities of under 10,000 population. Under the heading of "Changes in Village Facilities" it mentions the following:-

In Norfolk " The village shop and Post Office has continued to disappear with an overall 4% loss



since 1991. In smaller villages under 300 population, the loss has been 15% and in villages between 300 and 500 population, some 16%. The loss of village shops is greatest in North Norfolk with 12% and Breckland with 8%. The figures reveal that the village shop and P.O. is able to survive better in villages of over 1000 population and that 42% of all Norfolk villages do have a shop of some kind.

However 37% of villages do not have a post office and there is a slow change from sub-post offices to community offices, leading to greatly reduced hours. The village pub is slowly disappearing from the smaller villages. 70% of villages under 500 population no longer have a pub; 38% of villages overall no longer have a pub." and so it goes on ... " Less than half of Norfolk villages now have a Primary School ..."

Until about 12 years ago Welney had a trio of village shops, but when Bill Mottram retired and left the village in the 1970's, his petrol pumps and cycle shop, adjacent to the school, were taken over but only lasted for a few years before that in turn became an Art and Craft shop. This too, appeared to have a chequered career and closed towards the end of the 80's, reopening later for a brief year or two as a general store/delicatessen, before again closing down. Cox's main village general store, abutting the Lamb and Flag, closed around 1985 and now there only remains the General Store and Post Office in New Road.



The signs are ominous in view of what has been said above about closures in the Norfolk Rural Development Area.

The Appraisal survey shows that although the majority of households split their main shopping fairly evenly between Ely (42%) and Wisbech (41%), there are still a small number of households (8%) who rely on the local shop, along with the mobile retailers of fish, butcher's produce and bakery items, for all their purchases; the local shop also providing many other essential and desirable services such as:- Post Office, off-licence, angling supplies and licences, calor gas, fancy goods, newsagents, etc., including a delivery service where requested.



In addition to the above, most households felt the loss of the village store would prove to be extremely inconvenient (50%), fairly inconvenient (41%) and no inconvenience at all (about 9%)

The main reasons for using the village shop were, in descending order :- to support local shops, for last minute items, for social contacts, saving time, saving transport costs.

The statistics (separate document) related to use and users of the local shop are worth deeper consideration by the community and by individual households, to see whether improvements can be made in specific areas, and also as a focus for people really to think positively about the retention of a facility which is socially necessary and whose loss would be detrimental to village life.

For several years, after the disastrous raising of small business rates, there has been talk of giving help in terms of rate relief. The recent budget promises something come April 1997. But the assistance such as it is is often too little too late. Whilst pressure needs to be kept up on that issue, Welney households ought to think and act in ways that will help the village shop to be maintained. The recent history of village shops in Welney and Norfolk shows there is no such thing as the "status quo." So romantic notions of keeping the village "just as it is," are likely to be dashed, unless people individually resolve to do something to increase the local retail trade

Also from the survey we find that virtually all households are satisfied with our post office counter facilities and delivery service.

So think about it! It is all much more than just a personal service for individuals and it will be too late to do anything about it if it disappears.

8. Healthcare Services

The delivery of family doctor, hospital and emergency services to Welney is affected, as are many aspects of village life, by the risk of occasional flooding of the A1101 at the Washes.

Residents of the main village and outlying areas to the West of the Washes, with a few exceptions, receive general practitioner cover from the Upwell Health Centre, a modern well equipped facility with 5 doctors and 3 nursing sisters plus health visitor, 2 District nurses and part-time Health Authority provision of chiropody, physiotherapy and a dietician. A dentist attends the Centre once a week, and the practice runs its own dispensary. A doctor from Upwell visits Welney on 3 days each week at 12.00 midday for simple consultations in the village hall and arrangements are in place for collection of prescriptions from the village shop. Upwell is some 7 miles distant from Welney so that problems can arise because of lack of transport and in relation to surgery times. Since February 1996 the doctors have run an early morning (08.30 to 09.00 hrs) surgery for patients in full-time work, in an attempt to reduce difficulties of attendance.

Since the beginning of 1996 the Upwell practice has become part of an out-of-hours cooperative emergency service centred on Wisbech, consisting of a number of practices and known as FENDOC (Fenland doctors on call). Patients ring their usual practice number and are transferred to the ambulance control centre where someone will take details, give advice or arrange for a doctor to call. 2 doctors are on call at all times. It may be that these recent changes in the arrangements for Upwell patients will meet some of the dissatisfactions expressed in returns to the questionnaire, regarding individuals opinion of treatment and service from their doctor, (31% with some, albeit minor, reservations.) Respondents expressing themselves well satisfied amounted to 197 out of 287 in total, (ie. approx. 69%).

Residents of Welney parish east of the Washes, with few exceptions, register with the Littleport Health Centre doctors. At 4 miles from Welney on a fast road, Littleport is easily accessible for those with transport, but there is no public service. The Centre provides a similar range of specialist clinics and personnel to those at Upwell, though there is currently no visiting dentist. Littleport has a branch of Lloyds Chemist where prescriptions are dispensed and the usual range of non-prescription medical products are available. While the majority of patients of the Littleport Health Centre expressed themselves on the questionnaire as well satisfied with the service provided, 39% had some reservations. During 1996 the practice has been understaffed with doctors for some time. Since they cover their own out-of-hours work, this may have been relevant in producing certain difficulties for patients.

Returns to the questionnaire indicated that the services bearing on health provision, which received a high degree of patient appreciation were; district nurse, health visitor, maternity care, chiropody and loans of medical equipment. Black marks were reserved for hospital outpatient departments and, as ever in East Anglia, the dentists.

As in many parts of the country, changes in location, staffing and treatments available, have characterised the hospitals used by Welney residents. The Queen Elizabeth hospital at Kings Lynn provides for out-patients and in-patients in most main specialities, though there has been a move to increase the range of out-patient clinics at the North Cambs., hospital in Wisbech over the past 2 years. The hospitals, both of which are ultimately controlled by the North-west Anglia Health Authority, are part of an NHS hospital trust and share many staff. The so-called 'walking wounded,' can still be dealt with at either hospital, while for patients nearer to



Littleport, non-urgent treatment is available at the Princess of Wales hospital in Ely. For certain specialist clinics, and certain conditions, patients may be referred to Addenbrookes hospital in Cambridge or other hospitals.

Despite the accessibility of well-respected hospitals within an hours drive of Welney, it is the transport or lack of it which can change a simple out-patient review into a day-long marathon, or a night emergency into a highly stressful, seemingly endless wait. In fact, emergency ambulances are stationed at Kings Lynn and Wisbech and regular ambulances not only at all the hospitals, but also in certain intermediate locations. Although the central control is at Norwich, this does not affect the distances travelled by the ambulances.

Transport problems are also mitigated by the hospitals' voluntary car service, also controlled from Norwich but run on a cooperative basis between Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Lincolnshire. Access to this very helpful service is via a GP or hospital doctor, but a community car service, local to a village, also exists and proves popular since it is informal and friendly and not associated with any bureaucracy.

Detailed examination of the questionnaire may well indicate that some of the concerns and criticisms expressed refer back to earlier arrangements now improved upon. The general impression is that Welney people are quite fortunate in the accessibility and quality of their healthcare provision and that in the main they are appreciative of this.

Health Centres telephone numbers

Upwell: (Wisbech) 01945/773671

Littleport: (Ely) 01353/860223 Emergencies 860515

Community car service: Welney 201

9. Social Services

Social Services for the Welney Parish are the responsibility of Norfolk County Council and are administered locally by the District Office, Downham Market, Tel 01366 382911. Initial enquiries regarding all social services should be made to Regis House, Kings Lynn Tel 01553 669300.

Norfolk County Council issues an annual report on the Social Services which is usually available in Downham Market Library or from the NCC Information Section at Norwich.

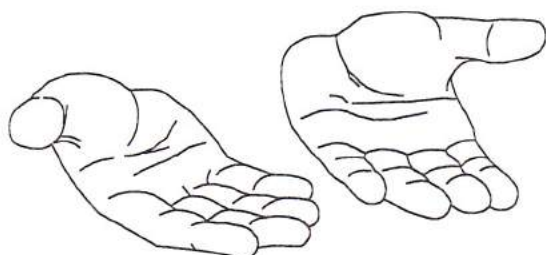


There have been many reorganisations of Social Services over recent years. Currently the NCC Social Services Department acts as an "assessor of needs" and an organiser of "care packages". By means of what is known as "Special Transitional Grant", over the last few years, central government has transferred funds from the DSS (now the Benefits Agency) to local government, and this is not additional funding for 'Care in the Community'. The conditions of transfer of responsibility from central to local government are a) That at least 85% of the Social Security Transfer Element has to be spent on services provided by the private or voluntary sector and only 15% may be spent on the direct provision of care by the Social Services Department themselves, eg., the provision of daycare centres; and b) the second condition is that Health Services and Social Services reach agreement on continuing care and hospital discharge.

Social services provide support services for children and families, the disabled, the elderly population and the mentally infirm, in close cooperation with local primary healthcare services, hospitals and private and voluntary organisations

Services available include advice on registered childminders, fostering and adoption services, home help, meals on wheels, daycare at local hospitals or residential homes, organisation of respite care, laundry for the incontinent, assistance on discharge from hospital, occupational therapy, and Orange Badges. Social Services will also provide information on private and voluntary sector services which can be contacted and paid for privately.

The emphasis is on providing care to enable those in need to continue living in the community as long as possible by providing "home based" care packages, enabling them to remain in their own homes as long as possible.



Some services are provided free, but most do have to be paid for. All but those on very low income will be expected to contribute toward the cost of care. People have always had to pay something if they went into a residential or nursing home, and savings too are taken into account when deciding how much has to be paid for residential and nursing home care.

As with other rural areas, services for Welney are perhaps not as readily accessible as in large towns and cities, but Norfolk Social Services endeavour to have a "named" social worker for particular villages, thus providing familiarity and continuity.

From the questionnaire, of those who had contacted Social Services within the last 3 years, a sizeable proportion (40%) felt that service provision had been poor. A similar number thought they responded quickly and the majority (60%) felt support had been excellent or adequate. There were slightly more requests for home help than other services.

10. Voluntary Services

Approximately 26% of Welney households have contacted the Citizen's Advice Bureau or sought advice from other voluntary agencies over the past 5 years. This relatively high figure suggests a real need, if not for assistance, at least for readily available advice.



So far as voluntary organisations in general are concerned, it is difficult to keep track of the large numbers of such bodies and new variations keep appearing. It is worth noting some of the points made in the Borough Council's document "Community Development Strategy", approved in November 1996.

"As new voluntary workers and agencies emerge, it might be necessary to assist with the establishment of a Boroughwide Forum of voluntary agencies which could act as a central representative network for Voluntary Agencies within West Norfolk. This function could be provided by strengthening the current role of the West Norfolk Federation of Helping Agencies."



With regard to the latter, they have published a Directory of Services and Organisations for West Norfolk, sponsored by the Borough Council and available from the council offices at no charge. Welney does not figure in the Directory though there are long lists of Womens Institutes and Senior Citizens Clubs, along with lists of eg., CAB's, Youth and Community Services, Scout Associations and a myriad of other organisations.

A service which has only recently been notified to the Parish Council by the Norfolk Association of Parish and Town Councils, is the Norwich and District Legal Services Committee. This service, in spite of the name, covers the whole of Norfolk. Their 'blurb' is as follows:-

"Free Housing Advice and Assistance."



"Do you have mortgage arrears and are being taken to court by your lender?
Have you been asked to leave your rented accommodation by your landlord or council or housing association, or have you received a summons from the court?"

Do you rent your home and have a repair problem?
If you are on a low income, you could be entitled to free advice about your rights, telephone calls and letters on your behalf and representation in court.

Tel. 01603 661779



Normally in such circumstances many people are more familiar with the assistance offered by the CAB but with all services badly needing cash support, this may be an alternative.



11. Police

The Norfolk County Council annual report, dated June 1996, states that "The Norfolk Police Authority is no longer a Committee of Norfolk County Council. Instead it is a separate corporate body with 17 members."

11.1 Membership of the Norfolk Police Authority:

9 elected councillors appointed to the Authority by Norfolk County Council, 3 magistrates, 5 independent people, This change was operational from April 1995.

The policing of Welney is undertaken by Downham Market police station, where Inspector Wade is the inspector for the Downham Market Section of what is the Western Division of the Norfolk Constabulary which covers 110 parishes.

11.2 The Welney Beat

Welney is one of 9 parishes on the D6 (Western Division/Downham Mkt Section) Marshland Beat. (not to be confused with Marshland St James parish or Mershe Lande ward). There are 5 full-time police officers specifically assigned to cover this beat. Over and above that, there are 8 officers detailed for response policing of the whole Downham Section (ie. D6,D7,D8 beats.) So D6 has as it were a secondary cover in response to incidents. Statistically the D6 Marshland Beat has the highest ratio of officers per crime of the whole Downham Market Section.



11.3 Traffic Problems

The returns to the appraisal (statistics and comments in the Transport section) indicate great concern in the community about traffic and speeding both in the village and in the parish. The Parish Council regularly contacts the Police on this issue and speed checks are carried out on an occasional basis as resources permit. For instance, on 17 April 1996, the constabulary informed us of checks recently carried out. " 13 drivers were dealt with by means of the Endorsable Fixed Penalty Ticket procedure and 45 drivers were given verbal warnings for speeding ." On 4

October 1996 the constabulary reported that "several checks have been carried out in Welney parish over the past few weeks. Whilst there were vehicles travelling marginally over the speeding limit, 24 drivers were reported or advised regarding their speed." In their letter to the parish council it was stated that speeding is an anti-social problem that appears to be prevalent in the majority of the county's villages and towns, and whilst we (the police) endeavour to redress this behaviour with our limited resources, it does mean that some parishes will not see our officers as often as they may wish to. "Periodic attention will be given to your parish, where further checks will be carried out."

11.4 Burglary and Theft

Replies to the questionnaire on 'Policing' showed that 13 households had suffered burglary or theft within the last year, whilst in the previous 2 years the figure was 22, and for the 3 years preceding that the figure was 14. This would indicate a rising incidence of burglary and theft.

11.5 Welney Neighbourhood Watch

Towards the end of 1995 Welney Neighbourhood Watch was established, with many households subscribing to the scheme (membership fee for 1996 - £2.00) and the parish council making an initial donation towards funding the scheme. The main coordinator is Linda Briggs, Tel: 610393 and there are deputy coordinators in specific areas. A newsletter has been produced. It will be interesting to see the effect of Neighbourhood Watch on future levels of burglary and theft, as their main aim is to reduce crime in the area. "Monitoring and preventing the rise of crime in the village is proving to be an uphill task due to the lack of enthusiasm." (Quote from Neighbourhood Watch)

11.6 Vandalism

Likewise with vandalism, the returns to the questionnaire show that 9 households suffered vandalism within the last year. For the preceding 2 years the corresponding figure was 5 and for the 3 years prior to that the figure was 7. Again this suggests an increase, but we are dealing with small numbers over long periods and tricks of memory with time could have had some influence on the figures. 48 households have actually seen evidence of vandalism in the parish and 103 have not. The original question set no time limit on this answer but comments (available in the statistics document) indicate the typical targets for vandals, though in many cases the time of occurrence has not been stated. Favourite targets appear to be uninhabited or unattended properties, telephone kiosks and road signs and it is particularly sad when damage occurs to special amenities for the community, such as the children's playing field and the pavilion. Other forms are broken windows and graffiti and though not strictly in the category, litter and the gratuitous dumping of rubbish from passing vehicles have been mentioned.

11.7 Work Rates

We do not have specific numbers of persons apprehended, warned or successfully prosecuted for crimes in the parish, but the Downham Police Section have indicated to us that the work rate for officers in this Section substantially exceeds that in other rural sections within Western Division, ie. in relation to arrests, stopping suspicious persons and criminal intelligence. In the Downham Market Section, the detection rate of reported crime has risen to 32% in the period April to Sept 1996, compared with 21% for the corresponding period April to Sept 1995.

Detection and prosecution are a major aspect of the solution to crime but in addition the community has to think about the root causes of anti-social behaviour and whether one can offer at least partial solutions to it, along with the help of other agencies.

11.8 Everyone Pays

When all is said and done about vandalism, theft, burglary and petty crime, in the end it is the households who pay the costs in terms of direct and indirect taxation which pays for policing and detection and also the costs of restoration of public amenities which the local authorities

have to make good. This applies whether or not individual or communal insurance policies exist to mitigate the effects of crime.

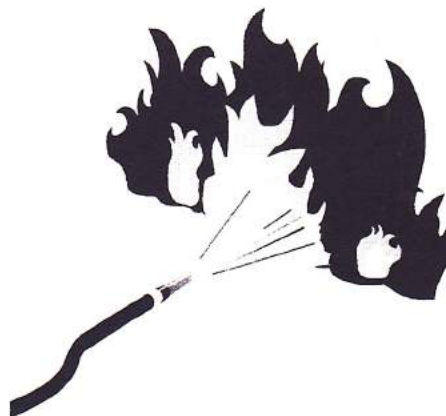
11.9 Satisfaction

Finally we solicited opinions on the current level of policing. 33 households felt this to be satisfactory, 96 unsatisfactory and 49 households were not sure of their answer. These figures can be interpreted one way or another, but it is safe to say that 50% of households are not happy with the current level of policing in Welney.

Returns to the questionnaire also included a few comments about "never seeing a police officer in Welney." (see statistics document) To compensate for this, communities have been encouraged to set up Neighbourhood Watch schemes, as has already happened in Welney. Alternatively, part-time, unpaid Parish Constables could be appointed to a parish if the parish so wanted, and was prepared to pay the necessary costs. A Parish Constable is a trained Special Constable, who would deal with nuisance, minor crime, crime prevention, liaison with schools and patrol on foot or on pedal cycle for a minimum of four hours per week. The Parish Council would have to pay the costs, which are estimated, currently, at about £500 for the first year and then £250 per annum or thereabouts for each successive year. Appointment and management would of course be a matter for the police. Expenses can be defrayed by employing one special constable, say, for 2 parishes, but one suspects such arrangements increase the need for extra hours and travel, thereby putting up costs. Costs include initial training, uniform, cycle, communications equipment, etc. Naturally like all other services, costs are reflected back in the parishioner's community charge.

12. Fire

Norfolk County Council provides the Fire Service everywhere in Norfolk and the service comes under the purview of Norfolk County Council's Fire and Consumer Services Committee. The NCC annual report of Jan 1995 stated that " the Norfolk Fire Service now has one of the most up-to-date Control, Mobilising and Communications Systems in the country. When a call to a fire or other incident anywhere in Norfolk is received at Fire Service Headquarters at Hethersett, (Norwich), a computer screen immediately gives control staff information about appliances and firefighters available in the locality, to deal with it."



12.1 Cross-border Cooperation

Although central control is at Norwich and operational control, so far as Welney is concerned, is at Kings Lynn, intercounty cooperation effected by the use of fast, modern computerised systems, means that local services will respond in the shortest possible time. The situation of Welney at the county boundary poses problems for the Fire Service, just as it does for health and ambulance services when a 999 call is made. This means that when a call is received the computer screen at operational control shows, say, 8 or 10 stations and their current state and commitments. From this information the optimum choice is made, considering all the circumstances. The response can be from the Norfolk or Cambridgeshire Service or both, the nearest local stations being Littleport, Ely, Downham Market, Outwell, March, Wisbech, etc. The joint response to 999 calls is covered by the 1947 Fire Services Act, Section 12 agreement.

12.2 Response Times

In less populous areas the service makes use of 24 hour retained stations ie. staffed by firefighters who turn out only when called to an incident. A variation is to have a station staffed

by full-timers during the day, but reverting to being a retained station at night. The Fire Service is reviewing and updating its arrangements in the light of the advances in communications systems and also taking account of changes in local areas, such as road improvements, bypasses, etc., all of which determine the call-out times which are expected to be within norms specified by the Home Office. Welney is a category D risk area (A being the highest ie. highly populated areas) and the service is expected to take 20 to 30 minutes at the most, to get to a fire or incident. The Fire Service claims that most incidents are attended to much quicker than this. Welney has the additional problem of the flooding of the Wash Road (A1101) for considerable periods during autumn and winter and officers rely on local information to estimate the speed of response to any incident. Again, cross-boundary communication and support systems are much improved these days.

The Annual Report of the County Fire Service categorises incidents as chimney fires, small fires, barn fires, road accidents, genuine false alarms, malicious false alarms and incidents outside of the county. Figures are not available on a Welney parish basis.

It is advisable for all householders to install smoke alarms in order to detect fires very quickly, thereby allowing them to be put out locally or to get the fire brigade quickly in order to limit damage and injury. All households should think about the need for fire extinguishers and other means of quickly extinguishing a fire. Village households could possibly do with some consultation and advice on this issue, which is not straightforward and depends on the types of fire and other circumstances.

In 1993-94 the Norfolk Fire Brigade was called to 4,015 fires, including 861 where arson was suspected (the only figures available at the moment). In regards to arson, there is evidence of it taking place in the parish or close to it, particularly in relation to stolen or abandoned cars and we have had several fires where straw bales have been stacked. It is in everyones interest that such occurrences should be monitored and reported, since apart from possible injuries and damage it is householders who foot the tax bills which maintain the fire service.

13. Telephone

Towards the end of Queen Victoria's reign, the telegraph came to Welney and was installed in George Stokes' shop. As well as providing Money Orders and a Post Office Savings Bank, Mr Stokes delivered the post and despatched telegrams free if you lived within a mile. To celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 1897, the Post Office gave Welney a daily delivery of post and extended the free delivery of telegrams to three miles. The first telephone system came to the village in the 1920's. It was a manual switchboard with the operator using plugs and cords to connect subscribers to the outside world and to each other. It was called a CBS 2 (Central Battery Signalling System No. 2) and, even in 1933, the operator at the ' Old Post Office' would not have been overworked - there were only five telephone numbers in Welney. They were TN's 5,6,7,8, and 9.



Welney GPO Telephone Directory of the 1930's.

Subscriber	1933	1937
Bedford William (farmer)	TN6	206
Carley William (haulage)	-	212
Clayton Robert (farmer)	TN7	207
Curtis George (farmer)	-	213
Dalton Noel (farmer)	TN9	209
Dalton Thomas (grocer)	TN8	208
Jackson Percy (shopkeeper -100 Foot Bank)	TN5	205

In the early 1950's the first automatic system was installed in the old building on the present telephone exchange site. This building was replaced in the mid sixties by a larger brick building to allow installation of a SAX (Small Automatic Exchange), having a maximum capacity of 323 connections when it closed in December 1994. This was when the current Digital Switching System was installed with a maximum capacity of 1215 connections, which should more than accommodate the Parish well into the next century.

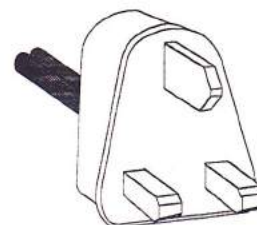
According to returns to the appraisal, there are 9 households without a telephone, of which 2 are single person retired households. In addition 11 households use the parish telephone kiosks often and 61 households do so occasionally. There are four kiosks located respectively at Suspension Bridge, Welney School, Wisbech Road and Tipps End.

Generally there is little complaint about the service.

There are concerns for elderly people and others who may be isolated if they do not have access to a telephone and so breakdowns or malfunction due to vandalism should be minimised.

14. Electricity

With privatisation complete, but take-over bids continuing in the industry, the response to our questionnaire shows that 167 households were satisfied with the service and 28 households were dissatisfied. Perhaps this relates to the Watchdog's recommendation for a rebate to be paid. Instead of the accustomed bleat about bills always rising, only one household claimed the service to be over-priced.



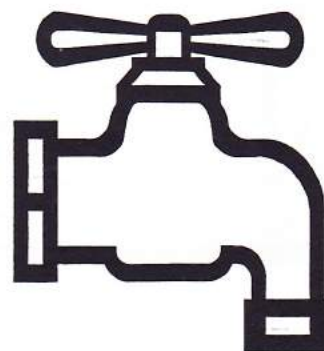
14.1 Interruptions

The number of dissatisfied households roughly corresponds to the number of adverse comments made. By far the most of these (21) were about the frequency of interruption of the service, particularly in the winter. These were variously described as interruptions, cuts, short power cuts, blips, failures and intermittent breaks. Most were ascribed to winter, with a brave few (6) suggesting the cause to be birds or swans in particular. This led to a few suggestions for making the wires more visible to the swans (1) and to a number (3) wondering if the cables, especially near the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, could be put underground.

The main nuisance caused seems to be the resetting of clocks of various kinds on fax machines, TV, boilers, heating, and burglar alarms. One person using a personal computer on a regular basis found the interruptions very annoying.

15. Water

It appears that most of the Parish is satisfied with the quality of tap water as 81% of households drink it straight from the tap, 11% filter it and 8% drink bottled water. Perhaps four fifths of households have no worries whilst one fifth do, but of course other factors such as price enter the equation. On the continent where distinctions are made between potable (drinkable) and non-potable (for washing or industrial purposes), people are more likely to drink various types of mineral water and we need to be aware of the distinction when holidaying abroad. By way of adverse comment, there were about seven references to taste or chemical content, ranging from chlorine to nitrates, herbicides, insecticides and 'metallic' taste.



15.1 Metering

On the installation of water meters, 40 house holds were in favour with 106 against and 46 who were unsure. Among the commentators, 5 households already had water meters, with one saying it was cheaper and two insisting costs had risen substantially. In one case the household was split 50/50 about the merits of installation but the village appraisal does not wish to be cited as the reason for divorce because it was not put as a personal question. One considered opinion was that if meters brought down costs they would become fashionable, whilst another worried about the effects of cutting back use of water in less well-off households.

15.2 Satisfaction

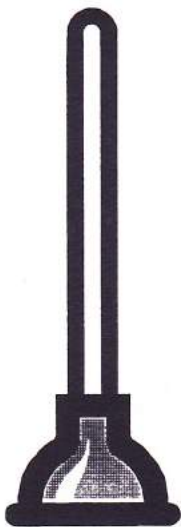
Regarding the service, a number (10) were dissatisfied with continuing periods of low pressure, particularly in the summer when showers and washing machines have difficulty working. There was little or no comment about bursts in water mains though these do occur from time to time and the supply line down the Hundred Foot Bank seems frequently prone to these. Some doubts have been expressed about the efficiency with which maintenance staff are able to find bursts when they occur, whether by listening stick, electronic gadgetry, water divining or just increasing the pressure to create an easily spotted 'gusher'. However once spotted they are usually promptly repaired.

16. Sewerage

Every household in the Parish has a septic tank or cesspit to hold their sewage, which needs to be emptied by a contractor. About 26% are emptied annually, with a sizeable number (18%) being emptied several times a year. 25% are emptied every two years, 28% over a longer period and 5 are apparently never emptied. Theoretically a properly constructed septic tank, as opposed to a cesspit, should continue to function for long periods without interference. In the Fens, trouble can arise due to settlement, low gradients in pipes and where tanks are constructed in pockets of low lying land.



16.1 Mains Sewerage



In 1995, on receiving a letter from the Borough Council regarding 'Rural First Time Sewerage,' the Parish Council conducted a survey to find out attitudes regarding mains sewerage. The following minute, passed nem con at the Parish Council meeting of 14/3/95, summarises the position. "The survey had now been carried out and around some 50 to 60 reply slips returned. Clerk to ask the Borough Council to consider adding Welney to their programme and to give them the result of the survey as a percentage." According to the Borough Council, because of its ongoing commitments with other villages, Welney could not be considered before the year 2004 and then only if all the necessary criteria are satisfied. The problem for the Parish is that any installed scheme would rebound in terms of council tax and in a scattered Parish, even if a majority of parishioners within the village are in favour of a scheme, those in the outlying areas are likely to be less enthusiastic at the prospect of paying for a service they do not enjoy. It does appear that some clarification is needed about "where do we go from here?" If a criterion is that a majority of the Parish need to be in favour then the current 50 to 60 replies (yes? or no?) is not going to move things along.

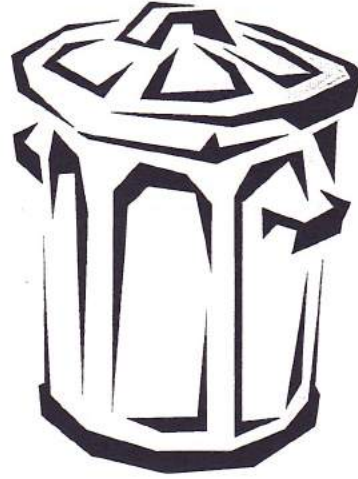
17. Refuse

17.1 Satisfaction

85% of residents are satisfied with the refuse collection service and 15% are dissatisfied. The dissatisfaction expressed by a few households has to do with bags; either the number (1) provided is too few and the number accepted (2) not enough, or else new bags are just thrown down any old way and difficult to recover, especially if the householder is disabled. Another few complaints are about collection times, which are described as erratic and can cause difficulty at times of statutory holidays. Another small group are more concerned about what type of waste will be collected as permissible. There is some such guidance printed on the bags.

Clearly from the large overall response (near 100%) to this section of the questionnaire, residents are genuinely concerned about all aspects of waste disposal.

As regards household's preference for wheeled bins, approximately 50% say no, 41% yes and 9% don't know.



17.2 Recycling



On the question of recycling, a large majority (70%) of households want to see more recycling bins and 30% seem to think we have enough. When it comes to the recycling of individual items, the positive responses (assuming a maximum possible of about 190), are roughly as follows:- Almost 50% of households are prepared to recycle cans, plastic bottles, clothing and garden/organic refuse. Only one or two are interested in cardboard, waste oil and plastic generally. It should be mentioned that the village school accepts recyclable aluminium cans which brings them in some extra educational funding and therefore ought to be supported. Nor should households forget that supermarkets and charity shops contribute to recycling facilities.

Many households (about 80% of the 164 respondents) want information regarding the collection of unwanted items. There is a message printed on every Borough Council black plastic sack for domestic refuse, which amongst other advice tells us "Free collection of bulky household items such as furniture, fridges etc., call Kings Lynn 01553 773393." According to some users this service is extremely helpful, though collection may be the next day or the next week depending when and where the collecting team are making their rounds. Residents who wish to personally get rid of several sackfuls of household waste quickly, including some items of garden waste, metal, cookers, electrical goods etc., can take these to the Council waste and recycling depot at Crimplesham, 2 miles east of Downham Market. According to some respondents there appear to be similar collection points in March and Wisbech. The larger picture is that Norfolk County Council and the District/Borough Councils have formed the Waste Management Partnership to put Norfolk's Waste Management Plan into action. This current Plan was approved by the Government in February 1996. The County Council now have to produce and have it approved by the year 2000, what is known as the "Norfolk Waste Local Plan." Household Waste is only one part of this and some idea of the size of the problem is indicated by its quantity. Norfolk collects about 350,000 tonnes per annum of which 30,000 tonnes are recycled and 19,000 tonnes are exported out of Norfolk. This leaves 301,000 tonnes to be disposed of in landfill sites. It all has to be paid for and the

Government holds the purse strings. The County Council in its recently published draft document recognises the need for better partnerships and more coordinated action with parish councils and community groups as well as with industry and commerce.

The very full response to the village appraisal questionnaire would suggest this is a major item of community concern requiring community action.

18. Transport



18.1 Private Transport

Private motor vehicles, including cars, vans, motorcycles and mopeds, are the main means of transport used by households in the Parish. This is indicated clearly by the small number, approximately 10%, of households reportedly having no vehicle and the large number, approximately 85%, that stated that they never use the available bus services.

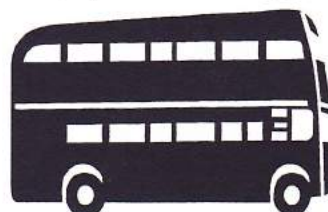
At the present time there are about 245 motor vehicles in the households in the Parish, of which over 90% are cars and vans. Approximately 45% of the households have two or more cars.

Approximately 45% of the households have a total of over 100 bicycles. These would include those used for sport or pleasure and by children and are not, therefore, considered to be a main means of transport.

18.2 Public Transport

At the present time there is a bus service to March, Downham Market, Ely and Peterborough on the following days.

Wednesday - March
 - Peterborough via March
 Thursday - Ely
 Friday - Downham Market
 Saturday - Downham Market



In addition, a bus to Kings Lynn on Thursday will pick up passengers at Welney on request.

There is only one bus per day to and from each destination except Wednesday when there is a choice of two to March

The buses leave from the Post Office in Welney between 08.30 and 10.30a.m., returning the same day. Bus schedules are available at the Post Office.

Few households use the available bus services as is shown in the following table

Number of Households Using Service

Frequency	March	Dnm. Mkt	Peterborough	Ely	Kings Lynn
once/week	0	1	0	1	1
once/month	2	3	4	1	0
occasionally	18	15	15	13	7
Totals	20	19	19	15	8

This table shows that, of the few households using the bus services, very few use the service to Kings Lynn. It also shows that the majority only use the services occasionally. This would seem to indicate either that most households prefer to use private transport or that the present bus services are unsatisfactory.

There are no bus services to Littleport or Wisbech at the present time. The questionnaires showed that if these services were available, approximately 20% of the households would use the service to Littleport and 25% would use the service to Wisbech. Approximately another 25% of the households indicated that they would probably use both of the services. If the bus service to Ely was more regular, four households indicated that they would use it regularly and another four would probably use it.

Comments on the bus services show that a few households are not aware of the existence of these services and several, presumably living in the outlying areas of the Parish, find the pick-up point at the Post Office inconvenient, being too far from their homes. This indicates a need for better publicity about the availability of the services and consideration being given to changes in the routing of the services.

By far the most comments indicated a desire for more frequent daily services, including services on the weekend for shopping and services scheduled to allow them to be used to get to and from workplaces outside the Parish. A comprehensive survey would be necessary to determine the viability of such improvements to the present bus services.

There is no rail service to Welney, the nearest stations being in Littleport Ely and Downham Market. Use of rail services requires travel to these stations by private transport due to the limited bus service available.

There is a voluntary Community Car Service in the Parish, coordinated by the Postmistress, to provide transportation to the Health Centre at Upwell and hospitals for those who have no other means of transport. This service is used by only 5% of the households in the Parish.. Only five households commented on this service, their comment being that they were unaware of this service.

18.3 Roads

Many households express concern about the roads in the Parish, considering them poorly maintained and inadequate for the volume of traffic on them, especially of heavy goods vehicles which cause vibration and noise due to the poor condition of the roads.

The maintenance of roads and verges is the responsibility of the County Council. Approximately 50% of households consider this maintenance to be poor.



The cleaning of roads and drains is the responsibility of the Borough Council. Approximately 35% of the households consider this cleaning to be poor.

18.4 Traffic

The danger from the excessive speed of vehicles is of great concern to many households with some 57 households commenting specifically on this. A large number of households suggest that traffic calming schemes be installed or that more police surveillance be carried out to ensure that speed limits are observed. Several also suggested that speed limits be imposed along the Wisbech Road and at Tipsend and along the Wash Road

Several households expressed concern at the increasing number of heavy goods vehicles using the roads, especially in view of the impending increase in the permitted weight of these, believing the present roads are unsuitable for these, being too narrow and with poorly maintained surfaces.

18.5 Wash Road

The questionnaires showed that a large number of households, 138 in all, are inconvenienced by the flooding of the Wash Road in some way.



The road across the Wash is about three-quarters of a mile in length. When the road is flooded, as it is for various lengths of time every winter, residents who normally use this road must make a detour of about 25 miles to cross the Wash. About 90 households are forced to make this detour to get to and from work, school and shopping. As well as the additional time involved, they incur the additional costs resulting

from having to travel the extra distance and many find driving on unfamiliar roads at night unpleasant.

Another inconvenience experienced by a large number of these households is the feeling of isolation in that they are unable to visit family and friends, to make use of the amenities in the village such as the Post Office, shop and pubs and to take part in the social life of the village. Others are concerned about the difficulty they find in selling their property, the loss of trade, disruption of postal services and the disruption of their family life.

For a number of years the Parish Council has been pressing the County Council to take steps to eliminate the flooding of the Wash Road without success. The obvious solution is to either raise the existing road or build a new, straighter road across the Wash. Of the households expressing a preference, about two thirds prefer to have the existing road raised and one third prefer a new road, while about one third of all households have no preference for either.



If a new road is constructed, 90% of households would like it to incorporate footpaths and 75% would like it to include a cyclepath.

18.6 Street Lighting

The Borough Council is responsible for providing street lighting. However, this responsibility is delegated to the Parish Council with the Borough Council contributing part of the installation and operating costs of lighting within the Parish. In view of the high cost of installation and operation, a large part of which is borne by the rate-payers in the Parish, the policy of the Parish Council is to provide footpath lighting only in those areas of the Parish most used by pedestrians. Approximately 45% of households consider the present lighting to be poor.

19. Education



19.1 Preschool

In Welney parish, organised facilities with registered supervisors for the provision of day care and nursery education are practically non-existent, except that, firstly, the Downham Market Playbus comes to Welney on a Monday morning (costing parents a minimal fee per session) and, secondly, the primary school's admissions policy now permits the admission of

children in the September term following their fourth birthday. The effect of the latter is that a few children between the ages of 4 and 5 have the advantage of earlier schooling and qualify for participation in the government's pilot nursery voucher scheme. At the moment this operates in four areas in England, one of which is Norfolk, the others being three London Boroughs. Under the scheme the £6.8m which Norfolk County Council spends on education for children under 5 is being withheld by the government and given to parents in the form of vouchers. The value of vouchers spent by parents with council nurseries and schools then comes to the County Council. The value of vouchers spent with other providers such as private nursery schools, is passed to them. Elsewhere in the county, the education committee has embarked on a programme of setting up nursery units. These appear to be limited in number and generally are being established in the more populous areas.

There are a number of places in the Borough of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk where children under 5 years of age can be left by their parents and supervised by regular supervisors. These comprise a) Playgroups where children mainly play; b) Daycare centres and Nurseries where play is dominant but elements of education are mixed in, depending on age and ability; c) Nursery education where the emphasis is on education, with play having a lesser role.

In Welney, out of 22 households with children under the age of 5 years;

2 leave their children regularly with a carer (respondents did not indicate if these are registered child minders)

4 would like to leave their children with a carer but do not do so, mainly because it is too expensive, though one household indicated this was due to lack of places. Replies to the questionnaire produced a sizeable number of comments in favour of both daycare and nursery education.

However one respondent thought that with the new policy of admitting rising fives to primary school, nursery education is not now necessary.

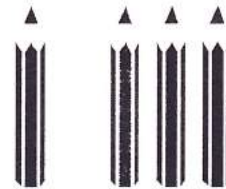
19.2 Primary Education

The William Marshall (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, which has affiliation to the Church of England, was built in 1848 for 130 children, the funding having been provided by Marshalls Charity (see history section). Another school, known as the Mission School, at 100 Foot Bank, Suspension Bridge, was built for 80 children in 1874, the funding again coming from the Marshalls Charity. However this school closed on 20 May 1927. The school house and school hall still basically exist today, but have been converted to housing.



Today the Welney Primary School has 9 governors as follows

- 2 Parent governors elected by parents.
- 2 Local Education Authority governors appointed by Norfolk County Council.
- 1 Teacher governor elected by the teaching staff.
- 2 Foundation governors appointed by the Ely Diocesan Education Committee.
- 1 Parish council representative. (currently Ken Sorensen)
- 1 Head Teacher if the head so chooses.



Current numbers and staffing are; 41 pupils; Head Teacher; 1 Full-time teacher; 1 Part-time teacher, giving a full-time equivalent staffing of 2.4. In addition parent-helpers have been working in the school from September 1996

The appraisal questionnaire took no account of children in the rising five group coming from Lakesend. and there may not be a large number of under 5's there. Of the present 41 pupils however, 10 children currently attend from Lakesend. There could therefore be some uncertainty regarding future numbers in the school. The school's finances appear to be in good order but fund raising is still very important.



Of households having children currently attending or who have attended during the last 5 years; 79% consider the Primary School as good, 14% consider it as reasonable, 7% regard it as poor.

The appraisal did not produce significant comments on other aspects of school life other than reinforce the already high esteem in which the school is held, as shown above. The school produces a prospectus, available to parents which covers all aspects of school activities and policies. In addition the parish council representative presents an annual report to the parish council. The current report shows a very active school, much involved in the community and with the " Friends of the School," fund raising through various events. The report concludes, " 1995-96 has been another successful year both educationally and financially due to the continuing efforts and dedication of the staff." Nevertheless staffing difficulties occurred towards the end of the 1995-96 school year, due to illness..



19.3 Secondary and Further Education

In a rural area such as Welney, choice within the state system is to an extent limited by the concentration of secondary schools and community colleges in towns. For Welney, Downham Market High School is the designated school for which free transport is provided. This is a grant maintained, mixed, comprehensive school with 1518 pupils on the roll. A prospectus is available from the school. A few pupils/students from the village do participate in Cambridgeshire schools and colleges in March and Wisbech to the north. To the south there are obvious travel limitations and the closure of the Wash Road due to flooding is probably a deterrent to anyone contemplating the use of facilities in Ely and Cambridge. Beyond that, choice appears to become a matter of whether one can personally afford fees and travel costs to independent schools in Cambridgeshire. There have been cases of households moving out of the area to secure a particular choice of secondary school.

From answers to the questionnaire we find that for households having children currently attending or who have attended Downham Market High School in the last 5 years, that;

51%	consider the school to be good
36%	consider it to be reasonable
13%	consider it to be poor



Three households have children who attend or have attended the Isle College, (Wisbech) during the last 5 years and their households consider the college to be good. Neale Wade Community College (March), Wisbech Grammar and the Kings School Ely have taken one or two children from village households in the last 5 years (a total of 7 households), nearly all of these households considering the schools to be good, with an odd dissenting voice about Neale Wade. In Oct 1996 the governors of Neale Wade decided to ballot parents on whether they want the school to become grant maintained.

The government's 1996 performance ratings for schools and colleges were published in Nov 1996 and below are given some extracts with some relevance to Welney. Figures for City of Ely Community College are given for comparative purposes.



Results for specified Vocational Qualifications at Advanced and Intermediate Level follows:

School/College	No of 16,17,18 yr olds in final yr of a specified adv. voc.qualification	% of those students getting advanced VQ	No of 16,17,18 yr olds in final yr of a specified intermediate VQ	% of those students getting intermediate VQ
D Mkt H.S.	17	94	-	-
N.Wade C.C.	-	-	7	43
Isle College	153	82	87	51
NORCAT	149	87	117	74

Government's 1996 Performance Ratings								
School/college	% of 15 yr olds achieving			No of Pupils aged 15 at start of school year	Average point score of pupils entered for		Total pupils on roll	No of special needs students (no statement)
	5 or more GCSEs A-C	5 or more GCSEs A-G	1 or more GCSEs A-G		Less than 2 A Levels or AS equivalents	2 or more A Levels or AS equivalents		
D.Mkt	36	84	96	262	0.0	12.7	1518	178
N.W.	32	89	93	270	2.3	12.0	1479	183
Wis.G	96	99	100	96	2.8	18.3	629	nil

KSEly	78	88	93	104	8.4	16.2	682	57
Isle C	-	-	-	-	1.6	9.6	-	-
ElyCC	36	85	93	228	4.1	15	1051	105

D Mkt = gm,c,x

Neale Wade = c,x

Wisbech Grammar = in,s,x

Kings School Ely = in,s,x

City of Ely Community College = c,x

NORCAT = Norfolk College of Art and Technology.

Where *gm = grant maintained*

c = comprehensive

in = independent

s = selective

x = mixed

19.4 Adult and Continuing Education

The returns to the questionnaire (see section on Social Activities) indicated that a sizeable number of households had participated in Adult Education or evening classes during the last 5 years. Of these, 31 households had participated 'locally' and 16 households had done so but 'further afield' in East Anglia. The figures indicate there is a demand for this type of education. Classes, times, locations and fees are given in leaflets/brochures available from Local Authorities and copies are normally available in public libraries; Downham Market dealing with Norfolk locations and Ely, Littleport, March and Wisbech for Cambridgeshire.

20. Social Activities

Welney Parish has two main assets in property which have made a large contribution to social activities in the parish.

First, the New Parish Hall, built in 1929 and renovated, refurbished and reroofed in 1993.

The Hall provides a venue for a number of regular village social activities (which are listed later on); it is hired for private functions such as weddings, birthdays and the School Christmas party, and is the venue for a medical surgery on Monday, Wednesday and Friday at noon, when a doctor from Upwell Health Centre attends.

Hiring rates are deliberately kept low for village activities, so income is small, and fund-raising events, such as dances, coffee mornings, the monthly Bingo and the annual Water Gala, are essential to cover the rising costs. Greater support for these events would certainly ease the financial burden.

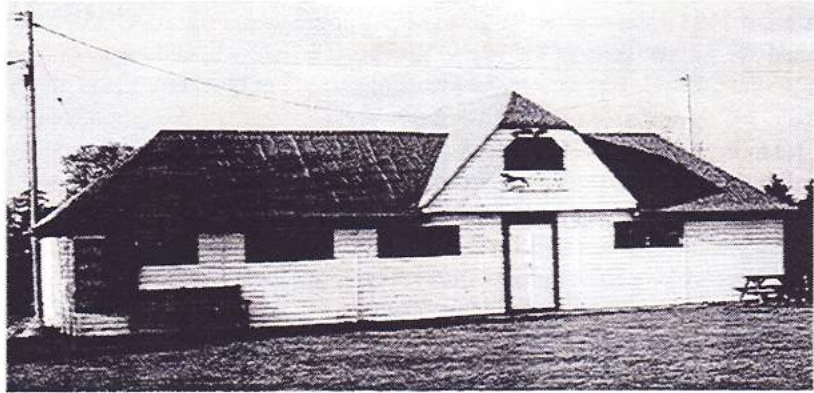
At present the annual cost of keeping the Hall open and viable for public use is around £1,500 - insurance alone is £450 a year and caretakers, electricity, site rent, official inspections for safety and fire precautions and regular repairs and maintenance swallow up over

£1,000. A small committee works to organise the running of the Hall and the fund-raising and tries to balance these precarious finances but there is an urgent need for more volunteers to join the committee and spread the work-load. (Secretary Helen Barry 610 200)



Secondly, the Pavilion and Playing Field which opened in 1971, the Pavilion having been purchased from Balding and Mansells Sports Club in Wisbech. This also has had to have repairs and renovation from time to time and some villagers feel it is due for further renovation and upgrading.

There is a lot going on in Welney in spite of hearsay that nothing much is going on; or rather, there is a general feeling that people do not know what is going on. as events may not be well enough notified or



The Pavilion

advertised. It is sometimes taken for granted that people generally know of such events, but considering the sizeable movement in population in the village, perhaps relative newcomers need more information and better induction into village life. People in the outlying areas of the parish may also not be too well informed.

Another thing to be recognised is that the world external to Welney has changed beyond all recognition in the last 10 or 20 years. The motor car sustains everything else, and sports and leisure centres abound in the numerous small towns surrounding Welney and within easy reach of the village. A question that needs to be asked is to what extent households find their leisure needs satisfied outside the village. The answers to the questionnaire give some clue to that. There remains the residual question of what is left for Welney itself to provide in terms of leisure needs and once again the questionnaire uncovers many suggestions for extending activities within the village and some of these suggestions are supplemented by the the desires of young people in the Youth section of this report.

Welney needs to take a long look at its provision in order to find out what is desirable, what is possible and what is sustainable, given the small population and the fact that many households are involved with other matters. This has to be an ongoing concern and not one that can be sorted out by one meeting or indeed by a handful of individuals. It requires a communal effort over time. One thing is certain; all the things suggested cannot all be done especially on top of and possibly interfering with many activities already going on.

Major sporting activities taking place in the village are associated with the Playing Field, which is managed by the Playing Field Committee. The chairman is Bob Frusher (tel 01354 610480) and the committee is in the process of filling vacancies at this moment and is trying to generate more interest in its affairs.

The Parish Council supports this enterprise by paying about £600 pa for grass cutting, (one of the major items of parish expenditure) and for several years has paid a financial donation of £200 to help maintain the Pavilion and Playing Field

The Cricket Club which disbanded around 1981, reformed and started playing on a new all-weather wicket in 1990, installed due to communal effort plus external assistance from the MCC and others. A leading role in this was played by Bob Frusher (current chairman and Captain) and Ray Kent (current President). It is a formal club with a properly constituted committee and officers, produces a printed fixture list and will be playing in the Fenland Invitation Trophy League in the 1997 season. They have training sessions, host a quiz night on a fortnightly basis at the Three Tuns, thereby raising funds for the club, host the Blows Brothers

cup competition in July and participate in a cricket festival at Upwell CC on the Whitsun weekend. The latter brings a substantial contribution to their funds and along with other activities helps to cover their running costs of around £700.

Welney United Football Club were Isle of Ely First Division League Champions in 1979, 1981, 1983 and 1984. After this period of peak performance the team declined. The present Welney United FC still compete in the Isle of Ely and District Football League and have to affiliate to the Norfolk FA. Unfortunately the present team can only muster 3 or 4 players from Welney Parish and we are informed that as no one in the village is willing to manage the team, it is run by Jason Penn from Ten Mile Bank (tel 01366 378858). They do not appear to have a formal committee structure. The team appears to derive social and financial support from the Hilgay area, but not from any other organisation so that the players themselves pay £1.50 at away matches and £2 at home matches in order to be able to pay the referee somewhere between £10 and £15 each week. The organisation appears to be somewhat loosely held together only by the work effort of one or two individuals. Training when it takes place is on Wednesdays. The current fixture list occupies 3 Saturdays each month with the final fixture at home on 3 May 1997. According to reports, their future may not be too assured unless they put their house in order. They try to have at least one annual fund raising event.

20.1 Angling

The intricate network of Fenland watercourses is nationally known for the quality of its coarse fishing and national championships are often held in the area, which is noted particularly for bream, roach, pike, rudd and zander, not to mention the eels which lend their name to the nearby Cathedral City of Ely.



Anglers' Camping and Caravans behind the Three Tuns

Welney has a popular Angling Club, with a formal committee, (secretary Peter Redman, tel 01354 610201), and about 30 full and 100 associate (non-voting) members. They fish 4 miles of the River Delph between Welney Bridge and Welmore Lake Skuice, as well as a 3 mile stretch on the Old Bedford River between Welney Bridge and Double Lift Mill. Full club membership is £7 and juniors pay £3. Evening matches are held during Summer and occasional Saturday matches in Winter. Whilst local interest in the club is limited, the sales of Associate Books and day-tickets ensures a sound financial basis for the club. The club have worries about river management, over water abstraction, weed growth and low water levels in Summer on the Old Bedford River. The club has kept a keen eye on the National Rivers Authority Water Management, and will no doubt continue to do so with the Environment Agency having now taken over control.

At one time in Welney there was a large influx of "fishing tourists" in the Summer but numbers at the present day are much lower. This leads one to conclude that Welney could do to raise its tourist image, improve its accommodation facilities, such as reasonably priced B&B etc., and set out its stall to attract a good class of angler who cares for the environment and social life of the community and thereby brings added value which the Parish needs. Angling Club meetings are usually held in the Pavilion.

Other communal activities appear to centre on the Parish Hall, other than the Mother's Union, which meets in the Church on the second Wednesday in the month, at 19.00 hrs, except for January, February and August. The membership person is Mrs Symons, Christchurch 01354 638277.

20.2 Parish Hall Activities

The Womens Institute (WI) meets on the first Wednesday of every month at 19.00 hrs. this group has been active over many years with a varied programme. New members are welcome on the night. It may be worth dropping in for a chat without having ones arm twisted to join.

The Friendship Club, likewise has been active for a long time and fulfills a very necessary social role and provides enjoyment for the over-60's, who are an increasing proportion of the parish population, as indicated elsewhere in this Appraisal. Regular, varied and interesting outings are arranged in the summer months. Cissie Bedford (01354 610206) is the contact/coordinator of this group which seems well attended and lively. They are affiliated to Age Concern, Norfolk. The secretary is Pam Sorensen (01354 610516) and the club meets fortnightly on Tuesday afternoons. The annual subscription is £2 and newcomers are welcome to drop in with a view to joining.

The Whist Club plays every week on Wednesday evenings, except for the first week in the month when it clashes with the WI meeting and then it is held on the Thursday. Normally there are only 3 or 4 tables and the numbers are sustained by players coming from other villages. New players would be welcome to participate in what seems a happy atmosphere and there are small prizes. Potential members should not be deterred by feeling they may not play to a high enough standard. It takes all sorts to make a world and the Whist Club has to recognise this in order to get the numbers to keep this worthwhile and enjoyable activity going.

Bingo takes place on the last Friday in the month at 19.00 hrs, again attracting players from other villages and likewise looking for increased local support. Both the whist and bingo provide good entertainment for small financial outlay, which ought to appeal to young and old and in between.

Quiz Night This has proved a very successful and enjoyable activity over a number of years. As mentioned under 'Cricket' the quiz is organised by Bob Frusher and is held fortnightly on Thursdays at 20.00 hrs in the Three Tuns Pub. A cohesive and socially participative atmosphere is helped along by the organisation into teams of 4 with odd names, (but individual newcomers can always come along and fit into vacant slots or merge to form a group). A positive feature is that each group sets the evening's questions on a rota basis, sometimes with bizarre but nevertheless amusing results. Running totals of the scores eventually uncover the season's champions and boobies.

20.3 Pubs

Amazingly for a settlement of just 500+ inhabitants, the village sustains 3 establishments; The Cherry Tree, The Lamb and Flag Inn and the Three Tuns. Over the years all have provided their own forms of organised entertainment. Both the Cherry Tree and the Lamb and Flag take paying guests and provide food. The Cherry Tree and the Three Tuns manage to run Darts and Domino Teams which play in a League. Recently for a number of years the Lamb and Flag Inn seems to have had an unsettling turnover of tenants, but now from 10/12/96 the tenancy has been taken over by Mr and Mrs G Wild, and the village will

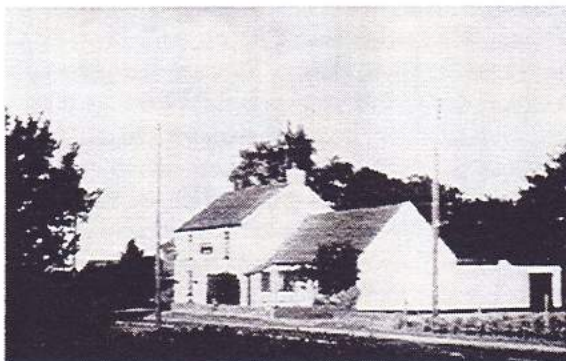


The Three Tuns Pub

undoubtedly wish them success in the future. It could be said that the position of all three establishments, close by the A1101, contributes to their income from passing traffic, but the drink and drive laws rightly militate against a former source of income and therefore necessitate a change in the nature and arrangements of hostelryes, alehouses and their clients if they are to maintain their valued position in the community and still be economically viable.

20.4 General

About two thirds (127) of households responded to the question on whether social activities were sufficiently publicised and 64% thought not. Obviously there is a message here. Of about roughly 140 households responding to the question about attendance at discos, dances, cinemas plays and concerts, something like an average 64% claimed to attend hardly ever, though for cinemas the figure was nearer 50% of those responding.



The Cherry Tree Pub

Something like one sixth of households have participated in Adult Education classes during the last 5 years.

As regards households aspirations for clubs they would be willing to join, the most sought after would be: keep fit (47), gardening (45), rambling (29), handycrafts (26) and flowercraft (25). The others (see the statistics document) tail off. but anyone or group desirous of starting a club should weigh up the statistics to get some idea of viability. There remains the question of organisation and membership and whether such things can be slotted in between the many other things going on in the village. Perhaps it might be



The Lamb & Flag Pub

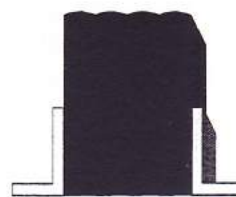
advisable in the first instance to aim at smaller interest groups which may flourish and grow under changing conditions. For example, only 10 households show an interest in drama, yet not so long ago the village sustained an active group who put on an annual variety/pantomime type show, known as 'The Welney Follies', in the village hall. It provided endless mirth for the population as well as pleasant and hardworking enjoyment for participants, whether involved in the on or off-stage production. A small group could 'read' a play just for fun.

Perhaps there is a need for induction and information about activities to be made more explicit for newish as well as longer term residents in Welney and this can be done verbally, by notice boards, by circulars to houses, or through a village newsletter that seeks to find some cohesion in the community rather than dissension. For success, probably all methods should be tried in conjunction, though ultimately it is the willingness to participate that counts.

20.5 Library

This piece could well go into the information section, but it is an activity of extreme importance and to be encouraged.

In relation to the use of main libraries, of 156 respondents, 30 use a main library regularly, 46 occasionally and 80 households never use a main library. The most popular main libraries are Ely (22), Wisbech (16), Downham Market (12), Littleport (12) and March (9), with a few individuals using others. Libraries used will obviously relate to workplace and domicile from the point of view of convenience. It should be noted that official information and reports on Norfolk are more likely to be available in Downham Market library, whereas the others cater for official information and reports for Cambridgeshire. Downham Market also has a hands-on computer terminal link with Norwich, allowing access to further official information regarding Norfolk. Some other libraries have a similar facility for Cambridgeshire.



The Mobile Library van from Downham Market visits the parish once a month on a Friday morning and seems poorly used, possibly because people are at work. A bit of thought and neighbourly help could get round that. Those who do use it value the service greatly and would like to encourage more support/use and newcomers to the village should be made aware of it. Present users would not like to see the service disappear through lack of support, and such services are always prone to public expenditure cuts based on cost-benefit analysis.

21. Religion

21.1 C of E

The present village church of St Mary the Virgin (Anglican) will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 1998. The foundation stone was laid in 1847 and the church built and completed in August 1848 with funds from the Marshall Charity. In the grounds of the church are the remains of the chapel which preceded the church. The History Gazetteer Directory of Norfolk, ie. "White's 1845



Church of St Mary the Virgin

Norfolk," states that "the church is a small ancient brick edifice on the Cambridgeshire side of the parish, which keeps its poor separately. The living is a rectory consolidated with Upwell." Kelly's County Directory of 1858 describes Welney as "a chapelry annexed to the rectory of Upwell," and further informs us that "The Baptist and Methodist connexions have chapels here (ie. Welney)." White's 1845 Norfolk also informs us that the Rev John Rofe is the Curate. The Rev ER Wilford was rector from 1873 to 1899 and his son, the Rev HH Wilford was rector from 1900 to 1938. The Rev AB Johnston was rector from 1940 until his retirement in 1958 when the Rev. HJW Law became the new rector. The last vicar in residence was Rev. Tofts when the Church sold the Rectory in the 1970's (?).

Church records go back to 1640 and though there is some dubiety, it has been said that earlier remains in the churchyard may be of Norman origin. It has also been claimed that there are/were remains of a still earlier chapel on the Wash.

Whites 1845 Norfolk describes Welney St Mary as by Buckler and built in carstone with a Bellcote at the east end of the Nave, where there are lancet windows with plate tracery. The stained glass by Wilmhurst appears to be similar to Reynolds "Faith Hope and Charity," from his New College windows at Oxford, but here interpreted in strong colours, with heraldic motifs around.



In the appraisal questionnaire, 222 households were asked their opinion on whether the parish church was important to them in certain contexts. Of the 199 respondents, some of whom obviously answered 'yes' in several categories, the highest vote of 108 was for its importance as a historic building, whilst not far behind, 99 votes were returned for its importance for baptisms, weddings and funerals. For Sunday worship 58 households regarded the church as important, whilst 45 held the parish church to be of no importance to them, but the questionnaire did not ask respondents in this category to say why.

21.2 Other Denominations

We were concerned in the appraisal to direct some attention to denominations other than C of E, without distinguishing which they might be. Since these were likely to be minority denominations there was a large 'no' response to the questions. Nevertheless a substantial number (41) would like to have seen transport organised to other local places of worship, regularly, though only 13 households reckoned to use such transport regularly. Households responding that they would like to see meetings of other denominations on a regular basis, amounted to 28. Without identifying the various denominations, perhaps these questions were rather ingenuous. Parishioners, however, may put their own interpretation on the statistics. It is known that since the methodist chapel in the village ceased to function in 1986, a number of families worship at the chapel in Lakesend and obviously those and others such as Roman Catholics (who may be a sizeable minority?) can arrange to attend places of worship in other nearby villages or towns, as most households have their own transport.

If the figure returned for the importance of the church for Sunday worship seems low, and when 25% of households find the parish church of no importance to them, we can take consolation from the words of a one-time well known methodist of Suspension Bridge by the name of Liddy Thurston (who had lived there all her life). When interviewed in 1951 by the Wisbech Advertiser, she ruefully recalled the fall- off in congregations by commenting, " You had to go early to get a seat when I began 47 years back (ie. 1904). Now there are seats to spare." But she said she also knew the reason for it too. " It's because there's more money for the people and good transport for them to get about, so instead of going to church, they travel and have a change." What would she have thought nowadays, with multiple channel TV, nearly every household with a private car, package holidays, the National Lottery, and money to spend in fiercely competitive supermarkets pressuring you to take their club card?



The former methodist chapel in the village is now an antique shop, having served previously as a builders storeroom/workshop and the former primitive methodist chapel which became defunct many many years ago at Suspension Bridge has been converted to a house a good number of years ago.

As an historic building, St. Mary's will continue to have a place within the community. This is due to the fact that the fabric of the church is well provided for through the generosity of William Marshall and the trust fund which he set up.

As a place of worship St. Mary's continues to have a firm place within the community, thanks to the efforts of those who worship there on a regular basis. Average attendance for normal Sunday worship stands at 21. The church is grateful for those who support, by their willing help, assistance and attendance at coffee mornings, fetes,



barbecues and other fund-raising functions held throughout the year.

The church congregation and the local school have a good relationship. The school come into church for their harvest thanksgiving and also take the leading role in the school/community Christmas Carol Service. On both of these occasions children, their families and friends, teachers and congregation join together in praise and worship.

As with many rural communities, Welney shares its parish priest. For some time Welney has enjoyed fellowship with the next-door parish of Christchurch and in 1995 pastoral revision within the deanery saw the creation of a benefice - Christchurch and Manea and Welney - under the leadership of one priest.

22. Youth

The village appraisal Part 3, "Youth Survey," at least attempted to give young people some 'voice' in the affairs of the parish. There were 27 replies in the 11-16 year old age group, and 11 responses in the 17-18 year old section. This rate of response is probably quite high, but the numbers involved are still small if one wants to think about some coordinated approach, on a parish basis, to creating an environment that allows young people to develop and improve themselves physically, mentally and socially, in these importantly formative years.



Common comments from older parishioners are; "We ought to have a youth club;" or "There used to be a good-going youth club." Perhaps after the appraisal is published, there ought to be a more widespread consultation on these matters and in particular more needs to be known of how young people themselves envisage solutions to their needs and desires in this respect. Comments from youth respondents are listed in the statistics document. One or two of these raise important issues. As regards a policy for young people, the questions to be asked are:

What should be done? (If the answer to that is nothing, then that is the end of the matter.) Why should it be done? Where should it be done? When should it be done? If out of that lot there is some agreement, then one can tackle how it should be done, looking at all the alternatives. There will be no perfect solution in a small village like Welney, but at least the community should be offering better facilities than exist at the moment, given that there are many other attractions and activities outside the village, some of which involve parents at least as transport providers.

Youth work these days is fraught with difficulties and therefore the experience and professional advice of the Youth and Community Service ought to be made use of. Examples of successful youth schemes/projects, if any, in parishes comparable to Welney's size and location could be helpful. Apparently there is a Youth Bus in the borough which visits the more isolated communities to provide activities on a regular basis.



A few years ago the Youth and Community Service did attempt to establish a youth club in the village. The scheme ran for one or two (?) years but apparently fizzled out. Among the local comments one hears: "The people in charge just let the kids run riot." or "Bad time-keeping." etc. On the other hand the Youth and Community Officer says, "we put one of our best workers on this essentially trial project, to see if the community could develop and sustain its own control/management/funding organisation. As the finance was temporary and no local organisation emerged, the project had to close."

Whatever the truth of these matters, and there is no point in going over old ground, one is faced with the reality that solutions to the "problem of youth," are not easy and require skill and application by worker/volunteers who have some training and experience. It is also a fact that local authority budgets are strapped for cash and youth may not have the same priority as essential services.



22.1 Leisure Activities

From returns to the questionnaire it was found that 11-16 year olds had the following priorities in relation to their leisure time:

In descending order, the main ones were,

- first watching TV (18)
- second homework (17), playing and listening to music (17)
- third swimming (12)
- fourth playing computer games (10) reading (10)



There follows a batch of various sports, etc., including; football (9), cricket (7) hockey (5), scouts/guides (5), going into nearby town (7), wandering around (5). It may be that some of the sports are related to staying on after the school day has ended.

For 17-18 year olds, the pattern was similar if more restricted because of the small numbers.

- first watching TV (8) playing and listening to music (8).
- second homework (6)
- third computer games (4).



One striking difference was that whereas 37% of 11-16's spent time reading, only 18% of 17-18's did so. Interpretation of this may be difficult because of the small numbers.

22.2 More Sporting Opportunity Wanted

Nearly all of the respondents wanted more opportunities for sporting activities, and similarly the vast majority would like to see transport organised to attend swimming pools and outside sports complexes. In relation to the latter, there are facilities in many small towns within easy reach of Welney. So the question comes down to which to choose for particular facilities, when to use them and how frequently, and how to organise transport on a scale adequate for the perceived demand. Promises in advance and fees for transport in advance would help to ensure places were taken up on a minibus, (if possible subsidised). Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough run a leisure card scheme which gives concessions, but this would have to be weighed against general costs of transport and admission at other locations. Any such scheme would require the backing of at least the participating group. This could also cut across existing arrangements where parents or friends provide transport, security and supervision. On the other hand a communal scheme, if well run, might lend itself to young people having to relate to social groups and learning to mix and get on with the activity within a group where particular individuals may not be friends and yet be able to survive and enjoy the activity.



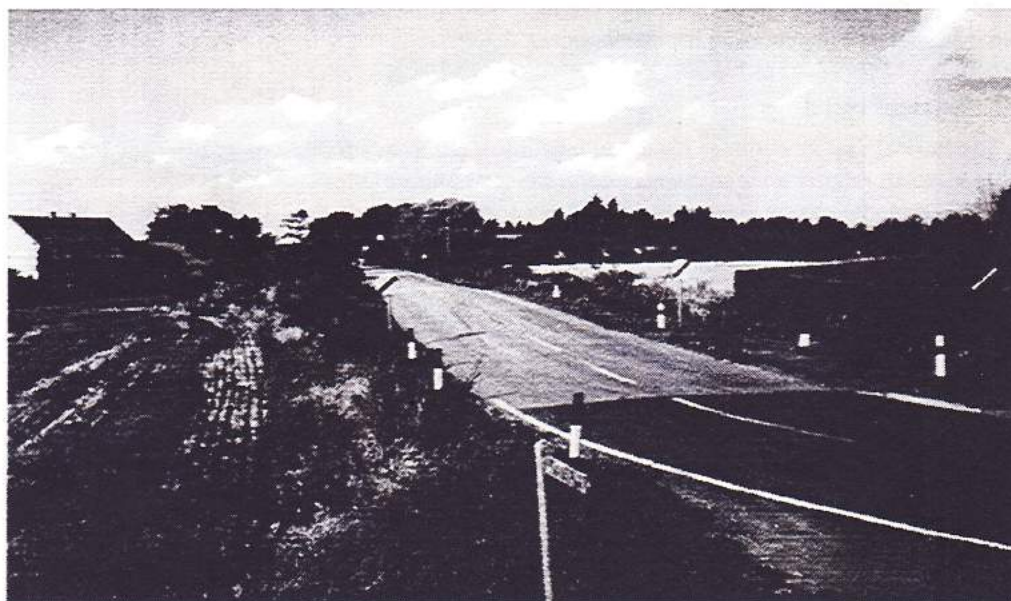
22.3 A Meeting Place

In response to the question of whether individuals were interested in a meeting place open during the evenings;

- 16 of the 11-16 year olds said 'yes' and 11 said 'no'.
- 9 of the 17-18 year olds said 'yes' and 1 said 'no'
- The comparatively high figure of 11 saying 'no' is interesting.



Hearsay evidence around the county and borough appears to show some nostalgia among older persons for the idea of the well-run, organised, disciplined (?) youth club. People who work in the field and some young people, see the idea of a drop in centre where you can chat and get a non-alcoholic drink or snack, as something more appealing and informal. Within such a context, events can be organised where sufficient support, effort and discipline is forthcoming from the young people themselves. Whatever the version, success requires commitment, work-sharing and finance, no matter what sources of external help are available, and there remains the question of compatibility between different age groups who may not always have the same goals.



The road to the Playing Fields

23. Information

23.1 News

Like most people living in a rural community the people of Welney prefer to know what is happening in their own area first and foremost, and this is amply illustrated by the answers to the question "Does your household take any of the following?" :

local newspapers	120
regional newspapers	50
national daily tabloid	84
national daily broadsheet	32
no newspaper at all	31



To emphasise the point about local news, out of a total 197 households 159 would like a monthly Welney newsletter/information sheet, and to back this up 49 households have offered to assist with the production, distribution and news gathering. This indicates very full support for the introduction of a community newspaper/newssheet.

The fact that 80% of households want a monthly Welney newsletter should not give carte blanche to any individual or group of individuals to set up something envisaged by them alone, without further consultation with all households and in particular the 49 who wish to be involved. It should be up to anyone, of a mind, to offer alternatives relating to form and

organisation, editorial policy and accountability, finance, printing, publishing, equipment, advertising policy, distribution, etc. If such alternative schemes could be outlined in writing, so much the better. Perhaps it should not be done in a hurry and perhaps more than one consultation with households would be helpful if the publication is to be sustained for a long period, and also to allow for continuity of production. Naturally, existing bodies, clubs and organisations in the community will have special interests, and no doubt will wish to have their activities publicised and reported, and should therefore take part in the consultative process. Ultimately, for success, a committee cannot produce a newspaper, therefore an editor would need to be appointed or adopted to run it. It would perhaps be more democratic if the editor is backed by a small elected editorial/management group who can, in emergency, supply subeditors or temporary editors and help maintain accountability by keeping an eye on policy and to some extent representing the community.

23.2 Noticeboard

The question "Should the village have a village information board" was intended to refer to a social events board, but the nature of the replies would indicate that many people took the question to mean the statutory Parish Notice Board. The answers and comments therefore have to be viewed in the light that many people have not distinguished between the two, and the conclusion might be that there should not be a distinction and that a dual purpose board (or boards) are needed. In the event 143 respondents replied 'yes' to the question, "Should the village have a village information board".



From a total response of 163 households, only 20 are content with the present site of the Parish Notice Board on Main Street near St Mary's Church. 7 households do not even know where the board is. Those that do, find difficulty with parking, worry over having to cross the road onto an unpaved grass verge, and nuisance from passing traffic.

75 households felt the Notice Board should be at the Shop/Post Office; 34 households siting it at the Parish Hall, 20 for the Church and 8 for the car park. Others, in ones or twos, suggested alternative locations around the village. Though the question cited the village and not the Parish, no one objected. In addition to local Council notices/reports, the boards could contain posters advertising local sports and social events, the opening times and locations of the village shop, public houses and churches. Should a Notice Board be sited near the Parish Hall this could display a map of the village and surrounding area with details of cycle routes and footpaths for parishioners and visitors to the area.

Norfolk County Council Highways Department assure us that there will be no objection to the erection of such boards, provided suitable sites are found and the appropriate Planning Permissions are obtained prior to erection. Maintenance would be the responsibility of the Parish.



24. Environment

Around Welney and the Fens it is easy to sense 'Planet Earth' because of the flatness of the landscape and the immense dome of the heavens reaching out to the horizon in all directions. Stand on the newly completed Suspension Bridge, which is now a good metre higher, at road level, than the old one and on a clear day one is confronted with probably one of the best and most comprehensive views of Fenland. Walk down a farm drove, into the fen, on a cold, grey, sleety, wintry afternoon, about dusk, with a touch of mist overhead, and listen to the plaintive honking of a hundred unseen swans flying overhead as they return on the evening flight and it is easy to envisage the ghosts of the past.

More stunning still can be the views from the Wash Road, when the land is flooded either side and the sun is setting red, towards the end of a clear day. Suddenly one is engulfed in the orange/red/pink light which pervades the whole wonderful landscape.



Indigenous parishioners over 40 will tell you how, when they were very small, the whole family would go for a fine Sunday afternoon promenade across the Wash Road and back, observing Nature at its most bountiful. Some still walk the Wash Road today, but it is something of a hazard due to the intensity of traffic. Much of the old magic remains but still the environment changes for the worse.

24.1 The Ouse Washes



The Washes from the new 'Suspension' Bridge

The Ouse Washes are now nationally and world famous as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), in regard to wildfowl and aquatic flora and fauna, and also as a Special Protection Area (SPA) for wild birds, and as a RAMSAR Site, which defines them as Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat. Details of these can be found elsewhere including in publications of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and various studies of the Ouse Washes commissioned by the National Rivers Authority, (now the Environment Agency). Fancy latin and botanical names can put some people off, but for anyone with a general interest, there is no easier way to discover what The Washes and their associated dykes contain, than to go on the Wildfowl Trust's 'summer walk'. from the Hundred Footcross to the River Delph and back. Visual aids at many staging posts on the way, actually portray with fine sketches, what is exhibited on the ground and in the dykes around the spot where they stand. One begins to wonder why one never really 'saw' these plants before. The Appraisal leaves it to readers to find their own way to such knowledge if they are sufficiently interested. Here we are mainly concerned about aspects of the environment more or less within the village itself as it impinges on households.

A main feature of the Parish is the large expanse of washland and the three waterways that divide the village into two parts. These are part of the original 17th century Fen drainage scheme and remain to keep the fenland drained. Without these washlands to take the excess water from surrounding counties, and the rivers and drains to channel it to the sea, most of Welney and the surrounding area would be under water in winter and especially when there is a conjunction with high tides and sea levels. Welney has to learn to live with it. Some residents consider this flooding to be part of the charm of the village. There are discussions going on about raising the Wash Road to prevent it being covered with water, but the washes will still be flooded.

The washes quickly became a haven for wildfowl and other wildlife, which attracted local Naturalist Trusts, the WWT and the RSPB to the area. They have subsequently provided facilities for visitors to the area to observe birds and wildfowl more conveniently conservationwise. The flooded washes bring many visitors and sometimes skaters to the area and they find it fascinating.

24.2 The Waterways

Anglers enjoy fishing the waterways, and most days during the season some can be seen along the banks of the Old Bedford and Delph, on the west side of the washes. The New Bedford (Hundred Foot) river on the east side, being tidal, is harder to fish but locals and others try it from time to time, as a challenge.

If the Old Bedford could be made completely navigable again for motor boats, this would possibly help to reduce weeds and might also benefit the shop and pubs in the village, as refreshments and supplies are always needed. Would it disturb wildlife or would the wildlife get accustomed to boats as they do on other canals? The appraisal questionnaire shows that 89 households would like to see it navigable again, 45 would not and 48 are in the 'dont know' category.

An "Ouse Washes Water Level Management Plan" has been published, covering many related issues, and both the Parish Council and the WWT have copies which could be available for viewing on request.

The Environment Agency are about to embark on a consultation exercise about their Old Bedford Catchment Local Plan and the parish council is on the consultation list.

24.3 Footpaths

Serious walkers and pleasure strollers can be seen on the public footpaths alongside the waterways. More people probably use the paths for walking than for other activities. Nearly all these walks are free from traffic and air pollution, though in summer one may have to encounter livestock.

Access to these footpaths is provided by stiles and they are signposted, though the signs need a touch of paint at the time of writing. Other public footpaths are not so well signposted, access is not so easy and there is no public plan of Welney footpaths on display, so that new residents and visitors may have no knowledge of where they are situated or to where they lead. Responses about walking showed that 22 households walk the banks daily, 20 do so two or three times a week, 21 about once a month and 66 occasionally. The Church is regarded by most households as an asset to the village. Married couples often have their photographs taken among the trees opposite the main door of the Church. The churchyard is regularly and well maintained, pleasant to look at and a peaceful haven in the middle of a working village bisected by a busy 'A' road.

The Old Croft River, running along the A1101 could be better maintained; providing a pleasant feature and an asset to the village. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, yet even now there are stretches of the Croft, particularly near Meadow Farm, the Church and the stately chestnuts fronting Marifa Lodge, where limpid pools with overhanging vegetation and a morot of floating varicoloured dead leaves



A section of the Old Croft

would be a painters paradise. Can finewriting make up for the smells of a dried-up summer?

Pisces Fishery, along Bedford Bank West, has been improved and landscaped to make it attractive to anglers and provides another facility on the edge of the village.

24.4 Agricultural Chemicals

Despite 153 households expressing concern about chemicals used on farms, many fields had poppies blooming along their edges this year, so farmers may be using fewer chemicals. Farmers should take care and stick to a proper spraying code of practice and not spray near homes and gardens on windy days. It also helps to know if sprays being used are toxic or non-toxic. Does the farmer choose the time and day or is it left to a spraying contractor? Where there is doubt or lack of information, worried households could maintain their own diary of events in case of subsequent ill-effects.

24.5 Trees, Brush and Woodland

In an area as flat and exposed as Welney, trees are needed to provide windbreaks. There are already many large trees in the parish, a lot of willow and many horse chestnuts to provide children's conkers in the autumn. Households and the Parish Council are concerned for mature trees in particular and the Parish Tree warden is Tim Bennett (01354 610433).

At Copes Hill Farm over the past two years or so, the owners have planted a 15 acre wood of 7700 native broadleaved trees, with a half acre pond included. Already, Mr and Mrs Morgan are witnessing an increase in wildlife in this area. Wild flower seeds are to be sown for the flowers to naturalise. Though the wood is and will remain private, the School have been invited to use it for Nature Studies, so that the children's education and environmental understanding will benefit. The trees when mature will strikingly alter the look of that area of the Parish.



24.6 Insect Life

Grass verges are left uncut during Spring and Summer to allow insects to breed, but this can produce hazards in some places where large uncut weeds block footpaths. If farmers left their farm roadway verges uncut until Autumn, this would provide compensatory breeding areas for insects, so that some of these hazardous areas of footpath could be kept trimmed regularly all year. Such a shift of emphasis from road verges to farm-road verges might reduce the vast numbers of insects killed by fast moving traffic on roads.

24.7 Dogs

Welney suffers quite badly from inconsiderate owners allowing their dogs to foul the few hard footpaths, despite notices and warnings of the legal position which allows fines of £100 to be imposed. Some dogs are allowed to foul in others private gardens. Most dog owners take their responsibilities seriously but they unfortunately also tend to get blamed. It is devastating to see dog faeces around the childrens play area on the Playing Field when it is widely known that contamination can cause blindness in children. Please !!



24.8 Green Space

120 households would like to see safer access to the Playing Field so that children do not have to walk along roads without paved sidewalks and round blind corners. The Playing Field is poorly used, among other reasons, because it is dangerous to get there, and going home in the twilight even more so. The Parish Council once discussed a safer alternative access but the proposition was dropped. Perhaps the issue could be looked at again.

About 107 households would like a village green but no suggestions were forthcoming

79 households would like a regular meeting on environmental issues, 25 do not and 70 households are undecided.

Other concerns about noise and litter come fairly high on the list and there is a modicum of support for hanging baskets, flower tubs and Best Kept Village competitions. All are registered in the statistics document.

25. Local Government

According to the returns to the questionnaire, a majority of households think that local councils at every level do not give them sufficient information. Nevertheless, such information is easily available from the Borough and County Council information sections and Parish Council meetings are open for public participation. This part of the questionnaire mainly dealt with councils informing households. Though a high proportion of households may feel let down in this respect, one cannot draw the conclusion that people feel bad about local government itself.

As an introduction to this topic, here is what the Nolan Committee has to say:

“ Local government is a major component of public life in Britain. Its activities at all levels affect the entire population. Local government spends £70 billion a year. This is 10% of gross national product (GNP) and a quarter of all government expenditure. It is a major employer of over 2.5 million people. Its role has been changing in recent years, with a move away from direct service provision, greater use of private contractors, and an increase in what is often called the ‘enabling’ role. Local authorities now undertake many functions in partnership with other organisations, public and private ... Local authorities ... are run by councillors who are elected and answerable at the ballot-box. They have wide ranging functions within the local community. They have powers of taxation. They are creatures of statute, and must operate within statutory powers and controls. Some of the rules affecting individual councillors and officers are enforced by financial and criminal sanctions ... Local councillors are subject to the National Code of Local Government Conduct.

As far as Welney is concerned, local government has 3 levels :

The Parish Council

The Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk. (District)

The Norfolk County Council. Recently the Government has accepted the recommendations of the Local Government Commission that there should be no change in the structure of local government in Norfolk. The result is that we stay with the above 3 tier arrangement instead of a proposed alternative 2 tier arrangement, where the County would have been broken down into several Unitary Authorities.

25.1 The Norfolk County Council

25.1.1 Finance

The money the County Council spends is made up of :

- a) **Part of the Council Tax** (so far as Welney is concerned, the Borough of KL&WN collects Council Tax for its own needs (the Precept) and for Norfolk CC).
- b) **Government Grants**, some of which are ‘specific’, eg. for education and transportation
- c) **A share of the National non-Domestic Rate Pool** (rates paid by businesses)
- d) **Charges for services** eg. school meals, library fines etc.
- e) **Balances** - the Council’s equivalent of a company’s working capital.



The central Government, however, controls council spending by setting a "Capping Limit," which is the amount of money the council can spend annually. It can only be exceeded by the extent the County Council can draw on its reserves or balances. This financial arrangement is complex. Those wishing to know more should consult the NCC Annual Report (June 1996), which can be obtained from the NCC Public Relations Unit (tel. 01603/222964), but copies are available in the Downham Market Library. Obviously it would be too expensive to issue this to every household and also a great many people might not be that bothered, especially if the cost raised Council Tax by another few pounds. What is certain is that after many years, central government exerts tight control over the amounts that can be spent, whilst at the same time maintaining that improvements are still possible by better financial management and organisation by local councils. These central government policies produce strange effects. Eg., NCC wrote to Welney Parish Council, among others, asking for support in their request to the Government for a change in grant distribution, more favourable to Norfolk. The extraordinary thing is that the letter was sent in the name of the leaders of all 3 main political groups at County Hall.

According to the NCC Annual Report the Government has set Norfolk's spending limit (cap) at £444.7million ie., 4% up on the previous year, and the Council has raised this to £452million by drawing on reserves.

25.1.2 Policy

The County Council consists of 84 councillors elected in 84 wards of which Welney is in the ward (electoral division) known as Marshland South and its representative is Mr Harry Humphries of Emneth (tel. 01945/430539). The appraisal questionnaire shows that only 9 households could name their county councillor. The County contains 539 parishes. Council manpower was almost 16,400 full-time equivalent staff as at March 1995.

25.1.3 Responsibilities of The County Council:

Education	Social Services	Highways and Transportation	Fire Service
Strategic Planning	Economic Development	Waste Disposal	Library and Info
Trading Standards	Reg Births Marriages and Deaths	Coroners	-

25.1.4 Party Politics

Politically, there is no overall control in Norfolk County Council. The county council elections of 1993 produced the following result:

Conservative	33
Labour	32
Liberal Democrat	17
Independent	2
total	84

Although there are no formal alliances, the Labour and Liberal Democrat groups have a working agreement to provide stability, secure the efficient running of the Council and ensure that a jointly agreed budget can be delivered. The chairing of committees is shared between the two groups, with Labour having the lions share.

The next Norfolk County Council elections will be in May 1997. In regard to that it is worth quoting part of the farewell message from the NCC Chief Executive who retired in July 1996. " Having worked for nearly 40 years in County government, I am a firm supporter of local democracy, but it has been weakened in recent years by Central Government actions to remove power from it. This will continue unless local people take an interest in their Councils and show that interest by voting at local elections."

Some may disagree with that view, but it is one held by many, of every political hue, involved in local government.

From the questionnaire we gather that only about 15% of households think that the County Council keeps the parish sufficiently informed on matters of local government. Another major area of complaint is in regard to roads and transportation, (see Transport section). Responsibilities in respect of speeding, a major area of complaint, are now shared between the County Council and the Police Authority.

25.2 Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council

25.2.1 Finance

The Borough Council consists of 60 elected councillors and 584 employees (excluding temporary and seasonal staff), with an annual budget of approximately £55.3million. There are 102 parishes in the Borough. Details of finances are given in the leaflet issued to all households in the Borough when the demand for and assessment of Council Tax is issued. The Borough Council collects Council Tax on behalf of itself and the County Council.



25.2.2 Responsibilities of The Borough Council:

Collection of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates

Housing

Local Planning

Environmental Health (inc rural sewerage programmes)

Community Services (includes Housing Management, refuse collection, street cleaning, car parks, etc.)

Economic Development and Property (includes sale of council houses)

Electoral Registration.

The management of all these areas is complex and is better described in the Borough Council Directory and Diary, a copy of which should be available in the Downham Market Library. Minutes of Council meetings are also lodged there.

Suffice it to say that the 1996-97 budget will spend about £55.3million against an income of £42million, leaving a net cost of approximately £13.3million. This £13.3million is recovered from the Government's Revenue Support Grant, (about £5.4m), a share from the national Non-Domestic Rate Pool, (about £4.6m), a portion from Council Tax (about £2.8m), plus small amounts from elsewhere (say £0.5m).

25.2.3 Policy and Party Politics

Arising from the Borough elections in May 1995, the current state of elected representatives to the 60 wards in the Borough is as follows:

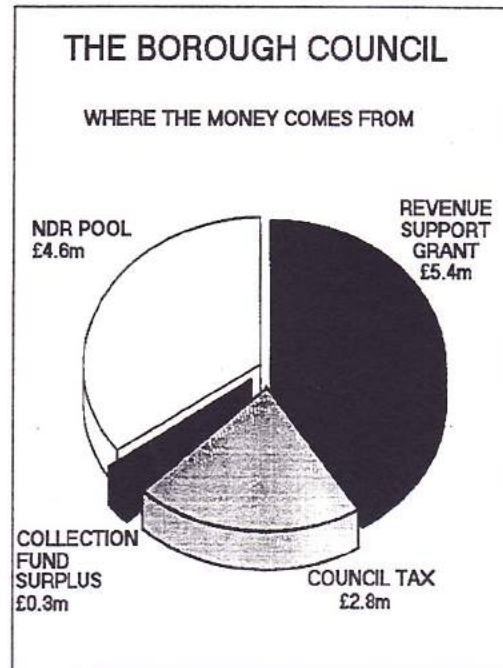
Labour	37
Conservative/Independent	16
Liberal Democrat	6
Independent	1
Total	60

As a result of its clear majority over all other parties combined, Labour chairs all of the Borough Committees.

Welney is part of the electoral division (ward), known as 'Upwell, Outwell and Delph' which returns 2 district councillors. At the moment these are H.Beckett from Outwell and AE.Feary from Upwell (tel. 01945/773238). Unfortunately while this report was being compiled Mr Beckett died. At a subsequent bye-election Linda Keer was elected to fill the vacancy.

The next Borough Elections should occur in May 1999.

The questionnaire shows that only 5 households could name 1 of the Borough councillors, and 1 household could name both.



Only 21% of Welney households think the Borough supplies them with sufficient information on matters of local government

Also from the questionnaire, comments indicate concern over many issues which fall into the province of the Borough Council, such as ; sewerage, leisure and recreation, street lighting, need for community projects, local planning applications, footpaths and verges, etc. In May 1996 the Borough Council issued a glossy brochure to all Parish and Town Councils - " Putting People First." This is the Borough's draft corporate strategy, a new long term plan, to provide a framework for its activities for the next 5 years, and a response was requested by the end of May. The document included ; a Mission Statement, Planning, Economic Development, Environmental Health, Housing, Leisure, Tourism, Resources. Welney did not respond, probably like many other parishes. There is a real problem here and it is time-consuming and not at all easy to fit Welney into the Borough's scenario. But it could be attempted sometime, somehow.

Similarly another consultation document, the Borough's " Draft Community Development Strategy," dated 10 July 1996, but possibly posted after that date, was received at the 10 Sept. Parish Council Meeting. Again comments were required in a very short space of time and the Parish Council was unable to respond. Many other parishes also did not do so. Once more there are real problems.

Perhaps what the parish requires on these key matters is some kind of Parish or Civic Forum, where such issues can be discussed at length. It is pointless to talk just for the sake of talking, but such a grouping could at least try to come up with a longer term perspective for the parish which has some relation to Borough and County Council strategies. This would demand time, effort, skill, resources, which in a small community are often in short supply or unavailable when they are most required. The fact is a lot of voluntary effort and activity already takes place. Information ought to be a 2-way process and if the parish does not elect to find out things for itself, it is unlikely to have information spoon-fed to it either.

25.3 Welney Parish Council

The Borough Council fixes the number of parish councillors from time to time, the number not to be less than 5. Welney has 9 parish councillors assisted by a part-time Clerk to the Parish Council (Mrs PA Copeman, tel. no. 01354/610226).



The National Association of local Councils publishes a booklet, "Powers and Constitution of Local Councils," which states "A single election is held every fourth year for the whole parish.....The poll for the local council election must be taken together with the poll for the election of the district councillor for the parish or community. Bye-elections are held if required by 10 electors. If no bye-election is required, the council must fill the vacancy by coopting any person it chooses, who is lawfully qualified to be a member....."

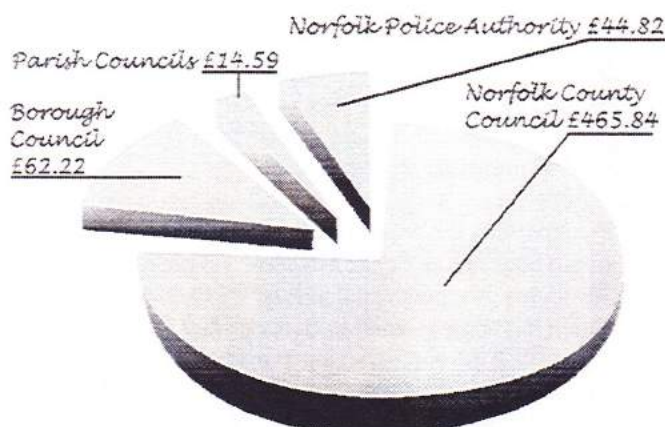
This raises a question about the functioning of local democracy in Welney, since there appeared to be no poll for a local council election in 1995, and though a casual vacancy occurred towards the end of 1996, there was no sign of 10 electors requiring a bye-election, although the procedure was posted on the village notice board. The reason usually given for such omissions is apathy. "Not enough people put their names forward in order to have a contest!" This puts the ball back in the parishioners' court, but surely it is a problem which the parish council should attempt to solve in concert with parishioners. As for those who disparage the work of the parish council, there is only one real answer, which is the ballot-box and that will not function unless sufficient candidates come forward. A usual riposte is "put up or shut up."-- not altogether fair!

Parish Council Meetings are held on the second Tuesday in Jan., March, May, July, Sept., Nov., and are open to the public and an item on the agenda is reserved for public participation to discuss items raised by parishioners.

The proposed annual budget for 1996-97 was approximately £5,500, (though in previous years when street lighting projects were undertaken it rose to just over £12,000). The bank balance at the start of the 1996-97 financial year was approximately £3,300. Since no major costly projects are envisaged this year, a truer reflection of the proposed budget would be about £4,000. Within that figure the bulk of the income comes from the Parish Precept, ie., the amount the parish thinks it needs from the Borough in order to carry out its functions. This year the precept is £3,200. The main items of expenditure in descending order ; street lighting, clerk's salary, grass cutting, and donations.

The parish assets include the Parish Hall and the Playing Field and Pavilion.

A range of services known as 'Concurrent Functions,' means that they could be provided either by the borough Council or by parish councils. So far as Welney is concerned, these include ; bus shelters, village halls, footway lighting, playing fields. The Borough Council does not normally provide these services in parishes. Instead it offers grant aid to parish councils which carry them out. (The minimum is usually 40% of net costs.) Last year's costs resulted in a reimbursement, paid in this year of almost £500. The Parish Council is consulted regularly by the borough about local planning applications and these are always dealt with by the parish council, though its role is merely advisory.



Where the money goes

25.4 Council Tax

For 1996-97 the average council tax for Band D, the band to which all other bands are referred, was £587.47. That amount of money is apportioned as indicated in the pie chart

Using the Band D equivalent as a guide, the parish requirement contributed by Welney households in Council Tax is £19.51. This is against our Precept from the Borough of £3,200, plus £500 concurrent functions, a total of £3,700. A rough calculation for Welney's 200 households is £3,700 divided by 200 equals £18.50, (near enough £19.51). From these figures one can see that one pays for what one gets in terms of services to the parish. Similarly council tax in Welney pays towards policing and Borough and County Council services roughly as shown in the diagram.

For comparison, the Band D equivalent for Upwell is £13.79, Outwell £7.58, Denver £17.91, Hilgay £28.77, Southery £25.95. All of these relate to the size of their Precept per household. The question for parishioners is whether they wish to see a high level of services in the parish, and whether they feel they are getting value for money. Also in terms of future aspirations, every extra has to be paid for whether in terms of council tax or in unpaid voluntary effort.

Other sources of funding which Welney has so far not been able to tap into are ; European Union 5(b) funds, Rural Development Funds, Millenium Funding, Lottery funding, and so on. The difficulty here is that one has to provide 'matching funding' for any such projects, and local authorities are limited in their expenditure for these areas.

The appraisal questionnaire shows that 25% of households feel they are sufficiently informed on parish matters by the Parish Council. 57% say they are not sufficiently informed and 18% do not know whether they are well informed or not.

As regards how the parish council spends its money, 38% of households claim to be satisfied or reasonably so. Amazingly only about 3% are dissatisfied, but sadly almost 59% do not know how the money is spent. This might suggest a very trusting community, but it does show glaringly, the need for a better spread of information. Information occupies a separate section of this report.

Perhaps one should wind up this topic by saying that many complaints and aspirations have arisen as a result of the questionnaire. On the other hand one should not underestimate the amount of activity and voluntary work that goes on in this small community of 500 souls. Perhaps better access to information would help to put a better perspective on parish affairs and more and better group discussion, participation, effort and action on key issues should be aimed at in order that the Parish flourishes.

26. General Items

Under this heading the questionnaire asked a number of questions which may give some pointers as to how parishioners see the Parish now , and also what they might think of future trends or developments.

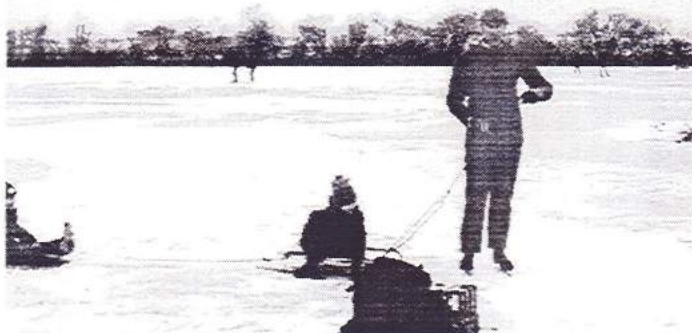
The returns show that there were many more complimentary things said about the village and Parish than there were adverse comments about what people find unattractive. However it is probably the unattractive features, added to other adverse comments in the environment section of the report, which need to be digested and discussed in a calm and realistic manner, in order to arrive at an achievable list of suggestions for improvement. These could then be subjected to scrutiny to see what is feasible, sustainable and economically acceptable to the community.

By far the most attractive features turned out to be, in descending order; The River System and Washes

(60); The Parish Church and surrounds(36); Rural peace and quiet (19).The unattractive features did not draw such large numbers, with the top four being; Mud left on roads/unswept roads (12); Farm in the village (12); Village Hall (8);Unkempt verges, paths, hedges and fencing (8).

All comments have been listed in the statistics document, but before jumping to conclusions, it is as well to remember that “one man’s meat is another man’s poison,” and this is borne

out in many instances throughout the returns to the questionnaire. One also has to keep in mind the silent majority and also the fact that the total number participating in the appraisal was 197 households.



Skating on The Washes

As regards future development of the Parish, it is probably as well to include here some tables which are also repeated in the statistics document.

G.3 Households opinions on how the Parish should develop, (remembering that the Parish has approximately 200 dwellings and village shops are only marginally profitable).

stay the same	63
small increase in size, say 10 more dwellings	32
medium increase in size, say 15 more dwellings	32
large increase in size, say 20 more dwellings	28
no opinion	26

G.4 Households opinions on the category of population the parish should aim to attract.

young people in their twenties	13
families with schoolchildren	33
retired people	6
all age groups, maintaining a balanced community	137

G.5 Households desire to attract some light manufacturing industry to the Parish.

in favour	107
but to be suitably located	1
against	63

The above opinions taken in conjunction with a fair number of individual comments from households about future development, indicate that while a minority (possibly 30%) seem to be in favour of things remaining more or less the same, a majority (possibly 60%) want to see some development, albeit limited to some extent. It is particularly interesting to see that nearly all households (189) wanted to attract population, in some form, to the Parish, with the majority opting for attracting all age groups, thus maintaining a balanced community. In some ways this is the ideal, but the big question remains of how does one go about attracting and maintaining the younger age groups and younger families.

27. Conclusions

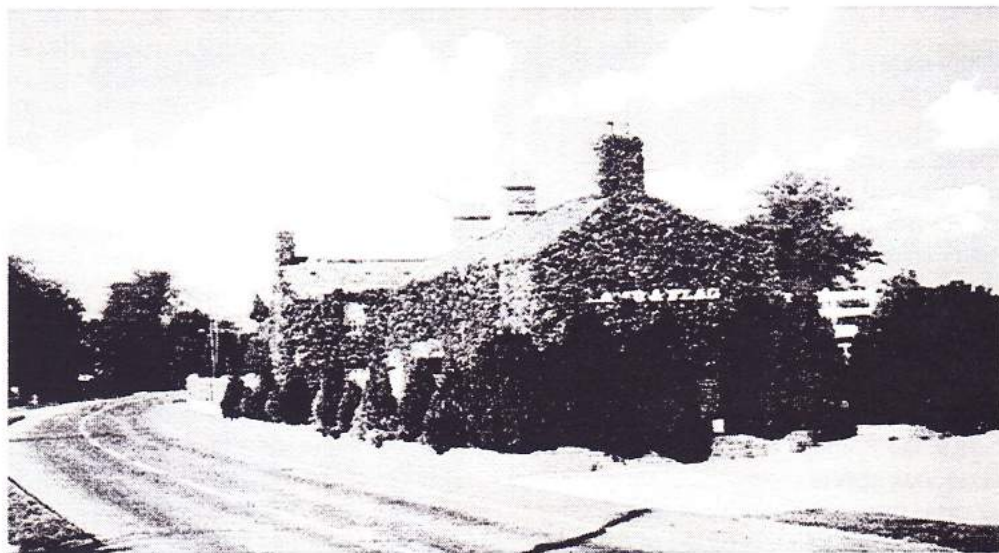
The appraisal presents a snapshot of Welney Parish in 1996 and what the residents think and feel about the Parish in response to a particular set of questions. This may give rise in peoples minds to many other questions, but that is for them to grapple with.

Both the answers and the levels of response to individual questions may give some idea of trends or of a majority or minority viewpoint. In themselves, they are not meant to represent some 'recipe' for action, but they should set individuals and groups thinking about issues.

The issues which can be addressed might be those on which it is possible to get a consensus, though just because there is consensus does not necessarily mean that that consensus is right for the community. There may be other considerations to be investigated.

Individual, group or community plans for action need to be well deliberated over and worked out in detail, so that all the necessary resources can be accessed. The most important is probably finance, which should be considered in detail before proceeding. If the scheme involves running costs and maintenance costs, these have to be incorporated in any plans.

As with setting up its major assets in the past, (Parish Hall and Playing Field) and also its largest recent project (street lighting), the Parish Council has a major role to play. In addition the Parish Council tries to encourage and support voluntary projects and initiatives. Whatever the community thinks about the Parish Council and its functions, it reflects in one way or another, the Parish in which it operates. But its standing derives from the fact that it is a statutory body and has to abide by a code of conduct and its members have to make a declaration of fitness to serve and its dealings are subject to law. Historically it also has a reservoir of experience, acquired over many years of dealing with community affairs.



It is to be hoped that the appraisal may help to enhance a sense of community (of which much already exists); that it will help the Parish Council to be more effective by providing some sort of information base; that it will lead to increased individual and communal voluntary effort and bring about closer working relationships between individuals, groups and the Parish Council in order to tackle Welney's problems bit by bit and collectively in order to promote a general sense of well-being.

Another important matter is to strengthen the links with local authorities and institutions at higher levels, to make use of external sources of information and funding and see whether things that other Norfolk parishes are doing can be useful examples for Welney. The Borough

Council, County Council, the Norfolk Rural Development Council and the Norfolk Association of Local Councils are just some of the places where advice, information and help can be sought.

Ultimately, for parish clubs, groups and institutions to be able to function requires dedication on the part of individuals, (many are already involved), and time is a precious commodity these days. 'Champions' are often needed to lead projects and work in various fields, but steady and sufficient support work is also needed. There is a need for 'cover' for those who are ill, or people who just need a break from being tied, week after week to some activity or other. Some find difficulty in delegating work to others but it might be useful to train others to do leading jobs such as chairperson, secretary, treasurer etc., and on top of that to rotate the functions so that leaders can take time out from the onerous posts, though still serving on main committees, with the possibility of returning after a 'breather'. In this way one can build up and extend expertise and produce a broad base of active people who can sustain community interests. The Parish needs doers rather than talkers. In any area of activity requiring substantial amounts of voluntary effort in terms of skills or manpower, it is better to have drawn together, and get promises from, a large enough team of volunteers before starting on some enterprise than starting with one or two and hoping the extra help will somehow materialise. Likewise, volunteers need to be employed on achievable tasks and not be left hanging with nothing to occupy them.

A list of suggestions or recommendations for action in this document would not be appropriate, until parishioners have had time to read and digest this Parish Appraisal. It is up to the community to take up or not to take up the challenges presented in the document, but when actions are proposed, they will carry more support provided there is the widest opportunity for consultation with all parishioners and particularly those parishioners who express an interest in a project.

What follows is a brief list of possible actions and is not meant to be prescriptive or comprehensive, but merely suggestions to stimulate activity.

It is worth repeating one of our original list of aims for the appraisal, ie. "to attempt to be cohesive and constructive at all times";

Be prepared to cope with change.

Support your local shop.

Seek improvements with regard to Refuse and Recycling, since it seems to be a major item of community concern.

The Transport section elicited more comment than any other section and peoples cares and woes are listed at length in the statistical document. There are items here which are of ongoing preoccupation in the Parish Council. Items such as the Wash Road and speeding traffic are a recurring matter and we probably need to enquire more closely as to what is being done elsewhere in the Borough and the County. Solutions will not be simple and straightforward. One only has to look at very recent national reports on the traffic police, who have major problems. In some cases they cannot afford to load the speed cameras with film. A speed camera costs about £18,000 and running costs are of the order of £15,000 pa., according to reports. In addition the revenues from automatic speeding fines go to central government and are not fed back to pay for the equipment and servicing. Nevertheless we must press the authorities concerned as much as possible for improvements. How are we to proceed with this problem in a realistic manner?

Should we be working out a project to extend street lighting in the Parish, remembering that, before the recent improvements, the Parish was paying about £700pa. for running costs and since the new lights have been installed, the running costs are nearer £1,200 or almost double. In addition the Borough Council is working out its policy on what percentage to reimburse parishes as regards Concurrent Functions, and if cuts in finance are the order of the day, we may get even less money to set against the parish electricity bills.

We must support and maintain the village school. Birth control is a personal matter so we make no recommendations in that respect. An influx of younger families to the Parish might help.

Stop being couch potatoes and get joining-in and improving social activities. The level of participation is some measure of community togetherness and some activities bring in much needed funds for voluntary bodies. Welcome to newcomers to the Parish! Don't mistake rural reserve for lack of interest. If you don't know, ask and you will get a response.

Support your mobile library or you may lose it.

The Church is of major importance to the Parish as shown by the returns. Ways and means should be found to sustain and increase its fund raising.

A policy for Youth needs to be teased out from among the many suggestions made. Again the appraisal was remiss in not including the under 11's and small children. Along with sports and playing field activities, there is a whole area here that needs looking at in the wider context of the general well-being and leisure activities of children, young adults and women in the Parish.

There ought to be a Parish newspaper/newsletter. Some suggestions have already been made in the appraisal. It is up to those who expressed willingness to do something to get together and work out a policy.

As regards the environment, could some interest group be formed to investigate what is feasible as short term improvements, whilst producing some discussion and plans for the longer term? A group needs to be broadly based, use wide consultation and look into the pros and cons of the many suggestions.

Take more interest in parish and local authority affairs. There are many ways of doing so. Taking problems to the Parish Council is one way. Public participation in its meetings is another. Extend local democracy, primarily at the ballot box, but also by running for the Parish Council or participating in sub-committees or working groups if you have skills or enthusiasm to offer in particular areas.

Add your own ideas to this list.

All inquiries regarding the Appraisal and documents to;

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100 Foot Bank
Welney
Norfolk PE14 9TN
Telephone 01353 860 821

A few spare copies of the Statistics Document for purposes of temporary loan are kept by the Parish Clerk, Mrs P A Copeman and also at the above address
Permission is required to reproduce any material from the Appraisal Report and the Statistics Document

Welney - A village with a history

