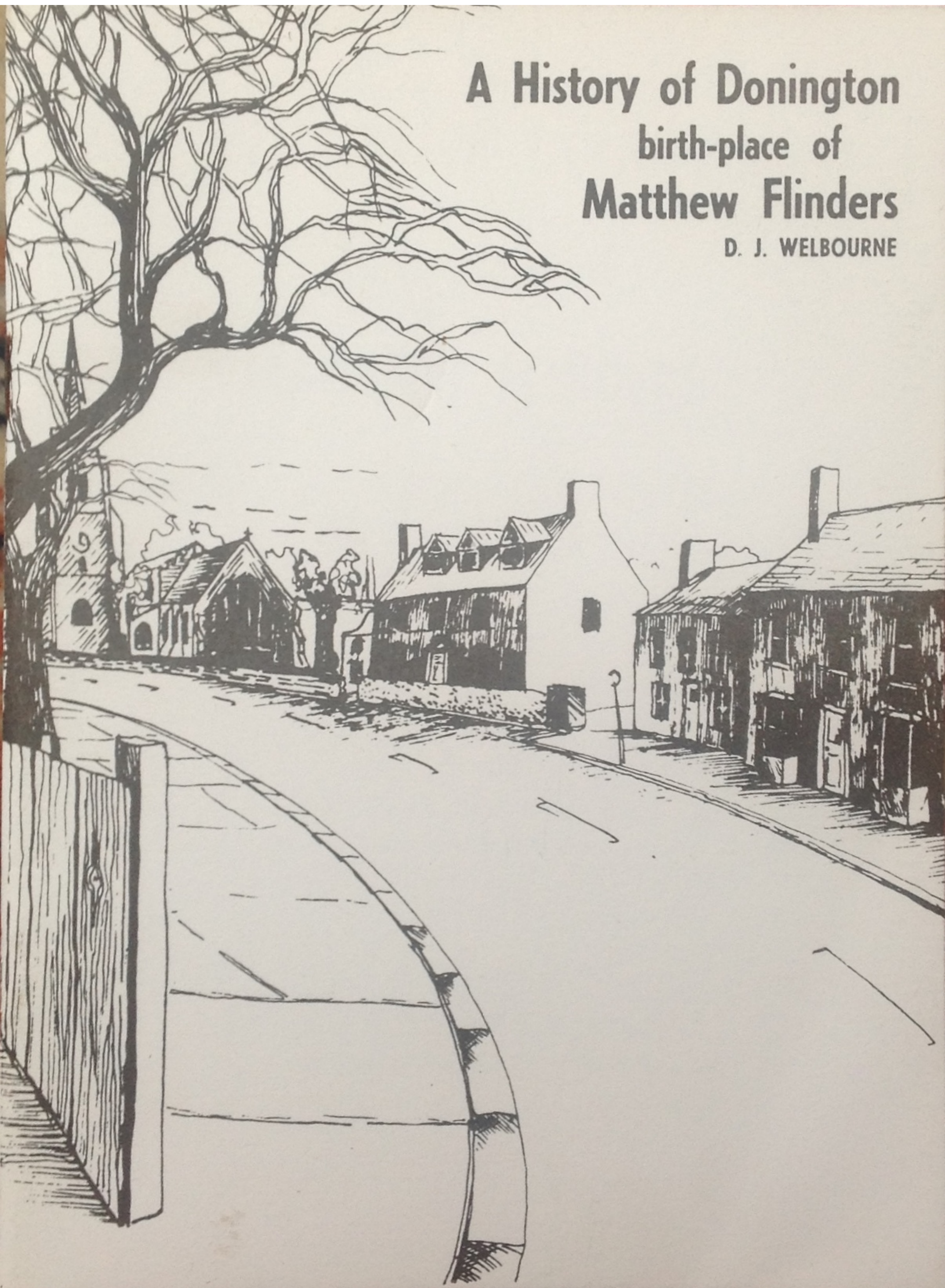


A History of Donington
birth-place of
Matthew Flinders

D. J. WELBOURNE



HISTORY OF DONINGTON

birth-place of

MATTHEW FLINDERS

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PREFACE

This book is based on material which I originally gathered together for History lessons when I taught at Cowley's Secondary School. It was suggested that I expand it and put it together in book form to coincide with the Matthew Flinders Bi-Centenary.

The finished product is for the people of Donington and surrounding area so that they can have a glimpse of the village's very interesting past. It is also intended as a souvenir for the many visitors to Donington throughout the year.

In compiling it, I have been grateful for suggestions made by several people, particularly Sir John Dudding and Catherine Wilson of the Lincolnshire Association. I am also thankful to Donington Parish Church and the Rev. F. Tompkins, and Cowley's Secondary School for allowing me to delve into their records. I am indebted to Bob Rutterford, Art Master at Cowley's Secondary School, for the illustrations, photographs and lay out. Finally, I am most grateful to my wife for helping with the original type script and for her encouragement over the months in which it was written.

DAVE WELBOURNE.

September 1973.

A HISTORY OF DONINGTON—BIRTH-PLACE OF MATTHEW FLINDERS

Donington, once a market town, covers 5,835 acres and has a population of about 2,000. Lying 11 miles south of Boston and 10 miles north-west of Spalding, it relies mainly on agriculture, and is an attractive village with a long history.

In Roman times a road connected Wainfleet, via Swineshead and Bicker, to Donington. This road, Salters Way, carried salt from the east coast, where there were extensive salt workings from pre-Roman times onwards, westwards to Grantham and beyond, thus linking the Midlands with the Wash. Later Donington was to owe its importance to the fact that three roads converged at the village—Salters Way to the west, the road to Boston taking traffic north, and one to Spalding leading south and to the Norfolk coast.

The Romans were the first to attempt to reclaim the land around Donington with the Car Dyke, which is a few miles west of the village and extends from Peterborough to Lincoln. It was probably built around 125 A.D., and for years it was thought that it was used for transporting the soldiers from one Roman station to another, and for carrying grain north. More recent work, however, indicates that it was not used for passenger transport but was constructed for drainage purposes. (The Roman Bank, the Forty Foot Drain and the Hammond Beck have also been very important in the drainage of the Fens.)

During Saxon times, places were often named after leaders or chiefs, and Donington probably owes its name to the leader Dunnas. It was then the 'homestead of the people of Dunnas' (Dunnas Tun). Life then would have been based on simple farming with hunting to supplement the diet.

The Vikings made raids in this area in the year 870 when the monastery built by the Saxon monk, St. Botolph in or near Boston, was destroyed by them. After King Alfred had subdued the Vikings, an area of land called Danelaw was partitioned off to them so they could settle down in peace as farmers. The region ran from north of the Thames as far as Chester, and to the east, roughly on a line with Watling St., the Roman road. Donington, therefore, was included in Danelaw. Lincolnshire was a centre of Danish colonisation and well over half of the early settlement names in the county are of Danish origin, in particular those ending in 'by', 'thorpe', and 'toft'. Traces of the Vikings can be found in local words, e.g. 'bairn', meaning child, and 'beck', meaning stream.

After the Normans had beaten the English at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 (the last time England has ever been invaded by a foreign power), William set about conquering the whole country. He met a good deal of resistance from the people further north, including Hereward the Wake, Lord of the manor at

Bourne, who defied him in the marshes around Ely. But slowly England was brought under the control of William the Conqueror, who then ordered that a survey should be made of England. This was called the Domesday Book, begun in 1085, which showed him what his realm contained and what taxes the people should pay.

In the Domesday Book, Donington is mentioned as Donnictune. It was then just a small hamlet and Earl Alan was Lord of the Manor. He had fought with William the Conqueror and must have been an important noble as William allowed him to marry his daughter. The Earl was famous for his piety and valour. He rewarded his faithful standard-bearer, Ralph, with 90 acres of land and several serfs of his own, and the Earl himself had 26 serfs who between them had 600 acres. Earl Alan, known as Alan the Red, son of Eudes, Count of Penthièvre, was given land in other parts of England, including the area around Richmond in Yorkshire where he had a castle built to protect his own men against the attacks of the English.

According to the Domesday Book, Donington had 16 salt works worth 20/- a year. Salt was a very important commodity in Saxon times, and also in Roman and Medieval times. As there were no root crops for cattle and dry fodder in winter was scarce, it was necessary to kill off stock in autumn and salt the meat for use in winter.

The annual value of the land in Donington was 60/- in the time of Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), and was valued the same at the time of the Domesday survey.

Throughout England in medieval times archery was very important, and boys were trained from an early age. During the reign of Edward III (1327-77), the boys of Donington practised on the south side of the church on Sunday afternoons. In the main doorway of Donington church there are some small worn grooves in the stonework which are probably due to the arrows being sharpened there. It was through constant practice in the villages that England produced superb longbowmen, who after hard training could fire six arrows in a minute and kill at a range of 250 yards.

It was during Edward III's reign that the Black Death occurred. By 1350 the plague had died down leaving a death toll believed to be about 1½ million — between a third and a half of the total population of England, which had been 4 millions. The effect on the country was disastrous. It is reasonable to assume that Donington was affected in some way, even more so because half the population of nearby Boston was wiped out.

During the Middle Ages Donington was a thriving market town, and proof of its prosperity is the fine church. Dominating the landscape, it is a great testimony of the builders of the Middle Ages.

FARMING METHODS IN DONINGTON DURING THE MIDDLE AGES



SOWING



HARVESTING

THE CHURCH.

It is possible that a church existed in Donington during Saxon times, though there is no evidence to prove it. Some of the stone work in the chancel may be Norman, but no definite details of a church exist before the 13th century.

It is mainly a 14th century building, the oldest part being the chancel. Alterations have been made over the centuries, but traces of 13th century work can be seen, for example, in the small priest's doorway on the south wall of the chancel. It was probably the Knight's Templars, a religious fighting order who fought in the Crusades, who began the building of the church towards the end of the 13th century. (The Knight's Templars were finally suppressed in Europe at the beginning of the 14th century after being accused of devil worship, blasphemy, spitting on the cross and worshipping idols.)

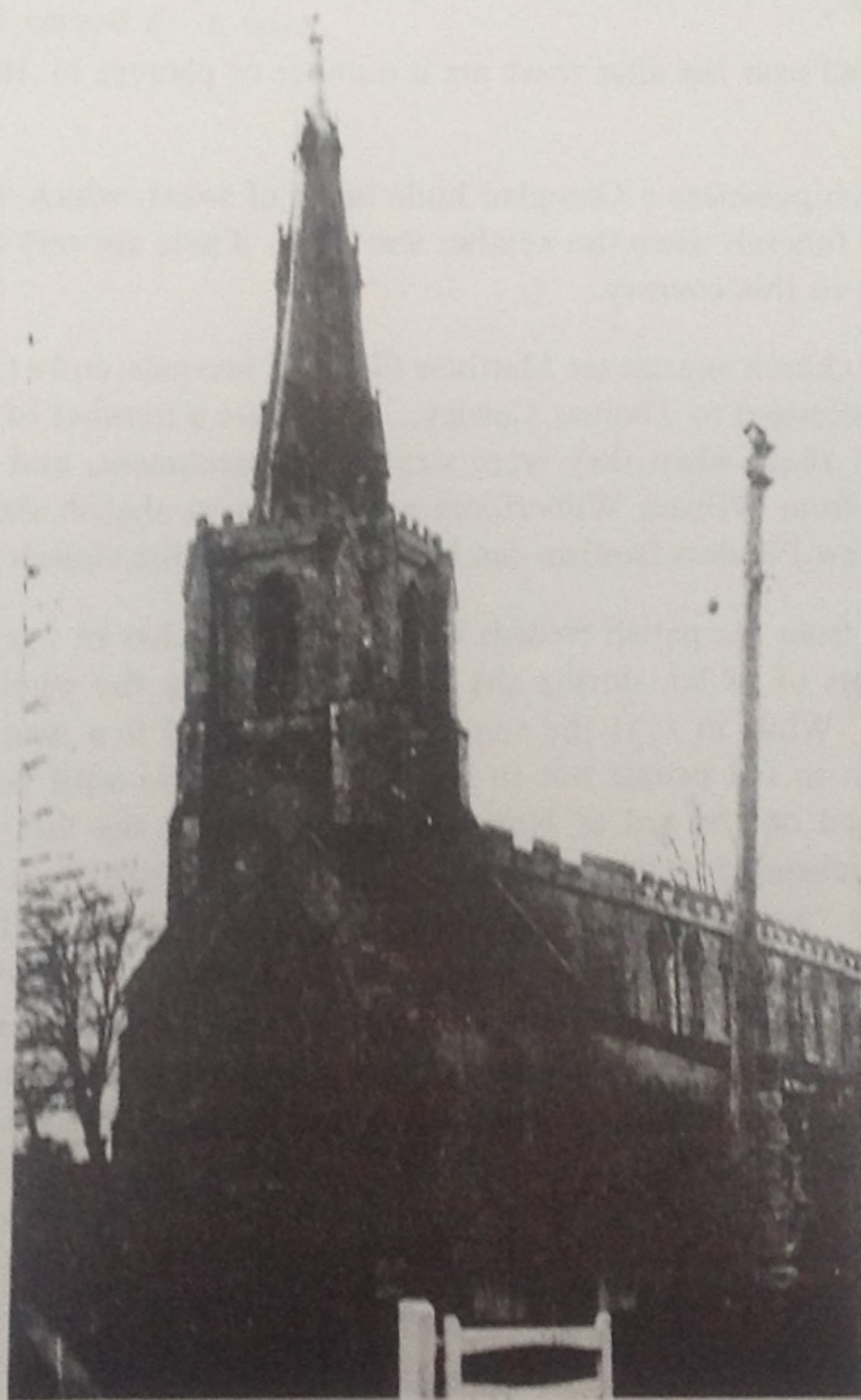
During the Middle Ages, life centred around the church. Apart from the parish priest religious teaching and spiritual comfort, it was also a place of entertainment in its widest sense. In church yards throughout England, sports, games and sometimes fairs were held. We know that in Donington archery was practised by the side of the church. It was also a meeting place where local inhabitants could talk to their friends and perhaps learn the latest news and gossip. The larger villages in England had companies of players who put on plays, usually of a religious nature. The parish provided the costumes, and the actors took their play around the neighbouring parishes. There was one such company at Donington. In 1524, Sutterton paid for players from Frampton, Kirton, Whaplode, Swineshead and Donington. They were eagerly welcomed by the villagers and a collection during the play amounted to 9/6d.

The name of Donington church, St. Mary and the Holy Rood, suggests that it is likely that it once claimed to have a piece of the original cross (or rood) on which Jesus died. This relic may have been kept in a small room behind the altar and pilgrims would come from far and wide to gaze at it and pray. The venerating of relics was abolished at the time of the Reformation, when the relic, if it ever existed, would have been destroyed. During the reign of Edward VI many changes were made in churches. Gold ornaments, statues, crosses and stone altars were removed. A new prayer book written in English was compulsory in all churches.

The nave of the church is 81ft. long and 22ft. wide, and the main part was built in the 14th century. During the Middle Ages the congregation had to kneel or stand as there were no pews. The South Aisle (16ft. wide) was built in the 14th century, and the North Aisle (14ft. wide) in the 15th century. The clerestory and the large rood turret were added in the 15th century. The style of architecture is Perpendicular and Decorated Gothic.

The steeple, like a number in this area of Lincolnshire, consists of a tower with a spire built on; its height is 140ft. The tower is unusual in that it stands on the south side of the nave and not, as one would expect, at the west end of the church. Above the door of the 14th century tower is a niche containing a statue of Christ. There are other niches around the outside of the tower which would have contained statues of saints before the Reformation. There are 8 bells; the earliest dates back to 1743 and the newest 2 were added in 1953. Inside the porch and in the interior of the church there are a number of carvings. Those between the arches are of ordinary people from the Middle Ages, perhaps modelled on persons living in the village at the time.

DONINGTON PARISH CHURCH



The font near the entrance to the church is of the Decorated Gothic style, but the top is a replica. The broken original is kept on the floor near the door to the belfry but the old pewter basin is inside the font.

In the chancel there are 15th century windows with fine tracery. Many of the other windows are in memory of people of Donington. A stained glass window in the North Aisle commemorates those who gave their lives in the First World War. Near the pulpit a plaque carries the Roll of Honour of those who died in the two World Wars.

In the centre aisle Thomas Cowley is buried, and his tomb stone records: "Here lies the body of Thomas Cowley, Gentleman, interred 17th day of July 1721, aged 96".

On the wall near the altar there are a number of plaques to the Flinders family.

The church possesses a Georgian hude made of wood, which was used by the minister at funerals when the weather was bad. There are very few of these still remaining in this country.

Inside the church one can see Matthew Flinders' journals, and a Cromwellian flagon which belonged to Thomas Cowley. There are a number of old records dating back to 1642, when they were written on parchment, and old letters, including one from William Wilberforce who fought to abolish slavery. The entry of Matthew Flinders baptism can be seen in one of the church registers.

We know from the parish records that the mole catcher in 1725 was given twelve payments of 18/8d. during the year for "keeping the whole lordship" free of moles. While in 1731 the sum of 1/6d. was paid to a man "for going about the town to tell people not to have anything to do with beggars." A document signed on the 3rd of November 1774 records the fact that Moses Berry was apprehended in the parish of Kettering as a "rogue and vagabond," and was caught "wandering and begging". He was sent back to the parish of Donington to be handed over to "some church-warden, chapel-warden, or overseer of the Poor." The poor laws gave power to the parish officers to remove people who had no legal settlement in the parish. An Act of Parliament 1597-8, ordered the appointment of overseers of the poor and laid down their duties. An Act of 1601, and later in 1640, ordered "the church-wardens and four, three or two substantial householders" to be nominated each year as overseers of the poor, with the duty of maintaining them and setting them to work. Funds for this purpose were to be provided from the taxation of "every inhabitant, parson,

vicar and other, and every occupier of lands, houses . . . ”, etc. During the second half of the 18th century there was an increase in rural poverty throughout England, which coincided with the period of rapid enclosure of land when the peasants lost their common rights and often their holdings of land. Poor law administration was changed under the Poor Law Reform Act of 1834, and the parish records show the amount that the parish of Donington had to pay towards the Poor Law in 1836 for the next three years was £369.

From the records we can find out what people's wages and rents were at particular times, and the cost of various items. For example, in 1845 forty-eight large nails used in repairing the church roof cost 4/-, and a ton of coal was 15/- in 1898; around the middle of the 19th century a labourer working on the parish roads earned 6/- a week.

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17th and 18th CENTURIES

Although the Romans had started to drain the Fens, the first systematic attempt at drainage was made during the time of Henry VIII, when a Commission of Sewers was appointed. It sat at Donington and after having the area surveyed, it ordered the cutting of two great sewers.

In the reign of Charles I, large drainage schemes were attempted, but it was virtually impossible to reconcile the claims of the undertakers who carried out the drainage, with those of thousands of commoners who obtained a living, wretched though it was, from the undrained land. Many people felt that drainage was for the private gain of speculators who were in the King's favour. As a result, Donington and the surrounding area witnessed angry and violent scenes in the first part of the 17th century.

In 1634 a decree of the Court of Sewers at Boston stated that four of the undertakers for draining the West Fen had not provided money or done anything to help in the work of drainage. As a result of this decree friction developed and conflict occurred. In 1640 "eleven men of Donington were in confinement in London." In the spring of that year there were riots and demonstrations in the village, and in some nearby villages buildings were set on fire, such was the anger and frustration of the people.

During the Civil War (1642-48) the Donington area sided with Cromwell and Parliament against Charles I and the Royalists. Thomas Hall of Donington was indicted for High Treason in 1643 when he was a captain in the Roundhead army. He was Taxation Commissioner for Boston in 1647, and M.P. for the county of Lincoln in 1654 and 1656. He was buried in Donington on May 12th, 1675.

Charles I was executed in January 1649, and after the Civil War much of the land returned to an uncultivated state. The economic loss was to be tremendous as it was more than a century before most of the land was again reclaimed.

Between 1764 and 1768 Acts of Parliament were passed for Donington, serving a dual purpose of drainage and enclosures of land. The Forty-foot, apart from acting as a drain was also used for transporting produce to market. A considerable amount of trade in various commodities, particularly coal and timber, was carried on between Boston and Bourne.

Towards the last quarter of the 18th century improvements were made to the state of roads, not only in these parts, but in other areas of England too. Journeys were often very uncomfortable and dangerous on some roads. In winter carriages and carts became stuck, or horses could not keep their feet. Passengers were covered in mud, some of which found its way into their throats. In summer the passengers were plagued by dust. The unsprung forms of transport clattering and lurching on these road surfaces made the journey unforgettable to those poor, bruised bodies. It was perhaps with relief that they halted at inns such as the Red Cow in Donington, a 17th century coaching inn. In those days it was quite common for the passengers to have to pay the driver a tip of 6d. at every inn at which they stopped.

The Highway Act of 1555 had ordered each parish to repair its own roads. Two men (surveyors) were appointed each year to organise the work, which was to be done by the labourers in the parish for six days a year, unpaid. Nobody liked working for nothing, and the surveyors knew little about roadmaking, so the work was often either badly done or neglected. But with the introduction of the Turnpike Acts, road surfaces improved. These Acts allowed tolls to be charged to travellers, and the money would be used for the building and repair of roads. A Turnpike Act of 1764 allowed the parishes of Spalding, Pinchbeck, Surfleet, Gosberton, Quadring and Donington to remove the materials of the paved causeways used for horses, which had been expensive to lay down, so that they could be used to repair other roads in the parishes. This Act allowed tolls to be collected from the roads from Spalding, through Gosberton to Donington Market Place.

The tolls were as follows:-

“For every horse, bullock, etc., drawing in any vehicle	3d.
For every horse etc. not drawing in any vehicle.....	1½d.
Every drove of oxen, cows or cattle.....	10d. per score
Every drove of calves, hogs, sheep, or lambs.....	5d. per score”

Allowances were made for local people, and by the same Act there was a reduction in tolls for cattle coming from Scotland, between Donington and Spalding. Great herds of Highland Cattle, about 40,000 beasts a year, passed through Lincolnshire on the way to London markets. (Around the middle of the 18th century there were terrible cattle plagues in the district. In 1746 Donington lost 1048 beasts.)

The land of Donington was enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1767, thus transforming farming from the open-field system, with its strips of land. In England between 1727 and 1760 only about 250,000 acres were enclosed, but the years 1760 to 1820 saw the enclosure of 6,000,000 acres, so that by 1820 only 3% of cultivated land in England was still worked under the open-field system. Enclosures were necessary in order to produce more food for the country's growing population, and so that the more advanced farming methods of the second half of the 18th century could be used efficiently. (According to the first census in 1801 there were 10 million people; Donington's contribution to this figure was 1,321). The open-field system had been wasteful and inefficient. There was a rhyme in England in the Middle Ages which illustrates this.

“Sow four grains in a row,
One for the pigeon, one for the crow,
One to rot and one to grow.”

But enclosures were largely carried out at the expense of the small farmer, and much common land was lost.

During the 18th century, the villagers of Donington kept large flocks of geese, which yielded crops of quills and feathers, and it is recorded that they were plucked five times a year.

The 18th century was a period of expansion and prosperity for the village, and a number of buildings of the Georgian period still survive., giving the place character. But in 1772, Bishop Fuller described Donington (and Swineshead) as “ill built and dirty.”

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THE MARKET PLACE.

During the Middle Ages, Donington had a thriving market but its importance finally dwindled due to the nearness of the large market towns of Boston and Spalding.

Special markets were held in 1740 for the sale of hemp and flax, and up to the first part of the 19th century, Donington was famous for its hemp fairs. Much of the hemp went to London for the Royal Navy's ropes, and before it was imported into England, it was the most important crop in this area. It was easy to grow but laborious to harvest. It had to be kept free of weeds, and just at the right moment, had to be pulled by hand, dried, wetted, and dried again and then shocked, before leaving the field. Hemp was a profitable crop but it exhausted the soil. (The area around the Bowling Green is still called the Hemplings).

Three special fairs were held annually for the sale of seed, the oil from which was used in the making of soap. Markets were held every Saturday, and three annual fairs attracted much attention — in September for oxen, in May and October for horses, oxen and merchandise.

Before the Second World War, the May horse fair was famous and people came from all over to attend it. The horses were kept in pens down by the railway station, and on the day of the fair they were paraded down the street, the line stretching as far as the school. Buyers and sellers would argue about the price, sometimes in the pubs around the market place, and no doubt the bargain was sealed by the traditional handshake. During the First World War many horses were sold at Donington fairs for use by the soldiers.

If a town with a market place has a 'Bull' inn, as Donington does, it usually signifies that bull baiting took place. The bull was tethered to an iron ring in the market place and then dogs were loosed on the poor animal. The bull's throat was often ripped open by the dogs, some of whom were gored to death by the bull's horns. This cruel sport was forbidden by law in 1835.

Towards the end of the 18th century the stage coach from Nottingham to Boston would stop in the market place. Matthew Flinders, who lived in the Market Square, would catch the coach for Cambridge from near his home, when

he was on his way to London. The shops in the High Street and Market Square then would have had signs hanging outside, a tradition of times when few people could read. Those familiar to Flinders were Bodycoats, Odlings, Hoppers, Blanchard's, Tagg's, Hiley's, and Cawkell's. 'Goody' Cawkell had the sweet shop, and she helped nurse him when he was a baby.

DONINGTON MARKET PLACE



In 1856, White's 'Lincolnshire' recorded the following pubs in Donington:- The Black Bull, Black Swan, Red Cow, Bottle and Glass, (Northorpe), Peacock, Rose and Crown, and the Sloop (on the Fen). Apart from these, there were two brewers, William Dods, West St., and George C. White, High St. Evidence of local beer making can be seen in street names such as Malting Lane.

In 1856 letters arrived at the post office at 7.30 a.m., and they were despatched at 7 o'clock in the evening by mail cart to Spalding. In the same year gas lighting was introduced into the village.



HIGH STREET, DONINGTON



THE RAILWAY STATION.

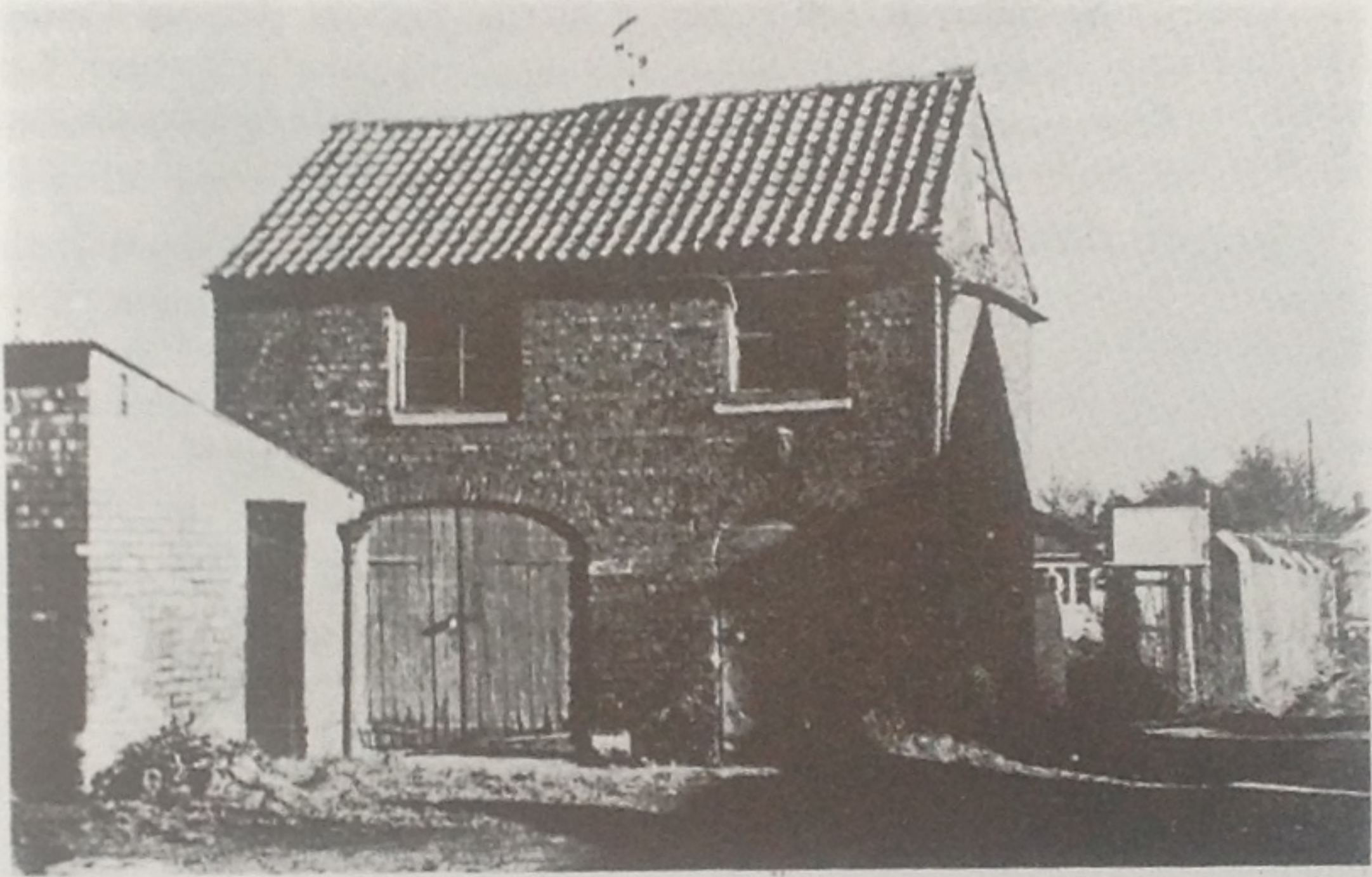
Donington still has a railway station although it is no longer used by passengers. The steel to build it was supplied by G. Holt of the Foundry, Church St.,. Building began in 1870 and was finished in the 1880's. It was first used in 1882 when it was then known as 'the Great Northern and Great Eastern Joint Line.' Ten passenger trains and six express trains passed through then.

In 1922 there was an amalgamation with the Great Central and North Eastern Railway, and the line was renamed the LNER.

Around the time of the First World War as many as 100 passengers might book at Donington station for Spalding, a journey costing 1/- return. In May 1914, 300 horses were loaded onto wagons from the biggest horse fair in Lincolnshire held in the village.



THE OLD BLACKSMITH'S SHOP



COWLEY'S SCHOOL.

Cowley's Secondary School is named after its founder, Thomas Cowley. He was born in 1625 and died in Donington in 1721. He lived at Wykes House, which was built around 1680, and owned 734 acres of land around Donington, the Red Cow in the High Street, and the blacksmith's shop in Church Street.

He was a charitable person who in 1701 thought of building a school in the village. A sum of money was put aside for the education of twenty poor children living in Donington. In the terms set out by Cowley, the Trustees of the school had to go to church every Easter Tuesday to hear a sermon on charity for which the vicar received £5. In the Parish Church there is a memorial slab in the central aisle which marks the site of his burial place, but very little is known about Thomas Cowley.

The school was opened in 1719, but the original building no longer exists. The oldest remaining ones were built in 1812. Above the porchway an inscription states that the school was founded by 'T. Cowley, Gent' in 1719. Inside this building can be seen the Cowley Chair. Made when the school was founded, it was probably used by the headmaster when he presided over the school. The building which is now the old gym was built in 1861. Much of the new building was added in 1966, and a new gym, science lab and woodwork room in 1970.

Matthew Flinders attended the school for a short time until he left to go to Horbling Grammar School in 1786. Flinders who was good at mathematics and trigonometry, might have come across an arithmetic book written by two masters of the school, Anthony and John Birks, in 1766. A copy of this book is kept in the school, and by looking at the problems set in it, one can see it would be of more interest and value in a History lesson rather than a Maths lesson today. (See Appendix 1).

A few years after Flinders had left Donington School, another pupil with a spirit of adventure attended there. His name was John Jewitt, and he was at the school during the 1790's. Around the year 1800 he sailed for America and was captured by Indians. Only he and another crew member survived the massacre. Jewitt was spared because he was skilled at making weapons and was, therefore, useful to the Indians, with whom he lived for a time. During his life in captivity, he witnessed blood-thirsty wars between different tribes, and was even forced to marry a Red Indian wife. He was eventually released three years after his capture when an American ship came near, and then settled in Boston, Massachusetts. His dramatic story was later told in the 'Boys' Own Paper' in 1881 under the title, 'Adventure of a Boston Boy Among Savages.'

COWLEY'S SCHOOL, OLD BUILDINGS



In the school library there can be seen a copy of "the Rules of the Free School at Donington, unanimously made and established by the Trustees at a General Meeting on the 1st day of August, 1799." (For these nineteen rules, see Appendix 2).

In 1872 Thomas Cowley's property of 734 acres of land, the Red Cow Hotel, the blacksmith's shop, a market garden, several houses and the profits of the Manor of Wykes, produced an income of £1,500 per annum. The headmaster of the school at this time was Dr. Constable who was appointed in 1854 (the year the Crimean War began), and given a salary of £40 a year, with a house and a large yard and garden rent free, and three chaldrons of coal a year allowed for the school.

It was during 1871 and 1872 that the school made history when it was one of the fifteen teams which entered the very first F.A. Cup Competition. After a bye in the first round, Donington School was drawn away to Queens Park, one of the best teams around at that time. But because of the distance to Glasgow and the cost (about £2 a head in those days), the team had to withdraw. Queens Park went into the third round, where they had another bye, and then went into the semi-final against Wanderers. After drawing 0—0 in London,

they suffered the same fate as Donington, being unable to travel for the replay. Wanderers beat Royal Engineers 1—0 in the final at the Oval.

One hundred years later, on May 13th, 1972, the unfulfilled fixture against Queens Park, the Scottish Second Division Club, was played in Glasgow as part of the F.A. Centenary celebrations. The team made up of ex-pupils, lost 6—0 after a very good and exciting game. Despite the result, that match will live in the memories of all those who were concerned with it. The event gained coverage in national and local newspapers, football magazines, radio and television. The school was also represented at the F.A.'s official Centenary banquet on the eve of the 1972 Cup Final. Souvenirs of Donington's part in the F.A. Cup's history are kept in the school.

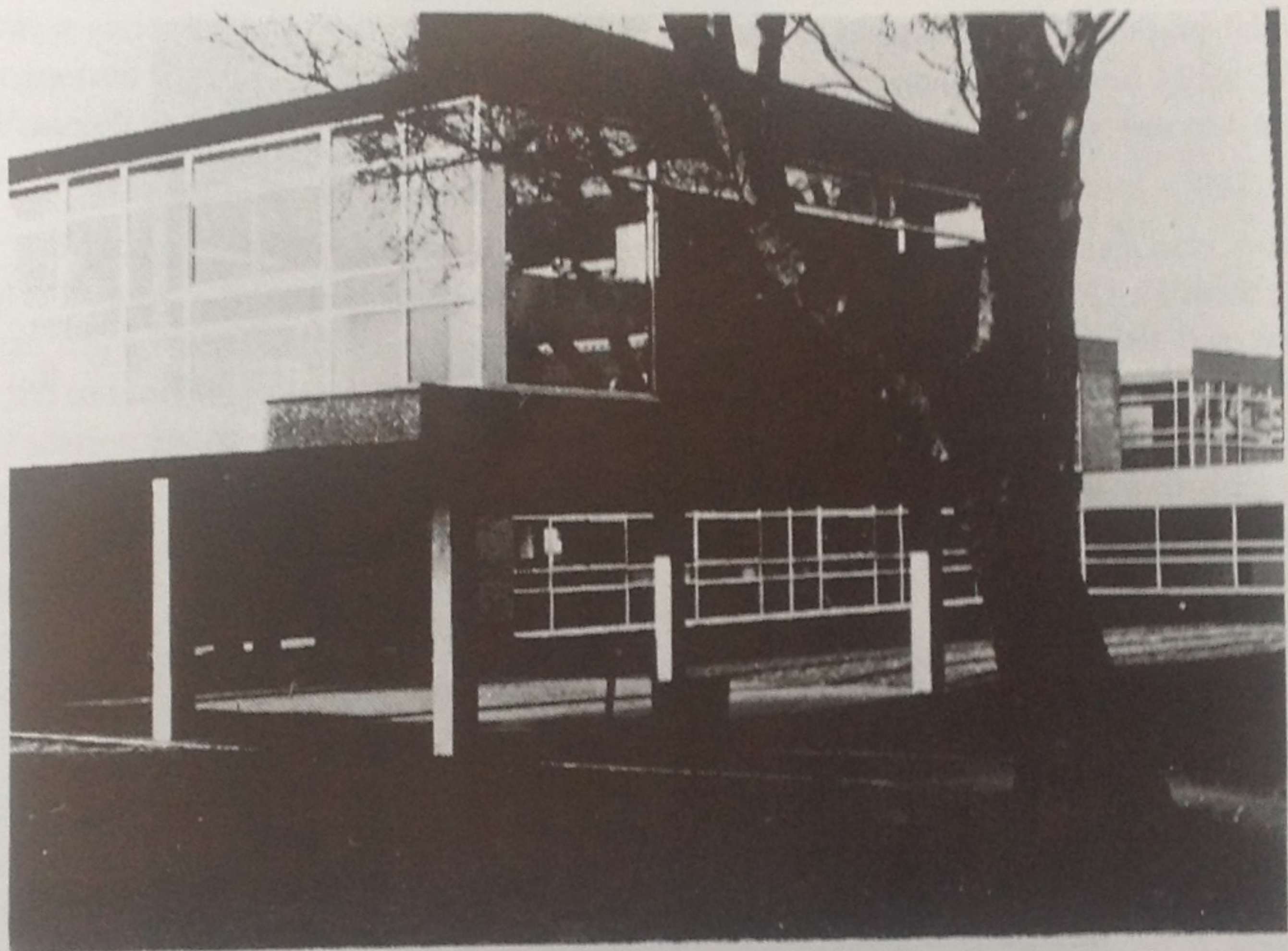
The Grammar School was closed down in 1896 due to lack of numbers and was re-opened on September 20th, 1907.

NUMBERS OF PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL

Year	Nos. at beginning of Autumn Term
1719	20
1907	42
1912	131
1919	156
1927	176
1939	165
1941	172
1945	211
1950	358
1955	358
1965	385
1970	332
1971	358
1972	391

During the Second World War, apart from normal school activities, the school was used as a Warden's Post and First Aid Post. The gym was used by troops from army detachments in Donington, and in spring 1941, the teachers' houses. Virginia Cottages next to the school, were used as army billets. First Aid lectures were given by the A.R.P. in what is now Room 1. Air raid shelters, built by the end of the spring term in 1940, were used during the day when enemy planes were reported in the area. (They were demolished in April 1973.) The top half of Middleton Green, the school playing fields, was cultivated during the war as part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign.

COWLEY'S SCHOOL, MODERN BUILDINGS



The Grammar School changed over to a Secondary Modern School in 1949 and adopted its present name. Sometime in the future it is expected to become an Upper School, age range 13-18 years, with over 700 pupils.

In recent years the buildings and facilities have increased, and with the rapid expansion in the numbers of houses in the village in 1973, the size of the school will be affected in turn. Good academic results continue to be achieved, and there are a number of school societies and clubs so that pupils can enjoy a variety of out-of-school activities. Sport, whether it is football, hockey, cricket, athletics or swimming, is popular and flourishes. W.E.A. and Local Authority evening classes are well supported, and some of the other school facilities, e.g. the swimming pool, are used by organisations from outside the school.

After a long and interesting past, the future of Cowley's School looks equally exciting for all concerned.



MATTHEW FLINDERS

Matthew Flinders was born in Donington on March 16th, 1774. He lived in the Market Square in the village where his father was the doctor. His grand-father was also a doctor in Spalding, and it was probably expected that the young Matthew would follow the family tradition.

From an early age he seemed to have an adventurous spirit. On one occasion the bells of Boston Stump are supposed to have rung out to call people together to search for him on the Fens. He had gone out exploring and the weather had turned bad. His parents were worried and the alarm was sounded, but, unknown to his family, he had reached safety.

As a boy he had a desire to go to sea. He had read Defoe's 'Robinson Crusoe,' which had had a tremendous impact on him. Matthew's uncle John was a sailor and he influenced the young lad with his stories. It was he who suggested that he should read Robertson's 'Elements of Navigation,' and Moore's 'Principles of Trigonometry,' which would give him a very important grounding in navigation.

Matthew attended Donington Free School where one of his teachers was Mr. Lound, whose son, Sharrard, was later to sail with him. But Dr. Flinders was impatient with his son's nautical obsession, and decided to move him in 1786 to Horbling Grammar School, where he felt perhaps his son would get a good education in Latin (useful for a doctor) from the Rev. John Shinglar who was passionate about the subject. Maybe it was thought this would change his ideas about going to sea, but Matthew continued to shine in trigonometry and still dreamed about the sea. It was suggested by the Rev. Shinglar that it might be best not to stand in the boy's way. Reluctantly at first, Dr. Flinders agreed to allow his fifteen year old son to join the navy.

Ship's conditions in those days were terrible for the crew. Cabins were infested with lice and cockroaches; the meat was often rotten; ships biscuits crawled with insects; the butter was rancid; and the cheese wriggled with long, red worms. An ordinary seaman earned 19/- a month, and an Able-Bodied Seaman 24/-. Lieutenants and ships' surgeons were often drunk, and it was almost impossible to become a captain without influence.

In October 1789, Flinders was appointed as a lieutenant's servant on board the training ship, H.M.S. Alert at Chatham. This was part of his training, although the ship never moved from her moorings. He was then transferred to the "Scipio," and after one trip joined H.M.S. Bellerophon as Midshipman.

A little later he sailed with Capt. Bligh who had, not long before, been the centre of the mutiny on the "Bounty". He was reputed to be hard and rumours went round all the sea-ports claiming that his crew were in danger of starving to death, being tortured, or being hung from the yard arm. If Flinders heard these rumours, it did not stop him from going on the voyage to the Pacific as timekeeper midshipman.

On this voyage in the Providence, he began to keep a very methodical journal. He made maps and sketches of the animals, birds and plants, and observed the natives. At a place called Adventure Bay he witnessed a human sacrifice when a native was clubbed to death, his head severed with a bamboo knife and offered to one of their gods. During this voyage, a party he was in was attacked by hostile natives.

After he had returned to England he was ordered to join the *Bellerophon* again. At this time Britain was at war with France, and it was on this ship that he saw action at the Battle of 'the Glorious First of June' (Battle of Brest, June 1st, 1794). He wrote a journal describing the battle, which the British, led by Admiral Howe, won. The *Bellerophon*, which later fought at the Battle of Trafalgar, had to be taken in tow after her topmast and most of her shrouds had been shot away, but Flinders records that this was not before she had inflicted considerable damage on the enemy. The commander of Flinders ship', Rear Admiral Pasley, had one of his legs blown off by an 18 pound shot during the conflict.

Shortly after his experience of war, he returned home to Donington, where both family and friends were eager to hear his stories.

In 1795 he left for Terra Australis, as Australia was then called, with Capt. Hunter aboard the "Reliance." Very little was known about the country then, but after Capt. Cook's expedition in the *Endeavour*, it was decided in 1786 to use it as a penal colony. The American colonies had been used for this purpose until their independence in 1783. Botony Bay had been chosen as a place for convicts but the governor, Capt. Philip soon realised it was unsuitable and decided to move north to Port Jackson.

It has been estimated that 1 in 20 people in England in 1800 was a criminal. About 200 crimes were punishable by death, including cutting down trees, stealing a sheep, impersonating a Chelsea pensioner, and stealing a handkerchief from a person's pocket. Men, women and children were publicly hanged. Transportation was for lesser offences such as taking turnips from a farmers' field, or killing a rabbit.

Flinders witnessed the convicts half starved and wretched, some falling dead in the chain gangs. There were hangings or floggings nearly every day.

Much of the country had not been seen by white men, but on this voyage, Flinders and his friend the ships' surgeon, George Bass from Boston, explored the coast and had a number of adventures. They used a little boat called Tom Thumb, and in three months Flinders made many maps and charts. One day they found themselves surrounded by hostile natives with matted hair and beards. The natives were puzzled by the smooth chins of the two white men, and Flinders daringly offered to shave them. This he did while Bass quickly got the boat and their possessions ready. They then made a hurried retreat.

In 1797 Bass explored the coast further and was convinced that Van Dieman's Land was an island, contrary to belief at that time. If this was the case, sailing

time from England could be cut by two weeks. With this in mind Hunter sent Bass and Flinders to investigate in the Norfolk. The theory was proved correct. They sailed right round Van Dieman's Land (now Tasmania), making charts as they went, and they discovered a strait which Flinders named Bass Strait.

As the weeks went by Flinders developed a passion for exploring the Australian coastline. On his return to England he delivered his reports about the country, and he had now a burning desire to make a full scale examination before any other foreign explorer.

In the early part of 1801, two French ships, the *Geographe* and the *Naturaliste*, had set out to explore Australia, which was still open to anyone who claimed it. With the support of Sir Joseph Banks, the squire of Revesby, who had been on Cook's voyage, Flinders managed to persuade the Admiralty to finance a scientific expedition which he would lead. He was given a 334 ton sloop, the *Xenophon*, which had its name changed to the *Investigator*.

Whilst waiting for the ship to be fitted out, he married his childhood sweetheart, Ann Chappell of Partney near Spilsby. His intention was to take her with him on the voyage, but the Admiralty refused permission and so she had to stay behind and wait for his return, the loneliness broken only by the occasional letter. She understood his passion for the sea and what the voyage meant to him, so she did not stand in his way. (Her own father had been a ship's captain who had drowned in the Baltic.)

Meanwhile, George Bass had gone his own way as a part owner in a ship called *Venus*. After leaving Sydney in February 1803, he completely disappeared. To this day it is not certain what happened to him. He was either captured by Spaniards and made to work in silver mines in South America, or he drowned when his ship went down. Either way his death was tragic.

Flinders chose the crew which was to explore Australia with him, and Banks selected the scientists and completed the details of the expedition. It says a great deal for Flinders' qualities of leadership when far more men volunteered than were needed, and this at a time when the press-gang method was used frequently to get men to go to sea. Although only twenty-seven years old, he was to show that he was a good captain, and throughout the voyage he received loyalty and obedience from the crew, in whom he always showed a lively interest.

This very youthful crew contained his brother Samuel as second lieutenant. From Matthew's journals and letters one can see that the relations between the two were strained, and Samuel was not always reliable. John Franklin,

Matthew's cousin from Spilsby, was also on board. He was an outstanding junior on the expedition, and later he was knighted and became the Governor of Tasmania. He died in 1847 while attempting to find the North-West Passage in the Arctic regions.

Another Lincolnshire man on the expedition was the first lieutenant, Robert Fowler from Horncastle. Matthew Flinders and Franklin, and two other members, Robert Brown, the naturalist, and William Westall, the landscape painter, were to become famous in their own lifetime.

On July 18th, 1801, the Investigator set sail with 88 men on board. As a result of the efficiency of the crew and the skill of the scientists, the total results in exploration and botanical science were greater than any achieved before by a single expedition.

Towards the end of 1801 Flinders arrived off the south-west coast of Australia, but the Investigator was in a poor condition and during the voyage many repairs had to be done. In the seventeen months that followed the southern coast was surveyed in great detail. Captain Flinders made accurate maps and reports, important notes and sketches were made of the scenery, plants, birds and animals, and interesting and valuable specimens were collected.

The Investigator was refitted at Port Jackson, and the second stage of the voyage began around the middle of 1802. Flinders went up the Eastern coast, which Cook had explored earlier, and he broke through the Barrier Reef by what became Flinder's Passage. New South Wales and the Queensland coast were explored and Flinders was able to fill in some of the gaps left by Cook, and indeed, correct some of his findings.

While surveying the Gulf of Carpentaria the state of his ship grew worse, and some of his crew were dying of dysentery, so he decided to return to Port Jackson round the western and southern coasts. On its arrival many of the planks were so rotten, it was possible to poke a stick through them, so in June 1803, the Investigator was pronounced unfit for any further service. But much work had been done by this stage, despite problems with the ship, Aborigine attacks, and some of the crew catching dysentery. (It should be pointed out, though, that dysentery and scurvy were reduced considerably because Flinders learned from Capt. Cook the importance of hygienic conditions and vitamin C.) Flinders was also ill for a time.

Australia had been circumnavigated, the area around what is now South Australia was discovered for the first time by Flinders, and many places had been named after Lincolnshire villages and towns (e.g. Cape Donington, Kirton,

Spilsby Island, Boston Bay, Port of Lincoln), and after Flinders (e.g. Flinders Island, Flinders Loch,). Capt Flinders did not forget members of his crew, nor his wife Ann, when he named newly discovered places, as the map of Australia testifies.

At this point Flinders was impatient to return to England and report his findings even though he was not fully fit. He now needed another ship, and it was on August 10th 1803 that he left Sydney as a passenger on board the *Porpoise*, which was accompanied by the *Cato* and the *Bridgewater*. It was not long before disaster occurred. The *Porpoise* and the *Cato* struck a coral reef. The *Bridgewater* escaped but after cruising around, sailed away for some unknown reason. (The reason was never to be discovered, for the *Bridgewater* never reached England; she sank off the coast of India.) Flinders and the other survivors (fortunately, only three men drowned) managed to retrieve some food and possessions, including his valuable papers, and take refuge on a nearby sand bank.

Flinders and a small crew then took one of the ship's boats which was not too badly damaged, and which they christened, *Hope*, and sailed about 750 miles south to Sydney for help. Thirteen days later they arrived looking like wild men with clothes tattered. Within two months of setting out, Flinders was back and the rest of the men were saved.

Now he embarked once more for England in the *Cumberland* on the 15,000 mile journey. But again he was in trouble. The ship began to leak and the heavy seas forced them to put in at Mauritius, where a military force intercepted them. The island was controlled by the French who were still at war with Britain, and the Governor hated the British. Matthew Flinders, who made the mistake of refusing to dine with him, was accused of being a spy and thrown into prison where his health deteriorated. He remained a prisoner for six and a half years. His plight came to the ears of Napoleon who, impressed by his skill and courage, ordered his release. But it was only when the British captured a French ship that the order was found, and they had to blockade the island for more than three years before he was finally released.

In prison he had carried out experiments into navigation and became the first to investigate the phenomenon of compass deviations caused by iron in ships. The result was the invention of the Flinders Bar for ships' compasses, which was a breakthrough in navigation.

He eventually reached England in October 1810, after being away from home for almost ten years. Despite his achievements he received little recognition or reward from the King or Government. His imprisonment had made

him ill, but he prepared his charts, maps and notes ready for publication. His journal, 'A Voyage to Terra Australis,' describes his adventures and discoveries.

The day after his book was published, July 19th, 1814, Capt. Matthew Flinders died in London at 56 Stanhope St. He was buried in St. James Chapel, Hampstead Road, but his tomb stone has been removed so it is not known exactly where he is buried. After his death his wife and daughter were badly off for many years, until the authorities of New South Wales and Victoria, after hearing of their circumstances, gave them a pension.

One of the Houses at Cowley's School is named after Flinders, and there are memorials to him and other members of his family in Donington Parish Church, where his baptism is recorded, and his journals can be seen. The house in which he once lived no longer exists, but on the site next to Dial Hall, a plaque records: "CAPT. MATTHEW FLINDERS, R.N., THE EXPLORER, BORN ON THIS SITE, MARCH 16th, 1774."

Flinders' contribution to the history of exploration is very important. He was the first man to circumnavigate and map the whole Australian coastline, and was responsible for giving Australia its name. He showed that it was a continent and not a number of large islands as many geographers at the time believed, and his map was the first to show Australia with its coastline complete. When we think of these achievements and the esteem which other British explorers have received, Capt. Matthew Flinders' significance in Britain seems to have been belittled, though not in Australia.

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FLINDERS' BIRTH-PLACE



Matthew Flinders' birthplace, Donington, Lincs.

E. M. C. Morris



APPENDIX 1 — Problems set in Arithmetic book of 1766.

1.—Three and thirty years before the Restoration in 1660, the crown granted demesnes, to certain uses, for 210 years then to come. The proprietor, in 1715, procured a reversionary grant of 99 years, to commence after the expiration of the first. In what year of Christ will the second term end?

2.—One of the smarts in the accomptant's office making his addresses in an old lady's family, who had five fine daughters; she told him their father had made a whimsical will, which might not soon be settled in Chancery, and till then he must refrain his visit. The young gentleman undertook to unravel the will, which imported: That the first four girls' fortunes were together to make £25,000; the four last £33,000; the three last, with the first £30,000; the three first, with the last, were to make £28,000; and the last two, and the two first, £32,000. Now, sir, if you can make appear what each is to have, and as you like, seemingly, my third daughter, Charlotte, whom I am sure will make you a good wife, and you are welcome; what was Miss Charlotte's fortune?

3.—Fair ladies of you I must yet enquire,

How the poll stood for the Knights of our shire:

The number of votes, as I have seen,

Were five thousand, two hundred, and nineteen;

Which among four was just so divided,

As one the second, and the third exceeded,

By twenty-four and fourscore bating seven;

The fourth by no more than sixscore and ten:

Then how many votes had each candidate?

You need not in finding much trouble your pate.

4.—A noted highwayman having committed a robbery not suspecting pursuit, fled northward at the rate of eight leagues a day; Jonathan Wyld, upon the scent, follows him, in a progressive motion, only three leagues the first day, five the next, seven the third and so on, increasing every day two leagues; in how many days will the highwayman be overtaken?

APPENDIX 2—Rules of the Free School at Donington, 1799.

1.—The Headmaster shall have the sole Direction of Business in the school, including especially the Mode of Teaching to be used by the Usher.

2.—From new Lady-day to Michaelmas the Scholars shall attend from Six to Twelve o'clock in the morning (alloweing an hour for Breakfast), and from Two to Five o'clock in the Afternoon. The Rest of the Year from Nine to Twelve o'clock in the morning, and from Two to Four o'clock in the Afternoon. The Masters are to attend not later than Half an Hour after the Time appointed for the Attendance of the Scholars.

3.—Such Scholars as reside a Mile from the School shall not be required to attend there earlier than Twenty Minutes after the Hour appointed for the Attendance of the other Scholars; and a further proportionate Time shall be allowed for every greater Distance.

4.—The Headmaster shall appoint a weekly Monitor, whose Office it shall be to call over the Names of the Scholars at Half an Hour after the Time fixed for Attendance, and to do such other proper Offices within the School as the said Master shall direct.

5.—Immediately after the Names are called over, appointed Prayers shall be read by the Head Master, Usher or Monitor, the School Door being kept shut.

6.—The scholars of all the Schools shall attend Divine Service in the Church every Sunday (twice, if it can so be) with the Master and several Mistresses, and also on such other Days as he shall appoint; but the children of Dissenters may attend their Parents to their respective Places of Worship, upon the Parents of such children acquainting the Master, or respective Mistress, that they do so.

7.—The Scholars of all the Schools shall every Saturday be instructed in the Church Catechism, and those of the Master's School, that are capable, shall transcribe the Collect for the next Day, and repeat the same on the Monday Morning following.

8.—At each Meeting of the Trustees all the Scholars (as well Boarders as Others) shall attend, in order that they may be examined respecting their Progress in Learning, and the Master is required to produce, at each such Meeting, the Books used by them subsequent to the preceding Meeting.

9.—In the Case of Sickness of either Master the other shall assist to the utmost of his Power.

10.—Holidays and Vacations shall be as follows, and no others. Every Sunday, every Saturday Afternoon, from Good Friday to Easter Tuesday (both inclusive), the King's Ascession Day, Four Weeks at Christmas and Four Weeks at Midsummer.

1.—Parents are required to take Care that their Children do regularly attend at the Hours of Teaching. The Head Master and several Mistresses shall

report to the Trustees at every Meeting the Names of Scholars negligent in their attendance, or disobeying the Rules and Orders of the School, who shall thereupon be called before the Trustees, and shall be liable to be expelled the School and excluded from every Benefit of the Trust.

12.—A Journal shall be kept by the Master, who shall take Care to note therein the Absence of those Children who go to his School, and the reason of such Absence, — And it is strictly required that the Parents of those Children who go to the several Schools, when they have Occasion to absent them from School, do give an Account thereof to the respective Master or Mistress, and the Reason of such Absence, on Pain of Suspension from the School.

13.—Parents wishing to Employ their Children in Harvest or other special Work, may withdraw them from School for a Time, on giving proper Notice, as mentioned in the last Rule, on Pain of Suspension from the School.

14.—No Parent shall interfere in the Ordering or Correction of any Scholar, except in Cases of Neglect or Cruel Treatment on the part of the Master or Mistress (and that not in School Hours), in which Cases Complaint should be made to the Trustees at their Meeting.

15.—Scholars guilty of profane Swearing or other notorious Misbehaviour, whether in or out of School shall be liable to be expelled by the Trustees at their next Meeting, and excluded from every Benefit of the Trust, they having been properly admonished by the Master or Mistresses, and their Parents having been acquainted with such intended Expulsion.

16.—No Scholar shall be advanced from one School to another but by the Appointment of the Trustees — And it is particularly required that the Mistresses of the School do severally attend the appointed Meetings with such of their Scholars as they may think fit for such Advancement, in order that they may be examined by the Trustees for that Purpose.

17.—No Child shall be put out Apprentice till the Trustees present, or three of them, have examined such Child in Reading, Writing and Accounts, and have reported, under their Hands, that he has made a reasonable Proficiency.

18.—All the Masters and Mistresses shall be Members of the Church of England.

19.—These Rules, with such Additions or Alterations as the Trustees from Time to Time may establish, shall be printed, and One Copy shall be given to each Trustee, one to the Parents of each Child, one shall be read by the Head Masters of the several Schools to all the Scholars within a Week after every Midsummer and Christmas Vacation. Fair Copies of the Rules shall always continue to be kept in the respective Schools by every Master and Mistress, and also in the Church.

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