



# A Short History of Orton Waterville

By Fred Killingworth



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Some time ago the history of the parish of Orton Waterville was written by a local schoolmaster. As he was something of a historian he would, I'm sure, have access to relevant historical documents. I have never seen this booklet but I assume it is probably dates and places, etc. In the following pages you will see my written history will mainly be people and places.

Items I have dredged from my memory and from details I learnt when attending the local school and snippets of information imparted to me by my father and uncle and aunt, also from local people who were very old when I was very young.

Much of the information in the following pages will relate to my family, who have lived in Orton Waterville for almost a hundred and forty years. Five generations having been born in the village. For most of this time my family have been involved in village activities. So bear with me if portions of the village history appear like the Killingworth chronicles, and forgive me for any errors.

I have read that one cannot be considered a true native of any place unless,

- a. You were born there
- b. At least one set of grandparents are buried in the local churchyard

Since I meet both of these criteria I can say truthfully that I am an Ortonian.

During the hot summer days of the 1930s (summers were always hot in those days) every child in the village would be disporting themselves in the river for it was very shallow. In the Summer a child could walk from one side of the river to another.

This changed in the middle of the 1930s when the whole of the river was dredged and the mud and gravel deposited on the banks. Walking the bank I found a stone knife which the curator of Peterborough Museum identified as a Neolithic skinning knife, probably about four thousand years old. I was also told that Iron Age hut circles have been discovered near the river, and it would seem that this part of the parishes of Orton Waterville and Orton Longueville had settlements at least dating back to the Neolithic period, that is 2000BC.

The next people to settle in this area would have been the Romans, who after their initial landing in 43AD had soon reached this area. Aerial photography of this part of the district now occupied by Ferry Meadows, reveals stockade buildings and a Roman villa.

I recall being told at school that the name with Castor or Chester (Chesterton) in it would be Roman, so it would appear that this part of the district must have been colonised by the Romans. (Further information can be obtained from the Ferry Meadows information pamphlet.)

When at the village school in the 1930s I recall being told that some sort of Anglo Saxon community existed between what is now Orton Waterville and Orton Longueville. This settlement was known as Overton, which is a Saxon word meaning a settlement on a slope or hill.

Following the Norman conquest of 1066 much of the country came under control of the Norman barons and overlords. One of these was the Abbot of Peterborough, and it was he who granted the holding of Overton to a sub tenant, Ansered de Waterville. Ansered de Waterville was one of the knights who came over with William the Conqueror, and was the ancestor of the Waterville family that gave their name, and were lords of the village, of Overton for three hundred years.

The Waterville family founded the first church in Orton Waterville, this was probably used first as a private chapel, which may explain why the church is so close to the manor house. Although the manor house in its present form was built at a later date, probably 16<sup>th</sup> century.

As for when Overton Waterville became Orton Waterville I have not the faintest idea, and have never met anyone who had any theories.

The area of land covered by the parish of Orton Waterville in the twelfth and thirteenth century was nearly 1400 acres, mainly all arable land as opposed to pasture land.

As was usual at the time the method used was 'open field' farming, which in the parish of Orton consisted of three large tracts of land named Churchfield, Hamfield and Bushfield, these tracts would be divided into strips which would be worked by tenants.

There was a large meadow adjacent to the river which may have been named Goldhay: there was a bend in the river where my brother and I spent many long happy summer days fishing, this area was always known as Goldhay corner. Hamfield must have been the area by the railway lines because the road to the station was always known as Ham Lane, and the large house just past the railway lines (currently used by the Ferry Meadows staff) was Ham Farm. When these strips of land were being cultivated by peasant tenants there would of course not be any fences, hedges or stone walls, these would come later. This land would be developed into the farms whose names exist today, mainly Manor Farm, Rectory Farm, College Farm, Glebe Farm and Cherry Orton Farm.

When these large pieces of land were divided into fields they would have to be named for identification purposes. My father knew most of them and related them to me, some would of course be self explanatory, i.e Ten Acres, Twelve Acres, etc, also Palmers Ground, Wetlands, Stonepit, but where the names of Shelmer, Norman's Horn and Brimbles came from I have no idea.

Any barns built at this time would usually have large doors on the east and west sides as have the Manor Farm (now a private dwelling) and Glebe Farm; both were barns on the village street.

When flails were in use for threshing corn, the doors would be opened to catch the prevailing west wind and the threshings tossed into the air. The husks would then be carried away and a board would hold back the threshings, this maybe the origin of an entrance in a doorway being called a threshold.

St. Mary's church was a private chapel belonging to the Waterville family, and was founded sometime before the early twelfth century. The first rector was presented in 1234 when the patron was Sir Robert De Waterville.

Most of the church was rebuilt in the thirteenth century and was added to in the fourteenth century. Sometime after this the advowson or patronage passed to Pembroke College, Cambridge. This did not involve any financial support but means that the college interview all new clergy and have to be consulted on any major changes. Quite a number of the clergymen who have been incumbent at Orton Waterville have in fact been educated at Pembroke College.

Like most that lack a benefactor St



churches wealthy Mary's is

rather plain and austere.

*The north side of St Mary's Church where my forebears are interred*

Inside this particularly applies to the font (where I was christened) which has no carvings or embellishments of any description. This font was installed sometime in the fourteenth century. What does seem somewhat out of place with the rest of the church, is the elaborately carved pulpit.

It is of Elizabethan oak and some of the carvings are of highly developed females, possibly representing fertility. The story of how this came to Orton Waterville is rather odd. This pulpit was originally installed in the church of Great St Mary's in Cambridge in 1618. But after a time it was thought that the carvings of voluptuous females was distracting for the students, whose minds should have been on higher things. It was then given as a free gift to the parish of Orton Waterville in 1748, who only had to pay the transport costs of 37½ p. It was probably thought that the yokels of Orton would be unresponsive to the feminine figures portrayed on the carvings.



*The pulpit showing the ornate carvings and the font showing its plainness*

In the south porch is a ledge each side, the height of a seat. I remember being told that in the Middle Ages leprosy was nearly as rife in England as it was in the East, and lepers were not allowed in church, but were allowed to sit in the porch and listen to the service.

Up to the second war, when attending church it was very important that you were well dressed, no woman would enter the church hatless, and every man would be clad in his Sunday suit. Even the choirboys were well scrubbed (I can vouch for this.) If there was a death in the village the church bells would be rung in a very sad doleful sound.

If the interment took place within the village churchyard, as the cortege made its way through the village every house it passed would have the curtains closed as a sign of respect.

Internment has taken place in the churchyard for many centuries, but gravestones did not come into use until the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the oldest one in the local churchyard being dated 1676.

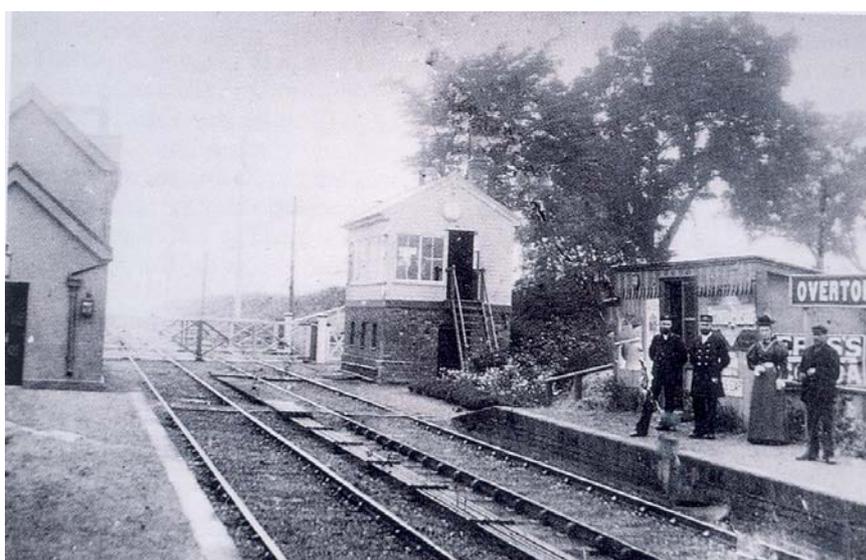
Until sometime in the 1960s the main church entrance was on the north-side. In 1939 I remember a notice being posted in the porch saying, 'Your prayers are asked for', and as each person left to join the forces their name would be added. At the end of World War Two there were nearly forty names on the document.

As choirboys most of our Sundays were spent in the Church, Sunday School first, then the morning service, children's service in the afternoon, followed by evensong at night.

Modern transport came to Orton Waterville with the opening of a railway line in 1845 between Peterborough and Northampton (later to have a branch line to Rugby). Although the station was built about half a mile from Orton Waterville it was actually in the parish of Orton Longueville. This may have been the reason for naming the station Overton, which I believe was changed to Orton Waterville in 1913, although it was always referred to as Overton throughout my childhood.

The train fare from Orton to Peterborough in the late nineteenth century was a shilling, sixpence and two and a half pence for first, second and third class.

A public footpath from the centre of the village (opening between No. 48 and 50 Cherry Orton Road) went through the area known as Eldon Close to the station and was much in use for all passengers from the top half of the village.



*The above photograph was taken in the late 1890s and shows passengers waiting to catch the train to Peterborough.*

The official railway handbook states that the station was closed to passengers from 1942. I can't quite agree with this as I remember using the station in 1947 and 1948 to go to play cricket at Kings Cliffe where the pitch was very near the station. The line was certainly closed in the mid 1960s and was opened in the mid 1970s with the launching of the Nene Valley Railway.

At the entrance to Station (Ham) Lane where the stream runs under the road there is a shallow brick lined pit where sheep were driven through to emerge slightly cleaner, before being driven to the station prior to embarkation - this area was always known as the wash pit.

It was also popular with gentlemen of the road (tramps) who would often spend a night there, for it was a sheltered spot with water and firewood available.

Until Dr Beeching created mayhem by closing so many small country stations, all the branch lines and some of the main lines, would look extremely attractive in the Summer with flower beds and hanging baskets adjacent to the platform.

The railway staff would have the time and the interest to maintain them in competition with other stations.

Although Orton station was one of the smallest stations, in 1926 it was adjudged to have the most spectacular flower beds and was awarded a plaque stating that.

Like most small Victorian villages, life in Orton Waterville must have been very peaceful, that is until August 1853 when rioting took place in the village. This was caused by a number of Irish labourers entering the village. The local men were afraid of losing their jobs to these people. The result being that fighting took place and the Irishmen were driven out of the village. A warrant was then signed by a Justice of the Peace for the arrest of the Orton ringleaders. A police constable then came from Peterborough with the intention of apprehending the five ringleaders, three of which he found mowing in Slaters Meadow (a field off Ham Lane) the constable's statement (of which I have a copy) says, 'I waited until they had finished mowing, then told the three I had a warrant for their arrest for driving off the Irishmen. These three men were Jackson Allen, George Ladds and William Austen. Another man with them, Samuel Austen then brandished a stick saying that no one would be taken, and George Ladds unslung his scythe and said, 'Here's one B-----that don't mean to be taken. I'll chop the first B----- that touches me.' I (the Constable) then said put it down, if you touch me with that cold steel I'll blow a hole through you.' It would appear that the party then moved down the village street where they reached the Windmill Inn, where thirty or forty people had congregated, including some women with sticks, who said, 'No one will be taken tonight'.

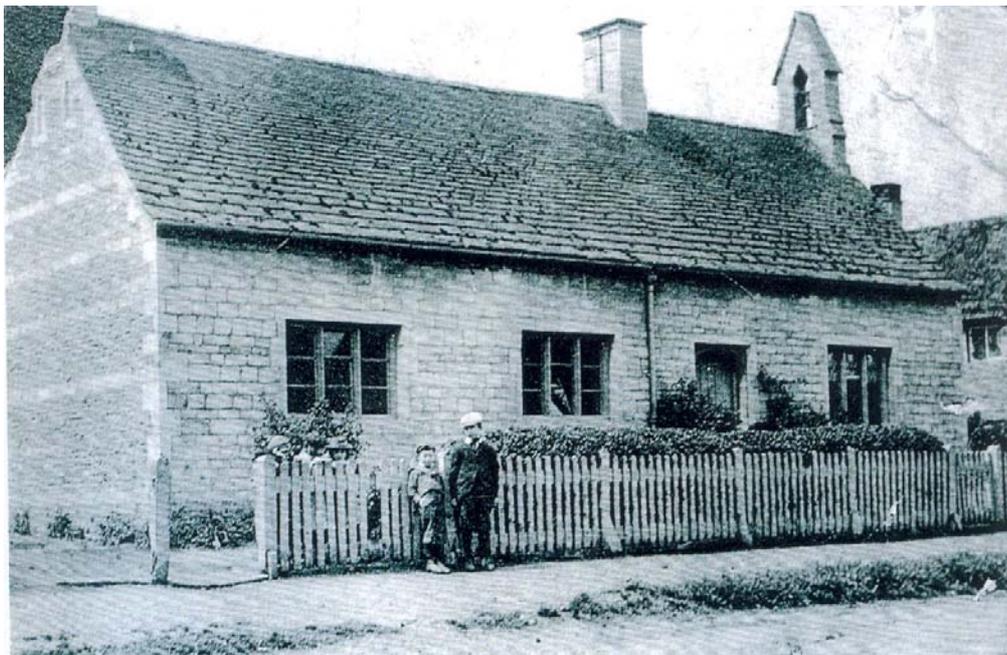
One old man seemed to be egging the others on, when the constable enquired who it was, he was told that it was John Austen who was making the rest a lot worse than they would be.

Unfortunately I do not know the outcome of this fracas whether anyone was fined or imprisoned. However, there was a sequel to it which I found interesting.

About eighty years after this rioting, when I was attending the village school, every Summer a chauffeur driven limousine would pull up outside the school, and an elderly man with a slight American accent would come into the school to talk to the teacher and children. He told us that he had attended the village school and when he left his family emigrated to America, where he was apprenticed to the building trade. We learnt later that he was quite successful and had in fact become a millionaire. A millionaire in the 1930s would be a very wealthy man.

The interesting thing is, his name was Austen – almost certainly the son or grandson of the Austen who was prominent in the rioting all those years before.

The building that was the village school in the centre of the village, is now a private dwelling house, renamed The Priory, and many modifications have been affected. As a school building it was built in 1849, and closed as a school in 1962.



*The Village school in late 1880s*

Like most schools built in the Victorian era it consisted of a main room with a smaller annexe attached, and with a dwelling house at the end, built as accommodation for a teacher. In the hundred and thirteen years that the school was in use, the information I have shows that the staff always consisted of two female teachers, never a male teacher.

Three generations of my family were educated at Orton Village School.

It started with my father's eldest sister in 1878, through to my daughter who was in attendance when the school closed in 1962.

I started there in 1930 when the school building and furniture was as it must have been eighty years before. One room had eight desks, each one for four children. These desks had a heavy wrought iron frame and a seat with no back. A sloping desk in front of you had four ink wells, and a shelf underneath for books. This room was parted from a much smaller room by a curtain. This smaller room had six desks of much the same pattern but each seating two children.

Heating in each room was provided by a coke burning tortoise stove and lighting was by suspended oil lamps. Throughout the time of the school's existence the number of the pupils seemed to be between thirty and forty with ages varying from four to fourteen years.

In 1936 the school building was altered to the extent that the school house ceased to be a dwelling, and the wall between the house and the school was removed, and a sliding wall fitted. The house part became the infant room, and when the school was required for functions i.e. dances, whist drives, etc, the sliding wall was pulled back making one large room.

At the same time as the building work was taking place, electricity was installed, and new furniture fitted with twin desks, etc.



*The school, now a dwelling house, renamed The Priory.*



*Orton School in 1904. My father is third from right on back row.*



*Orton School in 1962 when it closed for the last time.  
My daughter is second child from the right, back row.*

All boys leaving the village school up to the first war would almost certainly seek employment on one of the local farms.

As these farms were both pasture and arable, boys would be versed in every aspect of agriculture work. This work would vary very much from season to season. All boys would learn how to 'reap and to sow' and 'to plough and to mow'.

The skills required to perform all the tasks efficiently that have to be performed on a farm, that is both arable and pasture, are such that I think the title of farm labourer was a complete misnomer.

While the boys stayed at home to work, nearly every girl would leave home to go 'into Service'. While such a position would never be considered in modern society, in Victorian and Edwardian days it was considered a good career move. Although as the lowliest servant her room would be at the top of the house, and she may even have to share, she certainly would not have to share a bed as would be the case if she was at home, where there could be three or four siblings in the same bed top to toe.

The large Victorian families did not fit easily into small Victorian houses and chronic overcrowding was an accepted way of life.

A girl would learn all the domestic skills and could climb the domestic promotion ladder to cook, housekeeper or lady's maid.

My grandparents started their married life in 1871 in 23 Cherry Orton Road, where all of their family of eight were born, six of who reached adulthood. My grandfather was employed as horsekeeper at the Manor Farm. I never knew him as he died seventeen years before I was born.



*Where my grandparents started their married life in 1871.*

My father always said that he was a very good ploughman, his workmates would pay him the ultimate compliment by saying,

'When he put a plough in a field you could follow.'

Like most ploughmen of that era he would plough an acre in a day and probably walk twelve miles doing it. When there were arable fields adjacent to the village, I could with sincerity quote a line from a poem which says,

'My father's father ploughed this land'.

In 1893 my grandparents moved to 43 Cherry Orton Road which remained the family home for the next sixty years. This cottage was originally built in the fifteenth century as two cottages, each one up and one down. They were converted to a single dwelling in the eighteenth century. A peculiarity of this house was it had a staircase in the middle, and access to the end bedroom was via a ladder about three feet wide, this was always referred to as the 'ladder room'.



*My grandparents moved to this house in 1893.*



*Family house in 1896 with my grandmother at the gate.*



*As the house looks today*

The census of 1881 not surprisingly shows that the village was mainly an agricultural area, with most of the men being employed in farming or associated employment.

At the time of the census the population of the village was 309 persons, being equally divided between the sexes.

The largest number of farm workers were employed at the Manor Farm, this farm covering about 550 acres.

The number of dwelling houses was 68, with there being about 30 to 40 children of school age.

I recall when at the village school in the mid 1930s we did something like a census, and the result was not very different from the official census taken 50 years before. The population of the village was still about 300 and the largest employer was still the Manor Farm, and the number of children at the local school was 34. The main difference was the number of men employed in agriculture, which had nearly halved, caused by the number of factories in Peterborough that had started recruiting labour.

Street lighting is another aspect of village life that is not entirely twentieth century, for at the end of the nineteenth century there were (or so I'm told) 6 street lights in the village. I can remember a bracket at the end of Church Lane, and there still is a bracket attached to the wall of the first house in Huntly Square.



*House in Huntly Square showing a lamp bracket which held an oil lamp, which illuminated part of the school playground. This bracket has been in position for over a hundred years.*

This lighting was oil lamps, and the village constable (a sort of special constable) was paid a small remuneration from parish funds to maintain these, and light and extinguish them as required. This would be the only illumination in the village other than what my father always called the 'Parish Lantern' i.e the moon.

When I was attending the village school the younger children were looked after by a Miss Holly, a very pleasant person who was loved by all the pupils she taught. The head-teacher was Mrs Miles who had the difficult task of teaching all subjects to children of varying ages and abilities. Teaching would naturally proceed at convoy speed (i.e. the speed of the slowest ship) with the brighter children probably losing out being left to their own devices.

The general good health of the children was looked after by a district nurse who visited several times a year (known as the bug lady) she was very unpopular with all the children. A mobile dental surgery would park outside the school once a year, and fillings and extractions would take place on the spot.

An eye was kept on everyone's weight, and once a year every child in the school would go to the barn at the Manor Farm (this barn was adjacent to Church Lane and is now a dwelling house) and be weighed upon a sack weighing machine with the farmer in attendance as a member of the board of governors. I recall my twin brother who was shorter and heavier than me being weighed, and the farmer eyed him, poked him with his stick and observed, 'Weighs well', as though he was an item of fat stock on his farm.

The Summer holidays from school were always known to the children as the harvest holidays, as they always seemed to coincide. This may have been to allow boys of twelve years and above to be employed in the harvest fields, 'leading cart', as it was called. Horses were still in use up to World War Two. (Not one farmer in Orton Waterville owned a tractor.) The boys used to lead a horse drawn full cart from the cornfield to the stackyard, and ride an empty cart back.

Halfway down the village was the wheelwright who made carts to order, as each one was finished and painted it was pushed outside to stand on the grass between the wheelwright's house and the village street. He also made coffins, when each one was ordered he would say, 'Elm or Oak?', as the finished product was to be buried in the ground for eternity or cremated I can't see that it really mattered. The owner of this wheelwright and undertaking business was Boss Pauley whose family were very musical. He was the bandmaster of Cherry Orton Brass Band and he taught a number of local youths to play various instruments. This band was kitted out in a heavy uniform with silver braiding, and was much in demand throughout the district for various functions. Practice would take place in the wheelwright's shop on winter nights just lit by one or two oil lamps, and warmed by the dying embers of the forge. When the bandsmen complained that it was too cold for their fingers to feel the stops of their instruments, Boss Pauley would say, 'Alright Abide With Me and then bugger off'.

The bandsman who beat the large drum was a larger short rotund figure who had difficulty seeing over his drum. He was once seen marching down Bridge Street alone, unaware that the rest of the band had turned down Albert Place. This brass band was in existence until some time in the 1930s.



*The home of the wheelwright/Bandmaster,*  
who built carts, made coffins and taught village lads to be musicians from an early age, judging from the two young boys in the photograph on the next page. The carts when built used to stand on the grass outside the house. The band used to practice in the wheelwright's shop behind the house.



*My father aged 17 as a bandsman*



*Cherry Orton Brass Band 1912*

*My father, second from right on back row, my uncle fifth from right on back row.*

These two photographs are of the celebration for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1887, where a dinner and entertainment was held in a large barn, which was part of Cherry Orton farm. In the top photograph my grandmother is second from the left in the front row. In the bottom one my aunt is third from right in the back row (wearing the large hat).

I remember the barn being used for the same purpose for the celebration of King George V Silver Jubilee in 1935, and the Coronation of King George VI in 1937.



In Victorian times most villages would have a Feast Sunday, this in Orton Waterville was the second Sunday in June. The day would start with a church service, then the Windmill Inn would open and remain open all day. Stalls were erected on the village green, and fair people would attend with caravans. This Feast Day (as it was called) was still observed in the 1920s.

When my father was young another village custom was plough witching. This was observed on Plough Monday, which is the first Monday after twelfth night. The ploughmen in the village would carry a plough to each farm in turn and sing, for which they were rewarded with beer and money. When I was young this custom had just about died out, we did black our faces and go to each farm and sing the Farmer's Boy, and be suitably rewarded! May Garlanding was a custom that lingered on. On the last day of April children would call at every house in the village asking for a handful of flowers, these would then be arranged in a pram or cycle etc as tastefully as possible. Then the children would take them round the village on May 1<sup>st</sup> to the same houses they had got the flowers from, and people would give a few coppers for the privilege of looking at their own flowers. This custom lasted into the 1950s, when my own children participated.

As was usual in all villages, Summer was the time for garden fetes. In Orton there were always two, the church fete which was always held on the rectory lawn and the chapel fete that was held in a large barn and yard, across the street from Cherry Orton farm.

Most houses in the village had their own water supply in the form of private wells. I believe there were about thirty of these, for mains piped water was not available until the mid 1930s. There was a village pump situated at the top end of the village, which families in that vicinity would use. I can remember as a child drinking from it with cupped hands with another child pumping-very cold and very thirst quenching in the hot summers that seemed usual then.

In the Winter and Spring the fields each side of the village often used to drain down the village street. Up to the 1950s the area in the centre of the village used to be flooded up to a depth of three or four feet. In the early part of the twentieth century the flooding must have been worse because just before World War 1 there is a story of a local man swimming nearly the length of the village, keeping to the village street.

Years ago there used to be a number of walnut trees scattered round the village for the more affluent Victorians used to enjoy nuts and port wine to end their evening meal. My father told me that when he was a boy, every Spring they would beat all the walnut trees with a stick, supposedly increasing the crop by causing the sap to flow. He used to quote the following lines,  
'A woman, a dog and a walnut tree  
the more you beat them the better they be.'

The two Ortons have always had a reputation for having a very good cricket team. The basis for this was formed in the early nineteenth century, in the days of country house cricket when games were played in the park land adjacent to Orton Hall. It was in the 1860s that the Marquis of Huntly, then an undergraduate at Cambridge, enlisted the services of a professional groundsman to prepare a cricket square. It was in 1866 that the first games were played in the name of Orton Park C. C., the name under which games are still played.

The rector who was incumbent at Orton Waterville in the last decade of the nineteenth century was the Rev Pace-Rigg who was not only something of an academic, but was also a very good cricketer, who captained the village club for a number of years. During the Cambridge summer holiday undergraduates would come to the rectory at Orton for 'cramming', that is tuition. By way of recreation they would play for the village cricket team and coach the village boys, thus forming the basis of a good team for years to come.

When Orton Hall was requisitioned by the army in 1940 the parkland was used as a battle training ground, with tracker vehicles cutting up the grassland etc. During the war years the cricket square was fenced off and the pavilion locked, and they remained so until 1946.



*Orton Park C. C. 1906*

A. Barber, A. Hilliard, H. Beeby, G. Laxton, G. Barker, J. Barber  
H. Holley, J. Kearney, Marquis of Huntly, Rev Pace Rigg(Capt)  
J. Jackson, R. Hillson

The Orton park team were the winners of the Smith Barry Challenge Cup in 1905 and 1906. G. Barker was the father of the late president L. Barker and A. Barber was his uncle. H. Beeby and J. Kearney were Cambridge undergraduates. Two or three of this team lost their lives in the 1914 to 1918 conflict.

My father would relate how when he was a boy he was employed as a beater when there was a shoot in Milton Park. He said that boys would congregate outside the Windmill Inn and the Gamekeeper would select the boys he wanted. He (the Gamekeeper) also thought that the shoots were a waste of money, for he would say, 'Up goes a guinea, bang goes a penny, down comes half a crown.' For it cost twenty one shillings to rear a bird, a cartridge cost an old penny and game birds were sold for five shillings a brace.

Everyman in the village was something of a gardening expert. I remember some of the pearls of wisdom-

'Red potatoes will not grow on the east side of the village.'

'Always plant potatoes on Good Friday, as the Devil is otherwise engaged on that day.'

'Plant peas very thickly as follows,

“One for the mouse, one for the crow, one to rot and one to grow.”

I also remember my father saying that as a boy he was told that not everyone could afford a daily paper, or not everyone could read. The thatched building on Cherry Orton Road opposite what used to be the Rectory, was used as a village reading room, where daily papers and periodicals would be on display for anyone to read, or to be read to.



*The Victorian Reading Room*

As in my memory all the Summer days were warm, I also remember that in the 1930s every Armistice Sunday was always dull and wet. At this time the 1914/1918 conflict was still fresh in the memory of ex service men. On this Sunday they would all parade in the village street, wearing what was known as their 'Pip, Squeak and Wilfred' i.e. general service medals. For some reason they usually wore bowler hats. They would then march to the church where we choirboys were already in position. After the church service they would then form up by the War Memorial and the names inscribed would be read out, then someone would recite, 'They grow not old,' etc and a bugler would play the Last Post, the ex soldiers would then retire to the Windmill Inn, and some very wet choirboys would attempt to dry themselves by the church stoves.

I recall being told of one local who was missing in World War One and a service was held for him in Orton church. Sometime in the 1930s he turned up in the village with a wife and eight children!

Six local men lost their lives in World War One all of them in the Army. There were also six fatalities in the Second War, three of them in the Army, two in the Navy, and one in the Airforce.

The windmill that was situated at the end of Mill Lane (where else would it be) was still working when my father was young. Not only would the miller grind the corn for all the farms, he would also supply flour, etc, for all the local people and their stock i.e. pigs and fowl. I only remember it as a pile of stones. I was told that the windmill was situated where it was because that was the highest part of the village and it would catch the prevailing west wind. I was also told that the height of the windmill above sea level is the same as Peterborough Cathedral.

In the 1930s the small shop in Orton Waterville never really kept much stock. The result being goods had to be ordered elsewhere and then delivered, or it meant a bus trip into Peterborough. To catch a bus you had to go to the Oundle Road, and buses were never more frequent than hourly. Fortunately most tradesmen delivered in the village and two farms supplied milk, one at the top of the village, and one at the bottom. The one at the bottom delivered to all houses daily, the top one did not, you had to fetch it, but they also supplied butter and cream cheese. Four bakers roundsmen used to deliver three or four times a week. The order for groceries would be collected on Monday or Tuesday and would be delivered on Friday or Saturday. The butcher's van would contain sides of beef and lamb and the housewives would go to the van with their meat dishes and select the cut they wanted, they would always come away with a large lump of suet to make the suet puddings and dumplings; without which at the time the working man's evening meal was not complete.

As every house was still illuminated by oil lamps paraffin was an essential purchase. This was delivered to the house or it could be obtained from the Windmill Inn, where they sold it as a sideline.

Other men I recall coming around bi-weekly was a person who lost an arm in the First War, and used to ride a large errand boys type of cycle. In the front carrier he would have a large suitcase filled with all sorts of haberdashery; buttons, tape, elastic, etc. I always thought how hard it must have been to ride such a heavy cycle with only one arm.

Another man would call with a basket of peppermint cordial, which everyone would use when mixed with hot water to cure stomach ache, whatever the cause.

Another tradesman who used to provide a very useful service, was the man who had a large van filled with the sort of items you would expect to find in an ironmongers or hardware shop; that is everything from nails, screws, paint and buckets and bowls, also ironing boards, step ladders, crockery and mousetraps. What could not be contained in the van he would hang on the outside. These items jangling together would announce his coming, before he finally arrived. This vehicle was known to everyone as the pot cart.



*The village street about 1920*



Cows walking down the village street, a twice daily sight until the late 1950s.

A folklore that was often quoted in the village years ago was that if a hare ran down the village street it was a sign there was going to be a fire. My father told me that in his lifetime it had happened twice: Once just before World War One the thatched cottage that was on the right hand side of the entrance to the stackyard, where no.52 and 54 houses are now and then College Farm which used to be on the left hand side of the road as you come up the hill (the farm house is now on the right hand side) was also burnt down in, I believe, 1915.

On both these occasions a number of people swore that they had seen a hare running up the village street. With the number of thatched houses, and all the houses in the village having open fires, I'm surprised that there weren't more fires without the assistance of a hare!

There were a number of small thatched cottages adjacent to the village street, two were opposite the Windmill Inn, where two families lived until 1936. One of them having six children. Next to them was a one roomed cell like dwelling (which is still there) where I remember a Miss Dine living. She was the only woman in the village who worked on the land, she was a gnome-like person, and as I recall always wearing men's boots.



*Miss Dine's House*

I'm not sure exactly when the Windmill Inn was built but I have always believed that it was built as a public house, possibly in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. The first licensee that I remember was a Mrs Hodson, who was landlady for about forty years, 1910-1950.



*Mothers and children outside the Windmill Inn, 1926.*

The woman on the right handside of the doorway is Mrs Hodson, licensee for 40 years.

Like most village pubs it was the social centre of the village, where the cricket and football clubs would hold their meetings. There was also a 'helping hand' club where members would pay a small sum weekly, and then draw some cash out when they were unable to work through ill health, etc.

I remember that when my father was busy on the garden I would take a bottle to the Windmill and get him a pint of draught beer, bitter was sixpence per pint and mild fourpence.

The popular drink was mixed i.e. half of each was fivepence. Mrs Hodson would stick a label over the stopper (which it would appear made it legal), but my brother and I always removed this label and tasted the contents. Mrs Hodson had a peculiar rule, no games on a Sunday night - it would seem you could get drunk, but you couldn't play dominoes or darts.

Although the Windmill has always been the only licensed premises in the village, my father used to talk of what he called 'alehouses' of which he said when he was young there were three in the village. One of which is now 7 Cherry Orton Road, I forget the others. These were houses who brewed their own beers and were allowed to sell it, but not to be consumed on the premises and they were not allowed to sell tobacco or spirits.



*One of the buildings that was an 'Ale House'*

The first intimation we had as children that everywhere in the world wasn't as peaceful as it was at Orton Waterville was the arrival in the village of a number of Jewish schoolchildren, refugees from Nazi Germany. Most of these children were tragically never to see their parents again.

The next year there were about twenty evacuees from London who were taken into various homes in the village. These children would share the local school, the village children attending in the morning, and the London children in the afternoon, these children were accompanied by their own teacher.

What is now the Orton Parkway was a field which was occupied by an anti aircraft unit. At the same time a searchlight unit was billeted in Lady Lodge Farm. To add to our war potential a 'dummy airfield' was made between what is now the Orton Centre and the A1. The idea of this dummy airfield was to divert enemy aircraft away from Wittering which was an active fighter station.

I recall being disturbed in our beds one night in 1942 when an enemy aircraft dropped a stick of bombs in a field adjacent to Lady Lodge Farm: the result being one slightly wounded cow.

When the Government announced the formation of a citizen army, the Local Defence Volunteers, L.D.V (known to every boy as the Look, Duck and Vanish) this was later to become the Home Guard, a unit was formed at Orton Waterville. It would appear not to have been a large enough unit to have a commissioned officer in charge, so two service men of the first World War were promoted to NCO and appointed to run the unit.

The ages in this unit varied between 16years and 60 plus. An observer post was manned at the top of the church tower, and I'm sure that the 60 year old men stood more chance of injury when climbing the shaky ladder up to the tower than ever they did from enemy action.

Although this was very much a 'Dads Army' everything was taken very seriously, with training two nights a week and every Sunday morning. The headquarters were what is now 54 Cherry Orton Road, which happened to be vacant at that time.

There were two air raid wardens in the village, and the rectory dovecote was used as a base. This base was manned all night by a housewife and a teenage cyclist who, when a message was received that enemy aircraft had crossed the coast, would then inform the warden, who would then be on patrol before the local siren went.

The photograph below shows the entry into the village in about 1914. The large building on the left is College Farm, which was burnt down in 1916, the farm house was then rebuilt on the other side of the road. The thatched building on the far right of the photo was the post office, and was completely rebuilt in 1936. The buildings in the centre would appear to be unchanged.

Although cows no longer pass down the village street, but public transport does and although the village inn is now a pub/restaurant and the village school has now been converted into a private dwelling; a Victorian resident returning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would, I'm sure, have no difficulty in recognising the village of Orton Waterville.

