

# Out of Reach

20

Double



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Jenny Johnson (Editor) The White House  
Tel 741854  
Jenny Moseley, Delph End Cottage. Tel. 741425  
Bob Smith (Compiler)  
Geoffrey Woollard

Stencils typed by:-

Patricia Harrison

# "OUT OF REACH"

## COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

Issue No. 20

APRIL 1978.

### EDITORIAL

Ever since we arrived in Reach I have appreciated the presence of the Dyke. Now I begin to see it not only as a friendly piece of the landscape but also as a friend of the magazine. This month we have an interesting and amusing article on its construction from another village resident. Let us hope that the fascination of these earthworks continue to bolster contributions to our monthly.

With the arrival of Spring in Reach, the residents emerge from their houses into their gardens and chats across the garden fence become a daily pastime. Living near Mr. Webb, I find these chats informative as well as pleasant. The latest piece of Fenland Folklore recalled by Mr. Webb is that the common minor epidemics, particularly those affecting the skin, come with "the rise and fall of the leaf". Certainly these seem to be the times of year when our family is afflicted. If any readers are reminded of other wise sayings I would be most interested to hear of them.

I hope those who did suffer from chicken pox, 'flu', or mumps are now recovered and fully sympathise with them.

Spotty Johnson.

WARNING - April Fool in this issue. \*

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### BUSINESS MANAGER

Articles from me do not appear very often in Out of Reach, save when I have to thank persons or organisations for very useful and acceptable donations. These together with the revenue received from the advertisers and the sale of extra copies all help to keep the machinery of production well oiled.

This month, thanks are due to generous donations from the Friends of Swaffham Prior School and Nigel Balchin of "Needholy", Reach. Both gifts are very much appreciated.

If anyone feels that they would like to donate an amount, no matter the size I will be pleased to accept them on behalf of Out of Reach. If your contributions are more in the style of words - the editor will be glad of those.

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We are fast approaching the Annual General Meeting which is to be held this year on April 7th, at 8.30 p.m. in the Village Centre. You are reminded that members of the Parish are more than welcome to attend, whether or not they have any views to air. It is an ideal opportunity to learn how the Parish Council operates and it is hoped that both Mrs. Margaret Cook (District Councillor) and Mr. Geoffrey Woollard (County Councillor) will be in attendance.

\*\*\*\*\*

H.B.C. JONES (Gallions)  
Organiser.

|         |                              |            |       |
|---------|------------------------------|------------|-------|
| May 5th | Darts Match (Open) 7.00 p.m. | contd..... | - 2 - |
|---------|------------------------------|------------|-------|



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From the Vicar contd.

So we all have much to learn, perhaps most from our critics. Certainly the next five or six decades of settling down to a truly multi-racial society are going to be one of the most testing, but also one of the most enriching periods of our history; and Jesus, you recall, once packed his whole gospel into a single line: I came that they might have life, and have it more abundantly. The coloured races were already old when we were unheard of, and if we dispose ourselves rightly, we shall find ourselves receiving even more than we can give.

May I wish you a very happy Eastertide.

J.K.B.

HELP THE AGED

Clothing for this purpose may be left beneath the tower of St. Mary's Church for collection on April 4th and 5th.

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EXPLORING SILENCE

A conference has been arranged at Bishop Woodford House, the Diocesan H.Q. in Barton Rd., Ely, from 9-11 June, designed to help those interested to explore the meaning and use of silence, both in prayer and their ordinary life, and generally how to relax. Mrs. Wendy Robinson, who has written and lectured on this subject, has agreed to lead the week-end with Mrs. Ursula Fleming, who is well known for her teaching on creative relaxation in relation to prayer.

Would those interested in attending please let me know as soon as possible.

CONFIRMATION

Congratulations to James Robinson on his Confirmation in the Cathedral on March 4th.

J.K.B.

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FROM THE CHURCHES  
S. MARY'S & REACH - Worship in April

2nd LOW SUNDAY: EASTER I

8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (Reach)  
 9.30 a.m. Matins & Eucharist (St. Mary's)  
 6.30 p.m. Evensong (Reach)

9th, 16th, 23rd: EASTER II, III & IV

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St. Mary's)  
 11.00 a.m. Family Communion (Reach)  
 6.30 p.m. Evensong (St. Mary's)

22nd 3.00 p.m. Confirmation in the Cathedral, by the Bishop  
 of Huntingdon.

25th S. MARK

7.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St. Mary's)

30th ROGATION SUNDAY

9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St. Mary's)  
 11.00 a.m. Family Communion (Reach)  
 6.30 p.m. Evensong (sung) and procession to the fields (Reach)

30th April - 1st May: Exhibition of Old Reach, in St. Etheldreda's Church

1st May - REACH FAIR.

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CHARITY AUCTION

Saturday April 29th 1978  
 Gardiner Memorial Hall, Burwell  
 Commencing at 2.00 p.m.

Items required for auction - Household goods, Toys, Books,  
 Bric-a-Brac, Garden Implements, etc.

Please contact: Mrs. Anne Perkins,  
 35 North Street, Burwell.  
 Tel: Newmarket 741204

who will arrange collection. All proceeds to M.A.G.P.A.S.  
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## SHIRE HALL TITBITS

My major charge - the County Budget - has now been finalised and, though extremely uneasy about the massive and horrific Rate increase being imposed, and indeed uneasy to an extent about some of the economies being made, I believe that the County Council, in its wisdom or otherwise, has done as well as could reasonably have been expected, given the much-deteriorated financial circumstances within which it has to operate this year.

Without going into detailed figures, the basis of the Budget is concentration on the declared top priorities of the Council - the maintenance of Law and Order, the continuation of high standards in Education and the highlighting of the Handicapped, both young and old, for special help. The implication of attempts to distinguish priorities is that certain other services will be regarded as less important in the future, and though some may disagree with the priorities, there is certainly a majority of members at Shire Hall who believe that public services cannot continue to be expanded willy-nilly, and that the more important ones should henceforth be safeguarded to an extent greater than others.

The Council is, in addition to sorting out its priority list, making money available to promote schemes which will in themselves be money-savers. Energy conservation is in this category, and when I state that, as far as Bottisham Village College is concerned, £5,000 capital expenditure incurred now will produce an annual saving of £5,000 in heating costs, residents of the County will, I hope, see common sense in such ideas.

FRIENDS OF THE SCHOOL

The next major event will be a Ceilidh - a Fancy Dress Barn Dance - on Saturday April 22nd 1978.

Prizes will be awarded for - 'Most amusing couple'  
'Olde English yokels'

All children and adults will be welcome and any donations of prizes for the raffle or the fancy dress will be gratefully received at the school. There will be a licensed bar, raffle and folk songs - a complete family evening. Admission, at the door, 50p adults: 30p children.

NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING: April 13th, 1978 at 7.30 p.m.



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So he can weigh each pound very carefully.  
He does not want to cheat or try to gain.  
To please us all is this lads sole aim.  
No calculator does this boy need;  
He counts the cost with lightening speed.  
Is that a marrow I can just see  
Peeping under the straw packed carefully.  
Next to the carrots, scrubbed quite clean,  
A bunch of fresh beetroot can be seen.  
He pulls his barrow from door to door  
And he sells his goods - but he gives us more.  
He gives us pleasure and gives us joy  
This my friend is Our Barrow Boy.

Bill Estall.

\*\*\*\*\*  
THE STAINE HUNDRED

The next meeting of the Staine Hundred - the local history society - will be on Wednesday 12th April. This will take the form of a visit to the County Record Office at the Shire Hall in Cambridge. Members are asked to be at the main entrance to Shire Hall no later than 7.30 p.m. Would any members who need transport please get in touch with either the secretary - Anne Darvall, 16 Pound Way, Swaffham Bulbeck (Phone: 811762) - or the chairman - James Fitch, 15 Tunbridge Close, Bottisham (Phone 811425).

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HOW THE DITCH WAS BUILT?

A fanciful engineering speculation

Archaeologists for many years have tried to prove who built the Devil's Dyke and when. No concrete evidence has been found. Not even the first written record of its existence is given in their many learned speculations. One is left with the impression of lots and lots of little men scantily clad in trueblue British woad or later, in Anglo-Saxon kilted tunics, toiling miserably with buckets and spades over countless years. The object of this piece is to examine how the rampart and ditch were probably built.

Very little written historical evidence is available about Britain, prior to 1066 A.D. The comedian George Robey used to sing a song in the 1930's called "The Ancient 'B's' National Anthem". One line went, "Roman's crossed the Channel, all done up in tin and flannel". The operative word is "flannel". Historians are very much influenced by Roman accounts of our ferocious, savage and barbaric ancestors. It is forgotten that much of their writings were publicity for their conquests and the subsequent Emperor's triumphal parades through Rome. One might as well believe word for word some of our T.V. advertising today. A deeper study with visits to Museums, such as that of the Department of Archaeology in Downing Street, Cambridge, soon changes one's ideas. The ancient Britons were a highly civilised race for their era. Their craftsmen were quite equal to those of Rome. They had, for those times, sophisticated agricultural and mining industries with export trades.

A determined resistance was put up against the disciplined military might of Rome. Much of these islands was never conquered. Several great generals and emperors gained their military experience on this the N.W. frontier of the Roman Empire. The imperial family in later years had British blood in it. Records show British troops serving in far flung and important imperial garrisons, e.g. British Cavalry in N. Africa at Tangiers. So may be the story so beloved of Victorian historians of Boedecea's "secret weapon", chariots with scythe blades projecting sideways from the wheels, has some truth in it.

In military engineering and also in archaeology, the Devil's Dyke is called an earthwork. What do we know about earthworks in Britain? The earliest known earthwork in Britain, a massive earthen walled fort on Crickley Hill has just been dated as being built between 3500 and 2500 B.C., from finds by P. Dixon (Nottingham University). The ancient Britons had had a couple or so thousand years of experience of military field works before the Roman Invasion.

contd.....

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How the Ditch was Built? contd....

Take the O.S. map of East Anglia. On a tracing of it (in outline only) mark in the earthworks shown such as Fream Dyke and Brent Ditch, plus the river lines, marshes and forest areas. It is easy then to picture a defence system in depth and pointing toward Colchester based on the Reach ditch. Colchester, from the Roman remains there, was probably at one time the capital city of Roman Britain. Anyway, Boedecea sacked and burnt it to the ground. Legend puts her capital at nearby Eming.

When the runways were being built for RAF Station Valley in 1943 on the Isle of Anglesey in N. Wales, one of the most important archaeological finds from the late Iron Age in all Europe was discovered. Anglesea was the place of the last stand against the Romans by the Druids. Among many other ancient British artifacts found, preserved in a peat marsh, there were the remains of approximately 23 chariots of the period of the Roman conquest. The National Museum of Wales, based on the work of Sir Cyril Fox, has been able to reconstruct one, which is on view at Cardiff.

The Victorian historians and sculptors, who made the famous London statue of Boedecea in her chariot, show it as having crude solid wheels with nailed rims. What an error they made. From this new evidence it must have been a sophisticated vehicle with carriage building technique, the like of which was not found in Britain again until the early 18th century. The Britons knew how to shrink a tyre on to a spoked wheel built-up on a lubricated hub and axle. Later medieval wheels are often shown in contemporary illustrations as being crude and solid. Other finds on this site proved they knew how to fabricate strong gaug chains. When first found these were used in error by the RAF as airport towing chains. There can be no doubt that the ancient Britons, to possess such advanced vehicles must have been skilled in the use of horses and oxen as draft animals. They must have had ploughs as well as chariots. The myth of thousands of little men with buckets and spades begins to fade. No evidence shows a population of such a density as to enable a concentration of manual labour as in ancient Egypt, China or India to build massive works.

In the developing countries of East, Central and S. Africa in the early twentieth century British agriculturists and conservationists were forced to build large earthworks with resources and under conditions similar to those in pre-Conquest Britain. They were used to collect run-off water in the short rain season for storage and use in the eight month long "dry". The techniques used were the same as military field engineers had used for centuries to build earthen fortifications. This seems probably how the Reach Dyke was built too. An example of these dams built in the dry season of 1953 was of similar section and size to the Reach Rampart and three quarters of a mile long.

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X

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How the Ditch was Built? contd....

First the ground in a calculated area on either side of a pegged centre line was deep ploughed. A two furrow plough pulled by 14 oxen for six hours a day exerted a calculated continuous 12 h.p. The oxen were fed, rested, grazed and watered for the remainder of a 12 hour day. A man and a boy were needed for this. The oxen had to be large, in good condition and driven with skill. Two such teams were used to keep up the ploughing continuously throughout the day. The ploughed soil was scraped up into dam scoops, carried to and piled along either side of the centre line to make a wall. The scoops were shaped the same as those now often seen on the fore-end of agricultural tractors. In ancient times no doubt, these were a box of elm or oak, holding a cubic yard, with a front cutting edge clad with iron and two good ash shafts at the back for the man to guide it and finally to tip it over. No doubt the ploughs had wooden slatted mould-boards and iron coulter and plough points.

Two oxen lead by a boy were, in Africa, the crew of a modern pattern iron and steel dam scoop. Six of these scoop teams were used and the wall of the artificial lake or dam was built in about eight months. Twenty men and boys made up the labour force.

Just before he died Colin Washtell, an engineer of much and varied experience, in company with the contractor's civil engineers, made a careful study of the new cut through the dyke made for the Newmarket by-pass. In his opinion, the rampart had been raised in at least three stages. It does seem now probable the earthwork was constructed, extended and repaired in several stages, from maybe the late Iron Age to the Conquest, as and when troubled times arose. No doubt if Hitler had invaded East Anglia it would have been improved and used as an anti-tank obstacle against the Panzers!

Archaeologists have always speculated on the alignment of the ditch. If Romo-Britons built it why wasn't it straight like a Roman road? Many an ancient field in England has a curl and a swirl in its boundaries. Ox plough teams cannot be turned around as abruptly as a horse set of tackle. The alignment of the ditch points to ox plough construction.

How the little men in blue woad, looking down at us from "up above" must laugh at the idea of thousands of them with buckets and spades! No opinions have been expressed on who built the Devils Dyke and when, but my money is on the "boys in blue" whose descendants produced the Tank and the Spitfire in later defences of Britain. "Up the Ancient B's and God Save Boedecia (wherever she is)".

"Sapper".

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#### BOTTISHAM YOUNG FARMERS CLUB

This month's meetings began on 17th February with a General Knowledge Quiz, where the members challenged the Advisory Committee. After an enjoyable evening, the Advisory Committee won. The following week, the members enjoyed an illustrated talk on the Wild Life in Kenya by Mr. Fiddian.

Mr. Simmons of Linton Zoo was the guest speaker on 3rd March, and he gave a talk and showed some slides of some of the animals at the Zoo. Finally, on 10th March, Mr. Anderson of Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Department visited the Club and showed two films - the first one entitled "Driver Behaviour" and showed different people's attitudes to driving, and the second was "Motoring Practice" and gave numerous hints on improving your driving.

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#### TABLE TENNIS CLUB

Since the last magazine we have played four games, winning three and drawing one. These included a good win against a strong Soham Baptist side and a very creditable draw against Mepal I. We have now completed our programme so we shall have to sit back and see if we have managed to win second place in the League. Our final results were as follows:

| <u>Played</u> | <u>Won</u> | <u>Lost</u> | <u>Drawn</u> | <u>Points</u> |
|---------------|------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| 16            | 10         | 3           | 3            | 23            |

#### JUMBLE SALE

There will be a Jumble Sale in aid of Club funds on Saturday 8th April at 2.00 p.m. Any jumble will be gratefully received and collected in the week prior to it.

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|---|---------------------------|
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\* April fool if you loo'ed - there isn't one this time.

|                          |                            |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
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RECIPE

STUFFED BACON ROLLS

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| 6 bacon rashers         | 1 oz. butter            |
| 1 grated onion          | 1 grated apple          |
| $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp. sage | 2 oz. fresh breadcrumbs |

Melt butter and mix well with other stuffing ingredients.  
 Place some stuffing on each rasher; roll up and secure with cocktail stick.  
 Put rolls in a casserole, cover with greaseproof paper and bake at 400°F. for 20 mins.  
 Serve on a bed of creamed potatoes, garnished with parsley and grilled tomato slices.

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REACH EXEMPTION DOG SHOW WITH OBEDIENCE  
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 ON THE VILLAGE GREEN - SUNDAY APRIL 30th 1978  
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