Chapter Five: The zeal for reform - three centuries of change

The Reformation and the Civil War

The accession of Henry VIII seemed to promise so much. He was a dashing soldier, a scholar and known for his piety (for example, his devotion to the shrine at Walsingham). Religious reform was already underway in mainland Europe, but England seemed settled in its devotion to the old religion. Certainly, life at Lichfield would have been marked by the rhythms of cathedral devotion and by waves of visitors to the shrine of St Chad.

The Reformation swept through our area in four stages: the 'political' rejection of Rome in the 1530s left much of the pattern of worship intact; the 1540s saw that pattern deeply disturbed during the reign of Edward VI; and the temporary reversal during Mary I's time as monarch. Finally, Elizabeth attempted to embed the new faith, while not following the radicalism of Calvin. Few counties were quite as divided as Staffordshire. The south around Wolverhampton remained under Catholic influence, described by one writer as a 'nest of papists'. To our north, Burton was much more radically Protestant – with Calvinistic influence through the 'Burton exercises' in the early 1600s. That local radicalism led to the Lichfield 'burnings' of dissenters already described. In fact, as an aside, the burning at Lichfield of one Edward Wightman in April 1612 for attending the Burton exercises was the last burning of a heretic in England. Lichfield was doctrinally conservative – but willing to mould its practices to the leanings of its bishop.

The local effect of the dissolution of the monasteries has already been noted but the ending of monastic economic patterns (for these were rich institutions) had a more widespread effect of bringing about an economic recession in the middle of the sixteenth century.

The Civil War was equally pervasive – and, of course, had real local consequences. The gentry of both Lichfield and Tamworth were for the King; Burton and Derby for Parliament. In Lichfield, the Close around the cathedral became in effect a fortified wall containing St Chad's and its associated houses, orchards, palaces and administrative buildings. Outside the Close, Lichfield Corporation favoured Parliament, but the gentry, led by Sir Richard Dyot, held sway. In December 1643, 300 Royalist soldiers, led by the Earl of Chesterfield, garrisoned the Close. In March 1644, they faced a Parliamentary force of some 1,200 under Robert Greville, the second Lord Brooke. Brooke took the city but not the Close: but the Close took him, in that one John Dyot, a relative of Sir Richard, shot Brook through the left eye. Dyot was deaf and dumb – thus the Lichfield appellation 'Dumb Dyot'.

Sir John Gell took over the Parliamentary force and used a 'human shield' of relatives of the Royalists to mask his preparations for siege. But his army still did not succeed. Technology finally brought the Parliamentary force success in that an enormous mortar was brought into play, and faced with such artillery, the Royalists surrendered.

The Royalists had already used the lead from the cathedral roof for bullets; their Parliamentary opponents showed them to be amateurs at desecration however. They – famously – stabled their horses in the nave, broke up the organ pipes and 'hunted a cat with hounds throughout the church'. They didn't indulge in such pastimes for long, for early in April 1643, a Royalist force under Prince Rupert arrived and began a siege. By the middle of May, the King's forces were again in occupation of the Close. They remained there until March 1646 when, in the midst of an outbreak of the plague, a force of Parliamentarians under Brereton took up a watching brief. By May, Brereton had been supplied with gunpowder and began his pot shots at the defenders – and especially at the central spire of the cathedral. The spire survived for five days, but, on the sixth, crashed down. The defenders held out until July 1646, well after Oxford, and one of the last cities in England to fall. Parliament ordered a day of thanksgiving to celebrate the fall of Lichfield and Oxford.

Tamworth Castle also garrisoned for the king. The Ferrers family had held it for several generations and they, along with William Comberford at the Moat House, declared their support for the monarch. While the garrison played an active part in supporting Lichfield in the early years of the war, in June 1643 a Parliamentary force under Captain Waldyve Willington captured the castle and took the Moat House. Tamworth remained in Parliamentary hands, and Comberford village and manor were sacked.

On July 3rd 1643, only a couple of weeks after the capture of Tamworth, Queen Henrietta Maria brought her army of 3000 soldiers and 30 companies of horses south, through Edingale to stay overnight at Croxall. At this point, Lichfield was still in Royalist hands.

Beyond this, we have little evidence of the war's effect on local people. Staffordshire Edingale is listed under a number of 'townships' that had to pay a levy to Captain Willington to keep the Parliamentary garrison at Tamworth. Local raiding parties from either side would 'requisition' arms, horses and hay from the countryside. Edingale was without an incumbent priest after George Boydell's death in 1643 and church records are very intermittent in the period. At Catton Hall, the Hortons were staunch Royalists and they lost favour with Oliver Cromwell, who removed Walter Horton from the office of High Sheriff of Derbyshire. This was certainly an area divided in its loyalty, with significant military activity in all our local towns.

The Inclosures

The eighteenth century was one of great change. The growing industrialisation of the Midlands brought the expansion of urban settlements. Landless peasants could find both work and lodgings in the towns. There was also an agricultural revolution – and a new interest by landowners in the practice of farming, rather than merely of holding, land – mirroring the behaviour of some of the monarchs of the period.

The system of common fields and strip farming did not lend itself to this revolution. Crops grown in diverse narrow strips; cattle held in a joint herd on common meadows; poor or non-existent fencing; none of these factors allowed an expansion of the agricultural base.

So the process of inclosing land began. Croxall must have been inclosed informally, because we can find no records of awards. Edingale parish was inclosed by the statutory procedure in 1794. The process was started by an agreement amongst holders of four-fifths of the land (note, **not** four-fifths of landowners) that inclosure could be beneficial. A notice was then posted on the church for three Sundays so that villagers could object before the commissioners visited. Claims for land then had to be made in writing before the award of land by the commissioners to the new owners. Within 365 days, new owners had to fence their land securely. A copy of the inclosure plan, reworked by Peter Stanley, is overleaf.

Few local people could read the notice, or stake their claim in writing. Even when an award was made, the poorest did not have the means to fence their land satisfactorily and so further consolidation occurred. As a small compensation, peasants were given 'allotments' or large gardens where they could grow food for their own needs. Edingale's allotments seem to have been either side of Pessall Lane, south of the brook (where the houses are now) and to the east of the Harlaston Road below Rose Cottage.

For the poorest landowners, inclosure was bad news. Present-day radicals and anarchists claim that the inclosures *"took the land of England from the common people"* and, to an extent, they are right. Poor and landless labourers were forced from the villages into towns. But if they found employment, they could at least be fed, for post-inclosure, agriculture was delivering the food surpluses to urban settlements in a way that would not have been possible from pre-inclosure practice. Another legacy of the inclosures is hedgerows. Many of the hedges grubbed up by modern agricultural practice date from the early nineteenth century. They are not all ancient features of our landscape.

The Edingale award did not include two significant pieces of land. The entire area of what became Edingale Fields farm was already allotted to the prebendary of Alrewas as part of an historical settlement for 'great tithes' from Edingale. Two smaller pieces of land to the north of the Lullington Road, and what became Crabtree Farm in Mill Lane, were Edingale church glebe land, representing a settlement of the small tithes.

While inclosure in Croxall, under the 'grip' of a Prinsep at the hall, may have had a lesser impact, in Edingale parish these changes were fundamental. Not a single one of Edingale parish's outlying farms, Raddle, Brook House, Crabtree, Edingale Fields or Poplars, existed before the inclosure. The entire parish was farmed by people who lived in the village, albeit that some of the village-based farms (Church Farm and Fields Farm, Edingale House and The Firs) covered significant areas. Pre-inclosure, their land holdings mirrored the 'patchwork quilt' of the poor owners – they just owned more patches.

So the rich became richer. There is a list of fourteen people who were net gainers from the inclosure and thus had to pay the commissioners a sum in total of £2,685.8 shillings.6 pence. Nearly all are 'outsiders'; the two largest gainers were Charles Hastings, of whom we know little, and Thomas Prinsep of Croxall Hall, who ended up with blocks of land off Raddle Lane (then known as Moores Road) and Lullington Road. Close behind them was Thomas Webb of Church Farm. It is noticeable that the Lord of Alrewas manor is not named as a landowner in the payment list:

See Edingale Inclosure map

John Aspinshaw	..	£303.18s.0d
Simon Adey	..	£74.4s.5d
Isaac Hawkins Browne	..	£464.14s.0d
Thomas Eaglestone	..	£31.5s.4d
William Fitchett	..	£35.6s.7d
John Stanford Girdler	..	£5.8s.9d
Charles Hastings	..	£508.2s.3d
Elizabeth Hill	..	£63.0s.0d
Thomas Hatchett	..	£62.19s.11d
Thomas Holmes	..	£11.17s.7d
Thomas Prinsep	..	£506.19s.9d
William Pymm	..	£157.11s.7d
Thomas Scofield	..	£2.6s.7d
Thomas Webb	..	£457.3s.3d
		£2,685.8s.6d

Inclosure set the farming pattern for the next 200 years. Very soon after the map was sealed, Edingale Fields Farm was created – we know that a farmstead was constructed sometime before 1831 - and Raddle Farm was named in the same period. These farms employed a substantial number of villagers right up to the 1950s. But there seems no denying that inclosure condemned many of the landless workers to a life of poverty and grind for at least the first 50 years of the nineteenth century.

Shops and trades in the nineteenth century

There are few business in Edingale today. Even the post office failed to make it beyond the year 2000. In earlier years, the village needed to be much more self-contained and the nineteenth century provides an interesting bridge between the previous farming-based self-sufficiency and the late Industrial Revolution with its proliferation of trades.

The list below is drawn from the county trade directories of the 1830s and onwards and gives a flavour of the specialisation that had developed by that time:

Richard Odams – was a baker and flour dealer
Edward Dewsbury – was a shoemaker and grocer
Thomas Tricklebank – was a tailor for most of the century
James Needham – was a tailor
Richard and John Moore – (father and son) were victuallers (landlords) of the Holly Bush Inn and brick and tile makers (at the back of the Holly Bush)
John and Mary Gadsby – (husband and wife) were victuallers of the Black Horse Inn and he was a blacksmith
John and Thomas Gadsby – (brothers) were blacksmiths at the Black Horse Inn
William and Robert Riley – (brothers) were joiners and wheelwrights at the Woodyard
Joseph Collingwood – was an earthenware/pot seller
Joseph and Thomas Collingwood – (brothers) were shoe and boot makers
Thomas and William Kinson - (father and son) were shopkeepers

William Moore – was a shopkeeper
Ann and William Dicken – were carriers to Lichfield (Fridays) and Tamworth (Saturdays)
Joseph Collingwood – was a carrier
Joseph Robinson – was a fishmonger.

Not surprisingly, some of these trades ran in families. The Rileys (of the Woodyard) specialised in woodworking and several Gadsbys were blacksmiths. The Collingwoods were listed as earthenware manufacturers for much of the century and presumably they were exploiting the deep reserves of clay marl locally. Another interesting entry is for Ann Dicken: she was forced to work by early widowhood in 1858, having to support six children. She made her trade as a carrier from 1860 and her son, James, is pictured in chapter nine with his granddaughter, Mary Radford. Ann took village produce to Tamworth market where she sold it on behalf of her clients. Ann was still listed as carrier in an 1896 trade journal. She lived in the cottages opposite what is now Moores Croft – and she died in 1905, aged 80.

Thomas Kinson was a gardener and seedsman, and, from 1861, he ran a grocery shop. His son, William, was also a grocer. A relative of this family, Cyril Kinson, ran the Holly Bush Inn in the twentieth century.

The diversity of trade lasted until relatively recently. In 1930, there were three shops, including a bakery (at the rear of the old post office), two blacksmiths' shops and two pubs in the village. Of some of these, more later.

Ancient families of the parish

There are many ancient families that go back several generations in the Edingale and Croxall parish registers: Seal, Mousley, Pimm, Hatchet, Wilson, Startin, Alsop, Hill and Prinsop. Matthews appear in Croxall from 1590, Asbury from 1655, Wilcox from 1675, Brown, Elson, Erp, Morgill and Dewsberry from 1693, Birch and Blount from 1697, Royal or Royle from 1743 and Radford from 1801. Another old name, Johnson appears in the Croxall registers not Edingale from 1815.

The registers tell us about the Seal family and record the death of the last member of the Edingale branch. *"May 25th 1789 Buried Catherine Seal, spinster. She was the last of the name Seal whose family have resided in this parish upwards of 200 years."*

In fact, the Seals had lived here for more than 500 years but could only be traced back through the registers for 200 years. They featured in the court reports in chapter three. Fields named Seal's Gorsty Close, Seal's Lower Close and Upper Seal's Gorsty Close appear in the Croxall tithe map as part of Pessall Pits Farm.

The Seal family, like the Wilson family, had their own oak pew in the previous church, carved with "MS 1665" – after Matthew Seal head of the Seal family of Edingale, *"who had been landowners here from the time of Edward I."* The Seals and the Wilsons probably held the "*impropriated moiety of the rectory.*" Matthew Seal was churchwarden

in 1680, 1686 and 1703. His son, Matthew, was churchwarden in 1735 and William Seal in 1744. The benches were re-used in the construction of a vestment cupboard in the present church.

The Mousley family could rival the Hatchets in size and complexity and they are in both the Edingale and Croxall registers. Fields called Mousley's Close and Little Mousley's Close appear on the Croxall tithe map and are now part of Broadfields Farm. Like the Seals, they appear in the court reports and also in the *Alrewas Rental* of 1341, where Richard Mowseley was named as one of the *'customary tenants of base tenure'* of the lord of Alrewas.

The last mention we have of Mousleys in Edingale is in the census of 1841, where Charles Hague Mousley, aged 69, is recorded as living with his wife, Margaret, and is described as of *"independent means"*. Charles died on the 16th February 1849, aged 77, and is buried at Harlaston. Mousleys continued in the wider area and Colonel Charles E Mousley was occupant of Haunton Hall in 1880. He was a principal landowner in Edingale.

The Alsops are another old village family, with the first entry being for Thomas, son of William and Elizabeth, who was baptised in 1693. Thomas Alsop was described as a shoemaker at his daughter's baptism in 1747 and again at his burial in 1774. He was churchwarden in 1757 and 1759 and 1774.

Church Farm gable showing John Wilson's initials