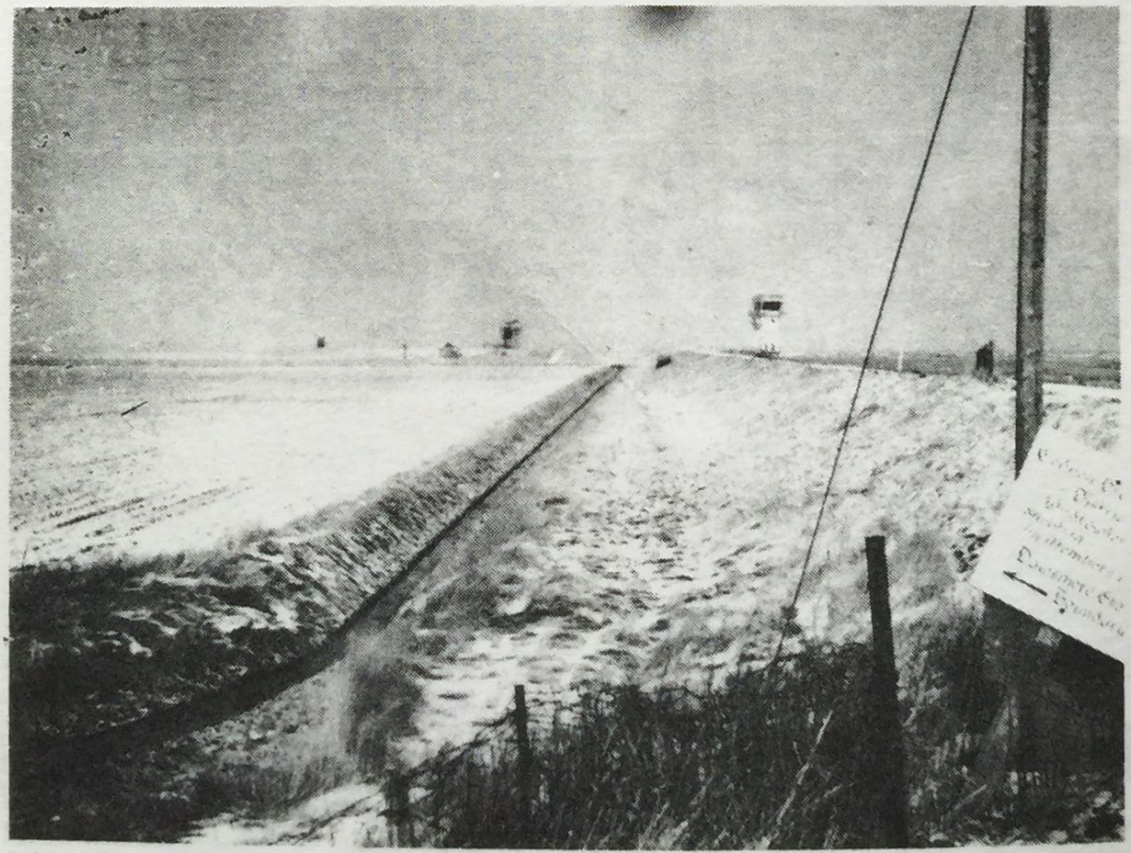
DAWSMERE

The Story of the Ecclesiastical Parish of Gedney Drove End

By the Rt. Revd. Kenneth Healey, M.A.
(with illustrations by Hilary Healey)

£1.00



Rather a New Sort of Place

This is a kind of Parish History, covering about a score of years — perhaps less, though these things tend to get out of control. But with a tug at the roots, and a little projection at the other end it may attain to the semblance of history rather than snap-shot.

DAWSMERE is rather unusual in being a village without any historical roots. It was created about 1855, by Cardwell, the Gladstonian statesman (I think he deserves the title), who, with his brother Charles bought about 3,000 acres in the Marsh, most of it in Gedney, with an over-lap into Holbeach Marsh in 1852. There were no ascertainable 'place-names', beyond that of 'The Marsh'; but there was a creek running through that part of the Marsh called Daws Mere Creek. The eponymous Dawes was pretty well certainly either Sir Abraham Dawes, or Sir Thomas. I have to study the Bertie Papers at Lincoln to pin him down; he was an Undertaker of reclamation, almost certainly under a Grant of 1635, renewed after the Civil War, the outer sea-banks made for that enclosure are generally described as the '1660 Bank', though they were the connected outer defence of at least two contiguous enclosures, and could not possibly have been completed in one year. This means, in short, that the Northern parts of several of the Elloe parishes were tide-washed until 1660. Indeed, all the ecclesiastical parish of Gedney Drove End (and of its neighbour of Holbeach St. Mark's) lies within the post-1660 enclosures. Until 1850 there had been only one centre of population growth in Gedney Marsh — Drove End; this will have to come into the story for obvious reasons. It was a huddle of small dwellings, with no substantial farm house in or indeed very near it; but it housed the 'tradesmen'. There were a number of small farmers, and a few characters of no fixed occupations.

Cardwell made a new start, and built his new village about 1¼ miles from Drove End. The cottages, in pairs, were plain and neat — and pretty well built — they all survive, modernised. There was a smithy, and a joiner's shop — the families shared a double cottage. There was a general shop, with some buildings and a paddock. There was a commodious school: "Gedney Drove End School" in the Diocesan Records — for it was a Church School. And Cardwell provided a parsonage, and a site for the Church, as well as at least half the money to build it.

Let me make a fresh start, from a point before Dawsmere was: but from not too long before; the historian, no less than the philosopher, blanches at the prospect of an infinite regress. The year 1855 will serve best; for it was then that the Ecclesiastical District of Drove End was detached from the very large and wholly rural parish of Gedney, by an Order in Council. I need not enlarge here on the scope and terms of the Act (6 and 7 V c. 37) under which this, and very many similar Orders were put into effect; but as the circumstances in this particular case were in several respects unusual, a certain expansion will not be out of place.

Briefly, then: the parish enclosures of the 18th and early 19th centuries, the drainage of the Fens and, from 1660 onwards, the reclamation of many thousands of acres from the sea, around the Wash, had brought into settled and profitable occupation very large areas of Lincolnshire previously un-

cultivated. This had economic consequences highly advantageous to some of the parochial clergy; but it also brought about an extension of pastoral responsibilities which the Church was for many years quite incapable of meeting. Yet in the half century between the exposure of this dismal failure in Arthur Young's *Survey of the Agriculture of Lincolnshire* (which I cite because it was the evidence of a cool but sympathetic observer, who, moreover, had some confidence in the ability of Bishop Tomline to remedy the situation), and the period here under discussion, a happy conjunction of spiritual revival, pastoral zeal, and somewhat radical administrative reform, had opened the way into what many have regarded as the Golden Age of the Church of England. Never is an Age all gold, but the vein was rich. Alongside such reforming bishops as Kaye and Jackson of Lincoln, were the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, increasingly furnished with funds as mortality gently disengaged the holders of sinecures, pluralities, and prebendal endowments from their sources of income; at ground level, squarson vied with squarson in building schools and restoring churches; patrons provided new parsonages; incumbents promoted the division of their over-large parishes, and even of their over-large endowments; best of all, there were more — and in time better-trained — earnest and dedicated young curates; Evangelicals, followers of Arnold, or, by that time, even Puseyites, were all, after their kind, filled with zeal and hope:

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive . . . "

Perhaps this is pitching the key a little high, but if so, we shall now come down to earth, and to the parish of Gedney. To the soul of the Vicar of that parish, in 1855, these winds of change were not at all congenial. The Revd. Thomas S. Escott had endured many trials, sometimes of his own making, during his twenty years as incumbent. So when, in the May of that year, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners informed him that they had had under consideration "the circumstances of this parish in reference to the provision for its Pastoral Superintendence", and that they thought it desirable "that the northern portion should be constituted into a separate District", their wish to be "favoured with any observations which he might see fit to offer" was speedily granted. It is difficult not to feel sympathy with the Vicar.

Whether or not there had been some earlier approach to him — as there certainly ought to have been, preferably from the Bishop — it is clear that there was some failure in communication. Mr. Escott plainly supposed that not only was the area of his spiritual jurisdiction to be diminished, as it was (and, as we shall see, with justification), but that also there would be inroads on the endowments of his benefice, which was not the case. That Mr. Escott was a man hard to persuade is plain enough; but one could wish for evidence that somebody had tried, and in the friendly and informal way that would certainly be employed today. Failing these preliminaries, the Commissioners' letter, for all its formal courtesy, must have seemed somewhat abrupt and chilly. This is no reflection on Mr. Chalk, the Commissioners' Secretary. It was not for him to assume the role of friend and pastor to the Vicar; propriety required brevity as well as courtesy.

The Vicar's reply also was sufficiently courteous, but far from cool. With heavy emphasis (he is a master of the underline) he declares the "Pastoral

Superintendence" of the parish to be complete; asserts all his rights; declares partition to be impossible; asks somewhat rhetorically whether they are asking for his consent to the scheme, and how they can possibly act without it; and has the honour to be their obedient servant. To this Mr. Chalk replied civilly that Mr. Escott's consent was not necessary; he begged to refer the Vicar to the Statute, and added, perhaps somewhat slyly, that his preliminary letter had only been sent "because the proposition to form the District has not emanated as such proposals usually do in the first instance from the incumbent of the Mother Parish". Did the Vicar desire to make any suggestions upon the matter, before the formal notice was sent to him? The Vicar, with a heavily under-scored growl, awaited 'any overt act', or the next letter — which was the formal notice of the intended division of the parish. The Vicar might consent at once, which would expedite the scheme; or he could comment again, which would delay matters for one month. He played his last card; consent on three conditions. These were, that if a new church were built, he might, by right, take services in it as and when he wished; that if any "ceremonies of religion" were performed in or near such a building, he should have the right to claim fees; and that it should also be his right to appoint the minister, if any, to serve the district. He had not, I fear, read the Act. The Commissioners, without any further comment, let this missive lie for the statutory month, and then informed him that the draft Order would

be duly placed before Her Majesty in Council. And so it was, on 24th September, 1855, at Balmoral; and whether or not the Queen was amused, by and with the advice of Her Council, and notwithstanding the observations and objections of the Incumbent of Gedney, Her Majesty ratified the said scheme, and it was published on the 15th October, 1855.

Poor Mr. Escott did not long suffer the vexation of seeing an intruded Minister in his parish. On 6th August, 1856, he died suddenly: "deeply involved in debt", says White's Directory for that year, "by a long litigation with the anti-church-rate portion of his parishioners". As the dispute with this faction is recorded also in the 1842 Directory, it certainly occupied most of his ministry there. But contentious as he clearly was, and a little too fierce in his own cause, there must have been another side to his ministry. For after his death an imposing memorial was erected in Gedney Church, by his parishioners and friends, testifying to their high regard and affection for their late pastor.

Meanwhile, a minister to serve the new District had been duly appointed. After a preliminary introduction to some of the leading parishioners, the Revd. W. G. Patchell, B.A., of Trinity College, Dublin, who had been ordained Deacon in 1847 and Priest in 1848 by Bishop Kaye, and had been serving as Curate of St. Mary's Church, Nottingham (then in the diocese of Lincoln), and was licensed to Drove End in 1855, arrived to take up residence in what is now Dawsmere; and began his

"Journal of my parish work
Commenced Feby 1 1856
W. G. Patchell
Drove End
Gedney
Lincolnshire.
Contents
128 Households 680 Members"

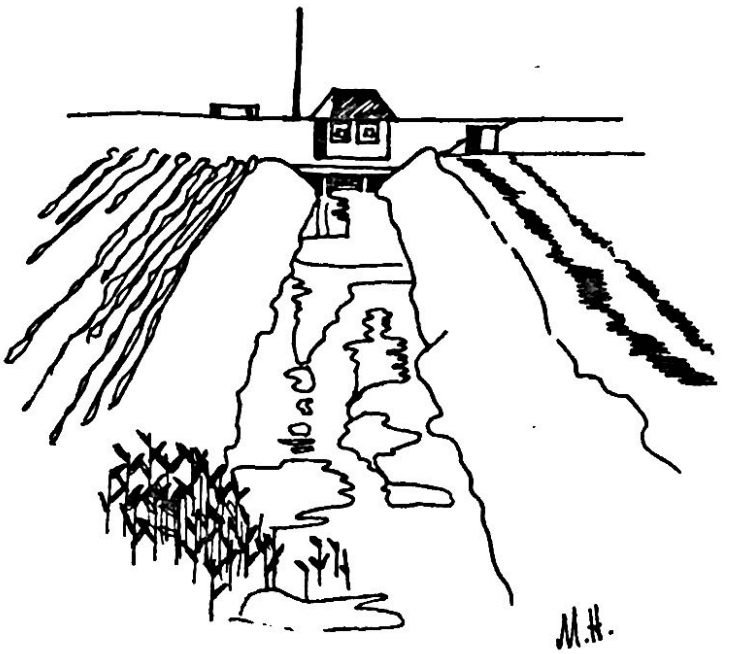
To this Journal we shall in due course return. But there are a few more somewhat "unusual features" in this case, as will next appear.

DROVE END

Of the 'unusual circumstances' attending the creation of the Ecclesiastical District of Drove End, the strangest, in retrospect, is the long interval between its birth in 1855 and the consecration of its Church in 1870. As a general rule, the district church was erected before the formal establishment of a new parish; Sutton Bridge, Holbeach St. John's, Holbeach Hurn, and Holbeach St. Mark's are cases in point. Indeed, when the Commissioners, in 1866, promised to endow Holbeach St. John's (where a church had been built in 1840) they also undertook to endow new parishes at Holbeach Hurn and Holbeach Marsh "provided that a suitable church was built in each". Perhaps they had in mind the disappointing situation at Drove End, and were no longer willing to rely on expectations alone, however well-founded. It is true that Drove End was only a District, but even this status was not promised to the Holbeach areas without the substance of a building in each. What had gone wrong in Gedney?

The position there in 1855 was (the Vicar's discontent apart) highly favourable. The need for a church and a resident minister was evident. The Commissioners, having become possessed of the sinecure rectory, worth £1,700 a year, were in a position to promise a sufficient endowment, and, in due course, to buy or build a parsonage. The chief landowner in the area was ready to provide a site, and to contribute suitably to the cost of building a church. It was this last and most promising circumstance that stood in the way. For the root of the trouble one has to look back, after all, to the pattern of the 17th century enclosure.

Gedney parish's expansion at that time was fan-shaped. From a mile-wide base at Gedney Dyke, the left-hand boundary reached northwards alongside the Fleet Haven for four miles; on the right, the new boundary moved East by North, again for about four miles, until it came to the sea by Boat Mere.



(Margaret Harrison)

As a map of 1679 shows, when the new lands were allocated, the Commoners' portion, and indeed most of that belonging to the Lords of the four Manors, lay near the southern boundary, the Commoners having a frontage to the sea. Through and to this portion ran the Drove, and it was where it came to the sea that a settlement developed, more rapidly after the next enclosure, at the end of the 18th century, when the 'Sixteen Mile Bank' was made between the Welland and Boat Mere. By 1855 about a quarter of the inhabitants of the whole of Gedney lived in, or very near to Drove End. White's Directory of 1856 shows that the hamlet provided a livelihood for four inn-keepers (there was a beer-house too), two bakers (one a miller also), a machine owner, a blacksmith, a wheelwright, a butcher, a tailor, two shoe-makers, two shop-keepers, and a school-mistress. Mr. Patchell's Journal adds a few more to this rota of happy families; two coast-guards, for example, and a clockmender, besides one (a fisherman) whose calling he regarded for some reason as dubious. But only three farmers are listed by White as living in Drove End, none of them farming more than sixty acres. The nearest farmers of substance were two or three who lived on the Drove, almost a mile from the village. But the larger farms in the new District were away to the North and West. These farmers for the most part contributed little to the life of Drove End, and expected nothing of the village — except for the labour of a few men who plodded along the banks to work for them. It was observed by Mr. Patchell that "scarcely any (of the larger Marsh farmers) look upon it as a home. Most of them regard it as but a temporary abode, and are constantly feeding themselves with hope of 'getting out of it'." Admittedly he made this comment on a Christmas Day when most of them had gone out to see friends and relations, instead of coming to Church. But the point was well made. The big tenant farmers of the Marsh and their families had no reason to turn to inaccessible Drove End for the necessities or the amenities of life;

they looked towards Long Sutton, or Holbeach, or further afield. The smaller folk at Drove End owned their homes and their fewer acres, even if only by copyhold. Here was a growing community, well rooted, but not merely earth-bound, or limited to such opportunities for self expression and mutual improvement as are provided by a smithy, a village pump, four inns, and a beer house. We can rejoice, as did good Mr. Patchell, that they could foregather also in two Chapels; one, of the Wesleyan Methodists, and one of the Primitives.

Cardwell House

But back now to the Marsh, and the big tenanted farms. Less than fifty years before, the principal landowner there was Peter Sers, Farmer and Grazier, who, besides purchasing three or four farms of the old enclosure, acquired a large interest in the marsh reclaimed by the Sixteen Mile Bank. After his death in 1811, his family moved away, until his son James and his grandsons Peter and William Sers were absentee landlords in their turn. They did engage, without success, in a further enclosure exercise; but although others carried it out, they had by 1852 recovered it, and were able to sell some 2,300 acres in Gedney Marsh to the Rt. Hon. Edward Cardwell and his brother Charles.

Edward Cardwell was a rising politician who had already held office, briefly, under Sir Robert Peel; but Peel was out, "in the hour of triumph" . . . on the very day, that is, on which his "Free Trade" Measure passed through the House of Lords . . . and for the next six years he had the leisure to attend to his own affairs. The conveyance of the Sers estate to the Cardwells is

dated 14th September, 1852. It was the day on which the Duke of Wellington died. It would be a wholly artificial exercise to make of this date and this event a hinge on which the course of English history turned; but there can be no doubt that for many the death of the old Duke meant the end of an era, the removal of a bulwark against unwelcome change — though Wellington was certainly not an obstructive reactionary. And change was certainly at hand, even if it was not exactly new hands who brought it about. Before the end of that year Derby (and Disraeli) were down; and within the Coalition that followed was Gladstone, increasingly to dominate the political field in the next twenty-two years. Where Gladstone was, there was Cardwell, his most loyal and trusted colleague. In or (rarely) out of office, during that period, they were much together; in the course of a continental tour, they were received, with two other eminent men, by the Pope. Gladstone was fond of recounting the Pontiff's reported comments on his guests: "I like but do not understand Mr. Gladstone; Mr. Cardwell I understand, but I do not like; I both like and understand Lord Clarendon; the Duke of Argyll I neither understand nor like." This perhaps tells us more about Pio Nono than about his visitors.

Cardwell held, with credit, some exacting offices: President of the Board of Trade; Chief Secretary for Ireland; Colonial Secretary (at the time of the Jamaica 'Rebellion'); and — the chief foundation of his high reputation — Secretary for War. "To all appearances one of the coldest and least warlike of men", says Justin McCarthy, "had in his charge one of the greatest reforms of the administration." Cardwell had indeed wondered whether he would be acceptable in a post usually entrusted to a man of military experience; but Gladstone was sure that he was the right person for the task. We can leave his political career here — with Lord Morley's comment: "In Mr. Cardwell he (Gladstone) was fortunate enough to have a public servant of the first order; not a political leader nor a popular orator, but one of the best disciples of Peel's school; sound, careful, active, firm, and with an enlightened and independent mind admirably fitted for the effective discharge of business."

So much space given to Cardwell's political career may not be entirely irrelevant to the undeclared war between the new landowner in Gedney Marsh and the landowners and inhabitants of Drove End, in the matter of the site for a church. No doubt Cardwell would be very pleased to have it in his new village, which he had provided with all the other buildings necessary to community life — except a public house. But he does not seem to have pressed his view too strongly; indeed, he may well have seen the justice of the case for building the church where most of the people lived. And if he might appear to have staked a claim by providing on his estate a house for the clergyman ,he could well ask where else was Mr. Patchell to live? On the other hand, though a very strong case was made at Drove End for a church there, Mr. Patchell justly observed that the case would be stronger still if any serious effort had been made to raise money to build it. Could the objectors have been a little more against "the Messrs. Cardwell", than for a new church? After all, in 1855 not much more was known of him to the rural citizenry than that he was, politically, a "Peelite", which to the landed and farming interest (and who else, in rural Lincolnshire, had political interest then?) meant the party of Conservatives who had gone over to the Free Trade camp, and repealed the Corn Laws?

So, to bring this instalment to a close, the prospect of a new church in the District begins, in 1856, to recede. Mr. Patchell has no church at all, no recognised centre of public worship. He must opt (though he would not be using a term now well in fashion) for a "house-church"; and on his Petition to the Bishop, in April 1856, the large Kitchen in Mr. Benjamin Goulton's Farm-house, on the Cardwell Estate (and about as far from Drove End as it could well be) was duly Licensed for Public Worship according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church of England. Although it was superseded a few months later by the new School at what was beginning to be called Daws Meer (spell it as you will), where it would be difficult now to assemble for worship, Mr. Goulton's Kitchen came first. Does it deserve a Plaque?

This house, Red House Farm, was replaced in the 1970s with the new home of Mr & Mrs John Hay.

MR PATCHELL VISITING

"Awake betimes", wrote the Revd. W. G. Patchell, "walk out to see Mr. Dring the farmer with whom I am to lodge for a time. He does not reside here but comes down from a farm which he holds in N(orth) Lincs). to see how matters progress in "the Marsh". Shrewd man is Mr. D. . . " This was his first day in residence, and I think he was only a few days 'lodging' with Mr. Dring. For the rest of his time as Minister he lived in a farm-house provided rent free by Mr. Cardwell; it stood very near to the site of the present Church. Geometrically, he was centrally placed; but he was among the large farms of the Marsh, and between his house and Drove End there was not even a public road. Not surprisingly, he began his visiting with the farmers.

"Went after breakfast to call on Mr. Reed, one of Mr. Cardwell's tenants" (living in what is now Cardwell House) . . . "son of an eminent dissenting minister, an Independent himself — and a sturdy one too, but disposed to be friendly — and I hope helpful. Mrs. R. an agreeable person — of a Long Sutton family, the Clarkes; both well-informed and intellectual considerably above the average . . . Called on Mr. Geo. Clarke, another tenant of Mr. C., a large holder . . . Having learned from the Dr. whom I met on the road in

the morning that one of Mr. Clarke's men, Gee, . . . is seriously ill I called to see him . Mr. C. accompanied me and sat in the sick man's room, while I read to and prayed with him . . . I trust that God may bless this my first pastoral visit and make it fruitful."

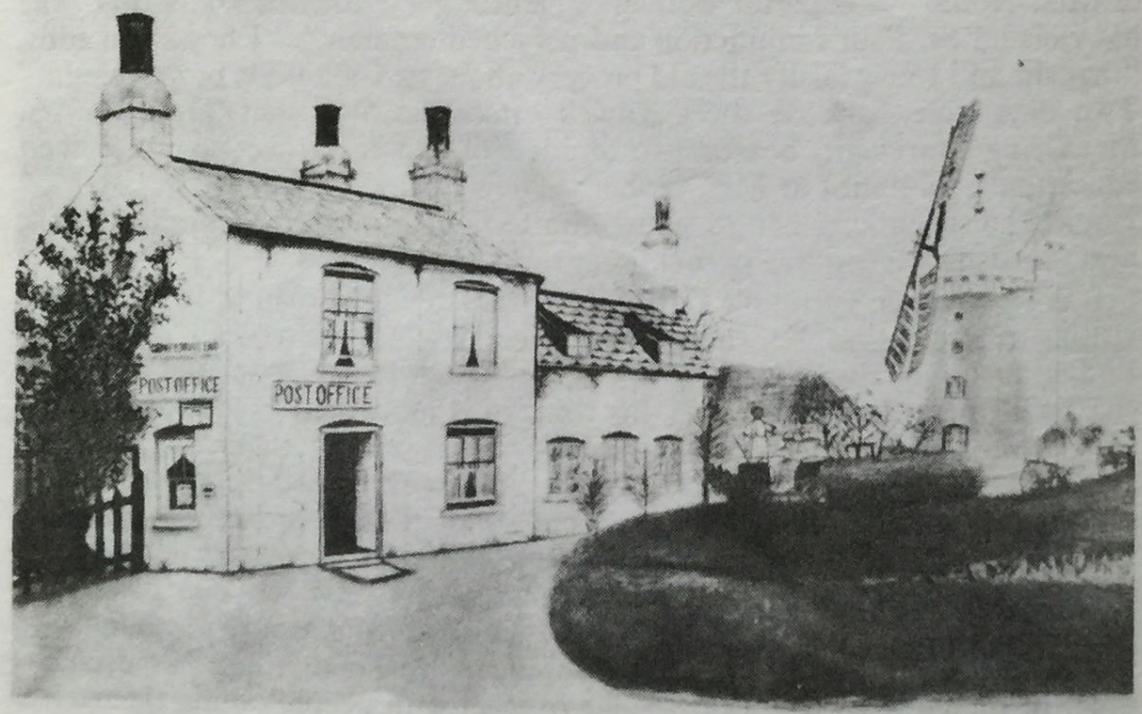
Nothing that Mr. Patchell writes, in his Journal or in his letters, lies outside the simple pattern revealed in that first day's entry. This was his first sole charge. He was in his thirty-sixth year (they ripen so much more quickly nowadays), an earnest, devout, faithful, uncomplicated Victorian clergyman. He wrote as he saw, and as he believed; and those who read what he wrote, especially if they have some knowledge of the place and the people, will find the past brought to life again in his simple and sympathetic record.

The first of February fell on a Friday; on the Sunday, "not being able to have a service in my own parish", Mr. Patchell attended Lutton Church in the morning: "very cold service altogether". (The curate in charge was the Revd. Septimus Dawes, who was also incumbent of Sutton St. James, but lived in Long Sutton). However, Mr. Patchell kindled a little warmth in the Marsh, where he assembled "as many of Mr. Dring's men as I could at 2½ and gave them a short service in the kitchen — had a lecture at 7 in Mr. Reed's kitchen which he kindly offered me — about 30 attended." Something further will be said below about the excellent relations between the Minister and the Nonconformists in his district.

On the Monday Patchell broke out of Mr. Cardwell's Estate, making his way along the sea-bank (of 1795) to Drove End, where he called on Mr. Slator, "the great man of the village", whom he finds "rather sore about the proposed site of Church and Schools." He next visited Mrs. Noble, "the village school-mistress". It is unlikely that her school was supported by anything but the contributions of parents, though just possibly it met in one of the Methodist Chapels. The one qualification to Mr. Patchell's high opinion of Mrs. Noble ("a superior woman . . . and a good Christian") is that "she has violated St. Paul's injunction and preached ere now". "I hope" he adds, "that she and I may falsify the old proverb about two of a trade by agreeing..." Two days later, back on the Cardwell estate, he finds that Thos. Barnes, Mr. Dring's foreman, boards two of his children in Drove End "for their education", no doubt at Mrs. Noble's school. On Friday he is back at Mrs. Noble's house, asking her to allow him to hold a cottage lecture there the next Thursday evening: "permission graciously accorded."

It is worthwhile spending a little time with the good man as he begins his visiting in Drove End. For though at his first sight of it he writes: " . . . Drove End, a most wretched place . . . ", and has much to say about the miserable character of many of the houses, his concern is immediately with the people; and he not only carries out his pastoral duties among them faithfully, he really **likes** them, and praise out-weighs disapproval, though he entertains a certain good-humoured scepticism about some of their professions of piety. He is, of course, against sin; but although he mildly deplores the preaching of women, he finds no fault with Methodists as such. Of one prominent villager he writes: "He is a Churchman — his wife and family Methodists — but people here have no alternative — Methodism or nothing has been the order of things — so that I rather like to meet with people calling themselves

Wesleyans or Ranters" — (the only time he uses this name for the Primitive Methodists) — "It is some slight proof that they have the fear of God before their eyes." In the course of his visiting he happily records more than "slight proof" of their sincerity and devotion. There is the Mills family: " . . .Primitive Methodists. Mills has a very handsome Bible which was lately presented to him by members and scholars of a school near Parson Drove with which he was connected for I think 20 years — that speaks well." Next door is the elderly shoe-maker, Steed: "I like the old man who is a Primitive Methodist, he was sitting in the chimney corner reading Fleetwood's Life of Christ — He and his wife thanked me very much for my visit." When he comes to the next two families, he says of the first: "They call themselves Churchpeople and farm two acres of land. The house they call their own so I presume they are **squatters** . . . " (he could have been wrong . . .); and of their neighbours "They too call themselves Churchpeople and have a garden under the Rev. Mr. Escott the Vicar of Gedney." It would not be fair to say that he appears to be rather cool towards the professed Churchpeople — the evidence was probably negative; they didn't go to Chapel — they could hardly go to Church, anyhow. But he finds a warmth among the Methodists, characteristic of that body to this day; and also a welcome to him as a minister of the Gospel. He could teach and pray in their houses, and they were attentive listeners to his Lectures on week-days. In the whole of his Journal there is no word of criticism or complaint against them, no indication that there was any discord between Church and Chapel. Indeed, in a letter to the Bishop in his first year he thankfully records that whereas there was much antagonism between Dissent and Church in the old parishes (the experience of Mr. Escott was not altogether singular), he himself had much help and encouragement from his Non-conformist parishioners. He is very pleased to tell the Bishop that Mr. Reed, the "sturdy Independent", had given orders that all ordinary week-day work should cease on his farm on Good Friday, and his work-people had been encouraged to attend Church — whether in Mr.

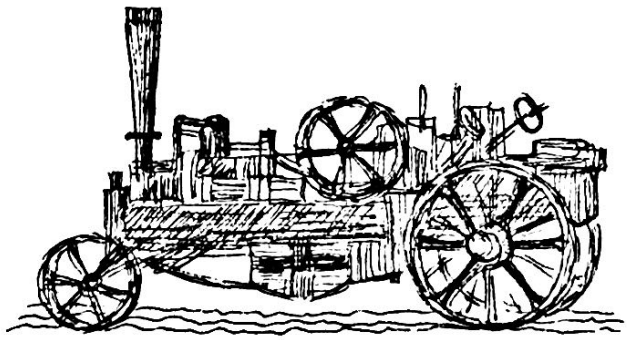


Walker's Mill c.1901 (picture by courtesy of Jessie Walker)

Reed's or Mr. Goulton's kitchen, is not clear. Mr. Reed is the only non-Methodist Dissenter mentioned. He accompanied Mr. Patchell to his first lecture at Mrs. Noble's house; Mr. Reed had given the Minister "a good supply of tracts for distribution", but there is no evidence as to their content.

From this happy ecumenical scene — pausing to record that Mr. Patchell, some days later, visited a tailor, "an intelligent fellow, but rather talky . . . He calls himself a Churchman, says he was a singer and professes great contempt for dissenters — I gave him rather a lecture to which he made no answer but took it quietly . . . " . . . we come again to the matter on which Churchpeople in the District were sharply divided; the siting of the new church and the school. Mr. Slator was not the only Drove-Ender sore about the prospect of their being at Dawsmere. Mr. Holborn, a farmer on the Drove, told Mr. Patchell, in his first week, that they were "getting up a petition" about this. It is extant, in the Commissioners' Archives; and though it is undated, it can be placed with some accuracy, for it bears the signature of George Carley, landlord of the New Inn, who died on 11th February (Patchell's Journal). The Petition carries the signatures of seventy-three residents in or near Drove End, representing, they say, 388 of the 550 inhabitants. Three non-resident landowners also signed, and the agent of a fourth. About the same time, the Revd. Charles Mossop, Rector of Etton, wrote to the Commissioners to say that "it is of the utmost importance that the site (of the new church) should be in the locality of the largest population", and that he would be willing to sell one for the purpose; indeed, he later gave one. Just two years later another petition was sent, this time to the Bishop of Lincoln. Its signatories were fewer; but that was because they were offering contributions to the cost of the building. Fifteen were parishioners, who promised £90 10s.; six non resident landowners (three of whom had signed in 1856) offered £140 . . . one of them, Mr. C. H. Bertie, offering an acre of land also, as a site. Another, a Stamford solicitor, said that he would consider how much to offer when he had studied the situation; but he "would not give six-pence" for a Church on Mr. Cardwell's estate, where "it would do more harm than good, for it would have the effect of preventing a Church being built in a proper situation."

The months passed, and the years passed; and still there was no church in the District. But Mr. Patchell was a resourceful man, as we shall see.



MISSIONARY ZEAL

By 1857 the new school "on Mr. Cardwell's Estate" was ready for use. It was duly recognised as "Gedney Drove End Church of England School", by both the Lincoln Diocesan Board of Education, and their Lordships of the Committee of Council on Education, whose Report for 1857-8 shows that a Parliamentary Grant of £264 had been made towards the cost of "Building (and) Fixtures", with £2. 17. 0½ for "Apparatus, Books, Maps and Diagrams". Dean Hook, ahead of, and at odds with, most of his clerical brethren, in matters concerning popular education, was at least in line with Church feeling at the time when he wrote that "The very first object which a respectable clergyman has in view when he receives an appointment is to form a school"; and we may be sure that Mr. Patchell was such a clergyman. But it was more than a school: it was his church, duly licensed, in succession to the Red House kitchen. There is, however, little mention of it in his journal, though we shall find much to say about it later. Part I of the Journal appears to close with the long entry dated March 7th (which opens thus: "Visited this day some of the vilest holes into which I have yet penetrated — I think I must have now seen the worst of the District . . . "); but the large number of parishioners then described suggests that under this date he brings together those missed on previous rounds. From time to time he returns to this survey to record the death of a parishioner, in the margin, opposite his original entry of the parishioner's name, but these additions are rarely dated. As a narrative, Part I concludes with the completion of his visiting in February and March, 1856. Part II records his successful establishment of a place of worship in Drove End:

"1862. The Wesleyan Chapel at the Drove End being closed by the Denomn. to which it belongs from lack of means to keep it open, I have rented it for a year from Dec. 1 and intend D.V. to have a service in it on Sunday eveng. at 6½ — and a lecture on Wednesday evg. at 7 o.c." In fact he began these services in what he decided to call the "Mission House" on Advent Sunday, 30th Nov., with a full and attentive congregation. His text was I Tim. i. 15: his Journal entry, "May God bring home His Word with power to all hearts." On the Wednesday following his congregation of "upward of 60 people" included "the two local Prim. Meth. preachers". After the saying of the Litany, and the singing of the 100th Psalm, the Minister expounded the Epistle for the week.

This was a fine start. Back at the School, there was rather different fare, the next evening. "Mr. Mackenzie came to Lecture for us . . . He gave an animated and interesting Lecture on the 'great Exhibition' to an overflowing audience. He highly commends the undertaking of the Mission house services — and has given me some valuable advice, and the promise of an annual subscription of £1 towards the carrying on of the work — wh. I hope to do without." This Mr. Mackenzie was the Rector of Tydd St. Mary, and one of the Bishop's Chaplains. The 1858 Petition relating to the site of the church had been sent to the Bishop through Mr. Mackenzie. Later (in 1870) he was one of the two Suffragen Bishops consecrated, when that office was revived

after nearly three hundred years; he assisted the Bishop of Lincoln as Suffragan Bishop of Nottingham, which was then in the diocese of Lincoln.

The next day — what a splendid week it was! — there came "a kind note from the Bishop conveying his approval and giving his blessing to the work." At which Mr. Patchell writes "May the Shepherd & Bishop of our souls bless it and then it must prosper." It was no less encouraging on Sunday, 7th Dec. "The Mission House was crowded and the congregation most attentive. Oh may they all be true worshippers. I preached on Heb. xiii. 8. Oh God, 'make me a faithful and wise steward, for Christ Jesu's sake, Amen'."

But on Monday, 8th Dec., "the Rev. Geo. B. Bennett, the Dioc. Insp. of Schools examined ours — result unsatisfactory — we all want stirring up — I must guard against neglect of *any* part of my duty — 'Feed my Lambs' is as much the Master's command as 'Feed my sheep'. May I have grace to obey both . . . "

After this brief and no doubt salutary set-back at the School, the faithful pastor was rewarded the next Sunday with a full and attentive congregation again at the Mission House, and with another spectacle to cheer him: "Tho' there was no moon to light me on my way I was not left to walk in darkness as the Northern heavens were illuminated by a splendid Aurora Borealis, the most brilliant I have ever seen. The light afforded by it nearly equalled at times full moon-light." The present writer recalls a similar display, also viewed from Drove End on a Sunday night, I think in December, 1919. Lincolnshire, with its wide skies, was an area favourable to the enjoyment of this spectacle: I say "was", because it seems to be no longer observable; or perhaps we too rarely look up into the night sky.

In the next few weeks Mr. Patchell's spirits rise and fall with the level of church attendance; he had more reason to rejoice than to grieve. Christmas morning at Dawsmere was very disappointing, as has been noted earlier; but there were a hundred present at the Mission House in the evening. The

New Year began well; but perhaps because he was tired, he too easily grieved to find only about twenty present at the Mission House on Wednesday, 7th January. "Instead of . . . seeking from God's Word & prayer, instruction & strength, I fear too many are beginning the year in revelry & dissipation." Complaints about his flock are rare; but in his prayers he blames himself too severely for a lack of zeal that is belied by the record. Clergymen do tend to suffer from post-festival despondency. A little later he recognises that bad weather, darkness, and much sickness in the parish have more to do with thin congregations than back-sliding, even if a few men "are going back to their old haunts". By the 19th Jan., 1863, he was cheered by two letters: "Mr. Cardwell has promised me £5 towards my Mission fund, and £5 for the sick poor . . . Mr. C.'s letter was very kind. I thank God and take courage. Mr. Mossop too has given £1. 1s. to the Mission Fund."

So at the end of 1863 he can write " . . . we completed a year of the Mission House Services. I have every reason to bless God for the success with which the M.H. movement has been attended. . . . By the exertions of the poor people themselves, aided by liberal contributions from many friends, we have been enabled to make the House comfortable . . . and we have bought a very well-toned little Harmonium which is played by W.L. and greatly enlivens the service. The year's accounts balanced leaving 2 2½ in hand. We have hired the Chapel for another 12 months . . . May God give an abundant increase."

The next, and final, entry in the Journal is dated "1866 January"; it is short and cheerful, concluding . . . " . . . the services are still appreciated by many, and . . . our expenses are annually covered by contributions and collections. May God give His blessing for Christ's sake. Amen."

So the old, redundant, Wesleyan Chapel had become the nearest thing to the Church for which "the Drove End" had twice petitioned, with powerful support. But still the months passed, and the years passed, and there was no church. But in that same year it really did appear that the majority will would prevail. For Mr. Mossop had now promised to give the site which he had in 1856 offered to sell. And what is more, the most prolific of Lincolnshire ecclesiastical architects, James Fowler, of Louth, prepared plans for the church that was to stand on that site (they show that in 1866 there was still no direct hard public road between Dawsmere and Drove End). These plans were approved for grant by the Incorporated Church Building Society. They show a building of quiet Victorian Gothic style, and of about the same capacity as that which was eventually built at Dawsmere. The square-ended chancel is narrower and lower than the nave, from which it is entered through a pointed arch of medium pitch. As at Dawsmere, the vestry and organ chamber are attached to the N. side of the chancel. The nave is without aisles, but has a square transept to the North, with seats for children, on whom the preacher can keep a close watch, as the pulpit is also on that side of the nave. A spire, rather larger than the flèche at Dawsmere, is near the West end. If it had been Mr. Patchell's great hope to see this church built, he was to be disappointed, as indeed were all those who wished for a church at Drove End. It seemed so near: only in 1867 was the site conveyed by Mr. Mossop to the Ecclesiatical Commissioners. Somewhere — but so far it has eluded search by this writer — lies the answer: perhaps in some

unpublished correspondence of Bishop Jackson; and probably the obstacle was financial. Mr. Fowler's church could well have required more than the £1,000 that was finally needed to pay for that designed by Mr. Ewan Christian. Again, perhaps because of this set-back, as well as because Mr. Patchell was finding that the cold east winds were undermining his hitherto robust constitution (so he declared), the Bishop decided not to leave him longer in the twilight of mere "District" incumbency, and appointed him the first Vicar of the new Parish of Holbeach St. John. He had served Drove End (from Dawsmere) faithfully — and we shall see him again before this narrative closes. As for the Church project, it was back to square one: which was, of course, Mr. Cardwell's Estate at Dawsmere, where there was a house for the "Vicar", a site for the church, and a considerable contribution towards the cost of the church to be.

AT SCHOOL

In July, 1856, the Cardwells signed the Deed which conveyed the site of the proposed school to the Minister and Churchwardens of Drove End, and embodied a Scheme of Management acceptable to the Church authorities on the one hand, and the Committee of Council on Education on the other. The approval of the latter was of crucial importance, if a building grant was to be obtained, and contributions towards the master's stipend. These Schemes gave the Committee of Council a good deal of trouble in the early years. They had to be varied in detail to meet the aspirations and allay the fears of all the religious bodies at work in this field — the Church of England, the Roman Catholics, the Wesleyans, the British and Foreign, the Home and Colonial Societies (names hardly associated with education in the public mind to-day), the Unitarians, and, across the borders, the Established Churches (and others) in Ireland and Scotland. The Committee could not please everybody, and for a time a number of schools refused to accept the schemes agreed between the State and the various parent (foster-parent might be a better term) bodies. Such schools struggled on for a time, on strongly held principles and private benevolence, but it was a losing battle. The Drove End Scheme of Management fully conformed to the views of Church and State. The latter required, in return for a building grant and help in paying the master's stipend, that the School should be open to examination by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools, that there should be

safeguards for the teachers against arbitrary dismissal, and that the building should be "used as and for a School for the Education of children and adults or children only of the labouring manufacturing and other poorer classes and for no other purpose". (This last clause seems to have been interpreted liberally, not only in the matter of the use of the building; the sons of some of the principal farmers were among the scholars). The Church had all it could wish. The Minister had the "superintendence of the religious and moral instruction of all the Scholars", and might use the premises for a Sunday School "under his exclusive control". For the rest, he was Chairman of the Managers, who were, besides himself, his two churchwardens, and four other persons who were resident in the District, or in an adjoining parish, who were members of the Church of England, and subscribed not less than twenty shillings a year to the school funds. These four were in the first instance "nominated" in the Trust Deed: they were Benjamin Goulton, George Clarke, William Hicks, and Thomas Gibbs, all described as Farmers, and "of Drove End"; and though this was at the time correct, they all lived at "Dawsmere", three of them in Cardwell farm-houses! This was hardly an arrangement to gratify the farmers "on the Drove", or the worthy citizens of Drove End village — but of course perhaps none of these was subscribing to School funds.

At that time, and for a few more years, schools were being built more rapidly than teachers were being trained. Although the Committee of Council encouraged the provision of training establishments, the initiative still lay with the voluntary bodies, whose work in founding Training Colleges was for some time both experimental and incapable of meeting the demands of the schools. Their Lordships of the Committee were properly concerned to have well-qualified teachers, and undertook to augment the stipends of those who gained their "certificate of merit" (this is where "certificated teachers" began) — though some school managers were mean enough to cut back the amount they had been paying by at least a part of the augmentation. The examinations for this Certificate were conducted by the School Inspectors in the course of their travels, at certain centres. Both students and masters (and mistresses) could take the examinations. In the early years the proportion of passes was depressingly low — or so it must seem to a reader today. The Inspectors appear to have taken a more optimistic view of things; one of them, indeed, thought that some of the brighter students could become too addicted to the pleasures of learning to make truly dedicated teachers! Still, it must have been a welcome change for an Inspector to find a master such as the ex-miner who had never been to school as a boy, but had taught himself (according to the clergyman of the parish) "English, French and Italian; Spanish, Latin, Greek, arithmetic, algebra, etc." The Inspector found him "a most diligent and at the same time humble-minded man". The same Inspector was not always so gratified. At one Yorkshire school he found that arithmetic was not taught. "I asked the reason; 'Because I know nothing about it,' was the honest reply." Across the border, in Red Rose country, and in a hopeless sort of school, he asked the master to put some questions to the children, as he himself could get no answer. "He took a book out of a corner-cupboard (where it had not seen the light for many a day) and began: 'Who wrote the Bible?' and then qualified this strange question,

'that is, the greatest part of it?' 'Moses,' was the answer given, and allowed. 'Who collected the Scriptures into books?' Answer, 'Gomorrah!' " Another Inspector (it is hard to resist these anecdotes) discovered in a copy-book the following exercise set by the master:

"God made man, man made money
God made bees, bees made honey
God made Satan, Satan made sin
God made a place to put Satan in."

(The Inspector adds a diverting footnote on "this ingenious combination of teaching the mechanical art of writing and communicating religious truth", comparing it with a copy slip recommended in a publication of the National Society: "Moses was meek: Moses was very meek: Moses was a remarkably meek man." He adds: "The merit of the invention . . . must be conceded to the schoolmaster to whom I have alluded, he having acted for many years in that capacity. I cannot report favourably of the success of the experiment, as his scholars were very deficient in religious knowledge.")

The first master of Gedney Drove End Church of England School of whom there is any record is Mr. Charles Riggott. A Tablet in Dawsmere Church describes him as "Schoolmaster and Parish Clerk of this Place" for 23½ years — precisely half of his too brief life: he died, aged 47, in the summer of 1884. It would appear that he took up his duties there about the beginning of 1861, some four years after the building of the school, so that he had been in office about two years when the Diocesan Inspector, as we have seen, brought Mr. Patchell's spirit low with his verdict of "unsatisfactory". Perhaps it was in the area of religious knowledge that the school fell short. The general picture was more favourable when, three months later, Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools appeared.

In 1862 the Government had produced its Revised Code of Regulations, generally regarded as a mean and retrograde step, and a misguided attempt to finance popular education on a narrow "payment by results" basis. (Mr. Lowe, the Minister responsible, argued that if the system proved costly, that would mean the result was good; if it turned out a failure, it would at least be cheap!) But one good thing came of it: the requirement that in each school the head teacher should keep a Log Book, with daily entries. There are in existence a great number of such Log Books dating from 1863, and they are a most valuable source of social and educational history.

So on Friday, 13th March (I hope the master was not superstitious) 1863, Mr. Riggott, in a neat copper-plate hand, made his first entries, beneath a heading by "A. T. Bonner, H.M.I." giving the name of the School, the date, the Master's name, and the grade of his Certificate of Merit — which, at 3 — 3, was as low as it could be: but he had qualified, and he proved his worth in his work. There were present that morning 34 boys and 13 girls. Although the three Tillsons had gone to Long Sutton Fair (having conveniently forgotten to tell their parents about the Inspector's impending visit) this was about the average attendance; and when the Inspector's Report arrived (1st April!) it must have given some satifaction to both Mr. Patchell, who copied it into the Log Book, and to Mr. Riggott. "The order of the school is very good," it says, "and the children passed a very fair examination. The spelling was inaccurate, and the reading monotonous, but the children work neatly, and with few exceptions worked their sums correctly. Mrs. Riggott takes great pains with the Girls' Needlework." And a brief postscript adds: "The master will shortly receive his Certificate." (And, one hopes, the due augmentation of salary.)

The two MSS from which one learns much concerning the people of Gedney Marsh in the mid-19th century — Mr. Patchell's Journal, and Mr. Riggott's Log Book — are completely different in purpose, content, style, and method of construction. The clergyman is getting to know his people by visiting them where they are. He sees the farmers in their spacious homes, or in smaller and older homesteads; or he meets them on their way to market, as well as at the services he is able to organise. He talks of parish affairs with the joiner, the tailor, the inn-keeper; he penetrates the most "wretched hovels", as well as the admirable new estate cottages, for he must know them all. He

records what he sees, and whom he meets, and what he thinks of them; but this is for his own eyes; his comments are as private as his prayers. His feelings control his style; he "runs on", putting things down as they come to him. Mr. Riggott, on the other hand, keeps his Log as the law requires him to do, making "the briefest entry which will suffice to specify . . . whatever fact . . . concerning the School . . . may require to be referred to at a future time, or may otherwise deserve to be recorded." He does not roam the parish in search of his flock of two or three score children; they come to him. His style, while not without some unusual constructions, is fittingly spare, and his feelings, although sometimes impossible to conceal, are never allowed to inflate the record. So between them the parson and the dominie give a credible and somewhat endearing picture of a Victorian village community in the making.

Every Monday Mr. Riggott entered in the school Log Book the names of the two monitors for the week, and every Friday he commented on the quality of their service. "Satisfactory" was the usual brief verdict: very rarely they fell short through unpunctuality — once a monitor was discharged in mid-week for this offence. When I first published some extracts from this Log Book, nearly forty years ago, a former Dawsmere 'monitor' of the 'sixties was an appreciative reader: too late I regret that I did not ask him just what the monitors' duties then were. It seems improbable that the original Bell or Lancaster systems, by which the master instructed the monitors, and the monitors taught the rest, were still operating on the original pattern, even in remote village schools. It had been a sensible, and indeed the only practicable method when teachers were very few and scholars relatively many, though sometimes Her Majesty's Inspectors noted its pathetic or ludicrous inadequacies. So first paid monitors, then pupil teachers, and at last assistant teachers in various stages of qualification came into action. But not yet, or for a good many years, at the small country schools. At Dawsmere, in the 'sixties, there was Mr. Riggott in charge; and Mrs. Riggott took 'sewing' on some — perhaps most — afternoons. And there were the odd occasions when Mrs. Patchell came to practice the children in singing, or even to give a hand in needle-work — how else could a naughty girl "draw stitches out of Mrs. Patchell's needlework"? There could be about fifty children present, from five to thirteen years of age — though few stayed beyond the age of eleven. We must suppose that the monitors at least kept order, as the Master taught,

as well examined, the five or six Standards. (And how, by the way, did they manage at that other school kept by Mrs. Noble the Primitive Methodist, in Drove End? As late as 1866 it was still going strong, with about forty pupils. Presumably they were the young ones, who would find it heavy going, along nearly two miles of muddy farm tracks, to the official 'Gedney Drove End School'. For thirty years the 'good Christian' lady, notes Mr. Patchell, had maintained her day and Sunday school. I hope she has, somewhere, a memorial).

Mr. Riggott's chief handicap was the irregularity of his pupils' attendance — far worse, said H.M.I., than in other similar schools. It was the more trying because the farmers' sons (their daughters did not attend) set so bad an example. The Leete boys would stroll in late ('30 minutes, on an average') for week after week. Once they were away three days 'killing mice'; and later, moving on, so to speak, in rodent control, 'killing rats'. To be fair, when they were Monitors for the week, they seem to have been punctual and reliable. All the farmers would keep their sons at home to work (or 'supervise', once, in the case of Griffith Leete); and Mr. Brown once sent for the children of his employees. Mr. Brown, a School Manager, was at least punctilious in addressing his requests to the Master: sad was the day when he courteously sought leave of absence for his four sons 'to attend their sister's funeral'.

As compulsion was out of the question, Mr. Riggott could only complain to parents, directly, or through Mr. Patchell. If the fault lay in the children, he could punish by detention, an appropriate deterrent for habitual late-comers. He seems to have carried the practice somewhat far when Joseph Warde, for whom playing truant was almost a way of life, was 'kept in all night'. As his parents, according to Mr. Riggott, 'did not care' about his absenteeism, presumable they did not miss him at bed-time. At least one other truant was given the same treatment; where were they put? There was no cell there in my time!

There were some unusual reasons advanced for keeping the children from school, apart from one that can no longer apply, namely, that the parents could not find the 'school pence'. (This was why children were away from school for months on end, returning too often with all but their letters forgotten.) One mother gives notice that her daughter will be at home for a week to learn a recitation for the Chapel Tea Party; a boy is kept away from school for a fortnight for a similar purpose. We get glimpses of old farming practice when children are away 'bean dropping'; and the school can be 'very thin' after harvest so long as there is gleaning available. John Atkinson lived beside the sea bank: one day Mr. Riggott notes that 'Mr. Atkinson is missing in the fog'. I think we can assume that he turned up safely, for a day or two later John has time off 'plover-catching'.

The children could rarely claim to have erred in ignorance, but some of the Master's warnings seem almost to have provoked misdoings, so promptly does it follow prohibition. Told on one day not to climb over the newly painted railings, the next day they do just that; two days later the warning is repeated, and the next day, sure enough, the cane comes out. Playing marbles meant dirty hands, so Mr. Riggott 'discharged the Tillsons from' this pastime

for one month. It is not quite clear what Alfred Hammond was up to, that he had to be 'warned against using aliases in the playground'. Perhaps it was akin to 'calling an old man improper names', for which Mr. Patchell reported the Tillsons to the Master. (Perhaps he was an improper old man, for they do not appear to have been punished). Very sad, somehow, is the case of little George T., 'severely punished for using bad language — only 5 yrs of age and appears to be wholly unable to restrain himself when excited'. George is kept at home for the next three months, and Mr. Riggott may have felt some compunction for his severity: on his second day back George, '(5¼ yrs) reproved for swearing, says his father swears at home'. The permissive age is dawning — I suppose even now children would be reproved for this deviation in school hours.

Ailments are not unduly frequent. From time to time somebody is 'sick of the ague', and there are bouts of 'hooping cough'. There are complaints from farmers' wives about 'itch' or 'ring-worm' among the children — not always well founded. Wm. Naylor dies of diphtheria (he lost another brother, home from boarding school); and Herbert Leete dies somewhat suddenly from 'an enlargement of the heart'.

But I must leave this unexciting narrative — not without regret: 'H. Naylor tried to pass a bad halfpenny for a pencil case; kept in school in consequence of very bad writing' is too good to omit. But to unfold the 'steel trinket' affair, or discuss the propriety of punishing children on Monday for naughtiness in church (the school) on Sunday, or speculate about Wm. Redstone's pistol (a real one), or the chagrin of the Laws children forbidden to wear toy watches in school . . .

On 16th July, 1867, 40 boys and 35 girls sat down at the School Tea Party. Teachers and children took this opportunity to present Mrs. Patchell with a walnut writing desk. It was a farewell gift. On 30th October the Patchells left for Holbeach St. John's, where Mr. Patchell became the first Vicar, complete with Church. But at Gedney Drove End, after nearly twelve years, and for all that a site had been given, and much money promised for the project, not a sod had been turned or a stone laid. Two men, it seems, had remained silent.

A CHURCH AT DROVE END?

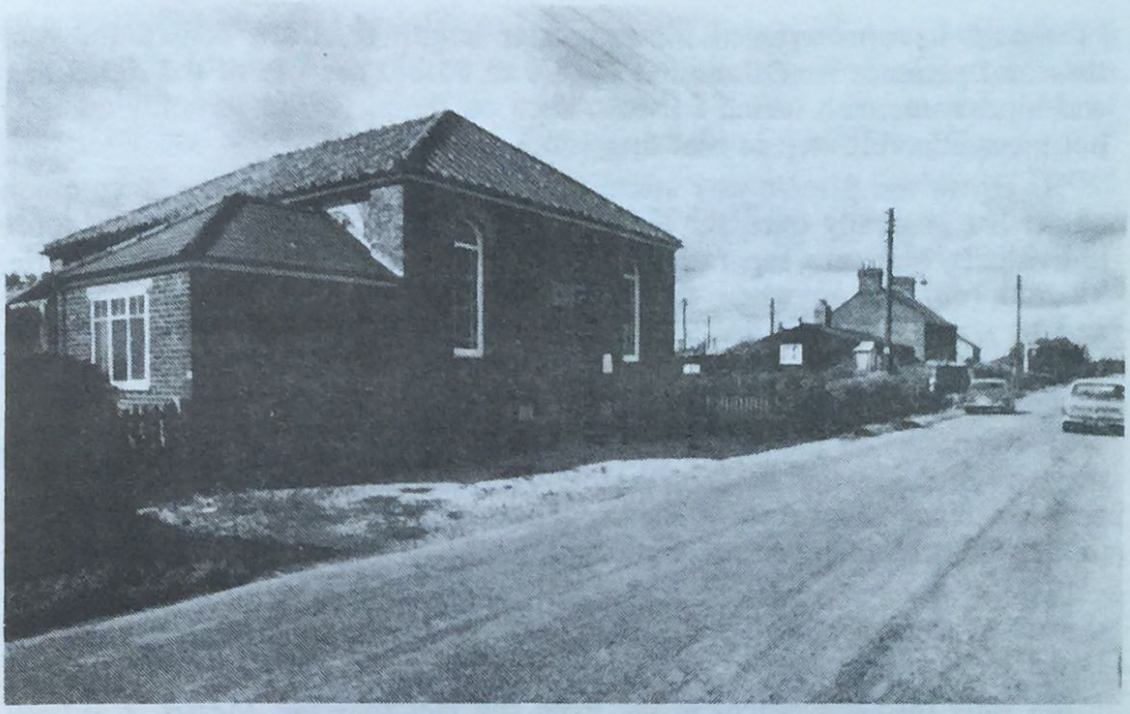
The Incorporated Church Building Society, founded in 1818, is well known for the grants that it has made towards the erection or restoration of hundreds of churches — at the same time promoting the abolition of pew rents, as their tablets in our churches remind us. It was to this Society that Mr. Patchell made application for assistance, in the summer of 1866, at the climax of his efforts to provide a church at Gedney Drove End. I am indebted to Mr. W. A. Carter, the Society's Secretary, for his kind permission to quote from the letters that the Incumbent wrote at that time, and can now give, in his own words, the good clergyman's view of his needs and prospects and of his own labours in the Marsh during those ten years. But not all his words: for when Mr. Patchell's heart was full, he disdained to use one word where ten would serve!

On 29th May in that year he completed the Application Form supplied by the Society. The Section headings date it: "3 . . . State number of the poorer inhabitants in the District." "Nearly 700" says the Incumbent, arriving at this, in a marginal note, by analysing the whole population thus: "Occupiers of over 20 acres — 24 (number in families 112); domestic servants — 50; poorer inhabitants — 638." Question 7 is "Room (in the church) to be provided: For the poor (Mr. Patchell ingores this); for children — 54; For others — 235; 289 in all." Number 10 asks — and the answers bode ill — "Estimated Expenses": the answer — "Building, £1,300; Extras — £100; Architect's Commission — £65; travelling — £15, Total £1,480 . . ." But "Funds raised and expected amount to £660 — a deficiency of £820."

However, leaving behind these somewhat daunting figures the ardent clergyman plunges into "Particulars", which he interprets as an invitation to tell all that is in his heart, as he looks back over the past ten years. Among some repetition of figures given, he adds a detail that will be of interest when we come to his successor's day. He "occupies the house rent free, on condition of keeping it in repair inside and outside . . . with it he has rent free a garden, paddock, and plantation 2r. 3p. in extent."

"On his first appointment" (he now gets into stride) "a large proportion of the District was in the hands of proprietors unable or unwilling to assist in any scheme for the improvement of the people who were in a most neglected state, and Drove End was notorious for the utter disregard of law human and divine shown by many of its inhabitants. Drunkenness prevailed among **all classes.** Sunday was chiefly observed as a day of visiting and amusement, and several couples lived together without marriage and without being regarded by their neighbours as doing anything particularly disgraceful." The roads, too, were bad, but . . .

"It is now greatly changed. Good roads have been made in several directions . . . A school and master's house were built in 1856 by the Messrs. Cardwell, aided by a grant . . . and some small contributions in money and labour . . . (In the school) are held two services on Sunday . . ." He adds information about the Mission house at Drove End, where "all services are well attended . . . In the present year a site has been given by the Revd. Ch.



Drove End Chapel

Mossop for church and churchyard. The Crown and the Eccles. Commissioners who have both lately purchased farms in the District, contribute to the Building Fund" (about half the £660). "The Incumbent therefore hopes that the Messrs. Cardwell, who have not yet promised any help will come forward when they see other persons and parties interested doing their duty . . . " He has almost finished the page, and hurriedly crowds in . . . "Sunday is now **fairly** observed in the District. The Incumbent knows of **one** couple (and their circumstances are very peculiar) living together unmarried and the policeman told the Incumbent within the last week that for a considerable time he has not seen a drunken man in the District and lastly there is a general feeling among all classes of the people that the site is a fair one."

Did Bishop Jackson, who could barely find room for his signature beside Mr. Patchell's, have an opportunity to ask "What **were** those very peculiar circumstances ?"

The Committee of the I.C.B.S. might well have thought this was information enough, and to spare, for their purpose. But much more was to come. The next day Mr. Patchell wrote again, and at considerable length:

" . . . I am most anxious to be in time for the monthly meeting of Committee . . . I can do nothing till I have reached a financial position that would warrant my renewing my application to the Messrs. Cardwell. I know that they consider — and justly — that they were not fairly met by other owners of land when they moved in school building, and tho' they have not said so I am forced to the conclusion that they will do nothing in the matter of church building till they have convincing proof that other owners in the District are prepared to contribute their full proportion of the fund required."

After saying that he encloses "four printed Reports in which I gave some account of our circumstances here" (something to look for, there) he adds:

"I should have to write at much greater length than any regard for your time and patience would allow if I were to unfold the tale of the difficulties and hindrances with which I have had to contend . . ." he certainly makes a not inconsiderable step in that direction.

"I. Up to the present any attempt to unite the District for any common object has generally been the signal for the defection either of one or more individuals, each on a separate ground, or of a clique. But by yielding a little, by compromising anywhere that truth and right were not directly involved, and by waiting with as much patience as I could for many years, I have at last gained this much: a site . . . given freely . . . confessedly well situated . . . against which no real objection has been made.

II. Readiness on the part of the occupiers of land and the great numerical majority of the owners to contribute . . . (crippled in many cases by Rinderpest which has swept away whole herds in the District) to the building fund." (This would be the great epidemic of 1865).

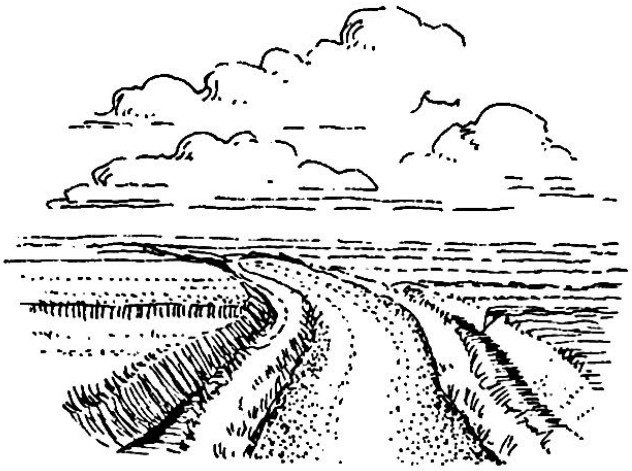
"III. A widely spread sympathy with me in my effort to build a church shown by contributions . . . from persons having no connection with the District.

My only discouragement arises from the fact that the Messrs. Cardwell decline to recognise in any way my present project — but I have hopes that they will aid in it when I can bring it before them only requiring an amount of aid proportionate to their interest in the District. Their tenants are satisfied with the site, are subscribing to the building Fund, and have **all** made a requisition to the Messrs. Cardwell to make good the road to the **site,** undertaking to pay interest on the money expended in the form of a rent-charge on their farms."

And the next day he writes again, "like the importunate widow: I hope I may prove so in the end." There is another circumstance that may "seem important to your Committee". It is, alas, Mrs. Noble and her school and her Primitive Methodist following, that he brings into the case for a church at Drove End. She whom he had described as "a superior woman . . . and a good Christian" on their first meeting, who had indeed allowed him to hold cottage lectures in her house, is now (it is perhaps a subtle distinction) "a clever earnest woman", who preaches to a large congregation principally of women and children. He sees that "the young will be drawn away from the Church by a power that exercises very little influence for good on them as they grow older, their teachers after a time being satisfied with collecting them occasionally by 'sensation' preaching and tea-drinking"; these, he thinks, "have a demoralising effect on them." A church and burying ground near the village would, he believes, strike an effectual blow against this "cause". without alienating the people by a crusade against it."

One can see his point, without approving his argument. It seems a sad decline. The faithful pastor who has, with much patience and labour, brought a disunited people to be of one mind, improved (from bad to fair) the standard of Sunday observance, banished the curse of universal drunkenness, and of irregular unions (except a very special kind), now sees his great project as a means of defeating Mrs. Noble, her large congregation of women and children, and the Demon Tea. This is not the Patchell of the Journal, and its touching

ejaculatory prayers: "May the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls bless it and then it must prosper!" he wrote of his work at Drove End Mission House. One hopes that, whatever he might think and write in this time of stress, he had time to murmur "Except the Lord build the House . . ." There were very good reasons for planning to build the church at Drove End; dishing the Methodists could not be one of them.



CHURCH & VICARAGE AT DAWSMERE

It could be said that the Church Building Society was less concerned with Mr. Patchell's blow-by-blow account of his battle against the forces of evil — after all, that was what he was there to wage — than with some suspected faults in Mr. Fowler's designs, doubts that were hastily passed on to the architect by the anxious incumbent, as he informs the Society in a letter that trembles with agitation. Mr. Fowler himself is confident but accommodating. The Society's Committee of Architects thought that the walls should be at least 2 ft. 9 ins. thick, and had misgivings about the foundations. And was brick alone adequate? The architect replied that the warp soil "is not calculated to bear any great weight", which was why he had kept the thickness of the walls at 2 ft.; as they would be of brick, he thought they would be as good as a thicker wall of any other material. But if the Committee knew of any better method, he would be glad to adopt it. The materials, he adds: "have all to be brought by sea, and we have nothing but brick to build with." There are some more notes on the softness and flatness of the soil, and his readiness to act on any better advice that they can offer is civilly repeated. It would appear that the Committee was satisfied. The Society's seal was placed on the plans, and a grant of £90 was voted. Mr. Patchell expressed his "grateful thanks" for this liberal response.

The Vicarage

Unfortunately this brought the total given or promised to little more than £750. The gap was still about £700; the Cardwells made no move, and the project died.

So Mr. Patchell departed and the Revd. Richard Powell came in his stead. He was no stranger to the Marsh, having been for three years curate of Fleet, mere walking distance (in those days) from 'the District'. There is reason to think that he and Mr. Patchell were on very friendly terms. They were both Irishmen, and both graduates of Trinity College, Dublin, where so many clergymen of the Church of England, as well as of Ireland, were soundly prepared for their ministry, both before and since 1873, when, after almost three hundred years, it was opened to non-Anglicans. Although Powell was five years younger, there is just a possibility that they met at T.C.D., since Powell was admitted to the University in 1846, the year before Patchell graduated. A year after Powell took up his duties at Fleet (his seventh curacy in thirteen years) he was visiting his fellow countryman at Dawsmere, and went along with him to the School, as Mr. Riggott duly notes. He would be well aware of the older man's efforts to build a church; and in due course he succeeded where the other had failed. The reason is very simply disclosed in the terms of Mr. Powell's letter (he was not a man of unnecessary words) to the I.C.B.S., on 23rd December, 1868.

"Revd. Sir,

I find from the papers handed to me by my predecessor in the Incumbency of Gedney Drove End District that the Incorporated Church Building Society promised to the Church wh. is about to be built there a grant of £90.

The prospects of building the Church were never so bright as at present, as one of the landowners who had been holding out has at length come round and is giving £500 to the Building Fund, a site near the Parsonage & School, & is also taking an active part in carrying out the work.

My predecessor had employed Mr. Fowler as Architect, & his plans were I believe approved by your Board. The gentleman to whom I have just referred wishes, however, to employ Mr. Christian, & to that, however much I sh'd have liked to have carried out my predecessor's plans, I can have no objection. Mr. Christian is I believe one of your Society's Architects — New plans &c. will therefore have to be submitted to you. I shall be glad to know if I may hope to have the grant made to my predecessor given to me? . . . "

There is no need to name "the gentleman to whom Mr. Powell had just referred," nor to wonder why he had "at length come round."

The two Cardwells were in Dawsmere on 3rd and 4th March, 1868, visiting the School on both days, and the subject of the church could hardly have been avoided during their stay in the District. They had not so much "come round" as dictated the terms on which their essential financial support was to be gained. Their own correspondence with the Ecclesiastical Commissioners enlarges the picture. The site they would give was to be adjacent to the "parsonage". The architect was to be Mr. Christian, who, as was now well known in the Marsh, was designing three churches within a few miles of Dawsmere, none of them to cost more than £1,000. The Cardwells' promise of £500 was therefore sufficient to meet all that was likely to be required. The church would be considerably smaller than that designed by Mr. Fowler; if only Mr. Patchell had thought of a smaller church he might have . . . but he didn't. The I.C.B.S. reduced their promised grant to £75, in view of the reduction in accommodation from 289 to 192. All was now plain sailing; the foundation was laid in 1869, and the church duly consecrated on 7th April, 1870, by Bishop Wordsworth. The School closed for the day.

The Cardwells gave rather more than they had promised, and with some ingenuity. As we have seen, they allowed the Incumbent to live rent-free in one of their redundant farm-houses: already it was known as the parsonage (though Mr. Patchell had named it — perhaps using an older name — "Dawsmere House"). As Gedney Drove End was now to be a Parish indeed, it needed its own parsonage; and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were prepared to provide one. The Cardwells therefore offered to sell to them the house in which Mr. Powell was already living, for £500 — which they would immediately give to the building fund. Mr. Christian, acting for the Commissioners, valued it at something under £400; but the Cardwells pointed out that Mr. Patchell had spent more than £350 in improvements to it. Since Mr. Powell had expressed his own satisfaction with it, and in view of the destination of the proceeds, the Commissioners agreed. This arrangement presumably came about before the church was built, and was part of the process by which the Cardwells "came round". But it is not quite the end of the parsonage story.

Some months later, Mr. Powell changed his mind about the suitability of the house which the Commissioners had purchased. In view of his re-

the Revd. F. G. H. Foxton, just returned from 13 years service in New Brunswick, was appointed to succeed Mr. Powell in 1871, he found the old parsonage demolished and the new one unfinished. Back, one might say, to square minus one.

As for Mr. Patchell, he had retained contact with Dawsmere, and his friend the Vicar; his official visits to the School, as Diocesan Inspector, are duly recorded in the Log Book, and so are the two occasions when he and Mrs. Patchell called on Mr. Riggott and his charges, together with Mr. Powell These visits took place both before and after the decision to build the church at Dawsmere. His last official visit seems to have been on 27th March, 1871. Less than three weeks later Mr. Powell marks his own impending departure to Hereford by presenting each child at the school with a bun and an orange, decreeing a half-holiday as well. On the actual day of removal, the Vicar again called to "bid farewell to the school children". It was a "very wet morning"; in the afternoon Harry Clifton was punished for "urging the younger children to fight".

A year later the Patchells also moved away from South Lincolnshire, probably finding Holbeach Fen hardly less bleak, to Hibernian taste, than the wind-swept Marsh. Mr. Patchell was appointed Vicar of Tathwell, near Louth, the Curate-in-Charge of that parish, the Revd. Robert J. Leslie, taking his place at Holbeach St. John's. Mr. Leslie was another T.C.D. graduate, and a contemporary of Powell; and as he had been a curate at Bingham, near Nottingham, shortly before Patchell left Nottingham, it would not be surprising if they also were acquainted.

Dawsmere House (formerly 'Browns')

PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

With the arrival of the Revd. G. F. H. Foxton at his new vicarage, the narrative approaches the frontier of living memory, a territory in which a jungle of luxuriant anecdotes hampers the simple historian's progress. Indeed, there are good reasons for bringing the story to an end here. Outwardly Dawsmere has hardly changed at all in a century; the only house in the village to have disappeared (the school house) was immediately replaced by another to serve the same purpose. But it is at this point that a realisation of change breaks in, for those who knew the village half a century ago. I think that one must admit an impression — indeed, the fact — of loss, here, as in almost all small villages; but "loss" can mean little to those who never knew, and do not need, the elements of rural community life that have disappeared. The smithy is closed and silent; but then there are no farm horses to be shod, and no simple, black-smith made farm implements to be fashioned there. The wheelwright's shop is closed too; but again there is no call for the wooden carts and waggons that were painstakingly shaped and assembled there, to last for a life-time. The village children do not hear, as we heard, the ring of the hammer on the anvil, the hiss of red-hot iron plunged into the trough beside the forge, the crisp slither of the plane as the carpenter shaped the shaft; they have never heard these sounds, and do not miss them, as we can easily persuade ourselves that we miss them. We cannot tell whether they would prefer the sights and sounds and smells of past days to those that impinge on their senses.

But, by the way, where are the children? Not in the school, which has been sold, and converted into a shed to house machinery; so the children no longer run out of school to play around the big horse-chestnut tree —

— or to climb rebelliously over the railings; and there is no schoolmaster to record their misdemeanours in his Log Book (the school house has been sold) or to walk down to report their faults to the Vicar (for the Vicarage has been sold). And the "Pastoral Superintendence" of the District, wrested from the impotent hands of the outraged Vicar of Gedney in 1855, has now been transferred to the Vicar of Lutton, who, thanks to modern means of communication, can arrive at Dawsmere from his home in about the same time that it would have taken Mr. Patchell to walk to the shop and back. So even when we regret change (which, in spite of outward appearances, has affected Dawsmere as it has any other part of Lincolnshire) we must concede the gains. It will change again, and perhaps more for the better than for the worse; but those who are children now will then be saying: "We liked it the way it was!"

Dawsmere, in spite of being a small, relatively new, village, which has never grown, has displayed a remarkable power to hold the affection of those fortunate enough to have lived there, if only (and this applies to most of its children) for a few years. I think this outward changelessness is an important part of that hold. Those who return are glad, when they see the place, that it *looks* the same; the houses are still homes; the shop is still, happily, the Shop; and the church is still the Church. There they stand, where, it seems, Providence, and those instruments of Providence, the

"Messrs. Cardwell", if not Mr. Patchell and the Drove Enders, intended them to stand. For although Dawsmere is far from the main roads, is not on the way to anywhere in particular, is not a famous beauty spot, and has but a plain inexpensive Victorian church lowly rated in guidebooks, still visitors come, and come again. A great deal of the disappointment that attends the return to so many once loved places is due to their being other than they were; we don't visit them to see improvements; we wouldn't go again if we hadn't liked them as they were. Dawsmere is, as nearly as can be expected, changeless to the eye. So the visitors come, often from far away places; and they come to the church. Some come because their parents or grand-parents were baptised there, or married there, or buried there. Some are drawn by grateful memories; perhaps in that place they first "saw the traffic of Jacob's ladder . . . ", whether in the stress of some "sore loss", or even as the most natural thing in the world, as they worshipped there. "There is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!"

The rest is 'postscript'. Mr. Patchell remained at Tathwell for the rest of his life, dying at the ripe age of 81, on 5th August, 1901. While at Tathwell, he had the satisfaction of engaging the services of Mr. Fowler the Louth architect, for the restoration of his church and the addition of a vestry, the latter at the Vicar's sole expense. The present Vicar has kindly sent me copies of some of his predecessor's memoranda, recording, for instance, the village's celebration of Queen Victoria's Jubilee; his pen was still, it is plain, that of a ready writer. Mr. Nunneley also copied the wording of a memorial in the church which I saw there on a visit a good many years ago; a sad, slender link between the Patchells and the present writer. Mr. Patchell's daughter-in-law (Adelaide Mary Patchell, B.A.) "died of syncope after saving the life of a friend" in a Cornish cove. The date was 7th August, 1899; it was the day on which I was born.

Mr. Powell, his succesor at Dawsmere, lived a year or two longer than his old friend, having held two livings in the diocese of Hereford. I have a more tangible link with him; about 1924 his son, the Revd. J. K. Powell, Rector of Armitage, visited Dawsmere, to see again the church that his father had built more than fifty years before. Thereafter we corresponded regularly; when I was at Lincoln Theological College in 1929, he gave me the bible from which, I saw, he had often preached; I too often used it, until the binding began to weaken; and it is still useful for its bound-in concordance. At my ordination he gave me, with his love, the "Imitatio Christi"; and many books besides. A chance conversation on a black-out bus passing through Armitage, in 1943, told me what I would have known, that he had been a faithful pastor, much loved in that place.

Postscripts have a way of getting out of hand; I conclude with two small items among many that clamour for a place.

In 1902, fifty years after the Cardwells made their purchase of what became the Dawsmere estate, their heir disposed of it. The greater part of it was bought (to the surprise and chagrin of some of the tenants) by Mr. George Thompson. His wedding to a Miss Oldershaw, of Dawsmere, had been the first in Dawsmere Church, more than thirty years before; and his father, Mr. William Thompson, had been one of the earliest worshippers at Mr. Patchell's "cottage lectures" in Gedney Drove End, where he had "sung

lustily", and had "proposed flute, clarionet, etc. in the choir" — a suggestion that the incumbent did not take up.

In 1969 the Thompson family trust sold that same Cardwell property to the Church Commissioners. I am indebted to Mr. Armstrong, the Commissioners' Records Officer, for the information, at which I had guessed, that Edward Cardwell himself was one of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners from 1852 until 1859. (It is difficult not to suppose that his experience of the workings of that body, combined with his observation of the situation in Gedney Marsh, had something to do with the creation of the Ecclesiastical District of Drove End.) I find it an agreeable circumstance that what an Ecclesiastical Commissioner created — and with a conscientious concern for the place of the Church in his project — should now be an asset and a responsibility of the Church Commissioners.

In recent years, with the decline in the number of clergy and the reduction in the value of church investment income, the pastoral care of the rural parishes has inevitably declined. After the departure of the Revd. Thomas Leech in 1962 the cure has been shared with the adjoining parish of Lutton and the Dawsmere vicarage passed into private hands. Since that year, this parish has been part of the Elloe Group of Parishes.

What of the future? Dutch elm disease is taking its toll of the trees which flank the road through Dawsmere, but saplings are being planted in the gaps. The process of the grubbing out of hedgerows, which has transformed the landscape and created the giant scale of modern agriculture, can hardly be extended. The uncertainty of private transport in the future and the drift away from city life may bring about a return of community activity. The undermining of the material security of recent years may, hopefully, bring a rekindling of the spiritual life and values to which the church stands witness.

In addition to those already gratefully named, the following generous helpers have placed a great deal of information at my disposal, though they may have wondered what I did with it, since most of it has been built, unseen, into the foundations; Capt. E. J. S. Maples, Mr. J. C. Mossop, Mr. Frank Robinson, Mr. C. M. Lloyd, the Revd. H. C. J. Malkinson, the Revd. David Hill, and, most recently, Canon P. G. Binnall, whose knowledge of past Lincolnshire clergymen is only equalled by his knowledge of Lincolnshire churches. I thank them all; and if I have forgotten any, I thank them too.

THE PARISH CLERGY

1855-67	William Gibson Patchell B.A.
1867-71	Richard Powell M.A.
1871-96	George Fredk Hardman Foxton M.A.
1896-11	John Millett Coates
1911-22	John James Browne
1923-27	Philip Augustus Evens
1927-36	Walter William Nash Alsop M.A.
1936-46	Arthur Kenelm Fagge B.Sc.
1946-52	Richard Augustus Forde B.D.
1954-57	Thomas Petitjean
1958-62	Thomas Leech
1962-67	Brian Walter Lowcock Ll.B
1968-8?	David Rowland Hill B.Sc.(Econ)