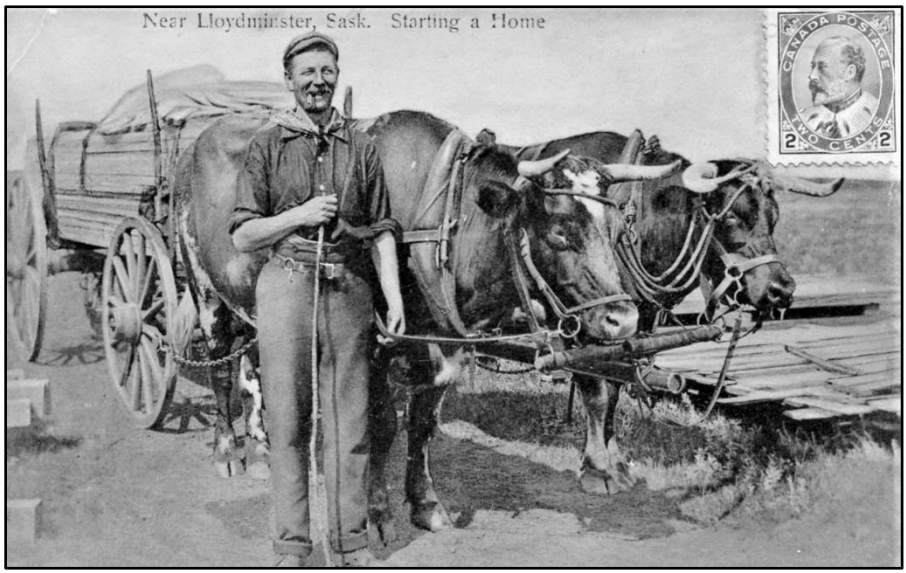
RETROSPECTIVES



Finedon's Canadian Pioneers
The Journey from Finedon to Lloydminster, Saskatchewan

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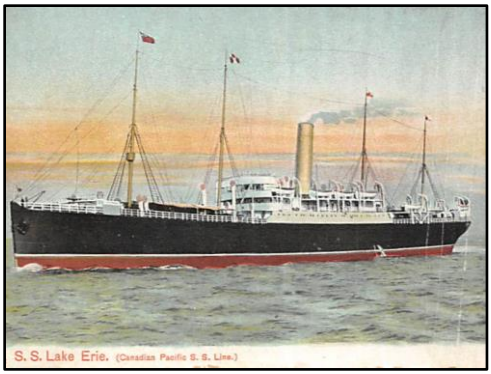
Finedon's Canadian Pioneers
The Journey from Finedon to Lloydminster, Saskatchewan

Carolyn Smith

In the last edition of Retrospectives, the lead article highlighted the Girls' School Coronation scrapbook compiled in 1953. As part of the scrapbook project the girls researched and wrote about the shoe factories in Finedon at that time. One of the factories had been owned by Albert Henson Bailey and Samuel Elson and the girls wrote, *'The firm was founded by Albert Henson Bailey and Samuel Elson in 1888 as Bailey & Elson. In 1900 it was changed to Bailey & Son and in 1919 it became A.H. Bailey and Sons Ltd.*' The following article explores why Samuel Elson left the company and the beginning of a new life for Samuel and his family in Canada.

Samuel Elson was born in Finedon in 1846; he worked as a shoemaker and by 1890 he was manufacturing boots and shoes in partnership with his niece's husband, Albert Henson Bailey. In 1890 they built the factory that stood until the 1960s, on the corner of Mulso Road and Wellingborough Road. In about 1900 the partnership split, and Samuel Elson then built his own factory, which within living memory was the Tower Boot Company factory, the building still stands adjacent to the block of flats on Wellingborough Road adjacent to the recreation ground.


S. S. Lake Erie. (Canadian Pacific S. S. Line.)

In 1904 Samuel Elson was declared bankrupt and very shortly afterwards, he and his extended family departed for Canada on board the Canadian Pacific steamship Lake Erie (pictured); they arrived at St. Johns, Newfoundland, on 23rd March 1904. The Elson family group comprised of: Samuel and his wife, Elizabeth, and their children Sarah, Florence and Frank. Also travelling with them was their married daughter Lucy Wilford and husband George, as well as their son Arthur and his wife Lillian, all accompanied by the eight Elson family grandchildren.

In late 1902, the Revd. I M Barr issued a pamphlet, headed, '*BRITISH SETTLEMENT IN NORTHWESTERN CANADA, ON FREE GRANT LANDS, CANADA FOR THE BRITISH.'* The object was to organize a *'body of British people of the right kind – English, Scotch* [sic] *and Irish*' to form a settlement in the prairies of Saskatchewan, Canada. This project went ahead and, in 1904, Samuel and his family were in the second wave of pioneers who were to become known as the Barr Colonists.

On arrival in the mid-west the family spent two weeks in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and then set out for Edmonton, Alberta, intending to travel by the river route rather than the long trek over the trail. On the way to Edmonton they were involved in a railway accident near Chaplin, west of Moose Jaw. Two of the carriages toppled down a steep slope. The family were all in the first of these carriages and, although some passengers were severely injured, family members suffered only minor ones. The carriage landed upside down, but the Elson's managed to walk along the ceiling to safety. The incident delayed their arrival in Edmonton by 15 hours.

The following information on the first part of the family's river journey is taken from an account given in a letter sent around 1948 by Arthur Elson to his friend Frank Bailey of Woodfield Cottage, Finedon. The remaining information is from a pamphlet Arthur Elson wrote, at around the same time, reflecting the early days of the Marshall Settlement; a copy of Arthur's account now resides in the Saskatchewan Archives.

To travel along the North Saskatchewan River, the family had to have a scow built at Walter's Mill, Edmonton. A scow is a cumbersome raft, 24 feet by 30 feet, with a shallow draught of only 6 inches when fully loaded, and steered from the stern by a long heavy oar. Once the scow was completed the family had to wait for 17 days for the river to rise; it was late spring, but the weather was cold and the snow had not melted in the mountains, hence the very low water. At Walter's Mill, the Elson's met a young man who heading for their intended destination. He had bought some timber and constructed a raft for himself and had left Edmonton ahead of the Elson family.

It took several days to load the Elsons' scow with oxen, wagon and farm machinery, chickens, baled hay and oats for the oxen, grain for the poultry, and 6 months provisions for the family. Also, a cooking range was set up on the scow so that cooking could be done on board. Once this was all loaded the family climbed on board, along with Ross, a part North American Indian, and expert river man whom they sensibly employed as their pilot.

It was late when the family left Edmonton on the first day so very little progress was made before they were obliged to tie up for the night at a small settlement near Frazers lumber mill. The following two days also saw very slow progress with low water and many sand bars to negotiate. On the third evening they tied up at Fort Saskatchewan and Arthur was sent to a bakery to obtain bread, as that was difficult to make with the limited cooking facilities on the scow. On arriving at the shop, Arthur was surprised to find the proprietor was a Northampton man who had left the county three years previously. He joined them for the evening, and this was spent talking about their old home.

Scow bound for the North, departing Edmonton, Alberta.
Postcard c.1910, The Valentine & Sons Publishing Co., Ltd.

The following day was quite eventful, and Arthur described it thus*: 'There was a very strong wind blowing upriver and we were having great difficulty in making any headway. Then on towards noon we heard an ominous sound carried by the wind, which gradually grew louder and louder until it became a mighty roar. Our pilot said it was one of the rapids, but though the water was low he thought it would be alright.*

'Suddenly we picked up a quicker current which got faster and faster and soon developed into a raging torrent. Immediately we found ourselves tearing through a narrowed portion of the river, formed by a large island. High rocks were showing on either hand and we and the pilot were working like madmen on the great sweep or oar (which was fixed on the square stern) to guide as best we could, this unwieldy craft, as we zig-zagged our way through the turbulent channel. The noise of the water in the channel was terrific, and it was impossible to hear each other's voices through it all,

but we could see the women and children were awfully scared and bawling their heads off. It was soon all over though for suddenly the noise ceased, the rocks and channel were left behind, and though travelling at great speed, we were in safe water. It hadn't lasted long, but coming through that rapid seemed an eternity to me.

'However, things changed quickly, and we soon had something else to occupy our attention, for there right ahead of us in this very fast stretch of the river, was our late acquaintance on his raft of lumber. He had run into a tremendous, big rock, his raft had slid over with its front end, and the rock had come up through the centre, the current was catching the corners of his craft, spinning it clockwise, around and around like a huge top, and it did look like a helpless situation. Anyway, we couldn't do a thing for it took us all our time and a tremendous effort to keep our own craft from the same fate, and quicker than it takes to tell we were around a bend in the river and out of sight. We have often wondered how he made out.' After negotiating more troublesome sandbanks the whole family were glad to tie up that night.

The following day was a much better day, and some progress was made. While they tied up for the night Arthur noticed a string of three scows loaded with oats that had left Edmonton just ahead of the family. As they came level each shouted greetings to each other, but as the string continued its way one sarcastic voice shouted, *'Goodbye, we will see you again in the fall*.' This remark was rather resented, especially by the pilot, but the last laugh, as shall be seen, was with the Elson family the following day.

After the scow had been secured, and while the women prepared a meal, the men climbed the bank and found the Lobstick Indian Reservation. Arthur again relates what happened that evening*; 'Then just as we had finished supper an Indian, who could speak English, came along to say that the chief of the band would like us to visit with him in his lodge. We accepted with alacrity, the messenger accompanying us. We climbed the high bank of the river and came out at the top into a very large clearing around which were dotted a large number of log shacks, varying in size, the chief's being of course the most pretentious. We went through the door into a medium sized room with no furniture, but a couple of elderly squaws were sitting on fur rugs on either side of an open fire on the earth floor, there being no chimney, just a hole in the roof above to take care of the smoke. Both were smoking pipes and making just about as big a cloud as the fire itself. We were shown into a much larger room with a long rough lumber table down the centre and a couple of long forms, one on each side. The chief himself sat in an armchair at the far end of the table and he was the only one there when we went in. As I entered the room, I noticed some peculiar objects hanging around the room on the walls, and it was a few*

'seconds before I realized that they were scalps. Then I am sure my own hair must have risen at least a trifle for I felt quite a creepy sensation pass over my scalp. The old chief, whom we found could speak English good enough to make himself understood quite well, must have noticed that I was taking stock of these scalps, for he was laughing and told me that mine was safe, and then proceeded to tell us all about them. They were the scalps he had taken in his young buck days, in their many scraps with the traditional enemy the Black Foot tribe, and he told us the names of some of the warriors they had belonged to.

'With that over he told us that he was the chief of the Lobstick Reservation, and that his name was chief Yee-cee-kar-was-is. He of course wanted to know our name and when I told him, we were named Elson he burst out in lively merriment. I guess he saw we were wondering at his merriment, so he hastened to explain that Yee-cee-kar-was-is, translated into English was Son of the Heavens, whilst we were Son of the other place. At this I suppose we laughed more heartily than he, and I sure have had a lot of fun relating that story to all and sundry, including some of the most prominent of our citizens today.

'We had a long evening with the old chief, listening to his account of his tribes wanderings, and their many encounters with their traditional enemies, and I for one was quite loath to leave. The old chief begged us to stay over all the next day and said that if we would give him a ½ lb of tea and a packet of tobacco he would gather up all the young bucks and young squaws and would put on a Sun Dance for our benefit. However we had been so long on our way we were anxious to be getting to the end of our journey so did not stop, but we did give the old chief a one pound packet of tea and a half dozen two ounce packets of tobacco, and to see his face light up at that was quite a picture, but he still said he would have liked to have put on the Sun Dance. For many years past the Sun Dance has been taboo through orders of the Federal Government, it is too fraught with danger of the young bucks going wild and doing much mischief, but I have often wished we had stayed and let the old chief give us an eyeful of this traditional ceremonial of the Redmen, for there are not so many white men who have seen a real Sun Dance. It is a real tribe ceremonial, and I am satisfied that the old chief would have taken good care and that we ourselves would not have been the victims of any excesses that might have arisen.

'I think that the old chief must have been pleased with our visit for the next morning when we pulled out from the riverbank, I think all of the Indian folk on the reservation were there to give us a send off.'

The following day was another slow journey in the morning due to the sand bars, but the pilot said they should move from the north to the south side of the river. Although this was a difficult move to make, they soon saw the benefit as they spotted the string of scows stuck tight on a sandbar on the north side. On passing they gave them a loud cheer, while the pilot climbed to the top of the luggage and crowed like a rooster. The scow arrived at Fort Victoria just before noon and, after stocking up with provisions, the family continued, albeit slowly, on their way.

The second week of the journey Arthur considered to be less eventful, although they had to negotiate another set of rapids and more sandbars before arriving at Hewitt's Landing. After two weeks almost to the hour' their river journey ended. Once their scow had been unloaded it was arranged with the Miller Brothers [local haulers] that they would carry three loads of belongings to the colony in exchange for the scow.

Lloydminster, Saskatchewan, 1910.
www.prairie-towns.com/lloydminster-images.html

The family stayed at the settlement over the weekend and on Monday morning they loaded their wagon and began their journey to the colony. After travelling for some hours in heavy rain they arrived at The Gully, they camped in a bluff where there were plenty of dead trees, so they were able to light a fire and dry out. The next morning they journeyed on and reached their destination, Lloydminster, at noon. A journey they had expected to take four weeks at most had taken ten weeks to complete.

Source: Origin and History of Fartown School District No. 1856 with Reminiscences, 1903 -1948, by Arthur Elson. Archives of Saskatchewan.

Finedon Independent Co-operative Society
Cultivation and Housing

Carolyn Smith

Once the Co-operative stores had become established and the Society had a reliable income, and savings deposits, the Committee started considering other areas where they could encourage self-help among their members.

In 1885 a field of arable land about 6 acres was purchased, and divided into 44 plots, to be let or sold. An eighth of an acre was the standard allotment, or garden field, plot size. The terms of purchase from the Finedon Independent Co-operative Society (FICS) were a £3 deposit plus the remainder to be paid either in full or by mortgage. All plots were quickly taken up and very few mortgages were needed.

In 1887 the financial position of the Society was so good that it was decided to begin offering mortgages to enable members to purchase their own houses. By the end of 1888, the Society had loaned out on mortgage £1,554 to its members.

Following the initial foray into land purchase the Society acquired a further plot of land at the end of 1893. This time it was just over 8 acres, and it was cut into 65 plots which were let to members for them to cultivate. By the end of the year all the plots had been let to members. On 19th January 1894 the *Northampton Mercury* reported this purchase in glowing terms, saying; *'This is a splendid instance of co-operative self-help, and is worthy of extensive imitation.'* At least one of these pieces of land, and possibly both, were situated near Irthlingborough Road.

A further land purchase was made in the autumn of 1899; unfortunately no acreage was given, but it was let out in plots for building or other purposes. This land may well be that which was known as Stores Field, and later formally named Miller's Close. At the half-yearly tea and meeting on the 21st January 1901 Mr. Hawthorne reported that the Society had by that time advanced 43 mortgages to its members with a combined value of £4,092.

After building the No: 2 Store on the Banks Field in 1902 there must have been some surplus land because, in January 1911, the Committee submitted a plan to members to erect cottages on The Banks, to be let on the rental-purchase scheme. Despite the acute shortage of housing in the town the scheme did not gain significant support and nothing came of it.

Aerial view of the Irthlingborough Road allotments (foreground), c.1960
FLHS Archive

Not all FICS mortgages went to their full term. A mortgage had been granted to Mrs Hulatt for two cottages in William Street, but the Society had to take over the cottages in 1914, put them into good order, and then rent them out. Also, in 1915, cottages built in Stores Field by J. Nicholls had been allowed to go into bad repair and the Society's mortgage was called in. As with the cottages in William Street, the Society put the houses into good order and then rented them out.

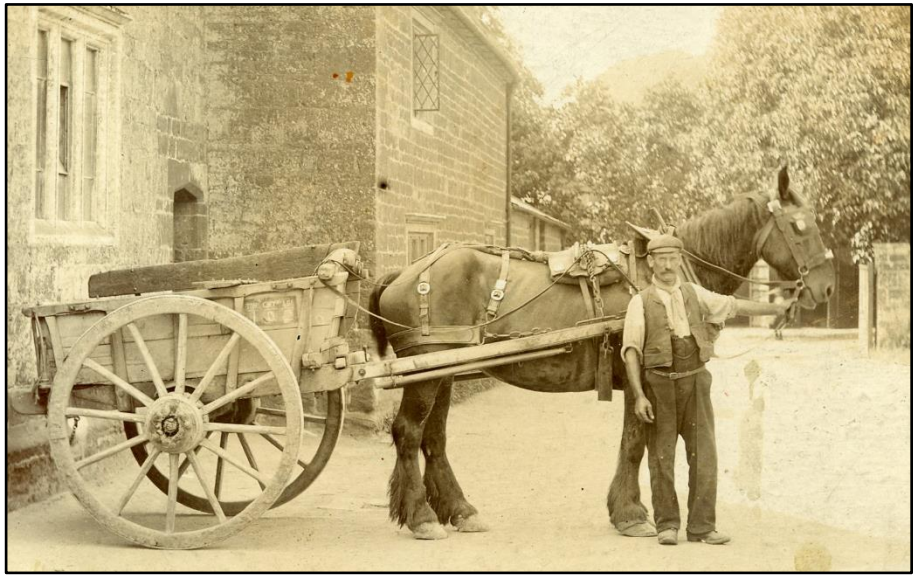
It has been suggested the terrace of four houses in Union Street was built either by the FICS or on their land. If this is correct, then this would strengthen the hypothesis that the land purchased in 1885 and 1893 was the land upon which Hayden Avenue now stands.

There is no evidence to suggest that the Society ventured into any further land purchases after 1918. From 1919 the Finedon Allotments Association had taken over responsibility for managing and providing allotments in Finedon.

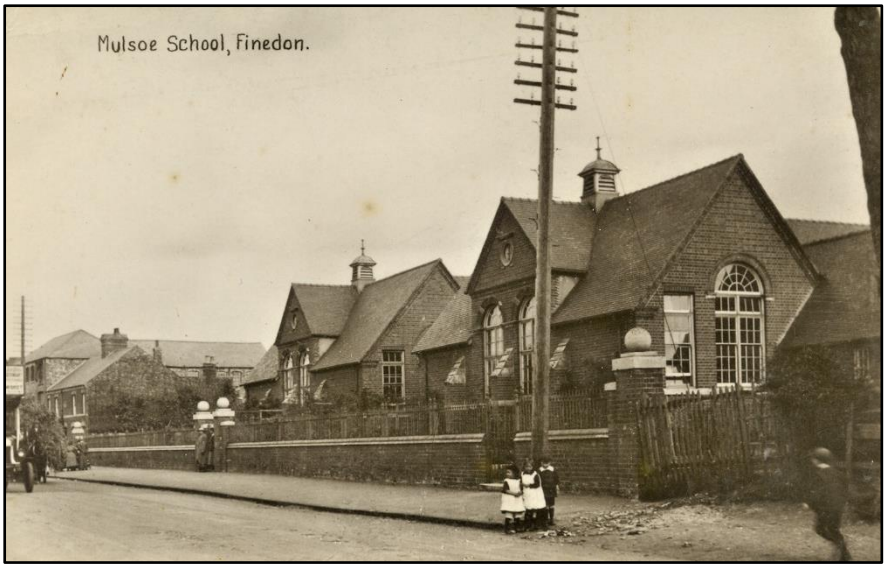
The Allotment Association minute books show that in October 1919 they purchased 22 acres, 3 roods and 27 pole of land that became the current Wellingborough Road allotments. This Allotment Association used a FICS loan of £750, to be paid back yearly, with interest, within 4 years.

Postcards and Photographs of Finedon

1920s postcard. From the Girls' School 1953 Coronation scrapbook.
The Infant School, built in 1931, now stands on the land to the right.



Local carrier, Bill Whiteman, outside the former Boys' School, 1930s.
The school was endowed in 1595. FLHS Archive.



Postcard, c.1916. Finedon Mulso School.

Finedon Scout Camp c.1930s. Only two names have been provided:
Herbert Smeathers and Bert Munns, both back row.
The two images on this page were donated by Rosemary Pearson

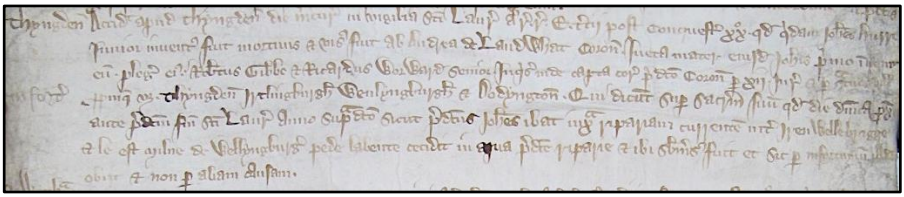
Medieval Finedon: Part 2

Stephen Swailes

Part 1 of Medieval Finedon, published in the May 2023 edition, looked at Finedon between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. Part 2 looks at other sources that tell us about some of the people from the village.

Inquests

The office of coroner was established in England around 1200. Each county had several coroners who investigated accidental or violent deaths after assembling a jury of twelve men, mostly from neighbouring villages, and inquest reports give a glimpse of what life was like for some. Not many inquests survive specifically for Finedon, but we know, for instance, that in August 1347 John Hurre junior slipped into the river at Thyngden and drowned. He was found by his mother, Ineta. Robert Gibbe and Richard Worward pledged that this was true.

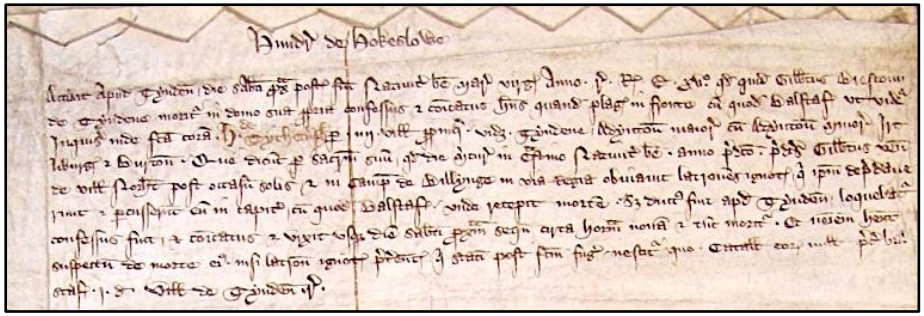


Inquest into the drowning of John Hurre.
Source: TNA JUST2/113 m.6

In September 1322, Gilbert Biestoun, possibly the same man mentioned in Part 1 and named in the 1301 taxation, was returning from Northampton when he was attacked by unknown thieves on the King's highway in the fields of Billing. He was struck on the forehead with a balstaff but somehow made it back to his house where he received the last rites. The value of the item that led to a person's death was forfeit to the Crown; in this case, the staff was valued at one penny which the town of Finedon had to pay. A balstaff was a quarterstaff about six to nine feet long and a popular weapon in medieval England. They were easily made, cost nothing and were deadly; they regularly appear in inquest reports as murder weapons.

Another inquest, dated 1321, tells us that Richard Thomas, a chaplain from Harrowden, was found dead by his sister Joan. It appears that he was killed when the gable end of a house called 'the gatehouse' fell on him. Whatever fell on him was valued at three pence and again the town had to pay. An inquest at Great Harrowden in September 1317 investigated the death of

Richard Clifforde who was found drowned in a millpond with no wounds on his body. He might have been looking for eels; the mill in question must have been on the River Ise.



Inquest into the killing of Gilbert Biestoun.
Source: TNA JUST 2/109 m.1

Patent Rolls and other sources

Patent Rolls are a class of administrative document recording the will of the Sovereign on a range of matters and many have been published. From these we know that in 1307 one John Metable was convicted of an assault on Robert le Bolde of Thyngden. John had been outlawed for not appearing before a court to answer the charges, but was pardoned on condition that he surrendered to the gaol at Northampton castle. In 1308 he was again pardoned on condition that he paid a ransom. Where Metable came from is unclear. In 1327 Theobald de Thynden was pardoned for the death of Henry Lucy, also of Thynden. The circumstances of the death and the reasons for the pardon are not known. Perhaps this was the same Theobald de Thynden who resigned his position at the church of Hoghton in Winchester diocese in 1305. Was he also the Theobald de Salicibus (Theobald in the willows) of Thyngdene, who in 1301, conveyed a house with land in Orlingbury to Robert son of Peter de Pyghtesle (Pytchley) and Isabel his wife. John Denys of Thyndon was appointed vicar of Wadhurst (East Sussex) in 1316.

In 1318, Master John de Hildesley was presented to the church at Finedon and the same year, as parson, he complained that several others from Finedon, Great Harrowden and elsewhere had entered his close, cut down his trees and ‘fished his stews’, and carried away the fish and the timber. Presumably, ‘fished his stews’ meant netting fish in his fishponds. What became of his complaint I could not discover but, in 1331, the same John of the church of Thyngden was sent to Gascony on the King’s service. Adam de Wylughby of Thyngden was his attorney and one John atte Welle the

younger was to travel with him. John Hildesley, doubtless fluent in English, French and Latin, had a deep understanding of affairs in Gascony and was regularly involved in diplomatic missions. In 1323 he was a clerk in the first Bench in Chancery. He was elevated to the Bench of the Exchequer in 1332 and became Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1334 (source: *Speculum*, 1944). From a class of document called Feet of Fines we know that, in May 1332, Adam de Wylughby of Thyngden and Isabel his wife entered into a land and property transaction with John Byweston of Thyngden, chaplain.

In 1336, John Thyngden was given a royal mandate to procure twelve good oaks for repairs in the castle at Newcastle and, in 1339, he was assigned to find ships to take victuals from Lincolnshire to Perth. At the same time he was allowed to travel to Scotland under the name of Henry Grene of Isham, or William de Farham of Thyngden. Perhaps he was going undercover. In 1341 John of Thyngden, receiver of the King's victuals in Newcastle, was ordered by the King to receive 100 tuns of new wine and keep them safe until further notice. The same John, also receiver of the money reserved for the war against the Scots, then seems to have been ordered to sort out a situation in which large amounts of wine had found their way to Stryvelyn (Stirling) castle, which at the time was being besieged by the King's enemies. Other transactions show that John was collecting large debts owed to the King and receiving and paying large sums of money on the King's business. In the same year, Robert de Thynden, chaplain, was appointed by the King to celebrate divine services for himself, his heirs and the souls of the departed in the chapel in the castle at Newcastle, and was to be paid 100 shillings a year for doing so. Presumably the same Robert, chaplain of the chapel in the castle, was there in 1365 when he was instructed to supervise the carpenters, masons and other labourers making repairs to it. We also encounter one Gilbert of Thynden, usher of the King's Hall, in 1341. Whether these men of Finedon were related is unclear, but the rolls show examples of the senior positions that they achieved.

Borrowing money was commonplace and, inevitably, some people got into debt. In 1375, John Giles of Thyndon was involved in a case concerning a debt of 20 marks and the King ordered his stewards to be very careful when taking the inquisition so as not to prejudice either party. In 1475, William Plowryght of Thynden, husbandman, alias Chapman, alias William Ploughwryght late of Thyndon, yeoman, was called to answer for two debts of 54 shillings and £13-6s-8d.

Women are often mentioned in medieval records, but often only as a wives. One exception, however, occurs in a baptismal list of children of the Fairfax family who lived at Deeping-Gate near Peterborough. The list gives the usual information, along with the names of godparents, but against one of

the children born in 1458 it lists 'Johanna Dey de Thynden, mydwife, obstetrix' (*Notes & Queries*, 1862). Joan, it seems had developed a reputation in midwifery and was perhaps a midwife to the gentry. Day/Dey is an old Finedon name and occurs in 1509 in the Mulso versus Selby enclosure dispute (see the FLHS Retrospectives of September 2022).

As it was a relatively large place, Finedon features in a range of documents, and it is possible to identify some of the people who lived in the parish long before 1538 when parish registers were introduced in England. We hear of people who became close to the King and who conducted the King's business. We also hear of the lives of people more ordinary, some of whom met untimely deaths. People who can trace their family history back to the early 16th century in Finedon might be lucky enough to find that their surname was there much earlier by trawling a range of medieval documents.

Sources:
Inquests documents. The National Archives: JUST2 series.
www.medievalgenealogy.org.uk for summaries of medieval inquests in Northamptonshire.
FLHS Retrospectives, September 2022 can be found at:
www.finedonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk/society/newsletters

Mini-Arsenal at Finedon

Carolyn Smith

Parts 1 and 2 of Stephen's 'Medieval Finedon', highlighted local surnames, or variations of the same, that appear to have been ever-present locally over the centuries. This article, in part, confirms that some of those names of the Medieval period were still in Finedon during the 17th century.

In 1660, Charles II had just returned from exile and had been crowned King. Sir Justinian Isham from Lamport was the Justice of the Peace for Northamptonshire from 1660 onwards and it was probably because he this post that he was tasked to produce a list* of all men in the county who held weaponry and armour. The intended purpose of this list is lost in the mists of time, but it could have been that the new Parliament and King were unsure of how welcoming the general populace was towards them, and records such as this would give an idea of whether a standing army was required and what size it should be. It would also have helped if the need has arisen to recruit for the Militia.

Did anyone in Finedon have any arms or armour under their beds?

The following are the details for the village. At the time the population of Finedon was probably between six and seven hundred, perhaps a hundred households, and there were 28 men and one woman holding weapons. Of these, there were trade/craftsmen, one was a minister and the remainder would appear to have been of the yeoman/husbandman class. The only armour recorded is a head peece [sic – a helmet] owned by John Garrat. In addition to this there were 12 swords and 32 assorted firearms.

Of the 19 people who held one weapon, the weapon of choice was a firearm; swords were less popular; perhaps the swords were heirloom weapons that had been passed down in the family. Only four men: John Day, George Knighton, Nicholas Mason and America Baggerly (a shopkeeper) owed only a sword for defence. The other 8 swords were all held along with one or even two firearms. Mr Thomas Vincent had a muskit [sic], a sword and a burding peece [sic]; Elizabeth Vincent had a case of pistoles [sic], a sword and a musket; John Makenes had three gunnes [sic] and a sword; Thomas Wallis had a sword and a muskit ; Richard Wallis had a sword and a musket; John Garrat, along with his head peece had a musket and a sword; Mr Coles had a gunn and a sword; and William Hodgkin (fellmonger) had one gunn and a sword. The others who held multiple weapons were William Miller, who had two gunnes, and Henry Wallis who had a musket and a little gunn .

The fifteen men who only had firearms owned a variety of types. Valentine Makernes had a peece; George Whitlarke, John Wallis and Henry Whitlarke each had a musket. William May, Jefery Freeman and William Makernes each had a hand gunn. William Sibley, Nicholas Day, Robert Walker (carpenter), George Knighton the younger, John Day, John Tindall, Mr Sanderson the minister, and Thomas Saby each had a gunn.

Although these people had all lived through dangerous times, it is likely that these weapons were held as much for the protection of property as for personal protection. They were all from the section of society that had portable property, and possibly money, at home and therefore needed to consider the possibility of being targeted by the lawless element living among them. Would there be as many weapons held in Finedon now, even though there is a much larger population?

Source: *Isham of Lamport. Civil War Lists, Northamptonshire Archive. Reference IL 3977D.

‘**Parachute Joe’**

Carolyn Smith

In 1911, in a two up one down cottage on Church Street, Finedon, backing onto the Town Brook, between Mannings Yard and Henfrey’s Yard, lived one Joseph Ingram, his wife Martha, daughter Nellie and granddaughter Daisy. What made this ordinary family less run of the mill is the description of the householder given in the census, Joseph’s, occupation. It was stated that he was a *‘bricklayer and inventer* [sic], *aerial hydro and caleric inventer and builder of models thereof*.’ This was further clarified by ‘*One employed by bricklaying mainly, repairing and jobbing work and steeplejack, lightning conductor fixer and chimney shaft etc*’. This man was better known locally as ‘Parachute Joe.’

Joseph Ingram was born in 1848 in Crown Lane Oakham, the youngest child of George and Sarah Ingram. Unfortunately his mother died in 1851, and his father in 1852, so he was orphaned before he was four years old. He and his sister Mary moved in with their uncle, John Ingram, who was landlord of the Blue Bull Inn, Northgate St, Oakham, and Joseph remained living with his uncle until around 1871.

Joseph and Annie Burt married in London towards the end of 1871, but they were in Oakham by 1881, where Joseph was working as a stone mason-cum-bricklayer. Annie died in 1884 and Joseph married in Martha Jackson in 1885.

By 1891 the family had moved to Brook Street, Wellingborough, from Oakham; this was via Bisbrook, Rutland. By this time Joes’s job description was becoming more diverse: *‘bricklayer, balloon maker, aerialist, aerial and pyrotechnic scientist*.’ He and his family were in Little Harrowden by 1894 and they had moved on to Burton Latimer by 1901. After spending a short time in the Berrywood Asylum in 1907, the family finally arrived in Finedon by 1911 where they remained until Joseph was removed to Northampton workhouse at the time of his final illness towards the end of 1921. He died in the Infirmary there during the first week of 1922.

The first of Joseph’s reported exploits took place in 1888. He had built a 40-foot scaffolding tower in the Victoria Grounds at Wellingborough with the intention of launching himself from the top while holding a canvas sheet. Fortunately, the Deputy Chief Constable of Wellingborough refused to allow him to go ahead. However, he was allowed to use a man-size weight attached to the sheet to demonstrate what he had proposed. When thrown

from the top of the tower, the weight penetrated the ground and proved that, had Ingram been attached, he would have been fatally injured.

Throughout the next three decades reports alternated between his appearances before the Bench for various thefts - for which Ingram always had an inventive explanation, and his various legitimate exploits. He undertook a number ranging long-distance walks, of between one thousand and two and a half thousand miles, around England. Whenever he arrived in the county on one of these walks, reports would appear in local almost every day in newspapers.

Copyright Alan Burman, 'County Tales'.

By 1905, his interest in parachutes seemed to have been replaced by powered flight. Whilst in Irchester he announced that he had plans for a really practical flying machine. The machine would weigh 700 lbs, have 4 petrol engines, each being of 6 horsepower, it would have sails that were 62 feet, tip to tip, and be able to carry 5 persons. He demonstrated his ideas by constructing model planes, some of which, it was claimed, flew successfully.

In 1910, when the Daily Mail £10,000 Air Race arrived in the county Joe's views were recorded. He said, *'Aeroplanes will eventually be built which will carry a hundred people. They will make present day machines as obsolete as the stagecoach.'* He is also said to have asked to be allowed to fly with William Rhodes-Moorhouse, a local aviation pioneer [and first airman to be awarded the Victoria Cross during World War One]. He wanted to make a parachute jump from Rhodes-Moorhouse's plane. Once again this was something that failed to materialize.

The Great War seems to have helped Joe to generate ideas. In January 1916, he called into the office of the Northampton Echo to report that he had invented an aeroplane that would fly 250 miles, weighing 100 tons, with engines that could develop 2,000 horsepower. In August 1916 he said that he was fully prepared for his Berlin Air Raid. In preparation for this, on 20th August he would fly from Spratton Grange, flying over Wellingborough to Canterbury, and on to Paris.

I would imagine his family may well have found Joe quite difficult to live with, but the local newspapers treated him as the local eccentric, although some of his ideas do seem to predate actual inventions. Had he been able to get financial backing, some of his ideas may have left his 'drawing board'.

The time has come…

Over the past five years and after my sixteen previous editions of the society Newsletter, recently named Retrospectives, I have, after much thought, decided that I no longer wish to carry on writing for, and editing, this publication; hence this will be my final edition. It has been an incredibly difficult decision as there have been some aspects of which I have very much enjoyed, chiefly the research and assisting individuals with discovering their own family history.

The preparation and production of Retrospectives is not a one-person task. Truly, it is very much a team effort. Therefore, I must take the opportunity to recognize and place on record my appreciation and sincere thanks to all those individuals, particularly Carolyn Smith, Elizabeth Taylor, Janet Schmelzer, Stephen Swailes, and Richard Buckby, who have supported me by undertaking their own research to provide the wide range of articles and proof-reading the drafts.

I should like to think that the publication has developed, recording the history of Finedon's past, across a broad brush of topics, from the medieval period to more recent times. The regular positive comments received from society members about the quality of the articles have been very much appreciated by the writers and myself. Thank you.

However, times and commitments change and my desire to escape my desk and computer to spend more time with my other (mainly outdoor) activities and interests, has been a factor in this decision.

To enable the society to keep in touch regarding future speaker programmes, and any necessary changes and updates, we should like to expand our current database of members' email addresses. Therefore, should you be agreeable please forward your email address details to finedonlhs@outlook.com

If anyone is interested in following the line of 'Newsletter' and 'Retrospective' editors, then I should be pleased to speak to you. I can be contacted on 07988 065010 or via the email above.

Many thanks for all your support.

Mick Britton

Then and Now
The Changing Face of Finedon
The Junction of Regent Street and Bell Hill

A difference of almost 120 years (c.1904 to the present day). Only the impressive chimney pots and their associated buildings, in the distance on the right-hand side of both photographs, remain to this day; this fact stands testament to the ever-changing face of Finedon.