



SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Structure and Character

In 1086, 71 per cent of the Kirby 'parish' was held directly by the lord of Melton, along with parts of seven other 'parishes'; the remaining 29 per cent was held of the Melton overlord by Ralph.¹ Kirby had over a quarter of all the land held directly by the overlord in the eight 'parishes', and probably had a large proportion of the total of its 100 freemen, 10 villeins and 13 bordars. In contrast, there were no freemen on Ralph's lands, but just six villeins and four bordars. There were no 'servi' (serfs) mentioned in the 'parish'.

Although there were two manors in Kirby in the thirteenth century, by 1318 Roger Beler (I) was returned as the sole lord.² The Beler family were resident in the parish, although Roger Beler (I) had national duties which would have frequently taken him away.³ In 1316 the founding of the chantry created another layer of land holding, with its head and landlord also resident in the parish. The dissolution in 1536 would have had a considerable impact on the social as well as economic life of the parish. Throughout the medieval period and into the eighteenth century some lords of the manor were at least partly resident in Kirby, particularly Roger Beler (II), Thomas Markham, the De la Fontaines, the Meres and possibly the Swillingtons. However when Sir John Meres (son of Ann de la Fontaine) died without issue in 1735, the manorial estate and the former

¹ A. Williams and G.H. Martin (eds.), *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London, 2002), 643, 644.

² *Feudal Aids*, 5, 186; TNA, C143/1234/14 Inq. ad quod damnum, 1318.

³ See above, 'Manors and Other Estates'.

Priory property went to his sister Dame Elizabeth Pettus, who lived in Norfolk.⁴ From that time, land tax and other documents indicate the lords of the manor and most other major landowners have lived away from the parish.⁵

Throughout the medieval period the parish appears to have been both populous and prosperous. In the subsidy of 1327 eighteen people altogether, largely heads of household, paid a total of 65s 0¾ d in tax on goods.⁶ Widow Alice Beler, now lord of the manor, paid 7s., as did Roger Foucher, while Roger Fleming and Adam de Stocton each paid 6s. Beneath them in terms of wealth stood a substantial body of 15 other taxpayers, who each paid between 2s. 0¼ d. and 4s. The pattern in 1332 was similar, except that Roger Foucher's payment was now only 2s. and 'The warden of the chapel of Kirkeby' paid 36s.⁷ The poll tax records of 1381 suggest that this 'middling class' was numerous, with 34 of the 54 recorded taxpaying individuals or couples paying between 2s. and 2s. 6d., and only two people listed as paying the basic 4d.⁸ However there was no gentry representation in the list.

The lay subsidy of 1524 shows a more graduated structure. There were 29 people assessed on goods valued at between £2 and £36, with a further seven people assessed on wages of £1.⁹ By the 17th century a very different picture starts to emerge. The 'middling class' may still be present, but its wealth is shrinking, and the de la Fontaine family stand well above everyone else in terms of their assets. In 1628 Sir Erasmus and his widowed mother were assessed, respectively, on land worth £20 and goods valued at £30, with the next highest assessment being on goods worth £4.¹⁰ In 1642, around seven years after the enforced depopulation,¹¹ Sir Erasmus de la

⁴ ROLLR, DE 2317/39/76, partition of estates of Sir John Meres.

⁵ ROLLR, MF 76 land tax on microfilm 1773-1832 and DE 8012/47 for 1837; ROLLR, DE 558/29, Kirby Bellars valuation list 1908.

⁶ TNA, E179/133/1

⁷ TNA, E179/133/2

⁸ TNA, E179/133/29 part I

⁹ TNA, E179/133/112

¹⁰ TNA, E179/134/303

Fontaine paid £5 1s. tax, while the rest of the inhabitants between them paid £5 9s., the highest assessment being 5s. 4d.¹² The 30 hearths of Sir Erasmus in 1666 stand out in a village, where no one else had more than two hearths.¹³ That said, those with two hearths comprised 23 per cent of all 43 families, which still compares well against the mean of 9.3 per cent for the 50 surrounding parishes, suggesting Kirby still had a band of residents who ranked higher than the majority on the social scale.

In the parliamentary by-election of 1719 only four freeholders of Kirby property voted, and none of these was resident in the parish, but as both the Whigs and Tory country gentlemen had agreed the seat should go to the son of the Duke of Rutland, it was only lightly contested.¹⁴ In 1773 the first extant land tax document reveals that there were probably eight freeholders.¹⁵ The more detailed land tax return of 1781 lists 12 freeholders, but only four of them were resident in the parish; they paid just 8 per cent of the total tax for the parish.¹⁶ From then, the number of freeholders increased, but after an initial rise the number of resident freeholders remained quite low, especially in terms of the value of their properties. Of the 41 freeholders in 1813 only seven were resident in Kirby. In 1837 there were 36 freeholders, of whom 17 were also ‘occupiers’, paying 26.2 per cent of the total land tax.¹⁷ However, the 1841 census reveals that some of these ‘occupiers’ of land were actually resident in nearby parishes, including Asfordby, Frisby on the Wreake and Great Dalby.¹⁸ In 1908, the valuation list for the Melton Mowbray Poor Law Union indicates that there were 50 freeholders, of whom 14 were occupiers of their own properties, with

¹¹ See above, ‘Economic History’

¹² TNA, E179/134/307

¹³ TNA, E179/133/31 part 30

¹⁴ ROLLR, 324.828, poll book; E. Cruickshanks, ‘Leicestershire’, in R. Sedgwick (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1715-1754*, (1970), 274-5.

¹⁵ ROLLR, MF 76 land tax on microfilm 1773-1832.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ ROLLR, DE 8012/47, land tax 1837.

¹⁸ TNA, HO 107/587, 24.

a combined rateable value at 18.8 per cent of the total.¹⁹ The 1901 census suggests that, as previously, some of the ‘occupiers’ were resident outside the parish.²⁰

The resident freeholders were largely farmers and graziers. In 1784 Lord Richard Cavendish’s property was taken over by the non-resident Duchess of Portland and after that there were no obvious gentry freeholders resident in the parish for some time.²¹ In 1854, Melville’s *Trade Directory* listed three gentry:²² George Killick esquire at Kirby House (Hall), son-in-law of the non-resident lord of the manor; Mr Thomas Haynes, who does not appear at Kirby in the 1851 census or the 1848 tithe award;²³ and Mr John Wartnaby, who in the 1851 census was living with his mother Ann, a proprietor of land, aged 63. She was a ‘farmer’ in the 1861 Drake’s directory.²⁴

By this period, it is possible that gentry and army officers lived in the parish for part of the year during the fox hunting season, but as the census dates were usually in April their names do not appear. The Burdetts of Foremark in Derbyshire certainly used Park Farm as a hunting seat in the season but the resident occupier was a grazier.²⁵ The arrival of these seasonal visitors would have had a short-term impact on the village. Non-resident landlords would have exerted considerable influence in the parish through their appointment of tenants and the development (or neglect) of their properties. The building of isolated farmsteads in the late 18th and early 19th centuries must have been at their instigation or, at least, with their agreement. Two of these lodges were part of the estate of the absentee lord of the manor: Highfields Farm on Thorpe Satchville Road and Kirby Lodge Farm off the Great Dalby Road.²⁶

¹⁹ ROLLR, DE 558/29 Kirby Bellars valuation list 1908.

²⁰ TNA, RG 13/3012, 109.

²¹ ROLLR, MF 76, land tax on microfilm 1784.

²² Melville & Co., *Dir. Leics* (1854), 159.

²³ TNA, PRO, HO 107/209, 62, Census 1851; ROLLR, DE 682/3/2, Kirby Bellars tithe award 1848.

²⁴ *Drake’s Gaz. & Dir. Leics & Rut.* (1861), 299.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ ROLLR DG 9/Ma/LI [DG 9/2727]; ROLLR, DE 3177/102 Sale particulars of Kirby manor 1918.

During the later part of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century there was a small number of ‘private residents’, including some retired officers of the armed services. In the 1881 census at Sanham House was retired Royal Navy Captain Molyneux, with eight servants.²⁷ In 1891 his nephew Francis Mildmay MP was also living there.²⁸ In 1901 there were eight domestic servants, but also eight grooms or stable boys plus three of their dependents, living at the stables.²⁹

In 1925 the four ‘private residents’ included Henry Theobald Hanbury Hart at the Manor House, Mrs Thomson at Kirby Gate³⁰ and Lieutenant Colonel Muir, his wife and daughter at Kirby Hall. Older residents have advised that the Muirs rented out the Hall to rich people, such as the Vanderbilts, who in turn entertained hunting parties, which included royal guests. The chauffeur’s daughter, Muriel Dawes, born at the Hall in 1920, corroborates this information.³¹ The heyday of the Hall was after the First World War, but the hunting parties were on the decline by the mid-1930s as the Muirs became too old to go hunting themselves. Colonel Muir died in 1937 and his widow continued at the Hall, with a much reduced staff, until her death in 1950.³² According to Muriel Dawes, the Muirs classed themselves as gentry and tended to keep apart from village life, although they gave an annual Christmas party for the village children and there were some garden fêtes there. At nearby Kirby Cottage (later Kirby Grange) was John Brodie (full name John Clerk Brodie Callender-Brodie).³³ Before him, the owner and occupier was Wilfrid Ricardo, gentleman and late major in the Royal Horse Guards.³⁴ He added new stables to his property in 1907.³⁵

²⁷ TNA, RG 11/3181/94, 10.

²⁸ TNA, RG 12/2543.

²⁹ TNA, RG 13/3012, 109.

³⁰ *Kelly’s Dir. Leics & Rut.* (1925), 124.

³¹ A. Fox & J. Luke (eds), *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, privately printed (1999), 61-3.

³² Kirby Parish Church burials register 1813-present, 58, 63.

³³ A. Fox, *Kirby Bellars: a Parish History*, privately printed (1997), 11; monument in churchyard.

³⁴ *The London Gazette*, 27 Oct 1903, p. 6533; *Kelly’s Dir. Leics & Rut.*, (1912), 115.

³⁵ Kirby Bellars Parish Council, Parish meeting minute book 1894-1936, 32.

The period of gentry residence and seasonal visiting in the Melton Mowbray area was very much diminished by the advent of the Second World War. Older residents recall that, after the War, Kirby Cottage was used partly as flats and then went through various commercial uses, before it was demolished in the 1990s to make way for a housing estate called Priory View.³⁶ Kirby Hall was converted into flats in 1960 and these remain to this day. An influx into the parish of people with different occupational backgrounds also started in 1960 with the building of many new houses in the village. Not only had the gentry element disappeared, but the parish was no longer dominated by members of the farming community.

The building of new houses led to an improved living standard for all the people in the village, because all houses received mains water, mains drainage and electricity.³⁷ Mains gas came later. Older residents remember that, well into the 1950s, coal fires were used for both heating and cooking, drinking water came from pumps and rainwater was collected in butts for washing. Outside toilets were emptied each week by the council 'lavvy men'. Lighting was by paraffin lamp and they went to bed by candlelight.

Poor Relief

Indications suggest that Kirby was a relatively prosperous parish in the medieval period. In 1327, the total tax paid of £3 5s. 0¾d. was the seventh highest of all the parishes in north-east Leicestershire. In 1334 the total tax paid had increased to £ 5 11s. 4d. In 1524/5 there were 36 households who paid the lay subsidy,³⁸ and with 57 households recorded in the 1563 diocesan inquiry, it appears that fewer than half the households were excused the 1524/5 tax.³⁹ The fact that relatively large number of Kirby residents paid tax could mean it had relatively fewer poor people than other parishes, but this was not necessarily so.

³⁶ Fox and Luke, *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, 64

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-6.

³⁸ TNA, E179/133/108 Lay subsidy Framland 1524-5.

³⁹ *B.M. Harl. MS 595 f 77.*

The enclosure of the open fields and the creation of Kirby Park in the mid-1630s, which ejected many from their houses,⁴⁰ may have resulted in a change in the numbers of paupers in the parish. In 1670, there were 15 families in Kirby excused from paying the hearth tax on the assessment list and there were three more non-paying families on the constable's separate return,⁴¹ from a total of 43 families in the parish. This gives the proportion of non-payers as 42 per cent, which is almost the same as the mean value for 50 surrounding parishes in north-east Leicestershire. Although the number of people with two hearths was higher than in surrounding areas, the number of poor families was now close to the norm for the area.

Account books for the combined offices of overseer of the poor and churchwarden survive from 1798 to 1836.⁴² Six adults and three children received relief in 1803, which is a similar proportion to that seen in the 50 surrounding parishes.⁴³ The overseer's accounts give some idea of items on which poor relief payments were made.⁴⁴ In 1798 J. Hastings was paid £6 10s for taking care of William Coley for a year and his schooling cost another 7 shillings. Mary Gilson was paid £10 8s for taking Mary Draycott. Payments to four female adults were for coals, shoes, mending their stockings and 'dressing the itch' (scabies). In 1831 various payments were made to people who were out of work, hence the high expenditure at that time, mentioned above.

The present Parish Church burials register for Kirby started in 1813 and there is no specific mention of pauperism until 1880, when an 87-year old woman died in the 'Union' (workhouse) at Melton Mowbray.⁴⁵ In 1881 the overseer escorted a pauper man to Melton Mowbray workhouse, but the 1881 census reveals that none of the 160 residents of that workhouse had been born in

⁴⁰ J. Nichols, *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* (1795, reprinted 1971), II, 231.

⁴¹ TNA, E179/133/108 hearth tax Leics, Michaelmas 1670; *Ibid*.

⁴² ROLLR, DE801/19, account book of overseer of poor 1798-1836.

⁴³ 1851 census of Great Britain, Population Tables 2, Table [1], 'Population abstract'.

⁴⁴ ROLLR, DE801/19, account book of overseers of poor 1798-1836.

⁴⁵ Kirby Bellars Parish Church, register of burials 1813-present.

Kirby Bellars.⁴⁶ In the 1901 census there was one native of Kirby, a female aged 52, out of 131 inmates.⁴⁷ Apart from the case in 1880, each of the other seven entries in Kirby burials register indicating death in Melton Mowbray workhouse were between 1902 and 1914, and most of these were people in their seventies.

Charities

Roger Beler's deed endowing his collegiate chapel provided for the distribution of '150 farthings or bread to that value' each year on the day of the Annunciation.⁴⁸ There is no evidence of any post-Reformation charities in the parish for support of the poor.

Education

It is possible that one or more of the priests or canons attached to the chapel or priory taught some local children, although there is no surviving document to confirm this.

No Kirby school masters or schools are mentioned in the subscription books for the late 17th , 18th and early 19th centuries.⁴⁹ At the three visitations of Bishop Wake from 1706 to 1712 the returns inform that there was no school in Kirby Bellars, but at the visitation of Bishop Gibson in 1721 a school of 10 to 12 pupils is mentioned.⁵⁰ In 1795, Nichols reported that there was a small school, supported by the lord of the manor, Mr Manners.⁵¹ Three years later, the overseer of the poor paid seven shillings for the schooling of William Coley for a year, but the location of the school is not stated.⁵² In 1818, a parochial return mentioned an unendowed dame school with ten

⁴⁶ ROLLR DE 801/20; TNA, RG 11/3181/94, 1881 census.

⁴⁷ TNA, RG 13/3012, 109 Census 1901.

⁴⁸ A. Hamilton Thompson, 'Chapel of St Peter at Kirby upon Wreake', *Trans. LAHS* 16 (1929-31), 179.

⁴⁹ ROLLR, 1D41/34/1, 4, 5.

⁵⁰ J. Broad, ed., *Bishop Wake's Summary of Visitation Returns from the Diocese of Lincoln 1706-1715, II Outside Lincolnshire* (2012), 765-6; Lincolnshire Archives, Gibson12, pp 172-4, 175.

⁵¹ Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, II, 228.

⁵² ROLLR, DE801/19, account of overseer of poor and churchwarden's account 1798-1836.

pupils.⁵³ However there is no mention of any day school in the parliamentary return of 1833, nor the National Society survey of Anglican schools in 1846,⁵⁴ nor in any mid-century trade directories. Directories of 1895, 1912 and 1916 state that children went to school in Asfordby.⁵⁵ Vera Bailey, born in 1909, said that she attended there to the age of 14, as did David Wheeler, born in 1914.⁵⁶ Mrs Bailey told this author that she thought there had been a small private school run by Miss Astill at Hawthorne House in Main Street before her time.⁵⁷

The Frisby School log book shows that junior age Kirby children started going there instead of Asfordby in 1937, shortly after the amalgamation of the both parishes to form Frisby and Kirby civil parish.⁵⁸ All primary age children were transferred to or started school in Melton Mowbray in 1946, where there was a school for infants in Kings Road.⁵⁹ The junior boys and junior girls from seven to 11 were on two separate floors of the building in Asfordby Road, Melton, that is now the Grove School. In 1975 a new junior school was built at Frisby, and Kirby children started going there again from 1981, as most do today.⁶⁰

From its opening in 1908 to the 1944 Education Act, King Edward VII Grammar School in Melton Mowbray was an option for those 11-year old children who won scholarships or whose parents paid the fees.⁶¹ After 1944 Kirby children went there if they passed the 11 plus examination. From 1931 most Kirby children were transferred to the new Melton Modern secondary schools at the age of 11, the girls going to one in Wilton Road (now the Library and

⁵³ *Education of the Poor Digest* (Parl. Papers 1819 (224) ix), p. 456

⁵⁴ *Education Enquiry* (Parl. Papers 1835 (62) xli-xliiii), p. 488; National Society for Promoting Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church: *The Result of the Returns to the General Enquiry made by the National Society into the state and progress of schools for the education of the poor...during the years 1846-7 throughout England and Wales* (London 1849), Leics. 8-9.

⁵⁵ W. White, *Hist. Gaz. and Dir. Leicestershire and Rutland*, (Sheffield, 1846), 253; *Kelly's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (1895), 100; *Kelly's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (1912), 115; *Kelly's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (1916), 114

⁵⁶ Fox & Luke, *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, 8.

⁵⁷ Fox, *Kirby Bellars: a Parish History*, 16.

⁵⁸ Frisby on the Wreake Primary School Log Book 1912-1980 (in private hands).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; Admission register at the school.

⁶¹ P.E. Hunt, *The Story of Melton Mowbray* (1957), 98.

part of the Further Education College) and the boys to one in Limes Avenue (now Brownlow Junior School). The Wilton Road school transferred to the new Sarson Girls' Modern School in Burton Road in 1952 and most Kirby girls attended there.⁶² As part of the so-called 'Leicestershire Plan', which introduced comprehensive education in a high school and upper school structure across the county in stages from April 1957, that school became the co-educational Sarson High School for ages 11 to 15 in 1964 (11 to 14 from 1972). Older children attended Melton Mowbray Upper School in the former Grammar School buildings. When Longfield High School was opened in 1981, Frisby and Kirby children were allocated to the catchment area of that school. In 2011 all the high schools became 11 to 16 schools and most Kirby children in that age range attend Longfield. The King Edward VII School closed in 2011 and the new Melton Vale School on Burton Road is the main destination now for sixth form pupils.

Sunday schools

The parochial return of 1818 records an unendowed Sunday School, supported by the landowners, with 36 pupils.⁶³ In 1833 it was reported that an Anglican Sunday School of 14 males and 20 females had commenced in 1832, which suggests a period since 1818 without one.⁶⁴ In 1846 there were 36 children attending, 16 boys and 20 girls.⁶⁵ At the 1851 census, 25 attended on the morning of Sunday 30 March, and the return states that this was the usual number during the previous year.⁶⁶ The Sunday School teacher is mentioned in the parish magazine of 1888.⁶⁷

⁶² J.K. Penstone, *Sarson School Melton Mowbray: the First Twenty-Five Years* (1976), 10.

⁶³ *Education of the Poor Digest* (Parl. Papers 1819 (224) ix), p. 456

⁶⁴ *Education Enquiry* (Parl. Papers 1835 (62) xli-xliii), p. 488.

⁶⁵ National Society, *The Result of the returns... during the years 1846-7*, Leics. 8-9.

⁶⁶ TNA, HO129/418.

⁶⁷ Parish magazines in private possession.

More recently the only village Sunday School was at the Congregational Church, which older residents remember attending up to the closure of the chapel in the 1960s.⁶⁸ At the end of 1917 there were 21 children and four teachers on the roll.⁶⁹

Community Activities

It is difficult to find the evidence of community activities before the 20th century, but newspapers provide some information. For example, there was a sheep-shearing match followed by a good dinner at the Flying Childers in June 1869, with prizes from 5s. to 30s.⁷⁰ A Sunday School treat was held at the Manor House in August 1864.⁷¹ In September 1885 the parish magazine refers to the Special Service for the Parish Feast on Sunday 16th August, followed on Monday by a tea and sale of work, organised by Mrs Fox of the Manor House, in aid of the Clothing Club. In August 1895 there was a dance and concert in a marquee provided by Mr J. Littlewood. In June 1896 there was to be a grand bazaar to raise money for re-timbering the south aisle roof in the church.⁷²

Most information on community activities comes from the memories of older residents. The first meet of the Quorn Hunt in October was always held at Kirby Gate and is remembered as an important part of the social calendar. The Parish Church and the Congregational Chapel both played important parts in the social life of the village.⁷³ Most children were in the Parish Church choir, but also attended the Congregational Church Sunday School on Sunday afternoons.⁷⁴

The highlight of the year at the Congregational Church was the Sunday School Anniversary when children in their Sunday best clothes sat on tiered benches after several weeks training to sing

⁶⁸ Fox & Luke, *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, 10-13.

⁶⁹ Superintendent's reports to annual meeting, in private hands

⁷⁰ *Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury*, 19 June 1869, 7.

⁷¹ *Leicester Chronicle and the Leicestershire Mercury*, 20 Aug 1864, 8.

⁷² Parish magazines in private possession.

⁷³ Fox and Luke, *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, 37-8.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 10-13.

special hymns. Most people in the village had guests for tea. People from Melton Mowbray boosted the congregation and the place was packed. There were organised summer outings both with the Sunday School and the Parish Church choir to places such as Trentham Gardens (Staffs.), Charnwood Forest and the coast at Skegness (Lincs.).⁷⁵ Most of the children helped with the bell ringing at the Parish Church when they were old enough and there was a hand bell ringing team.⁷⁶ There were parties organised by the churches, the Women's Institute, and staff at Kirby Hall. At Christmas there was carol singing around the parish. The Harvest Festival Sunday service was followed by the sale of the produce on the Monday evening.

Before 1925 many social events in the village took place in the racket court attached to the Cottage (later Kirby Grange).⁷⁷ In 1925 the Village Hall was built and this became the venue for whist drives and dances, the Kirby Twins providing the music with Albert Bailey on piano and Arthur Wheeler on drums. Mrs Gertrude Sampey taught several children to play the piano and she put on concerts at which children performed.⁷⁸ The Women's Institute met at the Village Hall once each month from 1927 to 2007 and had guest speakers followed by a meal.⁷⁹ At one time there were Young Men's Institute meetings and a ladies keep fit class. The Village Hall Committee still provides a programme of events, such as barbecues, concerts, dances and quiz evenings. There are also occasional and regular bookings at the Village Hall for groups serving a wider area. For example the Kirby Group of Artists, founded in 1980 by the late professional artist David Weston, meets there every Monday evening. A regular annual event in October is the Harvest Lunch organised by parish church members. In 2012 the Hall was enlarged with the addition of a storage area.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 10, 11.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 12, 49.

⁷⁷ Fox, *Kirby Bellars: a Parish History*, 11.

⁷⁸ Fox and Luke, *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, 37-45.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 37.

The main sporting activity involved the village cricket team, which played home games in the field at the end of Washdyke Lane to the late 1970s.⁸⁰ There were never enough parish residents for the team, so there were always ‘imports’ from elsewhere to make up numbers. For most people in the village the cricket match was an important social occasion and the excellence of the teas in the Village Hall lives long in the memory. Eventually there was a lack of sufficient young people to keep the team going. There was also a boys’ team at one time and in the early 20th century the Congregationalist Sunday School superintendent formed a boys’ team in order to gather recruits to the church.⁸¹ In his annual report the superintendent, from time to time, had to justify this method of bringing Christianity to young people. There were no other sports facilities but the river in the Cricket Field was used for swimming and Holwell Works provided changing huts.⁸²

The only public house was called the Flying Childers after a successful 18th century racehorse, belonging to the Duke of Devonshire.⁸³ The original building, with a 1714 date on the gable end, was next to Kirby Hall. In 1904, the present Flying Childers was built further west and renovated by Marston’s Brewery in 1993, to become a restaurant rather than a public house.⁸⁴ The original inn was converted into three homes for Hall servants, such as the chauffeur and butler, before it was sold in 1960.⁸⁵ Prior to the building of the Village Hall in 1925, the parish meetings were held in the old building and then the new one.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Ibid., 26-33.

⁸¹ Ibid., 29; Congregational Chapel superintendent’s reports, in private hands.

⁸² Ibid., 23-4.

⁸³ R.L. Ahnert (ed.), *Thoroughbred Breeding of the World* (1970).

⁸⁴ Oral testimony from David Wheeler, *Melton Times*, 14 Jun 1985; Fox, *Kirby Bellars: a Parish History*, 11.

⁸⁵ Fox and Luke, *Kirby Bellars Remembered*, 60-3.

⁸⁶ Kirby Bellars Parish Council, *The parish meeting minute book 1894-1936*.