

	<p>Welby, Social History</p> <p>Alan Fox</p> <p>2017</p>	<p>This draft text is liable to change as further research is completed, and primary sources are checked.</p>
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SOCIAL HISTORY

Social Structure and Character

1086–1500

There appear to have been resident lords of the manor throughout the medieval period.¹ For some of the time they held their property of superior lords, the Seagraves, who lived fairly close by at Seagrave. Major land holders were therefore on hand to exercise close control on the other residents of the parish.

In 1086, Welby had more than the usual proportion of sokemen amongst the inhabitants:² sixteen within 28 heads of house (64 per cent), whereas the average for 37 other parishes in the vicinity was 36.4 per cent. There were seven villeins, three bordars and no serfs. For comparison, neighbouring Holwell and Ab Kettleby together had six sokemen, seven villeins and four bordars.³ The total of 28 enumerated persons is high compared with parishes in the neighbourhood, especially when the relatively small area of the parish is taken into account. Welby ranks sixth out of 33 parishes on the number of people per square mile.⁴ The impression one gets is of a thriving community in 1086 with high proportion of people of

¹ See 'Landholdings'.

² A. Williams and G.H. Martin (eds.), *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation* (London, 2002), 644, 646-7.

³ Williams and Martin, *Domesday Book*, 630, 640.

⁴ Williams and Martin, *Domesday Book*, 627-49.

relatively privileged social standing. This situation may have continued, as in 1294 the lord received rents amounting to £4 5s. 10d. from free tenants.⁵

Earlier in the 13th century the abbey at Garendon had acquired two carucates and 44a. of land to create Welby Grange.⁶ It is quite likely that the grange was run by local lay people rather than the monks themselves.

The lay subsidy of 1327 gives some insight into the social structure and character of Welby.⁷ Eight people were wealthy enough to pay tax, totalling 16s. 1d. on their chattels, which may have included livestock and harvested crops that were not for consumption in the home. This places Welby at a lowly 51st equal in rank order from 62 parishes in north-east Leicestershire,⁸ but only six of these parishes had fewer tax payers. The average tax paid by those enumerated was 2s. 1d., placing Welby 53rd in the rank order. The conclusion is that Welby was a relatively poor parish at this stage in its history. In 1327 the lord of the manor, Robert de Assheby, was the third highest tax payer, paying 2s.; the highest payer was Walter Prest at 6s. He may be the son of the highest taxpayer in Melton Mowbray, also named Prest, one of the king's wool merchants,⁹ whose son was called Walter. Perhaps proximity to Welby Grange and its sheep may have been advantageous.

Tax of 25s. was assessed as due from Welby in 1332,¹⁰ a considerable increase on 1327. This increased slightly to £1 6s. 8d. in 1334, ranking Welby 52nd out of 57 local parishes,¹¹ and 42nd for the amount paid per square mile. Again there is a suggestion that Welby did not have many wealthy inhabitants. There were six tax payers and Walter Prest

⁵ Farnham, *Medieval Villages Notes*, IV, 271, citing Cal. Inq. p.m., 3, 192; Berkeley Castle Muniments, BCM/D/5/50, no date.

⁶ Farnham, *Medieval Villages Notes*, IV, 269, citing *Rot. Cur. Reg.*, 88, m. 29.

⁷ Farnham, *Medieval Villages Notes*, IV, 271, citing TNA, 179/133/1, lay subsidy 1327.

⁸ W.G.D. Fletcher, 'Leicestershire Lay Subsidy Roll 1327', in *AASRP* 19 (1888), 209-312 and 20 (1889), 130-178.

⁹ 'Leics lay subsidy roll', *AASRP* 19 pt 1 (1887), 230-1.

¹⁰ Farnham, *Medieval Villages Notes*, IV, 271, citing TNA, 179/133/2 lay subsidy 1332.

¹¹ R. E. Glasscock, *Lay Subsidy of 1334* (Oxford, 1975), 163-4 citing TNA, 179/133/3 lay subsidy 1334.

still topped the list paying more than half the total. The ‘lord’ of the manor Margery de Assheby paid only 13 per cent of the total.

In 1377, 42 people paid the new poll tax, but the number fell to 27 in 1381, perhaps suggesting evasion of this unpopular tax.¹² Heading the list in 1381 were the squire, Richard Assheby, with his wife Agnes who together paid 4s. 8d.¹³ and their four servants who each paid 4d. The only other residents who paid the minimum 4d. were two people enumerated simply as ‘sons’, and another servant. Farming appears profitable, with husbandmen Robert Stansfield and William Sutor paying 3s. 4d. and 2s. 8d. respectively. Widow Emma Wilkynwyf paid 2s.¹⁴

1500–1700

In 1524 there were 11 taxpayers in Welby parish contributing to a total of £3 1s. 10d.¹⁵ This produces a figure of 6.4 taxpayers per square mile, which is close to the mean value of six in much of north-east Leicestershire, although it rises to ten in nearby Wreake Valley parishes.¹⁶ Of the 11 taxpayers, seven paid tax on goods worth more than £2 per annum. The other four each paid 4d. on wages of £1 per annum. The largest sum was paid by lord of the manor Roland Dygby who paid 40s. on taxable goods worth £40 per annum.

In 1543 there were still 11 taxpayers but they were all taxed on their goods, and none on their wages.¹⁷ Although nationally the tax of 1543—4 yielded more than that of 1524,¹⁸ in Welby the amount assessment had reduced to 18s. 10d. The individuals who have the same

¹² *Poll Taxes* (Fenwick, ed.), 485, 603—4.

¹³ *Poll Taxes* (Fenwick, ed.), 485, 603—4.

¹⁴ *Poll Taxes* (Fenwick, ed.), 603—4.

¹⁵ Farnham, *Medieval Villages Notes*, IV, 274, citing TNA E1179/133/108, lay subsidy 1524.

¹⁶ J. Sheail, ‘The distribution of regional wealth in England as indicated by lay subsidy returns 1524/5 (London Univ. PhD Thesis, 1968).

¹⁷ Farnham, *Medieval Villages Notes*, IV, 274, citing TNA E179/133/136, lay subsidy 1543.

¹⁸ M. Jurkowski, C.L. Smith and D. Crook, *Lay Taxes in England and Wales, 1188—1688* (Kew, 1998), 139, 144.

surname on both lists appear to have goods of lower value at the second date. For example, in 1543 John Dygby, lord of the manor, paid 12s. 6d. or 68 per cent of the total on goods worth £20, against £2 on £40 worth of goods in 1524.

In 1572 only three people were taxed, with the lord of the manor William Dygby and widow Jane Dygby (his mother) paying on land, and William Towke paying on goods.¹⁹ Between them they contributed 24s. of a total of 29s. Is this a sign that Welby is struggling to maintain a large population, leading to its subsequent enclosure in 1605?

George Bennett, who purchased the manor in 1617, appears to have been an absentee owner, resident in London.²⁰ His grandson, also George, was a minor when he inherited,²¹ but was resident in the parish by 1642, after the enclosure and depopulation had taken place. Only the lord of the manor George Bennett and Elisabeth Bennett were listed as taxpayers in 1642, paying £4 3s. 4d. and £2 1s. 8d. respectively.²² Elisabeth may have been George's unmarried sister.

Seven people paid the hearth tax 1664, and that probably represents the number of families in this sparsely populated parish.²³ There is a great disparity between the number of hearths in the houses of the wealthier and the poorer residents. Dame Elisabeth Bennett, the widow of George Bennett, had 24 of the total of 37 hearths, and paid tax because St John Bennett, her eldest son and heir of George, was still a minor.²⁴ Elisabeth Bennett senior, the assumed sister of George, had another four. The only other resident with four hearths was Thomas Darby; three other householders had two hearths (Solomon Plumer, Thomas

¹⁹ Farnham, *Medieval Villages Notes*, IV, 275, citing TNA E179/134/207, lay subsidy 1572.

²⁰ ROLLR, Wills 1633.

²¹ Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, II, 285; TNA, PROB 11/158/503.

²² Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 278 citing TNA E179/134/307, lay subsidy 1642.

²³ Farnham, *Medieval Village Notes*, IV, 278, citing TNA E179/251/4/2, hearth tax 1664.

²⁴ Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, II, 285.

Baldricke and Richard Smart) and just one (William Moore) had one hearth. The list suggests that most of the poorer people had left the village.

1700–2017

The burial of St John Bennett Esq of Welby at Melton Mowbray in 1713 probably marks the end of Welby having a resident lord of the manor.²⁵ St John's daughter Elizbaeth was the last survivor of his five children,²⁶ and was living in Denbighshire, near her mother's family, in 1752.²⁷ Her cousin, Chiverton Hartopp, who appears to have inherited the estate, lived at Plymouth as Lieutenant Governor of the Citadel.²⁸ On his death, the manor was sold to the Godfreys of Essex,²⁹ who let the land to about eight farmers.³⁰ By 1846 Sir William Earle Welby had bought the manor from the Godfreys,³¹ and the head of the Welby family still owned the farm land in 1926, although the Holwell Iron Works had bought some of the manor land for their enterprise.³² By 1941 all the farmers had purchased their own farms.³³

In 1841, all seven families in Welby were headed by farmers.³⁴ The ten agricultural labourers were all resident on the farms, as were ten female servants. Six of the farmers now had the right, as occupiers of land, to vote in elections. In 1851 there were ten families in the parish, headed by six farmers, two agricultural labourers, one annuitant, and one elderly female supported by charitable gifts.³⁵ All six farmers had one agricultural labourer resident on the farm, four had resident shepherds, one had a resident herdsman and four had at least

²⁵ ROLLR, Melton Mowbray parish registers, 5 Sept. 1713.

²⁶ Memorial inscription in Melton Mowbray church.

²⁷ TNA, PROB 11/802/384.

²⁸ Elizabeth Robinson, 'Stanford House: the owners', paper read on a visit on by Thoroton Soc. Nottinghamshire 10 April 2013 <http://www.thorotonsociety.org.uk/events/Stanford-house-2013.htm> (accessed 3 August 2015) [primary source being sought].

²⁹ Nichols, *History and Antiquities*, 285.

³⁰ ROLLR, QS62/327, land tax documents 1773-1832; ROLLR, DE748/1, tithe map and apportionment 1839.

³¹ *White's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (Sheffield, 1863), 247.

³² *Kelly's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (London, 1925), 698.

³³ *Kelly's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (London, 1941), 1107.

³⁴ Census enumerators' books.

³⁵ Census enumerators' books, TNA HO 107/2091/313.

one resident female servant. Of the total of 17 employees, 11 were aged under 21 and all were unmarried. They were all born outside Welby parish. Altogether there were 11 farm workers living in the parish, but the farmers employed 17 in total, so there must have been some daily travel to work from outside the parish. Of the total population of 66 persons, 45 had been born outside Welby parish indicating considerable in-migration. However nearly all the incomers were born in nearby parishes, including seven in Asfordby.

Later censuses reveal a similar pattern. However, in the 1861 census the term 'agricultural labourer' was no longer applied to workers actually living at the farms.³⁶ At that time agricultural labourers lived in their own homes, usually as heads of the households. The farmers still had some farm workers living with them but they were referred to as farm servant, cowman, shepherd, wagoner, carter, threshing machine worker and so forth. In 1881 there were eight families in the parish, headed by four farmers, three agricultural labourers and one shepherd.³⁷ There was a total of 12 servants on the four farms and all were unmarried and all but two were under 30 years of age. As in 1851 none of the servants were Welby natives.

In 1901 the presence of Holwell Works still seems to have little impact on the occupations of the people living in the parish.³⁸ Of the eight families, five were headed by farmers, two by agricultural labourers and one by a wagoner. On the farms there were five resident servants and two resident yardmen. By 1911 however Holwell Works has a considerable influence on the composition of the parish population.³⁹ The heads of six Welby families, and another four men who were not heads of households, were employed by that

³⁶ Census enumerators' books, TNA RG9/2301/26.

³⁷ Census enumerators' books, TNA RG11/318/37.

³⁸ Census enumerators' books, TNA RG13/3012/45.

³⁹ Census enumerators' books, TNA RG14/19344.

company. Another four families were headed by farmers and three by agricultural labourers. There were five servants on the four farms.

Throughout much of the 20th century Welby remained a farming community but with the added presence of Holwell Works. In 1925 five farmers are listed in the Kelly's trade directory⁴⁰ and in 1941 there are five plus a farm bailiff at New Lodge.⁴¹ A *Melton Times* directory of 1941 names 11 people as heads of house.⁴² This situation continued into the 1950s when houses were built at Potter Hill on the edge of the old parish area.⁴³ Then in 1988 the National Coal Board acquired a considerable area of land in the parish.⁴⁴ The coal mine project was a failure and the actual mine site is now a business park (see Economic History), but much of the land used for waste disposal has now been reclaimed for agriculture. However only one working farm remains in the parish at Welby Grange Farm.⁴⁵ Apart from inhabitants of this farm and Potter Hill there are now very few other families in what was the former parish.

Community Activities

The small population has meant that there are no organised community activities other than the services at the parish church. However there is the Institute nearby at Asfordby Hill and Asfordby village and Melton Mowbray are not far away.

⁴⁰ *Kelly's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (London, 1925), 698.

⁴¹ *Kelly's Dir. Leics & Rut.* (London, 1941), 1107.

⁴² In private hands.

⁴³ Oral testimony of Mike Walker of Potter Hill Farm.

⁴⁴ Oral testimony of Margaret Hill nee Garfoot, formerly of Welby Lodge Farm.

⁴⁵ Oral testimony of Roger Hobill of Welby Grange Farm.

Education

There is no evidence that there was a Sunday School in Welby,⁴⁶ although there was one nearby at an Methodist mission church at Asfordby Hill. Margaret Hill (born Garfoot) of Welby Lodge went to the Methodist Sunday School at Ab Kettleby in the mid 20th century.

The population was much too small for any weekday school provision in the parish. A parliamentary paper of 1819 states that Welby children went to school in Melton Mowbray,⁴⁷ although attendance was not compulsory until 1880.

The school at Asfordby was opened in 1843,⁴⁸ and another at Asfordby Hill opened in 1909,⁴⁹ which would have been nearer for some children. Margaret Hill (born Garfoot) and her brothers and sisters went to Asfordby Hill Primary School from Welby Lodge in the mid-20th century.⁵⁰ At 11 they went on to secondary schools in Melton Mowbray, catching the school bus at Asfordby Hill. From 1931 most children aged 11 and over in the Melton Mowbray area attended the two new Modern Schools in the town, or they went to the King Edward VII Grammar School in Melton.⁵¹

Charities

In 1655 lord of the manor George Bennett left a charitable endowment in his will for the poor of Welby, although this was provided that his estate in Melton, Sysonby and Welby was exonerated from levies for the poor.⁵² In the 1851 census a 78-year old woman was

⁴⁶ ROLLR, DG36/135, Minutes of Melton and District Sunday School Teachers' Association 1914-34.

⁴⁷ *Digest of parochial returns into the education of the poor* (Parl. Papers 1819 (224), ix A.1, B.1, C.1), 458.

⁴⁸ Date stone on the building in Asfordby.

⁴⁹ Date stone on the building at Asfordby Hill.

⁵⁰ Oral testimony of Margaret Hill nee Garfoot.

⁵¹ J.K. Penstone, *Sarson School Melton Mowbray: the First Twenty-Five Years* (1976), 10.

⁵² *Abstract of returns of charitable donations* (Parl. Papers 1816 (511)), 630.

‘supported by charitable gifts’.⁵³ Later censuses do not specifically mention any people living on charity.⁵⁴

Poor Relief

In 1800 Jane Higginson and her infant child had a removal order to send them from Welby to Long Clawson, which was Jane Higginson’s parish of settlement, probably her parish of birth.⁵⁵ In another case at the Quarter Sessions in 1815 there was a bastardy order made out for George Hopkins of Welby.⁵⁶ In 1831 it was reported that the annual expenditure on the poor of Welby amounted to £58 16s.⁵⁷

In 1834 Welby became part of the Melton Mowbray Poor Law Union.⁵⁸ In 1844 a parliamentary paper reveals that from 1839 to 1842 the yearly amounts levied from the poor rate in Welby were £87, £25, £50 and £50 respectively.⁵⁹ Evidence of poverty includes, in 1861, an 86-year old cottager’s widow heading one house with another middle-aged agricultural labourer’s widow living there with three school-age children.⁶⁰ In 1901 the poor rate totals collected were £115 in 1895 and £75 in 1900.⁶¹

Census lists of inmates for Melton Workhouse from 1841 to 1911, at ten-year intervals, show that there were no Welby-born people there.⁶² With one possible exception, there are no obvious cases in the Workhouse of former Welby residents either. The exception

⁵³ TNA HO 107/2091/313, 1851 census.

⁵⁴ Census enumerators’ books.

⁵⁵ ROLLR, QS3/342/8, removal order 1800.

⁵⁶ ROLLR, QS6/1/12/192, bastardy order 1815.

⁵⁷ Curtis, *Topographical History*, 182.

⁵⁸ ROLLR, QS89/28, order establishing Melton Mowbray Union 1836.

⁵⁹ *Return to an order showing value of property assessed and amount levied* (Parl. Papers 1844 (63), xl.351), 83.

⁶⁰ Census enumerators’ books.

⁶¹ *Return showing rateable value of land in years ending 1896 and 1899 and rates collected 1896 and 1900* (Parl. Papers 1901 (117), lxiv.39), 37.

⁶² Census enumerators’ books: TNA HO 107/588; HO 107/2091: RG9/2304: RG10/3294: RG11/3182: RG12/2544: RG13/3011:RG14/19351.

is Samuel Sharpe, an agricultural labourer aged 45 in Welby in the 1891 census.⁶³ In the Workhouse a man of the same name was described as aged 68 in 1901 and 73 in 1911. The three given ages do not match, but all three references give Ab Kettleby as his birthplace.

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⁶³ TNA RG12/2544/145 1891 census.