

East Brent Parish History Group

Meeting 2nd May 2012

Diamond Jubilee Celebrations

Members of the Parish History Group are providing a display as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee on Sunday, 3rd June. This will be in the East Brent Village Hall from 10 am to 4 pm. Come along and see what the Group has discovered about the past.

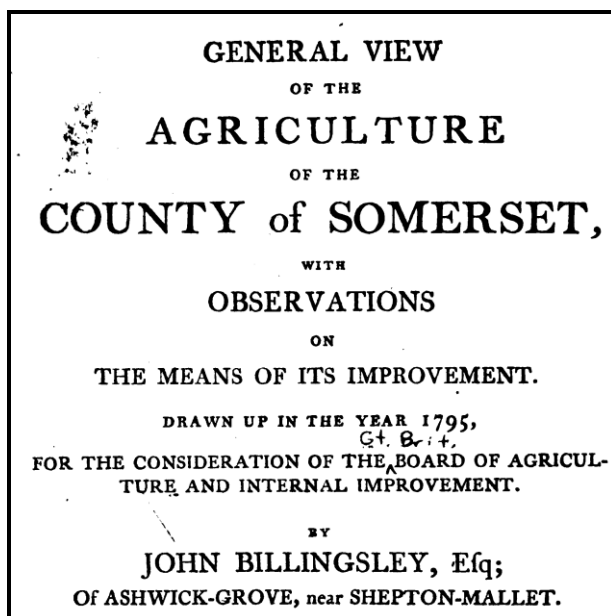
Parish Website

This is progressing and co-ordinated by Bill Walker (aventine1@btconnect.com). Please contact him with ideas or offers of help/expertise.

Brent Marshes in the Late 18th Century

Many books are available on the Internet which can be downloaded free of charge. Most of these are old, out-of-print books held in libraries around the world and have been scanned by organisations such as <http://books.google.com>.

One such book dated 1795 is entitled :-



This book deals with some of the agricultural history of Somerset and covers changes occurring as a result of 'inclosures'. It provides many facts about the economics of agriculture at the time. I have selected the following extracts which were presented at the meeting.

The area is described as :-

".....the marsh or fen-lands are divided into two districts.....

- Brent Marsh between Mendip & Polden Hills
- Bridgwater or South Marsh....."

This country has been heretofore much neglected, being destitute of gentlemen's houses, probably on account of the stagnant waters, and unwholesome air; but of late many efforts have been made to improve the soil, by draining and inclosing, under a variety of acts of parliament. The be-

(Note that an 'f' character is used as an 's' in some cases but still pronounced as an 's'.)

In the previous 10 years (to 1795) the following areas had been 'inclosed'.

ACRES:			
Wedmore and Mear	4,400	} together with 1,100 acres of turf-bog as yet unimproved.	
Compton-Bishop	300		
Glaftonbury	— 1,500	Ditto	300 ditto
Welfhay, &c.	— 1,700	Ditto	1,000 ditto
Mark	— 2,000		
Huntspill	— 1,200		
Shapwick	— 100		
Blackford	— 900		
Wookey	— 900		
Westbury	— 450		
Bleadon	— 400		
West-Perinard	— 250		
Eddington	— 1,000	Ditto	400 ditto
Stoke and Draycot	800		
Nylands	— 350		
Wells	— 1,150		
	<u>17,400</u>		<u>2,800 of turf-bog.</u>

The benefits are described as :

Of these seventeen thousand four hundred acres, six parts out of seven are cleared of stagnant water, and rendered highly productive: on the turf-bog but little improvement has hitherto taken place.* There remain about three thousand acres to be inclosed, which (the turf-bogs excepted) will complete the division of all the moors within the Brent-Marsh district. It is not to be understood, that the local

Much was to be gained for the economy of the area. The cost of draining some 25,000 acres of land was £25,000 which included :-

- Lowering the Rivers Brue & Axe for 3 & 6 miles respectively,
- 12 miles of new drains to a depth of 15 feet,
- Sluices at Hobb's Boat and on the River 'Perrott',
- Plus costs of the land purchase, surveyors & acts of Parliament.

The income from leasing such land for the next 25 years is given as £356,250 providing a profit over 25 years of £331,250 (late 18th century prices). A cheese maker who rented 35 acres could make 60cwt (3 tons) of cheese had an annual profit of some £110 from such reclaimed land. This would have been considered a good income.

I have an e-copy (.pdf) of this book which can be read on a PC or e-reader (Kindle). Anyone who would like a copy, please contact me.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on – **6th June 2012** when there will be a further presentation concerning the history of the Parish of East Brent.

All meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month - 7:00 pm in the Village Hall. Everyone is welcome.

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