

Monks Eleigh

Timeline

c.650 Illanleah. By the time of the earliest written record of Monks Eleigh in the mid-10th century, the manor and farming settlement here was already well established as an economically viable and valuable estate, and will therefore have been in existence for some centuries. It may be supposed that *Illanleah* (its original name), ‘the woodland clearing belonging to a man called Illa’, from the Old English word *leah* and an Old English personal name (the *-n-* is a genitive or possessive grammatical ending, equivalent to an apostrophe ‘*s*), came to be the name of the settlement here early in the Anglo-Saxon period, probably as early as the first half of the 7th century (perhaps around the time of the famous ship burial of East Anglian King Rædwald at Sutton Hoo). There would probably already have been a working farmstead settlement here during the Romano-British period, but with the coming of the Anglo-Saxons to Britain, estates continued in being but often took their names from their new Anglo-Saxon owners. We know nothing more about this man **Illā**, but we may suppose that he was either an Anglo-Saxon *thegn* (a minor nobleman) or a *ceorl* (a freeman or peasant farmer). At any rate, his estate was a very large one, to begin with comprising what later became the two estates of Monks Eleigh and Brent Eleigh before they were divided at some time before the mid-10th century.

946-c.951 The **earliest reference to Monks Eleigh** in the written records. In the Will of the powerful man called Ælfgar, who was Ealdormann (‘underking’) of the East Saxons (Essex) during the reign of King Eadræd of the West Saxons (Wessex), his many estates are bequeathed to his various heirs, and one of these estates is *Illeye* (Monks Eleigh): ‘And I grant the estate at *Illeye* to my younger daughter [Ælfflæd] for her life, and after her death to Byrhtnoth [her husband] for his life if he lives longer than her. If they should have children, then I grant it to them. If

they have none, then I grant it to my [older] daughter Æthelflæd after their death, and after her death to Christ Church at Canterbury for the use of the monastic community'. The promise and undertaking in this will resulted of course in the eventual granting of Monks Eleigh to Christ Church Canterbury by Byrhtnoth in 991.

991 The **second documentary record of Monks Eleigh**. Byrhtnoth, son-in-law of the powerful Ælfgar and successor to him as Ealdormann ('underking') of the East Saxons, in an Anglo-Saxon charter of this date (as if perhaps anticipating his own death before that of his wife Ælfflæd) grants lands at *Illelege* (Monks Eleigh), as well as at *Hætlege* (Hadleigh), to the monks of Christ Church Canterbury. On the 11th August of this same year, Byrhtnoth, leading the East Saxon army against an invading force of Danish Vikings, met his death at the Battle of Maldon. Although a defeat for the East Saxons, the battle is the subject of a wonderful 325-line Anglo-Saxon poem which celebrates Byrhtnoth's heroism and leadership and the loyalty of his followers.

1000-2 In the **Will of Byrhtnoth's widow Ælfflæd**, among the many bequests, land at *Illanlege* (Monks Eleigh) is to be given to the monks of Christ Church Canterbury.

1002 **Confirmation by King Æthelræd** (the Unready') to Christ Church Canterbury, on the refoundation of the monastic community there, of lands at many places including *Illaleh* (Monks Eleigh) and *Hædleh* (Hadleigh).

1042-66 **Confirmation by King Eadweard** ('the Confessor') to the monks of Christ Church Canterbury of lands at many places including *Illelege* (Monks Eleigh) and *Hædleh* (Hadleigh).

1086 In the **[Domesday Book](#)**, the great survey of all the manors and estates in England ordered by William the Conqueror, the entry for *Illeleia* (Monks Eleigh) in the Hundred of Babergh is as follows:

Holy Trinity (i.e. the Canterbury Monastery) held *Illeleia* in the time of King Edward as a manor; it had 5 *carrucates* of land (i.e. 600 acres) with *soc* and *sac* (i.e. full jurisdiction over persons and lands). Then it had 21 *villeins* (villagers), now 13; then 13 *bordars* (cottagers), now 12; then 4 serfs, now 3. It always had 2 plough teams on the demesne. Then 21 plough teams belonging to the men, now 13. It has 12 acres of meadow. Always 1 mill. Now 2 horses, 19 cattle, 20 pigs, 160 sheep. It has a Church with 22½ acres. It had a value then of £15, now £20. It is 1 league

(3 miles) in length and 5 *quarentines* (furlongs) in breadth. It pays 14d in *geldt* (tax).

Note the reference to a Church and a Mill, and to the number of ploughs, animals, and serfs!

1221 The **second written record of a Church** here (no doubt on the site of the present Church): an entry in a Close Roll for this year reports that two oaks were ordered for the repair of the chapel (i.e. small church) at *Illeghe*, so the building was already old enough to need repairs. It may well have been the Church mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, which would have been a wooden Saxon building. The oldest parts of the present Church (the Nave, the South Aisle, the South Doorway, the Font) date from some one hundred years later, perhaps mid-14th century, whilst much of the rest of the Church dates from the mid-15th century.

c.1300 Mention of the existence of a **Gallows** in a document of this date: it is said that there was once a gallows in Monks Eleigh at place called *Fulsclo* – this name means ‘the foul or dirty slough or muddy spot’, from Old English *fūl* and *slōh*, and is probably to be associated with the present Slough Farm, the name of which derives from the same word.

1327 In the **Subsidy Roll** of this year, a list giving details of a tax levied (at a 20th) on the value of the personal property of all householders, *Villata de Illeghe Monachorum* (‘Eleigh of the monks’) is listed with 20 taxpayers. Total tax for the village 42s. 8d, of which the largest amount (7s. 8d.) was paid by Andrew *le Forester* (who was thus the wealthiest person in the parish).

1348-9 The deadly plague known as **the Black Death**, emanating from the ports where it arrived on rat-infested ships, spread throughout England and reduced its population by a third (from c.3¾ million to c.2½ million): there is no record of its presence in this village, but it is almost certain it must have taken many lives here as it did everywhere else.

1348-9 Perhaps related to the plague years, the **oldest bell** hanging in the Church was cast during this time: it is the second oldest bell in Suffolk (the oldest hangs in Hadleigh Church) and one of the oldest in the country.

c.1350 The oldest parts of the present **St Peter’s Church** building (the Nave, the South Aisle, the South Doorway, the Font) probably date from around this time.

1368 In a **Court Roll** of this year, Adam Spencer, a poacher, was fined 6d. for fishing with nets in the lord's river, and for taking a *pykerel* ('a small pike') from the lord's pond.

1373 In a **Court Roll** of this year, William Sexsteyne, called Wynkes, struck Richard Dull and was fined 2d.

c.1381 Mention of the existence of a **Parish Gild** in the village: this kind of medieval gild (to be distinguished from a craft gild), found here and in many other villages, would have played an important part in the social and religious life of the parish. Members both men and women earned the right to be helped in adversity and to be prayed for by gild members after death. The Monks Eleigh gild maintained a candle burning before the crucifix in the Church, probably in the Chapel at the east end of the North aisle which is thought to have been the Gild Chapel. There were also social activities for which special gildhalls were built, hence of course the Old Guildhall on The Street, an ancient building c.1425.

c.1425 Two important **Hall Houses** were built in the village around this date – Hobarts in Back Lane (named from Thomas Hobart) and the Guildhall, both with impressive crown posts.

c.1450 Great additions and enlargements to the **St Peter's Church** building, including the Tower, the North Aisle, the Roof, and the Porch, probably date from around this time.

c.1490 Reports of some kind of **legal dispute** involving the Hobart family and Robert Brent, there being 'an axyon agenys Nyclas Hobard for huntyng and destroyng of your game at *Monkesyllegh*'.

1524 In the **Subsidy Roll** of this year, *Monkes Illigh* is listed with 53 taxpayers. Total tax £4 4s. 2d, of which the largest amount (£1 4s.) was paid by Nicholas *Hobart* (who was thus the wealthiest person in the parish).

c.1530 During the reign of Henry VIII, a **legal case** heard in the Star Chamber related to an assault on one Henry Mawyn of *Monkysylly* by William Hobard, Richard Rie, Mawde Aleyn, Roger Alysaunder, John Hasyll and 'dyvers other riotouse personez'. It was reported that they 'in a riotouse maner assembled that is to say with swords and staffs and there contrarie to the peace on him made assaute and hym sore did bete and evyll intreate'.

- 1536** With the **Dissolution of the Monasteries** by Henry VIII, it was decreed that the lands and manors held by the monks of Canterbury, including Monks Eleigh and Hadleigh, should be transferred to the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury Cathedral, and they remained lords of the manor until 1863.
- 1545** The earliest reference in the written records to **the Swan**: in a Court Roll of this year, a copyhold tenement called *le Swanne* was surrendered by William Colman to the use of Stephen Umfrey and William Lawman.
- 1568** In the **Subsidy Roll** of this year, *Monkes Illeg* is listed with 16 taxpayers. Total tax £4 1s. 8d, of which the largest amount (12s.) was paid by James *Hubbard*.
- 1631** A **Spire** was added on top of the tower of St Peter's Church (it was taken down again in 1845 for structural reasons).
- 1634** Dr Robert Cottesford was appointed **Rector** here, then in 1638 moved to Hadleigh, after which in 1640 he became Rector in both places – but was rejected from both livings in 1643: not perhaps surprising, as a document of this year reports that ‘He hath often been drunke, consuming his time in tippling and drinking, sometimes from morning to night, and hath oft attempted the chastity of his maidservant, that she could not live in the house for him, and seldom preacheth, and for five months last past, wholly deserted his duties’.
- 1640** In the **Ship Money Returns** of this year, 36 residents of Monks Eleigh paid tax, and another 10 non-residents also paid tax.
- 1650** After Cromwell had dispossessed Canterbury of its manors, **Monks Eleigh Hall**, together with its lands and manorial rights, was bought by Miles Burkitt, then aged forty and a miller's son from Northamptonshire, for the sum of £1447 14s. 7½d. As a wealthy incomer he swept away the old medieval/tudor hall and built a grand new house, but a decade later, at the Restoration, Charles II restored the property to Canterbury and Burkitt died a poor man.
- 1663** A **Perambulation of the bounds of the parish** was undertaken, ending up with what Northcote calls a ‘jollification’ at *the Swanne*. In the past this time-honoured event, intended to confirm the ancient bounds and to check that other parishes had not encroached, would have taken place every ten years or so.

- 1668** The **Parish Stocks**, which used to stand opposite *the Swanne*, were renewed at a cost of £3 4s. 11d.
- 1670** The **oldest gravestone in the Churchyard** is that of one Martin Salter, whose date of death (1670) is known from the Parish Register but is not engraved on the stone, the inscription on which states he was murdered. According to the Rev. Northcote, writing in 1930, burials in the Churchyard up to that date numbered between 3000 and 4000 as can be reckoned out from entries in the Parish Register.
- 1674** In the **Hearth Tax Returns** of this year, *Muncks Ely* is listed with 69 names of those living in the parish with the number of hearths in their houses on which tax had to be paid. Mr Dandy had the most hearths (9), followed by John Nutt (8)
- 1721** Another **Perambulation of the parish bounds**, an account of which in this year is recorded in an extant document describing and naming all the boundary points.
- 1724** The date of the wonderful large **Map of the Parish**, the original in the Suffolk Record Office, a copy of which is framed and hung on the north wall of St Peter's Church: 'A Map of the Town and Village of Monks' Eleigh in the County of Suffolk. Surveyed by John Miller 1724'. The excellent copy of the map in the Church was made through the good offices of villager Hugh Campling.
- 1748** 'There was **the greatest Flood** that was ever known in the memory of the oldest people that were then living' (entry in Parish Register).
- 1748** A **witch hunt** in the village: 'Alice the wife of Thomas Green, labourer, was swam, malicious and wicked people having raised an ill report of her being a witch' (note in Parish Register). The 'swimming' of suspected witches was practised until the end of the 18th century: it is not known whether Alice survived this cruel 'trial by water'.
- 1750** **Gedford Bridge**, crossing the river at the east end of The Street by Paddock Hall on the site of the original ford, was built in this year. It was repaired in 1804 and completely rebuilt in 1825.
- 1754** For the tenants of **Cobbolds Mill** there was a serious problem with flooding on the river which prevented the millwheel turning: the flooding was caused by a brick wall built across the river lower downstream on the estate of Robert Pocklington in Chelsworth in order to create a cascade or

waterfall as part of his landscaping scheme. The wall was not lowered until the 1780s.

- 1756** The **Parish Workhouse** (possibly on the site on the west side of the Village Green that later became the first Parish School) took the place of two cottage tenements which were destroyed by fire. It remained in use until 1834.
- 1764** A **lightning strike**: a horse belonging to Abraham East, miller of the Lower Mill [i.e probably Cobbold's Mill], was killed by lightning.
- 1766** There were **heavy snowfalls** in March of this year: the very deep snow lasted many days, and stopped villagers from going about their business.
- 1787** There was a **Sunday School** in the village for which accounts survive from this year until 1799.
- 1790** The parishioners decided to buy a **new bell** for the Church, thereby bringing the peal up to six. The maker of the bell was T. Osborn, and the cost about £15.
- 1790** The **Church clock** underwent a complete renovation costing £22.
- 1794** The **Church sexton**, one Sarah Munnells, responsible for digging new graves, resigned on account of old age. She was replaced by a certain Peter Powers.
- 1801** The **Population** of Monks Eleigh in this year was 542 according to the Census Returns. The population rose rapidly to 732 in 1841, then fluctuated, 720 in 1871, back down to 553 in 1901.
- 1815** Reports that the **bridge between Monks Eleigh and Chelsworth** (on the boundary of the two parishes) had broken down, and this happened again in 1821. There was controversy about who should pay for repairs, but the bridge was eventually rebuilt in that year.
- 1819** John Cook and William Mann convicted at Suffolk Quarter Sessions in Bury St Edmunds for **stealing some fowls** the property of Mr Woodgate of Milden and Mr Scafe of Monks Eleigh, Cook sentenced to be transported for 14 years, Mann for 7 years.
- 1819** John Clark convicted at Suffolk Quarter Sessions in Bury St Edmunds for **receiving some fowls**, knowing them to have been stolen by John Cook and William Mann, and sentenced to be transported for 14 years.

- 1822** A **devastating fire** in the village which destroyed some five cottages adjacent to the premises of Mr Samuel Baker: there were three engines at the scene, and it took eight hours to put out the fire.
- 1823** One James Clarke convicted at Suffolk Assizes in Bury St Edmunds for **stealing some fowls** the property of John Farthing of Monks Eleigh and sentenced to be transported for 7 years.
- 1820** The first record of **Non-conformity** in the village, it being ‘certified that the dwelling house of Thomas Wright, labourer, was to be set apart for the worship of Protestant Dissenters’.
- 1825** The earliest mention of the **Congregational Chapel** in the village: a barn belonging to William Faiers was converted by him into a place of divine worship for Protestant Dissenters. This building served as the Chapel until 1870 when the new larger Chapel was built, and is now of course still in use as the present United Reformed Church.
- 1825** A list of men who have not joined the **East Suffolk Regiment of Militia**, on being enlisted, includes two young men from Monks Eleigh, Thomas Alliston aged 17 and George Burnham aged 19: whoever apprehends either of these two deserters is entitled to 20 shillings reward.
- 1828** A man called Sam Proctor is **gaoled for trespassing** in a wood in Monks Eleigh and damaging a fence.
- 1828** A **village brawl!** Certain parishioners of Monks Eleigh and Milden were fined for taking part in an ‘Affray on the public street on a Sunday evening’, but (how kind!) the fines were spent upon ‘bread for the poor’.
- 1829** A man called Johnson is charged with **stealing a sow** from Peter Gage, butcher of Monks Eleigh [see the next entry].
- 1831** Isaac Johnson of this village is **transported to New South Wales** with 200 other convicts. Johnson was convicted at Bury Quarter Sessions on several counts, including maliciously killing five horses belonging to Nathaniel Holmes of Tye Farm, using arsenic to poison them, after a feud between the two men [see the full account on monkseleighhistory.co.uk].
- 1832** A man called Joseph Head is given **one month in gaol** for stealing ash and *battlings* (the loppings off trees used for firewood) from Tom Makin of Monks Eleigh.
- 1832** A woman called Ann Andrews is given **21 days in gaol** for wilful trespass and spoil in Monks Eleigh.

- 1833** One Robert Baker is given **one year in gaol** for obtaining money by false pretences from the overseer of the Monks Eleigh workhouse; he had as much as £8 10s. on him when apprehended, and had bought flour from miller Robert Keeble.
- 1834** The **Parish Workhouse** closed, like all other such small village workhouses. Inmates had to be transferred to the larger Union Workhouses, such as the Cosford Union Workhouse at Semer to which Monks Eleigh residents were now sent.
- 1834** The establishment of the first **Parish School** in the village. With the closing of the Parish Workhouse, a 'Schoolroom' or 'Schoolhouse' was built (at a cost of £98 6s. 0d.) on a piece of ground taken out of the workhouse yard, 'for the purpose of educating the children of the poor, according to the principles of the National Society'. This School existed until 1872 when it was pulled down and replaced by a new building.
- 1835** Edward Hollocks is **charged with inciting** the lad Wright to steal a hen from his master, Nathaniel Holmes of Tye Farm.
- 1835** One John Goymer is **gaoled for three months** for violently assaulting Susan Ann Partridge, dressmaker, and her father Tom of Monks Eleigh.
- 1837** Very **deep snow** this winter, all traffic in the village so much interrupted that farmers had to send their men to clear the drifts, the cost amounting to £26 18s. 3½d.
- 1837** An inquest was held on **Elizabeth Hawkins** of Monks Eleigh, who tragically drowned herself: a verdict of derangement was recorded.
- 1838** Samuel Cutcher, John Howe and John Ratcliffe are sentenced to be **transported for 17 years** to Van Dieman's Land, having been convicted at Suffolk Quarter Sessions in Bury St Edmunds of stealing a sheep the property of William Rayham farmer of Monks Eleigh.
- 1841** In this year the **Population** of the village reached its peak at 732, having been just 542 just 40 years earlier.
- 1841** The **old Church Clock** (repaired in 1790 but it now had only one hand) was replaced by a new one made by Mr Ambrose of Sudbury at a cost of £27 10s.
- 1843** William Grimwade, butcher of Monks Eleigh, is sentenced to be **transported for 12 years** to Van Dieman's Land with 300 other male

convicts, having been convicted at Suffolk Assizes in Bury St Edmunds of assaulting Mr Robert Gogmour at Hadleigh and stealing £12.

- 1843** The first of six separate applications (the last in 1896) to construct a **passenger and goods railway line** through the Brett valley: it was planned to link Hadleigh with Lavenham, running East-West through Monks Eleigh between the Lavenham Brook and The Street, thus crossing the water meadows and the gardens of the properties on the South side of The Street.
- 1844** In [Whites Directory](#) of this year, among the trades and occupations mentioned are: 8 farmers, 3 grocers and drapers, 2 tailors, 2 joiners, 2 shoemakers, 2 wheelwrights, 2 corn millers, plus, besides the rector and the parish clerk, a veterinary surgeon and shoeing smith, a tanner, a blacksmith, a schoolmistress, a castrator, a beerhouse keeper, a butcher and cattle dealer, a spirit merchant and victualler (at the *Red Lion*), an ironmonger, an animal painter, and a lady who ran a private school. It is clear that at this date the village was near self sufficient, with most people working for the local farmers or in the other village trades, and with most of the needs of its 732 population well provided for.
- 1844** In September this year there were **reports of incendiarism** in the village – the burning of farm property by rural labourers protesting against oppression and low wages. These often violent rural protests, usually taking the form of firing barns, wheat ricks and haystacks, were common in the early 19th century.
- 1845** Thomas Baker and Edward Bowers of this village are sentenced to be **transported to Australia** for 15 years, convicted at Suffolk Assizes in Bury St Edmunds of setting fire to a barn in Monks Eleigh, the property of Robert Gage.
- 1845** The property that included the **Congregational Chapel** was sold to John Ansell of Hadleigh, who created the Ansell Trust, appointing 9 trustees to carry out mission work in Monks Eleigh and the other village around Hadleigh in connection with the Congregational Chapel there.
- 1845** The **Spire** added to the top of St Peter's Church tower in 1631 was taken down because its weight was crushing the tower and causing structural damage.
- 1846** The **footbridge at the Wagger** was built.

- 1846** Some of the parishioners bought a **Fire Engine**, at a cost of £57. It would have been a hand-pushed engine, operated by a crew of five and a foreman. It was paid for by private subscribers who were then entitled to a free service: non-members had to pay £5, a considerable sum when an average farm-worker's wage was just 9d. a day. In the following year a brick shed was built for the Fire Engine in the land adjoining Church Cottage.
- 1852** The Monks Eleigh **Fire Brigade** was disbanded due (perhaps luckily) to lack of demand for its services and the high cost of maintenance.
- 1854** The [Village Pump](#) on the Village Green, made by Ransomes, was installed. Before its arrival, villagers used water from the various springs in the village and from the Lavenbrook Brook. It bears an inscription with the warning that 'boys or other persons damaging this pump will be prosecuted as the law directs' (vandalism was obviously a problem even then). It remained the village's main water supply until mains water was introduced after World War Two.
- 1855** In [White's Directory](#) of this year, most of the trades and occupations mentioned are the same as those in 1844, except that the castrator seems to have been dispensed with, there is now a curate and a police officer in the village, and there is also mention of the Post Office.
- 1858** The **bridge at Skipps Cross** was built in this year, replacing an earlier bridge known as Pole Bridge.
- c.1860** The **bridge at the Causeway** was built.
- 1870** The new larger [Congregational Chapel](#), needed because of the growing congregation and built next to the smaller one at a cost of £350, was formally opened for Divine Worship free of all debt.
- 1872** A **new Parish School** was built, after the old school had been pulled down, on the west side of the Village Green next to Church Cottage, and this remained the village school for some 90 years before it was replaced with the new Primary School built c.1960.
- 1874** The **Village Fire Engine**, not in use since 1852, was sold by the Rector for the paltry sum of £5, much to the resentment of the original subscribers who were not consulted and who of course maintained that it was not the Rector's to sell! The village was without a fire service until 1898, from which date it was supplied from Sudbury.
- 1894** The first meeting of **Monks Eleigh Parish Council**.

- c.1904** The [first motor car](#) was seen in Monks Eleigh, the owner being Colonel Scudamore of Chelsworth Hall.
- 1907** The [Kings Head](#) pub (now Christmas Tree Cottage) on The Street, one of the four pubs in Monks Eleigh, closed.
- 1909** [D. J. Hollox the tailor](#) (1888-1978) started his business in Monks Eleigh, having been apprenticed to a tailor in Bildeston at the age of fourteen.
- 1914-18** **The Great War** (WW1) had enormous consequences for this village as it had for so many others. As many as 108 men from Monks Eleigh were enlisted and went to the war, and sadly, 22 of them were killed in action [more detailed information still to be added from the War Memorial plaque in the Church].
- 1915** Work to strengthen the **Church Tower** and other parts of the church fabric was undertaken, partly paid for with £174 16s. collected by the Rev. Northcote in response to his appeal for funds.
- 1930** **Notes on the History of Monks Eleigh** by the Rev. A. F. Northcote, Rector of Monks Eleigh from 1900 to 1932, was published by W. E. Harrison, The Ancient House, Ipswich, with 92 pages of text and six attractive drawings in pencil by Jasper Salwey. This is a most important book, well written and diligently researched, and the essential starting point for any kind of further work on the fascinating history of the village.
- 1939-45** During **World War Two**, the 4 shops and the 3 pubs in the village were all kept going by enlisting the help of the women and the older men. Searchlights were positioned on the high ground surrounding the village: enemy planes flew over, but luckily no bombs were dropped here. The Monks Eleigh Home Guard had 24 members. The village continued to be well served by public transport: coaches ran twice daily from Stowmarket via Monks Eleigh to Kings Cross, you could catch a train from Lavenham to either London or Cambridge, there were buses to Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds, and one taking villagers to the surgery at Bildeston for 3d. return! So life went on here, and during the later war years, John ‘Stitcher’ Hollox was kept busy altering and repairing the uniforms of American servicemen who were often around on their bicycles (besides being the village tailor, John carried on collecting his hens’ eggs and milking his goats as he had always done in peacetime). Although the village itself escaped damage during WW2, sadly there were human losses: of the [52 men and women from the village](#) who

served, three never returned [more detailed information still to be added from the plaque in the Church].

- c.1946** After WW2 ended, the village benefitted from a **gift from Sweden**: four wooden semi-detached chalet bungalows, provided by the Swedish Government, were built on Church Field. At the time it was said that they were intended to be relatively temporary, and that they would last some 15 years, but they are of course (in 2020) still going strong.
- 1956** The [Village Hall](#) (known as **Coronation Hall**), a prefabricated building, built with voluntary labour at a cost of £1898, was opened.
- 1965** Monks Eleigh was the winner of the **Best Kept Village Award** in Cosford Rural District (and won the same award again in 1981!).
- 1967** [The Lion pub](#) (earlier the **Red Lion**) closed, thus leaving just two pubs in the village.
- c.1960** [Monks Eleigh Primary School](#) opened on a site at the west side of Church Field, thus replacing the old village school on Church Hill. Although small the school established an excellent reputation, and served the village well until its closure in 2014.
- 1970** [Corn Craft](#) (Bridge Farm Barns) was set up as a family business, making corn dollies, by Royston and Wyn Gage. After some years the company employed up to 80 local people at the height of the season, exporting both to Europe and America, and of course in later years it has grown into the collection of businesses and the tea room seen today.
- c.1973** The [K-W Joinery Company](#) was formed by Barry Keitley-Webb in the Maltings behind the Lion pub, eventually growing into a business employing some 15 workers making a diverse range of high quality joinery products.
- 1974** The **Monday Club** was formed, prompted by Mrs Thornton, wife of the then Rector. Its aim was to provide extra interests for the young women of the village, where crafts like macramé and crocheting could be learnt and where there would occasionally be speakers. One of the most active members, Joan French, encouraged an interest in sketches and plays: a successful concert was put on in 1976, and for a few years this became an almost annual event.
- 1977** By growing [miniature orchids](#), orchid grower David Randall developed a unique business venture from his nursery at Highland Hall.

- 1979** The **Police House** in Church Field, built in 1962, was sold to a private buyer.
- c.1980 Pig farmer** Tubby Watts of Back Lane was refused permission to sell his land for housing and relocate his business despite complaints about the noise and smell, but he later moved to Brent Eleigh Road where he set up his farm shop and plant nursery business 'Hedgerows'.
- 1981** A small **Nature Reserve** developed by Maureen and Keith Morris after purchasing a 5-acre area of water meadow between the River and Back Lane. This wonderful haven for wild life continues to be lovingly maintained by Maureen after the sad death of Keith in 2007.
- c.1985** Villager **Steve Alleyn**, having cleared the ponds and ditches at Springate, and finding the water ideal for fish breeding, started a venture to raise ornamental species.
- 1986** In June a week-long **Festival** was held in the village, with children dancing on the Green, flower displays in the Church, various stalls, exhibitions and concerts, and even a duck race on the river.
- 1987** The **Big Wind** that struck England from across the Atlantic did a lot of damage in the village: at Cobbolds Mill and Rushbrooks it uprooted over 200 trees, and many other gardens were devastated.
- 1989** In June the [Monks Eleigh Bygones Club](#), formed last year by Paul Goodchild and now with 50 members, held a large exhibition of vintage cars, motor cycles and tractors at his home Fen View.
- 1990** The Monks Eleigh **Wildlife and Conservation Group** was founded with the intention of monitoring and conserving the varying habitats in the village and recording the wildlife species to be found here.
- c.1990** Villager **Rosemary Claxton** is running a successful business making models of yachts for European and American boat builders to show at exhibitions as far apart as Miami and Tokyo.
- 1991** The village celebrated a **Thousand Years** of its recorded history with three days of special events. To further mark this village millennium, an attractive 56-page illustrated booklet 'Monks Eleigh: a Thousand Years' was published, with some 15 articles on the history of the village.
- 1991** First issues published of local magazine **Village Matters**, covering the five villages of Monks Eleigh, Brent Eleigh, Milden, Chelsworth and Semer. It was edited by Peter Bentley of Foysters Piece, ran

successfully for 33 issues from 1991-1999, had 16pp. per issue and sold for 45p.

- 1991** In this year [Monks Eleigh Football Club](#) still had a 1st XI and a reserves team, both playing a full series of matches. Other games being regularly played in the village at this time include carpet bowls in the Village Hall and quoits at the Bull.
- 1991** The first of three ‘friendly’ **annual cricket matches** between Monks Eleigh and Chelsworth, played at Milden; Monks Eleigh won the first two (1991, 1992), Chelsworth the third (1993).
- 1991** Eleven year old entrepreneur Patrick Sharman started his business producing and marketing [quails’ eggs](#) from his home at the Old Rectory, aiming to produce up to eight dozen eggs a day.
- 1992** Major restoration work on [St Peter’s Church tower](#), involving the underpinning and strengthening of the tower at a cost of c.£100,000, was begun.
- 1992** Death of **Charles Bunbury**, ex RN Lieutenant Commander and resident at **Rushbrooks** since 1956, who established a flourishing market garden business and shop selling home grown produce until 1984.
- 1992** Beating the bounds, another **Perambulation of the Parish Bounds**, was undertaken by some 40 people [[see the document on monkseleighhistory.co.uk](#)] . The 17-mile walk followed the parish boundary as shown on the John Miller map of 1724. This ritual for establishing the village boundaries is an ancient one, see under 1663 and 1721.
- 1992** During **Guy Fawkes Night** celebrations on Parson Croft, a flying spark from a Catherine wheel entered the boot of Jacques Forrest’s car, setting fire to part of the stock of fireworks and damaging the interior of the car. That drama apart, the event (the second to be held in the village) was a great success!
- 1993** A heating system was installed in **St Peter’s Church** at a cost of c.£6000.
- 1993** What used to be known as **K-W Joinery Company** or Paddock Hall Joinery Works, and what used to be the **Lion** pub, have been sold to John Ratcliffe, a joiner who will continue the business as Monks Eleigh Joinery Company and who intends to restore the Lion to its original appearance.

- 1994** In July of this year the **Chelsworth and Monks Eleigh WI** celebrated their 75th anniversary with a garden party: the group had 36 members (a good number, but less than in its heyday when it had as many as 65 members!).
- 1994** In September of this year, a grand [Regency Fair](#) was held in the village. Organised by the History Group, this splendid event included a procession of villagers dressed in period costumes, playlets, stalls, food and drink, an exhibition at the school, and an evening barn dance in the Village Hall.
- 1996** The **footpath between Monks Eleigh and Chelsworth**, running along the south side of the field to the north of the B115, was made on land belonging to Strutt and Parker.
- 1997** The **Village Hall (Coronation Hall)** open again after being closed for some months for necessary repairs.
- 1997** Closure of the [Bull](#) after some 300 years as a pub. The owner Mr Lavery wants it delicensed, seeking planning permission from Babergh D. C. for change of use to a private house.
- 1998** Owner of the **Bull**, Mr Lavery wants planning permission from Babergh to build four linked dwellings in the former pub garden.
- 1999** Babergh D. C. gives permission for four houses to be built on the [Foysters Hall Farm](#) site (developer Michael Howard Homes).
- 2000** The village celebrated the **New Millenium**. The Millenium was rung in on New Year's Night by **bellringers** Mandy Coll, Andrea Beckett, Peter Izatt and Peter Cook – they were then joined by Chris Banks and Bill Cooper to ring again at midday on New Year's Day. At 11.30 that day, the new **Village Sign**, designed by Rita Campling and made at Brandeston Forge, was unveiled on the Village Green by Sybil Quare, Monks Eleigh's oldest resident, to mark the Millenium. Afterwards, fun and games were organised on the Village Green.
- 2000** In the October of this year the **Millennium Green**, a wonderful green and peaceful open space in the middle of our village, was officially opened. Imaginatively created from an area of land that was once allotments, designed by Juliet Hawkins and run by the Monks Eleigh Millennium Green Trust (inaugurated in 1999), it is a permanent celebration of the new Millennium. It is a haven for wildlife, home to many different species of plants and trees, and an excellent amenity for the village.

- 2002** It is announced that the long established [Willows Garage](#) business is closed, with plans to demolish it for housing, planning permission having been sought for five houses on the site.
- 2002** In June of this year, the **Queen's Golden Jubilee** was celebrated in the village with three days of special events.
- 2002** Former [Church Treasurer Peter Bentley](#), suspended in 2001 on suspicion of false accounting, is found guilty of defrauding the parish of over £1000 and is sentenced to 200 hours of community service.
- 2003** In March of this year, the [old Village Shop and Post Office](#) closed after serving the village for more than a century. Having already lost two pubs and the local garage, there were fears for the community life of the village.
- 2003** The **new Monks Eleigh Community Shop and Post Office** opened on 11th December this year! Thanks to the hard work of many dedicated villagers, and with the permission of the owners of the Swan, Carol and Nigel Ramsbottom, the redundant brick built barn adjacent to, and within the grounds of the Swan, was refurbished as a Community Shop (to be run by volunteers) and Post office (run by Mandy Coll who had worked at the original one), thus restoring vital village services to meet the needs of all residents.
- 2004** The **Post Office** in the Community Shop was judged the 'Best Community Branch in Britain', an award well deserved by Mandy Coll for her dedication and hard work.
- 2003** Monks Eleigh was awarded 3rd place in the Calor [Suffolk Village of the Year Competition](#), with special praise for its Millennium Green and highlighting its 'resilience and tenacity'.
- 2004** Retired solicitor [George Hodgkinson](#) of the Hall set up his **apple-growing business**, by creating a small commercial orchard with a planting of over 700 traditional dessert apple-trees, including old Suffolk varieties such as St Edmunds Pippin and Sturmer Pippin, and some 140 Suffolk greengage trees.
- 2007** In October, the [Swan](#) was awarded 'The Best Dining Pub' accolade at the Suffolk Food and Drink Awards organised by the 'East Anglian Daily Times'.
- 2009** **Monks Eleigh Youth Club**, a vibrant and successful club for young people from the age of nine, both from this village and surrounding

villages, won an award as ‘Youth Club of the year’ (this was followed by other awards in 2010).

- 2011** In April a celebration of the **Royal Wedding of William and Kate** with a Tea Party on the Village Green, with lots of events for the children.
- 2011** The Reverend Canon **Brian Findley** retires after eight years of service to the Benefice.
- 2011** In a [malicious theft](#), quarry tiles were stolen from the porch of St Peters Church: it will cost around £600 to replace them.
- 2011** The **Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)** on the Playing Field was completed and was already being well used.
- 2011** The Parish Council purchased the old **Telephone Kiosk** for the sum of £1, with the planned intention of making it into a bring and borrow book store.
- 2012** A 10,000 foot **Charity Skydive** is done by daring 90-year old grandmother Mavis McKechnie to raise funds for Help for Heroes, a charity which supports wounded British servicemen and women.
- 2012** In June a village celebration to mark the **Diamond Jubilee** of HRH Queen Elizabeth: a big lunch party on the Village Green, and lots of events including a photographic exhibition in the Church, a treasure hunt, Morris dancing, a Fun Dog Show, games on the Playing Field, and a social evening in the Coronation Hall.
- 2013** A new business [Riverside Bulbs](#) was set up by villager Matt Long.
- 2013** A public access [Defibrillator](#), a piece of potentially life-saving equipment for heart attack victims, was kindly presented to the village by retired GP Gerald Gould, a former resident of Monks Eleigh. It has been fitted to the outside of the Village Shop.
- 2013** In September of this year, **H.O.M.E. (Heart of Monks Eleigh)**, a Day Retreat Centre, was officially opened at the United Reformed Church. This wonderful community resource is available for groups of up to 40 people for reflection, meetings and training days.
- 2014** [Monks Eleigh Primary School](#) closed, the last children and teachers leaving shortly after Easter. This followed a disappointing Ofsted report which led to sharply dwindling pupil numbers. This was a great blow for the village, but at the time it was still hoped by some villagers that the

school building might have some future community use, and a group was set up to promote this idea.

- 2014** It was decided by its Trustees that [MESCH](#) (Monks Eleigh School Community Hall Ltd), a company set up to construct and run a projected School Community Hall for use by both the Village and the School, should be wound up now the School has had to close.
- 2014** A **Flower Festival** was held in St Peter's Church to celebrate the centenary of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich.
- 2014** The **Village Hall (Coronation Hall)**, still in use but scheduled to be closed due to slow structural deterioration from 'concrete cancer' over the past 20 years, is put up for sale at an asking price of £250,000 as a site with planning permission for housing.
- 2014** Britain's **elite women cyclists** passed through Monks Eleigh during the Women's Tour Cycle Race.
- 2014** There was an annual 'friendly' fund raising **Cricket Match** between Milden and Monks Eleigh on Milden's lovely ground: this match was an annual fixture for several years.
- 2014** The [Swan Inn](#) is under new ownership, having been bought and refurbished by a company called Exclusive Inns which already owns The Angel Inn at Stoke by Nayland and The Anchor Inn at Nayland. In December it was officially (and very fittingly) opened by Donald Reynolds, Chairman of the Parish Council, who was born in one of the upstairs rooms as he was literally brought up here: his grandmother, then his parents, and after them his aunt had in turn run the pub during the 1940's.
- 2015** In January this year, Paul Goodchild's '[Sounds of the Past](#)' Museum, with its fantastic collection of artefacts and live performances, opens in the Old Chapel: it will be open on the first Sunday of every month. Paul, originally from Monks Eleigh, but now living in Gt Waldingfield, and the founder of the Monks Eleigh Bygones Collectors Club a quarter of a century ago, invites visitors to the museum to give a voluntary donation to Prostate Cancer Research or to Macmillan Nurses.
- 2015** In February the **Village Hall (Coronation Hall)** site is reported sold with planning permission for four new homes.

- 2015** In April a free bi-monthly newsletter **What's On in Monks Eleigh**, designed to inform residents of events and topical news about the village, was launched.
- 2015** In June the 800th anniversary of the signing of **Magna Carta** by King John and the Barons was celebrated by an exhibition and talk in St Peter's Church arranged by the History Group.
- 2015** Over the weekend July 18th-19th, an **Art and Craft Exhibition and Sale** ('Artists on the Green') was held on the Village Green, organized by villager Di Reynolds.
- 2015** In July, the '**Brett Gallery**', an attractive new exhibition space for the arts and crafts, opened at Bridge Farm Barns: it is owned and run by Wyn Gage, founder of Corn Craft in 1970.
- 2015** Also in this year, a new business [OliVen, a quilting and felting shop](#) opened at Bridge Farm Barns, run by Olivier and Vendulka Battais.
- 2016** In February, the [Community Shop](#) announces a new Home Delivery Service, available free to residents in need of help with their shopping.
- 2016** In March, the [Village Pump](#) is returned to its place on the Village Green after being damaged by a car: the pump cost £600 to repair because it was broken into bits and had to be welded back together at the forge in Barking.
- 2016** A new **Lifestyle and Home Shop** opened at Corn Craft (Bridge Farm Barns) by Caroline Gage, owner of Corn Craft.
- 2016** A new website for the **Village Archive** [monkseleighhistory.co.uk], with a link from the village website, is set up by Arthur Grosset.
- 2016** In May, the **Queen's 90th Birthday** (on June 4th) was celebrated with a village lunch on the Village Green.
- 2016** The old till in the **Community Shop** is replaced with a computerised touch screen EPOS (Electronic Point of Sale) system to make serving customers quicker and easier – but a learning curve for the shop volunteers!
- 2016** The village **Phone Kiosk** has been nicely renovated by Di and Don Reynolds, and as planned is now fitted with shelving, making it a small bookstore where books can be swapped or borrowed.

- 2017** In May, **MEBCC (Monks Eleigh Bygones Collectors Club)** returned to Bridge Farm Barns with a large Exhibition of their vintage machines – including steam engines, classic cars and motor cycles, vintage tractors, and displays of other bygone collectables.
- 2017** In August the sale of the **Village Hall (Coronation Hall) site** was finally completed.
- 2017** Due to the closure of the Village Hall, the **Monks Eleigh Youth Club** had to cease its activities and is no longer running, but there are hopes that it can be relaunched in the new hall when built.
- 2017** On 12th August the **Suffolk Bell Ringers Guild** rang a quarter peal in the Church to honour Private Charles Herbert Varo, who fell during World War One on 13th August 1917: he was a Monks Eleigh resident and an accomplished bellringer.
- 2018** The sudden closure of the **Swan Inn** following the illness of two of the senior staff of the company that owns it: although there was some talk of it being relaunched with a new menu, its future looked uncertain as it was also understood a lease on the premises was up for sale. This was of concern too for the future of the Community Shop, as the shop building is leased from the owners of the Swan.
- 2018** In early March, after severe weather with heavy snow, the [Community Shop and Post Office](#) had its busiest day on record since opening in 2003.
- 2018** A traditional plant nursery business, **Bridge Farm Plants**, selling a wide variety of Suffolk-grown garden plants, is established at Bridge Farm Barns.
- 2018** Four **new houses** built near the Church on the site of the old Village Hall are now up for sale with prices from £265,000.
- 2018** In August our veteran **village postman** Steve Brown has retired: he delivered to 365 addresses in the 3 villages of Monks Eleigh, Chelsworth and Milden, covered a total of 140,000 miles in over 20 years, and was always a regular welcome face in all 3 communities.
- 2018** In September welcome news: the [reopening of the Swan](#). After refurbishment by the new owners, Julie and Stephen Penney, the Swan is once again open for business: the opening night on September 14th was well supported by the village.

- 2018** In October the first of many **pub quizzes** held at the newly managed [Swan](#), with quizmaster Mike Nunn: a good turnout to support the new owners.
- 2018** On October 27th six members of the **Suffolk Bell Ringers Guild** rang a peal in the Church in remembrance of the villagers who lost their lives in WW1, among them the three bell ringers Corporal Keeble, Private Hollox and Private Varo. A Peal Board commemorating this peal hangs in the Church.
- 2018** On Sunday November 11th an **Armistice Day Concert** was held in St Peter's Church to celebrate the end of WW1. The concert was preceded by a peal of bells and featured Yalda Davis on cello and Hadleigh Choral Society's Choir Serendipity, and there were readings in prose and verse. As a backcloth to the Concert there was also a display by the History Group detailing the life of Arthur Fosker, one of the men from the village killed in the war.
- 2018** In December, David Turner, dedicated editor of **Roundabout**, the monthly parish magazine, stood down after working on it for over 40 years: he compiled and printed some 900 copies every month on a printer at his home in Hitcham.
- 2018** On December 20th the **official opening of the new £500,00 [Village Hall](#)** was celebrated with a giant Tea Party. More than 200 people were treated to tea and cakes in the splendid new hall, and hall committee member Patti Derry thanked all those who had made it possible through their work and dedication over the past 20 years, as well as the various funding partners and those who had made donations. In particular she singled out Richard Bines for his longstanding dedication to the project, including dealing with the financial side of the work, budgeting for all the construction and the purchase of equipment.
- 2019** On February 10th, a last **Farewell Service** for the Rev. Carol Mansell, who has lovingly served our parishes for over 5 years and is now moving on to All Hallows Church in Ipswich.
- 2019** On February 16th, an **Open Morning** was held to announce and advertise all the clubs, classes, and activities taking place in the new Village Hall: these included Pilates, Tai Chi, Yoga, Table Tennis, Zumba, Knit and Stitch, Poetry Circle, Creative Writing, Whist Club and History Group.
- 2019** In April, after its successful 4-year run, the last number of the **What's On in Monks Eleigh** newsletter was issued.

- 2019** In the same month , the first issue of a revived **Roundabout Community Magazine**, now edited by Caroline Burt of Semer, appeared, with the promise of free delivery to every household in all the 10 villages now covered including Monks Eleigh.
- 2019** Also in April the first **Monday Lunch Club** held in the Village Hall, run by Angela Forrest, Vicky Stanton, Margaret Lenton and John Thacker, with a plan to have it happen monthly.
- 2019** In June a second **Vintage Fair** was held at Bridge Farm Barns, with entertainment, dancing, displays of vintage vehicles, and a large vintage market.
- 2019** A beautiful **Peal Board**, commissioned by Jan and Simon Kelsall of the History Group, was hung in the Church Tower, this commemorating ‘A Peal of 5040 Minor rung on 27th October 2018 in 3 hours 16 minutes by six members of the Suffolk Guild, in remembrance of those from this parish who gave their lives in the Great War 1914-18 – among them Corporal Robert C Keeble, Private Edward J Hollox and Private Charles H Varo, bell ringers who were lost to this church. Commissioned from donations made by the grateful residents of Monks Eleigh 2019’.
- 2019** Coinciding nicely with their one year anniversary since buying the **Swan**, owners Julie and Steve Penney have been awarded ‘Pub of the Month’ by CAMRA (the Campaign for Real Ale).
- 2019** In October the first ‘**Flicks in the Sticks**’ in the new Village Hall, with the successful showing of the acclaimed film ‘The Greatest Showman’.
- 2019** A vintage 1955 Bedford **Fire Engine**, now handsomely restored, has been bought by Steve Penney, landlord of the Swan – a strange echo perhaps of the fire engine bought by the village way back in 1846.
- 2019** In November a Charity **Handcraft and Fund Raising Bazaar** was held in the Village Hall, organised by Jean Gatewood, Solvejg Mills and Sheila Brown and involving some 20 stallholders.
- 2020** During the great **Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic**, the magnificent community spirit of this village was shown at its best, with numerous acts of good neighbourliness, kindness and friendship.....

Yes, history is indeed in the making!

Monks Eleigh Timeline compiled by David Mills

Chairman, Monks Eleigh History Group

Sources include: Various medieval and later manuscripts and documents, *Notes on the History of Monks Eleigh* by Rev. A. F. Northcote, *An Historical Atlas of Suffolk* by D. Dymond and E. Martin, several other local history books and articles, *White's* and *Kelly's Directories*, the *Monks Eleigh a Thousand Years* booklet, the *Monks Eleigh Regency Fair* booklet, local newspaper cuttings from *Suffolk Free Press* and *East Anglian Daily News*, *Hadleigh Community News*, the village magazines *Village Matters* and *Roundabout*, the village newsletters *Shop Talk* and *What's On in Monks Eleigh*, and of course personal communication.

Any comments, corrections, suggestions for possible additions, all very welcome! Please email me at a.d.mills@btinternet.com