

**THE STORY OF  
WADENHOE**

# THE STORY OF WADENHOE

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*A Northamptonshire Village*

edited by Rita Duffey

David Marsden (Art Editor)

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1998

FRONT COVER  
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# PREFACE

Wadenhoe is one of those little villages in Middle England hidden away from the bustle of modern-day life, yet close to major access routes. It never fails to delight those coming upon it for the first time: its church on top of the steep hill and splendid view of the meadows along the Nene Valley; its picturesque thatched cottages; delightful riverside pub; tiny post office and shop, virtually unchanged since its establishment in the last century and reputedly the first 'Postal Telegraph Office' in the country thanks to the then squire, Chancellor of the Exchequer Ward Hunt, who also installed a gasometer to give the village street lighting. Its survival owes much to the Ward Hunt family who have owned the estate for two hundred years, but also to the villagers themselves, who are anxious that the village charm and character should be preserved.

Yet it is not just a pretty village. It has a lively community, prepared to work hard to ensure that the best traditions survive. This book is the village story, a series of essays by people who love Wadenhoe, whether they be experts in their field - archaeology, architecture, fauna and flora - or simply villagers with memories or an interest in its history.

The highlight of the book is the exciting new discovery of the remains of a 13th century hall and tower on top of Church Hill which must have been of similar size and status as other important archaeological sites in the region. Full details of this geophysical survey are included in Chapter 2, together with documentary evidence and an expert interpretation of the medieval landscape. A novel addition is a report of a detailed dowsing survey on the same site, also of a 13th century hall and tower.

*The Story of Wadenhoe* bore fruit from a seed sown during an Adult Education course organised in Wadenhoe to mark the opening of the new Recreation Hall in 1990. It would not have been possible without the help and interest of many. We are grateful to all those who have contributed, chatted over past times, loaned photographs, baked cakes to provide funds for the preparation of the book, and helped in many other ways. We are particularly indebted to the encouragement and participation of Mrs Julia Moss, who certainly took on more than she expected when she agreed to run a local history workshop on the village. Northamptonshire ACRE, Northamptonshire Heritage, the Northamptonshire Record Office, and Northampton County Library all gave advice and help.

The Wadenhoe Trust, Rural Action for the Environment, through the auspices of Northants ACRE, and an anonymous donor made generous grants towards a geophysical and dowsing survey of Church Hill and towards the preparation and publication costs of the book. We much appreciate their help.

Having 'abandoned' the village for France, just as *The Story of Wadenhoe* was nearing completion, I cannot adequately express my gratitude to Trevor Hold and Philippa Woods for subediting; to David Marsden for taking full responsibility for the production of the book; and to Peter and Stephen Hall for managing the financial aspects.

Much of the information in *The Story of Wadenhoe* is based on memories; as these are very personal and subjective, and may include an element of imagination, they may sometimes diverge from the fact. We hope that the general picture is accurate, but will be delighted if it generates more memories and discussion.

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