

## CHAPTER 6:

### WADENHOE IN THE 19TH CENTURY

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The second half of the 18th century was a period of enormous change throughout the British Isles and these changes were increasingly well documented.

From the late 18th century onwards, the production of written records increased steadily. Records such as enclosure awards, census returns, reports of Parliamentary commissions, ordnance survey maps, school log books, newspaper reports all contribute to our knowledge of the period.

Another important source is 'history on the ground', the material traces left by the developments which took place. The changes in agriculture brought about by enclosure left their mark on the countryside. New buildings and alterations to existing structures reflect changes in both population and priorities. In some areas a vast amount of new building, both domestic and industrial, was required to meet the needs of a rising population, while the growing demand for education resulted in the provision of many new schools. Churches and chapels, rectories and vicarages, were built, restored or altered as attitudes to religion evolved. Railways, many of them now disused, reflect the great advances in transport which took place during the 19th Century.

In Wadenhoe, a major change affecting the whole village was set in motion in 1793, when an Act for the Enclosure of the Open Fields was passed through Parliament. This act was one of the many enclosure acts passed in the late 18th Century. In the hundred years between 1750 and 1850 there were more than 4000 such acts. The population was growing rapidly, creating a greatly increased demand for food and it was widely believed that enclosure, resulting in the establishment of more compact farms, would lead to more efficient farming and higher yields. Furthermore, wheat prices were rising at the time, due in part to the Wars with France, and producers were anxious to maximise their profits.

The demand for enclosure came mainly from the larger landowners, who expected to see a rise in rents from the newly enclosed farms. In Wadenhoe the Lord of the Manor and the chief, almost sole, proprietor was Thomas Hunt of Oundle, who had inherited the property the previous year. The manor of Wadenhoe had been purchased early in the 18th Century by Sir Edward Ward, chief baron of the Exchequer, whose fine monument can be seen in Stoke Doyle Church. His daughter Jane married Thomas Hunt of Boreatton in Shropshire, grandfather of the Thomas who petitioned for enclosure in 1793.

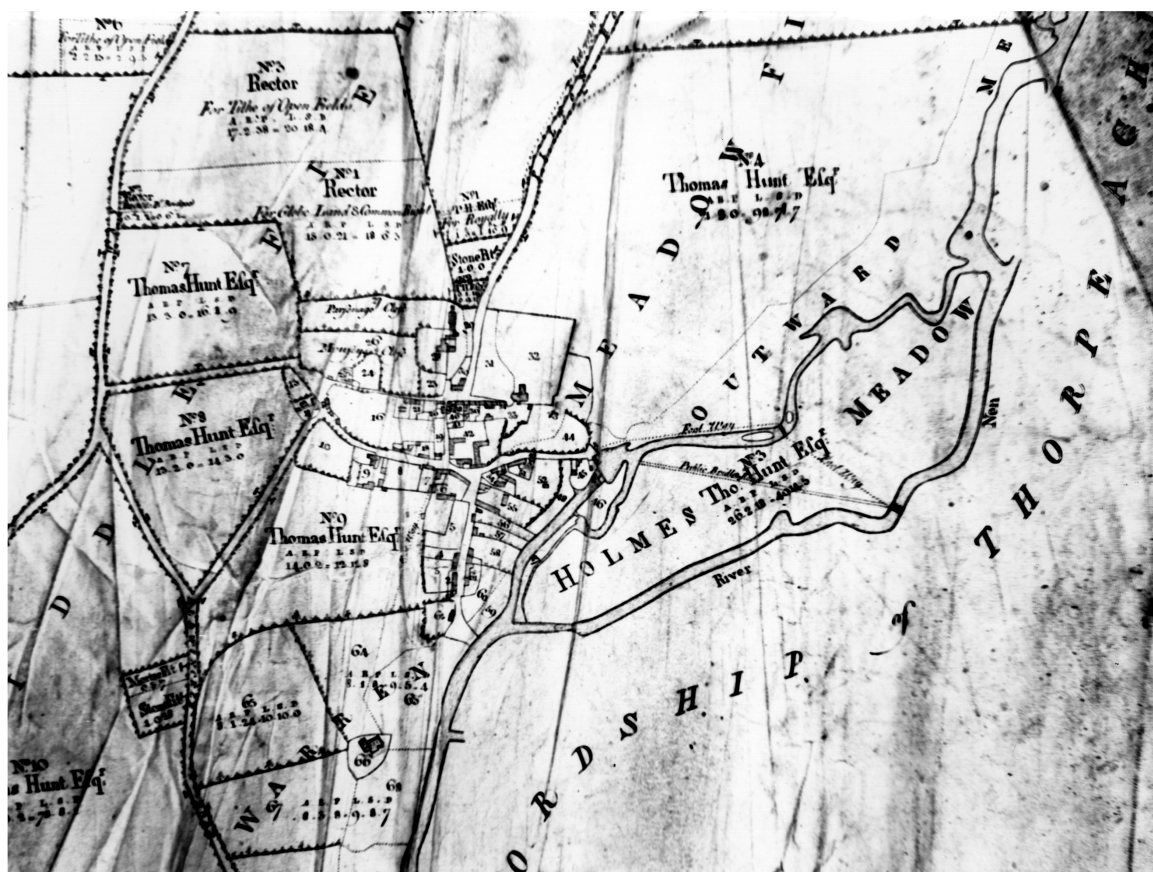
The impact of enclosure on the landscape must have been immense. Although there had been some enclosure prior to 1793, most of the agricultural land lay in three open fields, known in 1777 as Meer Field, Middle Field and Hasland Field; the fourth field, Meadow Field, was very small and was probably cropped with one of the others. In

### **The early period 1793-1835**

### **Enclosure and after**

was very small and was probably cropped with one of the others. In Northamptonshire a common three-field crop cycle was wheat, peas and beans and fallow. Barley was also a popular crop.

At enclosure, approximately 700 acres (*Fig. 1*) were enclosed and allotted to individual owners, who subsequently divided up the land, creating the familiar patchwork of fields, which has survived for the last two hundred years. Land was set aside for public roads, bridleways and footpaths as well as for the provision of public stone, gravel and mortar pits.



*Fig. 1:*  
Part of the Enclosure Award  
(reproduced by permission  
of the Northamptonshire  
Record Office)

A map of 1822, commissioned by Thomas Welch Hunt, Thomas Hunt's nephew and heir, shows how rapidly this new landscape had been created; only a few field names such as Hasland Field and Twenty Lands commemorate the pre-enclosure countryside.

At enclosure the bulk of the land was allotted to Thomas Hunt, who received eleven allotments, amounting to just over 500 acres. Apart from Thomas Hunt, the only other major beneficiary was the Rector, Samuel Parr. He and his successors were to receive allotments totalling more than 180 acres in lieu of tithes and glebe. During much of the 19th century the Rector of Wadenhoe was non-resident and did not farm his land directly: the land known as Rectory Farm was farmed by a tenant farmer.

A neighbouring landowner, Thomas Powys, Lord Lilford, was allotted Lilford Wood, a substantial block of 77 acres. In addition,

three villagers owned the site of their cottages with an adjacent yard and garden. One of these was William Stretton, whose name appeared on the 1777 Militia List, where he was described as a butcher. He also received a small allotment in the Meer Field. Robert Gray, a blacksmith, and William Buswell owned the sites of their two tenements with a yard adjoining. However, after Robert Gray's death in 1835 even these two tenements were acquired by the then Lady of the Manor, Mary Caroline Hunt. Nineteenth century Wadenhoe was largely a village of tenant farmers and agricultural labourers, with a small number of craftsmen and tradesmen supplying local needs.

In 1795 the most important farmers in Wadenhoe were Joseph and Philip Allen, whose family had been farming in the village for some years. The enclosure award shows Joseph Allen at Manor Farm. In addition to the farmhouse, barns, stables, farmyard, home close and an adjacent orchard, he also rented 'a water corn mill with buildings belonging thereto and yard and ground adjoining', Mill Holme Meadow, the Mill Dam and other land. Joseph was also allotted a very small holding in the Meer Field. Philip Allen occupied Home Farm with its stables and other outbuildings and, like Joseph, he also rented pieces of 'ancient enclosure' such as part of the Warren and the Furze Ground. The third farmer, Thomas Chew, whose family were also well established in the village, occupied the farm later known as Mill Farm, as well as other old enclosed land such as Winning Corner.

At a time when there were few public buildings, public houses provided an important venue for the transaction of official business. It is therefore not surprising to find that the oath was administered to Edward Hare, the enclosure commissioner, at the house of Oliver Birket, known 'by the sign of the Kings Head'. In addition to the house and stable, Birket occupied a piece of land well over an acre in size, stretching down to the river and known as the Willow Yard.

Although Wadenhoe was a 'closed' village, almost entirely in the ownership of one proprietor and the parson, the enclosure award, like the later survey of 1822, provides a full list of Thomas Hunt's tenants. Lists like this are particularly valuable for the period before the census enumerators' books are available. The occupants of property included John Morehen, Daniel Briggs, James and Mary Wilson, Benjamin and William Smith, members of whose families were still present in Wadenhoe in recent times.

The enclosure award does not list occupations, but these do appear on the Militia Lists. The List of 1777 shows three farmers, a miller, two butchers, four carpenters and one carpenter's apprentice, two masons, two cordwainers or shoemakers, two tailors, one smith, one shepherd, twelve labourers and seven servants; the servants were most likely 'servants in husbandry', generally young unmarried men boarding at the farm where they worked. Although the List is not comprehensive, it is indicative of an agricultural village with some service occupations. The number of carpenters seems rather high for a small village, but perhaps some of them lived in Wadenhoe and worked elsewhere. The mason 'Oleiver Bucket' was most likely the same as Oliver Birket, landlord of the Kings Head in 1795. He may have ceased

have ceased to be a mason by then, but it was not unusual for publicans to have another trade. On the census of 1891, John Speechley at the Kings Head gives his occupation as carpenter.

There is no exact record of the population of Wadenhoe at the time of enclosure, but the first census, taken six years later in 1801, shows 237 inhabitants. Ten years later there is a slight fall, but subsequent census years show a steady increase until 1851, when a maximum number of 290 is recorded. Whatever effects enclosure had on the lives of the villagers, it clearly did not result in depopulation. It is impossible to gauge the reaction of this largely illiterate group to the changes which were taking place. Enclosure itself with the need to make fences and hedges and build new roads must have brought some additional employment. More significant, perhaps, the crop returns of 1801 show that mixed farming with some arable, which was more labour-intensive than livestock rearing, persisted after enclosure. It was only where there was an increase in permanent pasture that the demand for labour fell.

These crop returns form part of the efforts made by central government through the Board of Agriculture to find out more about the state of agriculture throughout the country. The return for Wadenhoe, completed by the curate, shows 95 acres under wheat, 79 under barley, 16 under oats, 2 under potatoes, 4 under peas, 49 under beans, 46 under turnips and rape, giving a total of 291 acres. No acreage is given for pasture, but from this return it seems clear that while pasture predominated, there was still a significant amount of land under the plough.

While there was no depopulation in Wadenhoe after enclosure and no evidence of unemployment, life may have become harder for the ordinary villagers. Although many of them still retained a garden plot where they could cultivate vegetables, as occupiers rather than owners of their cottages they would not have been entitled to compensation for any common rights they may have lost. The hedging and fencing of fields and roads must have made it more difficult for them to gather firewood or free food such as mushrooms or blackberries. The enclosure award itself stipulated that 'it should not be lawful for any person or persons after the making such new roads or ways to use... any roads or ways within or through the lands... inclosed either on foot or with horses... other than such roads or ways as should be ... set out... by the said Commissioners.'. Despite such prohibitions poaching was widespread throughout the country. A poster of 1819 for the manor of Wadenhoe shows the efforts made by local landowners to warn off potential poachers (*Fig. 2*).

In the award, Thomas Hunt is described as 'of Oundle' where he owned the beautiful house in North Street known as the Berrystead; it is therefore not clear how much, if any, time he spent in his 'mansion house' at Wadenhoe. There are, however, some indications that he did not intend to neglect Wadenhoe. In addition to a nursery for young trees and an existing shrubbery or plantation, the award refers to a part of Park Close 'newly planted as a shrubbery' and a 'new shrubbery or plantation' situated in the area adjoining the river. It would seem from



# MANOR OF Wadenhoe.

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*The Game on this Manor  
is intended to be preserved,*

And Notice is hereby given, that the  
Tenants and Gamekeeper are di-  
rected to lay Informations against all  
unqualified Persons and Poachers,  
who may be found attempting to take  
or destroy the Game; and all qualified  
Persons who shall be discovered  
sporting without having obtained  
leave, will be prosecuted as Tres-  
passers.

*“By order of the Lord of the Manor.”*

Wadenhoe, 16th August, 1819

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Printed by T. Bell, Oundle.

Fig. 2:  
(Reproduced by permission  
of Northamptonshire  
Libraries and  
Information Service)

Jane Austen's Mansfield Park that the creation of a shrubbery was the mark of a proprietor anxious to improve the grounds of his estate.

Thomas Hunt was married, but he died without children and on his death in 1816 Wadenhoe passed to his nephew, Thomas Welch Hunt. Six years later in 1822 the young Squire commissioned from M. Selby a survey of his estate; the plan and accompanying book, which are now in the care of the Wadenhoe Trust, provide much information about the changes which had taken place since enclosure. The land was divided up into a neat patchwork of fields and many of the boundaries were marked by trees or hedges. The open fields had been replaced by a neater, more familiar landscape.

Other changes within the village itself have been noted by Eric Duffey: 'By 1822 Mill Lane had quite a different route with a dog-leg shape as it is today. Quite a few buildings must have been demolished to achieve this. Perhaps South Lodge was built as part of these

arrangements. One can only speculate why the Squire wanted to make all these changes, but it seems likely to have been associated with plans to enlarge the old Wadenhoe House and improve its surroundings.' Whether these changes were made by Thomas Hunt or his nephew is not clear.

In 1822 Joseph Allen and Philip Allen were still at Manor Farm and Home Farm respectively. A third member of the Allen family, Joseph's son John, was at Mill Farm, occupied in 1795 by Thomas Chew. John was also tenant of the Watermill together with Mill Holm and Mill Dam, previously held by Joseph. A house was listed on this site in 1822 but not in 1795.

The Allens must have been the main employers of labour in the village in 1822; between them they farmed nearly 750 acres. Joseph made a will in 1825 and died early in 1830. His son, John the miller, was his executor, but his other son Joseph appears to have left the village after his father's death. A Joseph Allen, who was an early member of the Aldwincle Baptist Church, left for Yelling in Huntingdonshire in 1830. The new tenant at Manor Farm was Robert Nichols, who was not a local man, but a native of Souldrop, Bedfordshire.

From the survey, it would appear that a number of the villagers who provided the labour on these farms were no longer living on the sites occupied by their families at the time of enclosure. For instance, Benjamin Smith's tenement, No. 12 in Main Street, on the enclosure award, seems to have disappeared and in 1822 a Benjamin Smith was living at No. 74 in Church Street [the numbering is not that of the present day].

When Thomas Welch Hunt commissioned the survey, he was a young man in his mid-twenties and he may have intended to make further changes and improvements to his property. In February 1824, he married Caroline Isham, eldest daughter of the Rev. Charles Euseby Isham, Rector of Polebrook and a relative of the Ishams of Lamport. Later in the year the young couple went to Italy, first to Rome and then south to Salerno in the Kingdom of Naples. It was not unusual for people of means to travel on the continent, but this trip ended in disaster. From Salerno they went further south to Eboli with a view to visiting the ruins of the Temple of Paestum. The country was wild and infested with bandits on the look-out for travellers showing any signs of wealth. While returning from Paestum, Thomas and Caroline were attacked by brigands and shot; they both died shortly afterwards of their wounds. A tablet in Wadenhoe Church commemorates the couple and a very full account of this dreadful incident can be found in Sir Gyles Isham's article in *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 'Tragic Honeymoon'.

Thomas and Caroline were married for less than a year and left no children. The Wadenhoe estate passed to his father's sister, Mary, who died unmarried in 1835 and from her to Mary Caroline Hunt. Mary Hunt seems to have left little mark on the village, but Mary Caroline made a lasting contribution to its welfare.

## **Mid-century Wadenhoe 1835-1877**

In 1835, when Mary Caroline Hunt inherited the manor of Wadenhoe, the sphere of central government was widening. The First Reform Act had been passed in 1832 and, although its direct impact on the countryside was not great, it did extend the franchise to the more substantial farmers. In Wadenhoe, Philip Allen, Robert Nichols and later Jonas Tebbutt who farmed the Rectory Farm were on the electoral register. The blacksmith, Robert Gray, who owned his house and premises freehold, was also entitled to vote.

Among the best known Acts passed by the New Parliament was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. This Act grouped parishes together into Unions, each of which was to build a central workhouse to provide for those too poor to look after themselves. Wadenhoe became part of the Oundle Union, which built a new Union Workhouse in Glapthorn Road; previously Wadenhoe like many other villages had its own small workhouse. The intention was to reduce the poor rates by making the workhouses so grim that few would enter them and by refusing most applications for out-door relief; however, references to 'paupers' in the census of 1851 suggests that a few Wadenhoe residents, mostly elderly, were still receiving relief at home in the village.

Another issue with which the Reformed Parliament concerned itself was the provision of elementary education. Concern about the education of the poor had been growing for some time with the increase in industrialisation at the end of the 18th century. Attempts to meet the demand were made by Anglicans through the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church and by Non-Conformists through the rival British and Foreign School Society. However despite the efforts of these societies there were huge gaps in provision. The report of a government select committee in 1818 reported that Wadenhoe had no schools at all. By 1833, matters had improved somewhat. According to a report of that year there was 'one day and Sunday school attended by 20 males and 8 females daily and by 21 males and 19 females on Sundays'. The school was supported by subscriptions from the principal inhabitants and the salary of the master was £24 p.a. There was, however, no mention of where the school was situated; at that time, children met for school wherever there was a room large enough to accommodate them. Mary Caroline Hunt clearly realised the need for a purpose-built school and in 1839 she provided the building now known as Caroline Cottage and described in Chapter 5.

The building of the school was not Miss Hunt's only contribution to the welfare of the village. By the 19th century many churches were in a poor state of repair and Wadenhoe Church was no exception. The Churchwarden's accounts show that major repairs were carried out in 1844, at a cost of £528, £400 of which was provided by Mary Caroline Hunt. Other contributors included the tenant of Wadenhoe House, Major General William Croxton, Miss Sophia Hunt and the leading farmers. A report of the work carried out is given in Chapter 4. It was undertaken by John Eaton of Titchmarsh. Another local craftsman, William Bunning, was paid for painting and varnishing the pews, seats and roof of the Church.

Efforts were made throughout the earlier part of the 19th century to encourage the clergy to reside in their parishes and many new rectories and vicarages were built to accommodate them. In 1831, when the Rev. Robert Roberts became Rector of Wadenhoe, two neighbouring incumbents certified that the Rectory of Wadenhoe was in a bad state and plans for its rebuilding were submitted by the Stamford architect Bryan Browning. The new building was to be a fine house with a drawing room, dining room and library and five bedrooms on the first floor; it seems, however, that although Robert Roberts remained Rector of Wadenhoe for over fifty years, he preferred to reside at Aldwincle, where he was also Rector, leaving the Wadenhoe Rectory to a succession of curates. Wadenhoe never had a dissenting or non-conformist chapel, but a later curate, the Rev. H.H. Gillett, wrote in 1872 that 'at least half the parishioners are dissenters'. This was probably an exaggeration, but the lists of members of Aldwincle Baptist Church include a number of Wadenhoe names. In addition to Joseph Allen, who has already been mentioned, John Langley and Jane Gray of Wadenhoe, Caroline and John Davison and members of the Norwood, Hollis, Wilson and Morehen families were listed. The following entry in the Baptist Church records sheds some interesting light on the concerns of a small village church in the 1830s: it is an extract from a letter of 1835 to the Northants Association of Baptist Churches at Kettering. 'But while we rejoice in the abolition of Slavery in the West Indian colonies, we are grieved to think of the awful extent to which slavery is carried on in the United States of America and hope the period is not far distant, when in that part of the world also, so horrid a practice will be put down to be known no more for ever.' Increasing literacy and the availability of newspapers such as the *Northampton Mercury* helped to bring an awareness of outside events to country areas.

Although the number and scope of written records was increasing all the time, it was not until the 1841 census that a complete record of the names of all the inhabitants of each town and village was taken and preserved, to be made available after a hundred years had elapsed.

The enumerator for Wadenhoe was Philip Allen, the farmer of what was then known as Philip's Farm, now Home Farm. His name appears first on the list, followed by that of Ann and three children aged four, two and nine months. The names of three young servants, two female and one male, John Quincey, complete the household. Unlike the later Census Enumerators' Books, the 1841 census returns do not list the relationship of each person to the head of the household and the ages of adults are only approximate, levelled down in spans of five years. For instance, Philip Allen's servant Sarah Lettings is recorded as 20, but may have been any age between 20 and 24. The place of birth was shown only as in or out of the county. The occupations of sons and daughters living at home were not usually given. For instance, the household of William Wilson, the carpenter, contained another William Wilson aged 17, most likely his son, but no occupation is given for the younger William. However, despite its

imperfections, the 1841 census does give a 'snapshot' of the village and all its inhabitants, men, women and children, on 6 June 1841, a great advance on any previously available listing. There were 287 people, 141 male and 146 female, living in 54 houses. The vast majority of these households were headed by agricultural labourers; the number of agricultural labourers listed was 46. In addition, the male servants, 'living-in' with the three farmers, Philip Allen, Robert Nichols and Jonas Tebbutt, were almost certainly unmarried agricultural workers. The household of John Allen, the miller, consisted of his son Francis, who succeeded him at the mill, his daughter, Sophia, John Palmer, who may have been his sister Lucy's son, Mary Mayes, a young female servant, and James Pridmore, aged 25, described as a 'male servant' but clearly another miller. On the other hand, the two male servants in the household of Major General William Croxton at Wadenhoe House were almost certainly house servants. The curate, William Bond, who presumably occupied the Rectory, had a household of eight, himself, his wife, four small children and two young female servants, but no male staff.

The elderly schoolmaster, Joseph Chew, taught at the national school which had recently been built by Miss Hunt; unfortunately, the census, unlike its successors, does not list the 'scholars' whom he taught. The other occupations listed were shopkeeper, tailor, publican, shoemaker, mason, smith, gardener, millwright, four carpenters and another miller. Although the population of Wadenhoe had increased by 50 since the beginning of the census in 1801, the village remained, and was to remain for the rest of the century, primarily an agricultural community.

One development which helped to bring rural communities like Wadenhoe into closer contact with the world beyond their immediate area was the creation of a network of railways. When the line linking Northampton and Peterborough was opened in the 1840s, Wadenhoe was only a little over two miles from the nearest station, Thorpe Achurch [nowadays referred to as Thorpe Waterville]. The growing importance of Peterborough as a railway town provided employment for people in the area and a quick and reliable route to and from London for both people and goods.

The introduction of the penny post in 1840 and increasing literacy among the villagers made it easier for them to maintain contact with those who left the village. In its entry for Wadenhoe, Whellan's Trade Directory of 1849 states that letters were received through the Thrapston post office and records the recent building of a 'neat National School'. Later entries show that Wadenhoe mail was received through the Oundle office.

Mary Caroline Hunt had died in 1847 and Whellan's Trade Directory gives the Rev. George Hunt of Sunninghill, Berkshire as Lord of the Manor and principal proprietor, but states that Wadenhoe House was unoccupied. By the time of the 1851 census the situation had changed and Wadenhoe House was occupied by Thomas Hague, aged 53, described as a landed proprietor, born in Dublin. This census provides much fuller and more exact information. Ages are given to the nearest year, the village or town and county of birth is shown as

is the relationship of each individual to the head of the household and his or her occupation.

This detailed information makes it possible to discover the structure of each of the 56 households and to gain some idea of which families had moved around the country and which ones had stayed close to home. For instance, while Thomas Hague was born in Dublin, his wife Mary came from Bradford. Their five daughters living at home, Mary, Maria, Julia, Louisa and Octavia, were all born in Yorkshire, the eldest in Scarborough, the next two in Wakefield and the two youngest in Stanley. The name Octavia may indicate that she was the eighth child; perhaps there were other children who had left home. This was clearly a wealthy household, employing both male and female servants. In addition to the gardener and groom, there was a young footman of 20, all three born in Northamptonshire. Of the four female servants, only Mary Wilson, the kitchen maid, came from Wadenhoe. The housekeeper was born in Uffington in Lincolnshire, while the cook came from Podington, just over the Bedfordshire border. Sarah Anne Shaw, at 19 the youngest of the servants, was born in Wakefield like two of her employers' daughters. Throughout the 19th century domestic service remained the most usual occupation for unmarried women and it frequently resulted in migration from their place of birth.

Another household demonstrating a high degree of mobility was that of the Curate, Henry Frederic Hewgill, aged 32. He himself was born in Great Smeaton, a village in Yorkshire, while his wife and mother came from Devonshire and Surrey respectively. There are indications that the Curate was a man of some social standing. Not only was his mother described as a 'gentlewoman', but his household included Jane Shipley, a 'ladies' maid' from Yorkshire, and there was a young governess from London for his two daughters aged nine and six. The housemaid was a girl from Brigstock and the cook, surprisingly young at 16, was Charlotte Chambers from Oundle. There were two visitors, Job Watson, an Oundle surgeon, born in Huntingdon and trained in London, and a little girl aged eight from Stanmore.

Mobility, however, was not confined to the upper classes and their domestic servants. It was not uncommon for tenant farmers to move around the countryside. For instance, George Hill, the census enumerator, who farmed Home Farm, at 260 acres the largest of the Wadenhoe farms, was a local man who had spent some time in Warwickshire. He was born at Lilford Lodge and his wife, Eleanor, was from Pilton, but both their children, five year old Eleanor Mary and two year old George Selby, were born at Wormleighton, north of Banbury.

Robert Nichols, an elderly widower, who farmed Manor Farm, was born at Souldrop in Bedfordshire, though he had some local connections. He had living with him three relatives, his nephew Robert Groome, aged 28, a farmer's son who succeeded him at Manor Farm, his niece Mary Anne Groome, aged 45, a farmer's daughter, both from Irthlingborough, and another niece, nine year old Martha Nichols from Brackley. In addition to Emily Quincey, a young general servant of 16,

the household included 16 year old John Morehen described as 'shepherd'. John's father, also John, appears elsewhere in the census as a shepherd. Occupations frequently ran in families and although the younger John was later described as a shoemaker at his marriage in 1860 to Elizabeth Seamark, his brother Benjamin was still a shepherd in Wadenhoe in 1891. The Willson family provide another example of continuity of occupation. The Militia List of 1777 contains two members of the Willson family, William and James, both carpenters, and over 100 years later, in 1881, there was still a William Wilson, a carpenter, in Wadenhoe. Boys and girls acquired various skills at a very early age by working with their parents, though attendance at school gradually postponed their entry into formal employment.

With large families and agricultural wages in Northamptonshire in 1850 as low as 9s a week compared with 14s in the West Riding of Yorkshire, the number of children described as 'scholars' is impressive. Out of a population of 290, 106, over a third, were under the age of 15 and of these 48 were 'scholars'.

With a population of nearly 300 living in 54 homes, overcrowding must have been common. In all classes of society families were large and there were a number of households which included additional family members such as a widowed mother, grandchildren or nephews and nieces. No doubt the Curate had sufficient room in the Rectory for his mother but for the shepherd John Morehen and his wife Ann with six children still at home, even finding room for their three year old grandson must have been quite difficult. The fact that their young son, John, was 'living-in' at Manor Farm as a farm servant must have helped to relieve the pressure. It was still quite common for apprentices and even journeymen to live with their masters. Samuel Smith, the wheelwright, had a young journeyman of 22 as well as an 18 year old apprentice living with him as part of his household.

Local mobility was not uncommon among artisans and labourers, though few of the men resident in Wadenhoe appear to have travelled far. Samuel Smith, the wheelwright, was born in Ashton, Northants, his wife Dorothy came from Leicestershire, while their two young daughters and the journeymen were born in Aldwinckle. Their apprentice came from Wigsthorpe and the young servant girl from Sudborough. Richard Quincey, an agricultural labourer from Titchmarsh, had married a Denford girl before settling in Wadenhoe where his three children, aged 15, ten and six, were born. He also had a three year old grandson, James Throsell, from Titchmarsh living with him. Although Richard was not born in Wadenhoe, the Quinceys were an old Wadenhoe family. A rental of 1666 shows one John Quincey among the leaseholders. As was often the case, the gamekeeper William Tolhurst proved an exception to this pattern of local mobility; he came from Goudhurst in Kent.

As a means of studying mobility, the census enumerators' books for a particular village have one great flaw; they show the number and origin of 'incomers', but they cannot help to answer a most important question: 'Where did those who left the village go?' In 1851,

Wadenhoe's population had reached its peak of 290. By 1911, it was down to 191 and still falling, so there must have been a considerable number of 'emigrants'. Perhaps the people best fitted to provide answers to this question are the family historians who, in tracing their roots back to Wadenhoe, can reveal the path their ancestors took away from the village. In the case of some young women, the marriage registers provide a clue, when, for instance, the bride is shown marrying a railway pointsman from Normanton in Yorkshire or a printer from Kettering.

There is another subject on which the census records from Wadenhoe provide little information, the employment of married women; this is probably in part because any paid work which the women undertook was part-time and often seasonal. The other more important reason is the size of their families. For many married women, child bearing and child rearing occupied more than 20 years of their lives. In 1851 Hannah, the wife of William Wilson the millwright, was 48; those seven children still at home in 1851 ranged in age from William, a carpenter aged 26, to Harriet, a baby of one. Forty-seven was late for child bearing, but many women continued to bear children into their forties, so for most of their married lives they were fully occupied. Child bearing and child rearing were only part of the burden they carried. Cooking, cleaning, washing, mending, often with insufficient money and no labour-saving devices, left these village wives with little or no free time. Overwork and lack of care during pregnancy and childbirth probably contributed to levels of maternal and infant mortality far higher than the norm for Western countries today.

As well as being census year, 1851 was also the year in which the government, concerned about the state of religion in the country, undertook a religious census. All places of worship had to make returns of the numbers of those present at service on Sunday 30 March 1851, which was census day. The returns for Wadenhoe were completed by the Curate Mr Hewgill and show that the general congregation numbered 42 in the morning and 112 in the afternoon with 30 'Sunday scholars' present at both services; it is impossible to judge who attended twice and who did not attend at all. It seems likely that it was the same 30 children who attended both services, so if the 30 children are added to the number of adults present in the morning and those present in the afternoon, and it is assumed that there was no duplication, a total of 184 is obtained. This fairly generous estimate of attendance amounts to a little under two-thirds of the population of the village, which is better than the average for the country as a whole and far better than Wadenhoe achieved later in the century. The experiment of a religious census was never repeated. However, in 1872, the Curate, Mr Gillett, estimated in a diocesan return that there was a congregation of 60-80 on Sunday afternoons and he put the total number of communicants at about 25 out of a population of 253. In 1901, the Rector, Mr Newby, stated that with a population of just over 200, the average number of his congregation was 30 in the morning and 40 in the afternoon. The number of communicants was up at 35. Both his



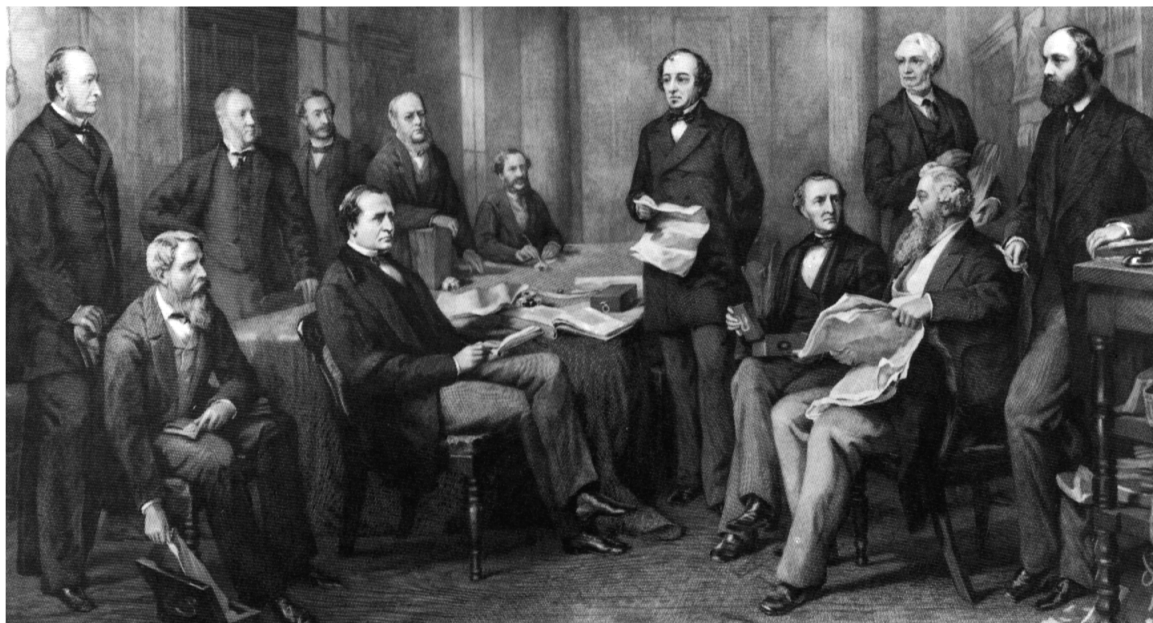
Both his churchwardens were ‘churchmen’ but one of them was not a communicant. While these are respectable numbers, they do indicate that churchgoing was by no means universal in the Victorian countryside. Mr Newby’s general comment is that ‘the people are quiet and orderly on a Sunday, spending the day in their own homes. The attendance at the morning service is however somewhat indifferent’.

In 1853, the Rev. George Hunt died; he was succeeded as squire of Wadenhoe by George Ward Hunt, who later became Chancellor of the Exchequer in Disraeli’s first administration and First Lord of the Admiralty in his second administration. Ward Hunt’s career is covered in an article by Margaret Main Schoenberg, in *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, on whose account much of what follows is based.

George Ward Hunt was born in 1825 and educated at Eton and Christ Church, Oxford where he read classics. The poet, Arthur Hugh Clough, who knew him at Oxford, referred in verse to Hunt’s stature, six foot four and weighing over 20 stones. When Ward Hunt was president of the Oxford Union, a contemporary described him as a ‘tall, heavy-hipped man with a handsome face in which good sense and good nature often blended’ and these qualities seem to have been apparent throughout his life. He read for the Bar and became a barrister in 1851; his London address was 5 King’s Bench Walk, Temple. Like many country gentlemen of the day, he stood for Parliament, initially without success, but in 1857 he became a Knight of the Shire for Northampton (north), a seat which he retained until his death 20 years later.

Dr Schoenberg gives a thumbnail sketch of George Ward Hunt’s career from 1857 onwards in these words: ‘In December 1857 George Ward Hunt, 32, squire of Wadenhoe, celebrated over pewter tankards of beer at Kettering, his victory as new Conservative M.P. for Northampton (north), married Alice Eden, a cousin of Lord Avon’ - Sir Anthony Eden’s father - attached an undistinguished front wing to the

*Fig. 3:*  
George Ward Hunt (seated, far right) at a meeting of Disraeli’s (standing, centre) cabinet. (reproduced by permission of Mrs Edna Ward Hunt)



family home built in 1654, and addressed himself to twenty years of High Victorian productivity. Father of ten children, paternal landlord, Chairman of County Quarter Sessions and ultimately Disraeli's Chancellor of the Exchequer (1868) [Fig. 3] and First Lord of the Admiralty (1874) he died in 1877 at the age of 52.'

After 1857, the electoral register gives Ward Hunt's address as Wadenhoe House and although he still had to spend a considerable amount of time in London, he was much concerned with rural issues and with his responsibilities as a Northamptonshire landowner. He saw national issues in the light of their effect on his own rural constituents and his attitude towards developments in agriculture was enlightened and far-seeing. Schoenberg cites a report in the Northampton Mercury of a speech which Ward Hunt made in February 1868 at the inaugural dinner of the Northamptonshire Chamber of Agriculture, where, quoting Tennyson, he said that 'English fields would soon be ploughed by a "kettle o' steam" and drawn by "the devil's own team" and the agricultural labourer begin to require a more literary education'. Busy though he was, the school log book shows that he found time to make informal visits to the village school.

His views on wages still make interesting reading. At a time when wages in the country were very low he said in another speech quoted by Dr Schoenberg that he believed the rise in wages would benefit employers since men would be able to keep their families in a state of greater respectability and would attain a greater degree of self-respect than when they were dragging on a miserable existence to make two ends meet. He took practical measures to promote good health in the village. It was often difficult for the families of agricultural labourers to obtain an adequate supply of milk and he ensured that new mothers were able to have sufficient milk, in the weeks after a birth.

On national issues, Ward Hunt's views do not fit into any predictable pattern. He opposed the introduction in 1872 of the Secret Ballot, which he regarded as 'hole and corner proceedings', but he believed that agricultural workers and, more radical still, women should have the vote; these reforms were not achieved until after his death.

His concern for village life manifested itself in practical ways. In 1865 he built a row of six new houses on the Green in Wadenhoe; three years later he established a gasworks in the village and the 1871 census shows George Wilson as 'gasman'. The 1871 census shows another 'new' occupation; Eleanor, the young daughter of William Beesley, blacksmith and postmaster, is described as 'telegraphist'. The introduction of a telegraph office into the village was another of Ward Hunt's innovations. He must have found this rapid means of communication particularly valuable when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, the office which he held in the three years prior to his death in 1877. His health was not good and the strains of office may have contributed to his early death. He often travelled to Homburg to take

the waters and it was there that he died. He was buried in Germany and the window in the north aisle of Wadenhoe Church is a memorial to him. His successor at the Admiralty was W.H. Smith, 'the bookman'. Smith, like Ward Hunt, was not a seaman and he was known to contemporaries as 'Pinafore Smith', the original of Sir Joseph Porter in 'HMS Pinafore'.

Although George Ward Hunt was not present in Wadenhoe at the time of either the 1861 or the 1871 census he clearly regarded it as his family home. The 1871 census contains the note 'Wadenhoe House - the residence of the Rt Hon. G.W. Hunt now in town'.

Not only did George Ward Hunt make substantial alterations to Wadenhoe House, the records such as the game book which he kept and the references in the school log book provide additional evidence of his presence in the village.

The survey of 1861 demonstrates George Ward Hunt's concern that his farms should be occupied by 'improving' tenants. The survey not only lists the property, field by field, and shows how each piece of land was used, it also includes a critical comment by the surveyor. He had the highest praise for Francis Allen, who was both miller and farmer of Mill Farm. The surveyor pointed out that Mill Farm like Manor Farm had a 'large proportion of inferior grassland' but did not state where it was situated. Out of Allen's 246 acres, only 56 acres were arable, on which he, like the other two farmers, Robert Groome and George Hill, grew wheat, barley and beans. His land was described as 'in very creditable order and condition'; presumably the inferior land was used as pasture. His rent was estimated at 316.3s. As well as being an efficient farmer and miller, Francis Allen was apparently very popular with the villagers. According to an article written many years after his death by Mrs Newby, wife of a later Rector, Francis Allen was widely remembered as a man who was clever and respected in the county and generous to those in need. In the 1861 census, he is shown as employing nine labourers and three boys. John Sharp, a journeyman miller 'lived-in' at the mill with Allen and his second wife Mary.

Robert Groome at Manor Farm was also described as an 'improving tenant' whose land was said to be in 'good, fair order'. Like Mill Farm, Manor Farm was described as 'having a large portion of inferior grass land', most probably in the area known as Wadenhoe Greens. This land was not described as pasture, but terms such as 'between woods grass' and 'open green-grass' were used. The survey also suggested one improvement - that the stone pit in Upper Cold Croft Leys, close to the farm itself, might be worked 'much more carefully and with considerably less injury to both landlord and tenant'. The rent from Groome's 220 acres was estimated at £273.17s and according to the census he employed six men and two boys. He was married with four young children and employed two female house servants.

Home Farm, the largest of Ward Hunt's three farms in Wadenhoe, was occupied by George Hill, who was the census enumerator that year. The surveyor's report was much more critical of Hill. Although this farm had a lower proportion of inferior grassland,

the surveyor commented that 'it was not managed in such an improving manner as the two occupied by Mr Groome and Mr Allen, although there is nothing absolutely to reprehend'. He considered the field Thistle Long to be 'more full of rushes than it should be' and suggested that Middle Fullers and White Heavy Lands 'might be much improved by draining'. This farm, the least well managed, was the most valuable with a much higher percentage of arable than the other two and an estimated rent of £350.5s. The census shows that Hill's household consisted of himself, his wife, two children, a house servant and a young governess. The employment of a governess for his children suggests that Hill like many other larger farmers of the time aimed at a more genteel standard of living for the family. The 1850s and 1860s were prosperous years for farmers and even agricultural workers' wages rose slightly.

All three farmers grew much the same crops, wheat, barley and beans, though Hill grew peas as well as beans on Stump Close. The survey makes no mention of livestock but a government return of 1866 gives the numbers of livestock in the village; there were 22 milk cows, 91 other cattle, 57 pigs and most important 697 sheep aged one year and above and 164 sheep under one year. With these numbers, it is not surprising that the 1861 census showed three shepherds and one shepherd's boy, all members of the Morehen family. Henry Morehen, the shepherd boy, was 13, but the census shows several ploughboys aged between 10 and 12.

There was another large farm in the village, which did not form part of the Ward Hunt estate and was therefore not included in the survey. This was the Rectory Farm and the 1861 census shows the farmer as John Gooder, employing six men and four boys.

In addition to Mill Farm, Manor Farm and Home Farm, the survey included two small holdings, those of Lewis Davison and Samuel Smith. Davison was a butcher and grocer who rented the butcher's close; his grocer's business was later carried on by his two unmarried daughters, Mary Ann and Sophia, while a nephew of theirs became a butcher. Another member of the Davison family was for many years the village carrier, providing a vital link between Aldwinckle, Wadenhoe and Oundle. For long distance journeys, railways had completely supplanted coaches but local carriers continued to perform an invaluable service well into the 20th century. Samuel Smith, the innkeeper and wheelwright, also rented two small pieces of land just over an acre each, Stretton's Close and Home Close. Davison and Smith were among the four Wadenhoe men enfranchised by the 1867 Reform Act; the Act introduced male householder suffrage in the boroughs, but most unfairly withheld it from agricultural labourers who had to wait until 1884 to obtain the vote. The other two new voters in Wadenhoe were Francis Allen the miller and the curate, the Rev. William Seymour.

The first name on the 1861 census was that of Joseph Clinkard from Garsington in Oxfordshire, who was described as 'butler in charge of Wadenhoe House'; his wife Alice was the housekeeper, one of comparatively few married women with an independent occupation.

Others were Hepzibah Beesley, the blacksmith's wife, who kept a draper's shop, one lacemaker, one dressmaker and three laundresses.

The Clinkards provide an interesting example of both geographical and social mobility. They were both born outside Northamptonshire and as butler and housekeeper had achieved success in service. Their next step was more unusual. In the 1863/64 electoral register, Joseph Clinkard's name appears as occupier of house and land in the 'middle of the parish', formerly occupied by George Hill. The 1871 census shows him as 'farmer of 250 acres', living at the Farm House with his family and one servant. Joseph remained at Home Farm until his death in 1878. His last years must have been sad; in 1875, his son Edward died aged 28 and the following year his wife Alice and another son, Thomas, aged 24 both died. Although Joseph Clinkard had made an apparently successful transition from domestic service to farming, he was not succeeded at Home Farm by a member of his family.

Although the 1871 census showed another slight fall in population from 270 to 253, the 1870s were probably a reasonably prosperous period in Wadenhoe. George Ward Hunt was a good landlord, concerned about the welfare of his tenants; agricultural wages in Northamptonshire as a whole rose to 16s a week in 1872, a considerable increase on the wage of 9s paid 20 years earlier. Agriculture remained the main source of employment in the village; the mill continued to flourish and there were four millers and two millwrights. Other occupations for men included the old trades of carpenter, mason, blacksmith and shoemaker. One of the Wilsons was a gasman, Lewis Davison is described here as a grocer and William Briggs doubled as an agricultural labourer and baker. Females outnumbered males by 136 to 117. While most women were 'wives' or if unmarried domestic servants, there were two milliners, a schoolmistress, a dressmaker and, more traditionally, several laundresses and a dairymaid. The existence of such occupations as gasman, postmaster, telegraphist and milliner in a small village like Wadenhoe gives a glimpse of some of the changes which were taking place in the country outside.

When George Ward Hunt died in 1877, he was succeeded by his son, George Eden Hunt, aged 18. The death of an active and kindly landlord, who was also something of a national figure, was probably quite a shock to the villagers but nothing is known of their reactions, nor is it known how much time his successor spent in Wadenhoe. As George Eden Hunt was not of age his name does not immediately appear on the electoral register and although there is no evidence that Wadenhoe House was let at the time, neither he nor any member of his family was present when the census was taken in March 1881. In Wright's Directory of 1884 Wadenhoe House is described as the seat of G.E. Hunt Esq. and Hunt is shown as a J.P. Kelly's Directory for 1890 again shows him as resident at Wadenhoe House, but by the time of the 1891 census Wadenhoe House was occupied by Alfred Hamilton, a lawyer born in Germany. The following year George Eden

## **The turn of the century - 1877-1914**

Hunt died, aged only 33 and was succeeded by his young son of 11.

The last quarter of the 19th century was a difficult time for agriculture in England. The import of foreign wheat, primarily from North America in the 1870s and 1880s, had a devastating effect on English cereal farmers and this was followed by the arrival of refrigerator ships with cheap meat from Australia. Wadenhoe was not primarily a wheat-growing village and the impact of these developments seems to have been delayed. Although the 1881 census (of which a sample page is illustrated in Fig. 4) shows another fall of 19 in the population, down to 234, and a drop of four in the number of inhabited houses, down to 52, the 1881 census does not give the impression of a depressed community. The village still had a range of trades and Wadenhoe House provided some direct employment. In addition to Alfred Young, the butler, who was the census enumerator, there were a footman, coachman and groom and gardener, and two laundresses, though none of them were natives of the village. Francis Allen at the Mill employed four millers; Kelly's Directory for 1885 describes him as 'farmer and miller (water and steam)'. Apart from agricultural workers of various types, there were also three carpenters,

The undermentioned Houses are situated within the Boundaries of the										13	Page 1
No. of Schedule		City or Municipal Borough of	Municipal Ward of	Parish or Town of	Town or Village or Hamlet of	Urban Sanitary District of	Rural Sanitary District of	Ecclesiastical Parish or District of			
		Wadenhoe			Wadenhoe		Wadenhoe	Wadenhoe		Wadenhoe	
		ROAD STREET, &c. and No. or NAME of HOUSE	HOUSES In- habited (1) or Building (2)	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CON- DITION as to Marriage	AGE last Birthday (3) of	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	(1) Deaf and Dumb (2) Blind (3) Insane (4) Lunatic	
							Male (4) Female (5)				
1	Wadenhoe Village		1	Francis Allen	Head	Mar	62	Miller	Wadenhoe		
				Mary C. Allen	Wife	Mar	58		North's Barton		
				C. F. Allen	Child	Unm	24		North's Barton		
				John G. Allen	Son	Unm	24		North's Barton		
				Elizabeth Allen	Daughter	Unm	20		North's Barton		
2	Wadenhoe Village		1	James Allen	Head	Mar	45	General Serv	North's Barton		
				James Allen	Wife	Mar	42		Wadenhoe		
				Arthur Allen	Son	Unm	19		North's Barton		
				Annie Allen	Daughter	Unm	14		Wadenhoe		
				James Allen	Son	Unm	13		Wadenhoe		
				Mary Allen	Daughter	Unm	12		Wadenhoe		
				Frederick Allen	Son	Unm	8		Wadenhoe		
				William Allen	Son	Unm	7		Wadenhoe		
3	Wadenhoe Village		1	Isabella Birt	Head	Mar	41	W. of Wadenhoe	North's Barton		
				James Birt	Son	Unm	24		North's Barton		
4	Wadenhoe Village		1	John Carter	Head	Mar	39	Blacksmith	Wadenhoe		
				Ann Carter	Wife	Mar	37		Wadenhoe		
				Elizabeth Carter	Daughter	Unm	19		Wadenhoe		
				William A. Carter	Son	Unm	14		Wadenhoe		
				William A. Carter	Son	Unm	12		Wadenhoe		
5	Wadenhoe Village		1	Mary Ann Carter	Head	Mar	55	Laundress	North's Barton		
				Joseph Carter	Son	Unm	24		Wadenhoe		
				Robert Carter	Son	Unm	20		Wadenhoe		
				Martha Carter	Daughter	Unm	18		Wadenhoe		
				William Carter	Son	Unm	17		Wadenhoe		
				John Carter	Son	Unm	16		Wadenhoe		
				Elizabeth Carter	Daughter	Unm	15		Wadenhoe		
				William Carter	Son	Unm	14		Wadenhoe		
				John Carter	Son	Unm	13		Wadenhoe		
				Elizabeth Carter	Daughter	Unm	12		Wadenhoe		
				William Carter	Son	Unm	11		Wadenhoe		
				John Carter	Son	Unm	10		Wadenhoe		
				Elizabeth Carter	Daughter	Unm	9		Wadenhoe		
				William Carter	Son	Unm	8		Wadenhoe		
				John Carter	Son	Unm	7		Wadenhoe		
				Elizabeth Carter	Daughter	Unm	6		Wadenhoe		
				William Carter	Son	Unm	5		Wadenhoe		
				John Carter	Son	Unm	4		Wadenhoe		
				Elizabeth Carter	Daughter	Unm	3		Wadenhoe		
				William Carter	Son	Unm	2		Wadenhoe		
				John Carter	Son	Unm	1		Wadenhoe		
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				William Carter	Son						

*Chapter 1*) incorporates some unhappy memories of the period: 'The poor master died. His time had come, but it was the wrong time for us poor folk. They were bad years in the eighties - bad for masters and men and the Mill stopped. Those that followed Master Allen couldn't tackle the job - no money - and the old machinery no good for the new sort of flour, fine and white as the people wanted.'

While conditions in Northamptonshire villages were depressed, the shoe factories in Kettering, Wellingborough and Northampton provided alternative employment. Some young people went further afield; a descendant of Josiah Quincey wrote that the younger Josiah had left Wadenhoe for Staines in Middlesex. Dr Alan Wilson (*Chapter 7*) describes how his grandfather Thomas Wilson had walked to the nearest station, taken the train to London and became an ostler in a horse tram company; one of his brothers, Fred, also went to London where he later opened a boarding house. Another brother, Wilby, worked on a local farm and finally went to Glapthorn. An example from the Wadenhoe parish register shows how some young men left the country to take up better paid jobs in the cities. In 1881, Sarah Jane Briggs, a Wadenhoe girl, married Cornelius Britten, a labourer from Great Billing. In 1886, Sarah Jane and Cornelius returned to Wadenhoe from London, where Cornelius was a police constable, for the baptism of their two year old daughter, Alice Maud. Names were changing too; there were no Mauds in the register in the 18th century. The revival of this medieval form of Matilda was probably due to the popularity of Tennyson's poem 'Maud'.

Between 1881 and 1891, the population in Wadenhoe dropped another 30, from 234 to 204, down 86 from its peak in 1851. Discussing the attraction of the towns for village labourers, the report on the 1891 census stated that 'the labourer sees not only a prospect of higher wages, but the certainty of a more varied and interesting life'. The spread of education and better communications had made village people more aware of what they were missing and the more agricultural villages like Wadenhoe shrank the fewer attractions they had to offer those who remained.

By 1891, there were only 49 inhabited houses in Wadenhoe. Concern was growing in society at large about the evils of overcrowding and the census enumerator was asked to record any 'tenements' of less than five rooms; 22 of the houses in Wadenhoe came into this category, though in this respect the situation in many big cities would almost certainly have been worse.

One of the most noticeable features in the 1891 census is the absence of any millers in a village where the mill had played an important part. The millwright was one of only four members of the Wilson family remaining in Wadenhoe. There were still three carpenters, but neither the blacksmith, the wheelwright, nor the mason had apprentices working with them. One of the new jobs, roadman, was not a skilled occupation and there were few openings for enterprising young people in the village. Occupations such as gardener and gamekeeper were likely to have only a limited appeal, if there were other options available outside the village. John and Ann Morehen had

Morehen had four young, unmarried sons, aged 22, 19, 18 and 15, living at home and working as agricultural labourers; it would be interesting to know how long young men like this remained in the village. Just over a third of the village population was under the age of 15, but it seems likely that many of them had moved away by the time they were 25. Among those who remained in 1891 there had been a noticeable increase in the percentage over 45.

The impression of decline is reinforced by the Rector's appeal in 1899 for funds for the restoration of the Church (*see Chapter 4*); he writes that 'the population (180) of Wadenhoe is purely agricultural and consists of only very poor people'. Allowing for the context in which this statement is made, it has a ring of truth. Another source states that the average weekly wage of an agricultural labourer in Northamptonshire was down from 16s in 1872 to 13s.6d in 1898.

It is ironic that at this time when agricultural labourers in villages like Wadenhoe were failing to achieve a better standard of living they finally gained the parliamentary franchise, which had eluded them in 1867. In 1884 the counties were granted the same voting qualifications as the boroughs, which meant that all adult male householders were able to vote. There were now 40 of these 'occupation voters' in Wadenhoe. They included members of long-established village families such as the Briggs, Chews, Morehens, Quinceys and Wilsons, as well as many others. Enfranchisement did not bring any immediate benefits, though it did mean that the parliamentary candidates had to travel much more widely round the villages and hold meetings after working hours. Wadenhoe was situated in the Parliamentary Division of North Northants, which after George Ward Hunt's death was represented by another Conservative, the Hon. Brownlow Henry George Cecil, Lord Burghley, later fourth Marquess of Exeter. The extension of the franchise did not affect Cecil's tenure of the seat which he continued to hold for a further ten years. The selection of Cecil as a candidate is some indication of the power which the great landed families continued to exercise in some rural areas.

Women were still denied the vote, but the establishment of County Councils provided some women with the opportunity to vote on local issues. Women who were householders, spinsters such as the schoolmistress, Annie Brittle, and the grocer, Mary Ann Davison, and widows like Eliza Smith and the charwoman Elizabeth Morehen were placed on a special register of County electors.

Another innovation was the establishment in 1894 of parish councils or for smaller villages like Wadenhoe of parish meetings. Their powers were very limited, but they formed the lowest tier in a network of elected authorities. The first Parish Meeting in Wadenhoe was convened by the overseers of the parish and held in the Wadenhoe Schoolroom on 4 December 1894. Among those present were the new Rector, the Rev. John Newby, a Mr Hull, the farmers John Groome and Henry Hill and other residents such as Bright Beesley and John and Joseph Morehen.



The routine business of the meetings was the election of a Chairman for the forthcoming year, the appointment of overseers of the poor and the recommendation to the justices of a new parish constable. Matters such as the bad state of the footpath by the Mill Ford and the road leading to the Keeper's Lodge were discussed and where necessary brought to the attention of the Rural District Council. After the new Education Act of 1902, the parish meeting was responsible for the appointment of a Manager of Wadenhoe School and the meeting was required to forward to the Education Committee of the County Council the name of one or more persons for appointment by the Education Committee to act on the managing body of the school.

In some ways it is more difficult to trace developments in the village after 1891, as the census enumerators' books for subsequent years are not yet available. This is because the returns are closed to the public for 100 years; the personal information was supplied in confidence and to disclose it would be a breach of good faith. Trade directories and other sources provide scattered pieces of information, but it is hard to form any very clear impression of village life. In the late 1890s Wadenhoe House was occupied by Charles Albert Winter, but he does not seem to have stayed long and in or around 1901 Admiral Sir William Culme-Seymour took up residence at Wadenhoe House, where he apparently remained until after the First World War. An inventory and valuation of furniture and other household effects, dating from 1911, made for the purpose of 'an optional transfer' from George Ward Hunt to Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour survives among the Ward Hunt papers in the County Record Office. As the rooms are named and the contents of each shown, it is possible to get some impression of how the house was used. There are references to the entrance hall, boudoir, nursery and night nursery complete with hip bath, and to 'Captain George's room' which suggests that he must have occupied the house at some time.

1911 was an important year for the Ward Hunt family. Notices in the *Northamptonshire Independent* refer to the forthcoming marriages of both George Ward Hunt and his younger brother Wilfred. A later entry for 14 October notes that Captain George Ward Hunt had taken Courtenhall Grange. The same year, he sold the Berrystead in North Street Oundle, which had been in his family since the 18th century, as well as other property in Oundle and Polebrook.

Although the Census Enumerators' Books are not available for this period, the totals for the village are easily obtainable. The 1901 census showed another drop to 185 though in 1911 there was an increase of six to 191. Far more rapid decreases in population were to take place after the upheavals of the 1914-1918 War.

Kelly's Directory for 1910 shows Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour at Wadenhoe House and the Rev. John Newby, who was Rector of both Pilton and Wadenhoe, at the Rectory. Miss Annie Brittle was still mistress at the village school, which now had an average attendance of 30. Robert Bright Beesley is listed as blacksmith and his wife Sarah as the sub-postmistress, a situation unchanged since the 1891 census. Davison the carrier still 'passes through from Aldwinckle Thursday, back same day' but now another carrier, French, also passes through from Aldwinckle, Thursday and Saturday. In addition to the

blacksmith, the 'commercial' list consisted of three farmers, Mrs Ellenor Childs, John William Copley and William Swiffin, the head gardener at Wadenhoe House, George Evans, Lewis and Sophia Davison shopkeepers, and another member of the family, Herbert Davison, at the Kings Head. A directory of 1914 showed few changes. The Rector was now living at Pilton, while Captain Ward Hunt occupied the Rectory. Edward Smalley had replaced Copley at one of the farms and, perhaps most important, Miss Brittle had retired and been replaced by Miss Flack.



*Fig. 5:*  
Wadenhoe villagers  
celebrating the Coronation  
of George V, in 1911,  
probably taken in the area of  
the Mill paddock

A Wadenhoe estate rent book contains an entry showing that from Michaelmas 1911 Miss Brittle was to hold her cottage on a five year lease; she clearly intended to spend her retirement in the village where she had lived almost all her working life. This rent book shows that some annual cottage rents in the years before the First World War were as low as £1.10 (30s) a year; the average weekly wage of an ordinary agricultural labourer in Northamptonshire at this time was between 14s and 16s a week. Many of the villagers in Wadenhoe and elsewhere rented allotments, on which they grew food for their families.

The years between 1901 and 1914 provide little evidence of improvement in the day-to-day life of villagers in Wadenhoe. Numbers declined, wages rose only very slightly and within the village there were no new sources of employment.

However, the static picture does not represent the whole truth. Changes were taking place at a national level which affected the whole of the country. The Liberal Government of 1906 introduced legislation on such matters as national insurance, wage levels and perhaps of most immediate importance for the people of a village like Wadenhoe, the Old Age Pension. The small pension of 5s a week, 7s.6d for married couples, for people over 70 on a low income helped many old people to avoid the stigma of pauperism and the threat of the workhouse and to remain in their own homes. It was a small sign, but a hopeful one.

I am indebted to Miss Rachel Watson and the staff of Northamptonshire Record Office for all their help and the use of their records; to Miss M. Arnold at the Local Studies Room, Northampton Public Library, Abington Street; to the Public Record Office, Kew and to the Trustees of the Wadenhoe Trust for granting me access to their records.

*The following are the main sources, primary and secondary, which have been used to compile this article.*

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