

GENERAL SUMMARY

Tiffield appears in the Domesday Book of 1086 as 'Tifelde', under the ownership of Count Robert, Earl of Mortain, half-brother to William the Conqueror. As there are references in Domesday Book to rents paid when Edward the Confessor was king this indicates that there was an earlier Anglo-Saxon settlement here.

It is likely that there would have been a wooden church at that time but in about 1250 work began on a stone church, directed by the Master of the Hospital of St John, Northampton, who was – by then – the main landowner.

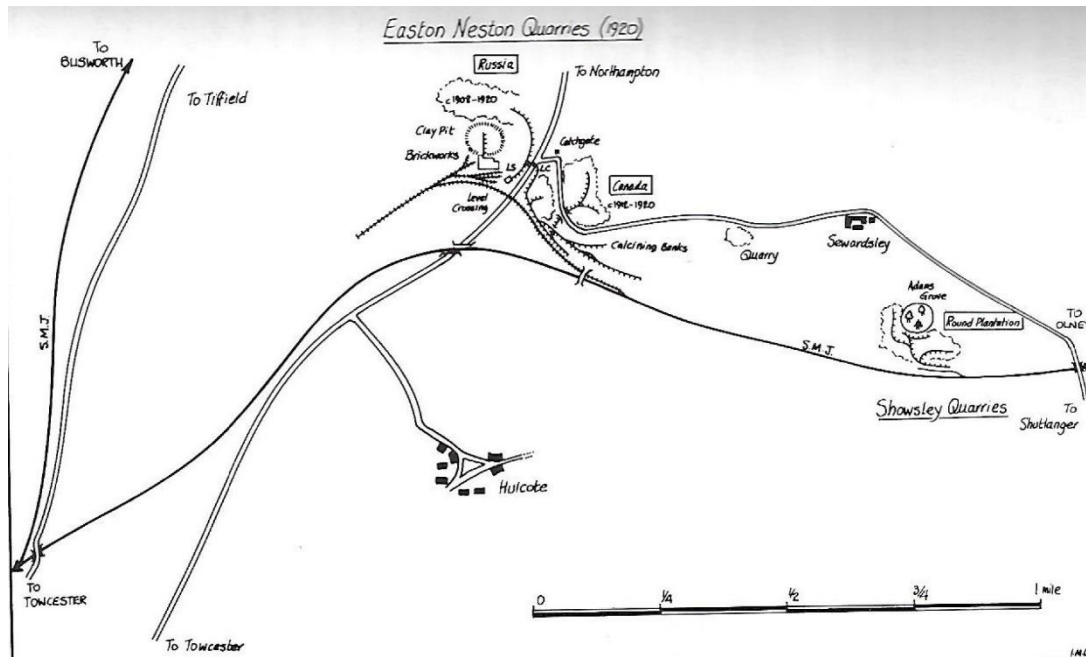
By the early 14th century the Master of the Hospital had become Lord of the Manor of Tiffield and Rector of the Church. A medieval Manor House is thought to have existed on the site of Manor Farm.

With the dissolution of the monasteries in the late 1530s under Henry VIII, the possessions of the Knights Hospitallers were granted to Sir Nicholas Throckmorton of Paulerspury. When that line died out, the Manor passed to Bartholomew Keeling in 1760. He built the present Rectory in 1762 in the classic Georgian style and – to show his wealth – it was built in brick and not in local stone.

The Enclosure Act affected the Parish in 1780 and the three fields, existing at that time, around the village were divided up. Many of the hedge boundaries, established then, still survive. These three fields were: to the North & North-West, Water Slade; to the East and North-East, Full Well; to the South, Meadow Field.

The land in the Parish became part of the estate of the Duke of Grafton and in 1823 the manor was bought by George Fermor, 3rd Earl of Pomfret, and incorporated into the Easton Neston Estate. In 1867 most of the estate passed to Thomas Hesketh. In the 1920s some of the land in Tiffield was put up for sale and was bought by the tenant-farmers; there is also a document that shows that Manor Farm, at least, was sold by the Duke of Grafton to the Towcester and Blisworth Ironstone Company in 1927. In the 1980s British Steel (who'd taken over the Towcester and Blisworth Ironstone Company) sold off the rest of this land.

The village has strong agricultural roots and most of the inhabitants would have worked on the land. The focus began to shift with the arrival of the railway when a single track line was built in in the 1860's. Employment opportunities expanded to include work at the iron ore quarry 'Canada' (opened in 1873 on the East side of what is now the A43), and the brickworks nearby 'Russia' (on the West side), and on the railway itself (to which connected a narrow-gauge section serving both works).

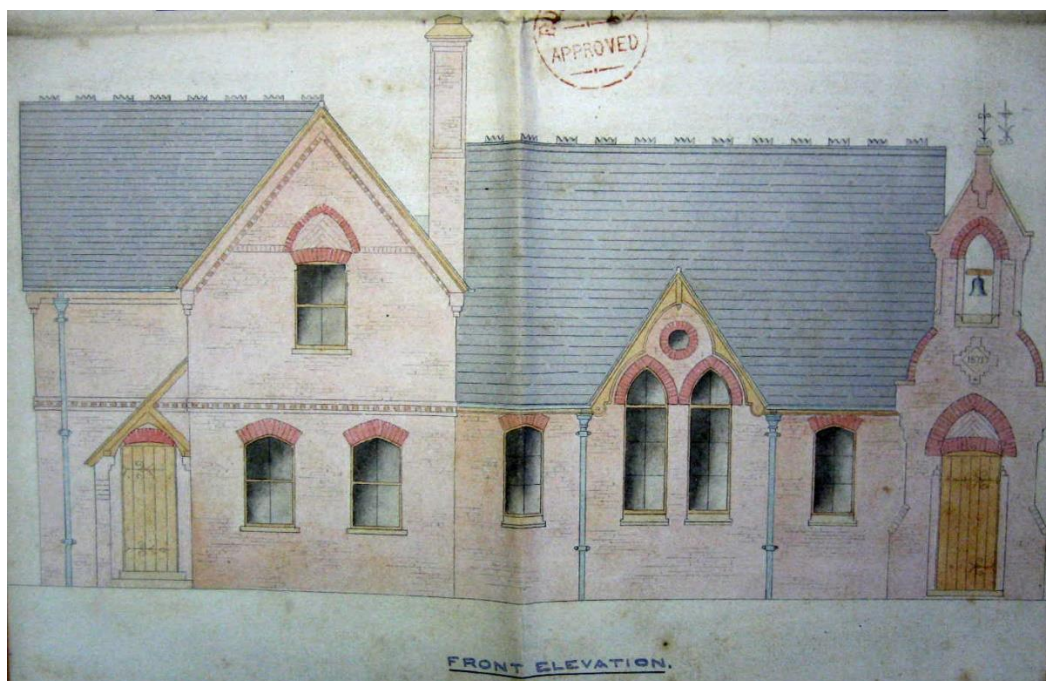
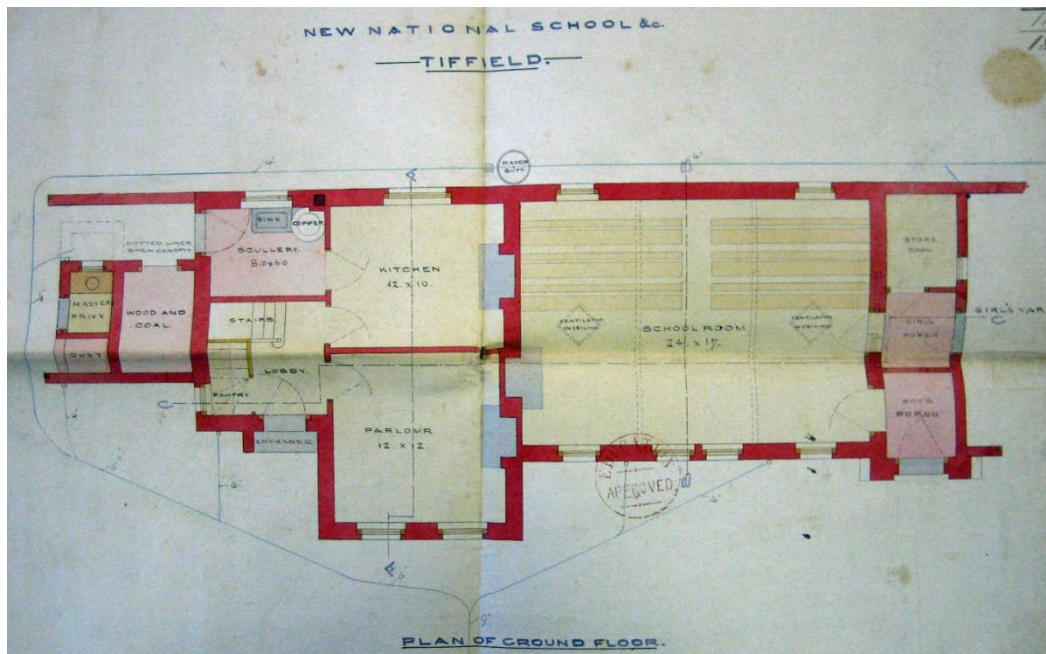


At the start of the 1900s most of the population would have still worked in the Parish. The majority on farms and some with specialist skills with the wheelwright/builder, the blacksmith, the brickyard, and the ironstone quarries. There were opportunities for domestic service and for work at the Boys' Reformatory at St Johns.

The development of the internal combustion engine in the early 1900s led – post WWI - to, amongst other things, an increased mechanisation in farming. Alongside this went the decreased use of horses who became redundant along with those who looked after them. The availability of cheap road transport resulted in more competition and concentration of manufacturing in nearby towns. In the village only the farms and wheelwrights survived as employers. A few inhabitants would have been employed by the railway, and there was likely to be at least one builder / building company.

EDUCATION

The school was built in 1872 at a cost of £593. Initially there were 48 children, looked after by the schoolmistress who lived in the schoolhouse.



The school was built as a result of the 1870 Education Act; prior to that there had been no country-wide mandate for even elementary education. So, unsurprisingly, once the school had been built it was recognised that a great number of the adult villagers also could not read or write. To encourage literacy required the provision of a separate meeting space as most of the cottages in which the families lived were small and crowded. And that space should not be in a pub. Thus a Reading Room

was erected in the garden of 2 High St South for the men of the village. It was moved in 1964 to its present position adjacent to the Church and became also known as the Church Room. During its life it has been home to all sorts of village organisations ranging from the Home Guard in the War, to the Mothers Union, and the Playgroup.

Miss Fanny (Frances) Bosworth lived at the far end of High Street South opposite the village green. She used to serve school meals. She also kept goats on the green; because of this the children are reported as saying that 'she stank' !

RELIGION

The Church of St John would have been obliged to follow the national 'flavour' of Christianity as it was dictated by England's rulers for many centuries. In the late 1600's religious tolerance was enacted in law and in the mid 1700s Methodism was one of the main Christian based alternatives to the Church of England.



Originally, there was a Wesleyan Chapel at the bottom of Meadow Rise. This picture is of Harry Bodsworth taken in 1977 standing in front of the Chapel. Harry lived at 4 High Street South with his sister in law. He was a foreman with a County Council gang, whilst Mrs Florence Bodsworth worked at 2 High Street South (then known as 'The Firs') when it was a nursing home.

The Church of St John 'benefited' from two Royal occasions.

In 1897 - Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee - local fund-raising in the village resulted in the clock being installed in the church. That has recently been overhauled and continues to strike the hours.

The Coronation of George VII in 1937 was marked by a copper beech being planted in the Churchyard. There is a plaque to show which tree this is !

SIGNIFICANT FAMILIES IN THE VILLAGE

THE EYDENS

The Eyden family came from Holland in the sixteenth century. With their expertise in land drainage they originally came to drain the Fens, but later settled in Stoke Bruerne, and then built Forge House in Tiffield. For centuries they carried on their work as blacksmiths and wheelwrights here.

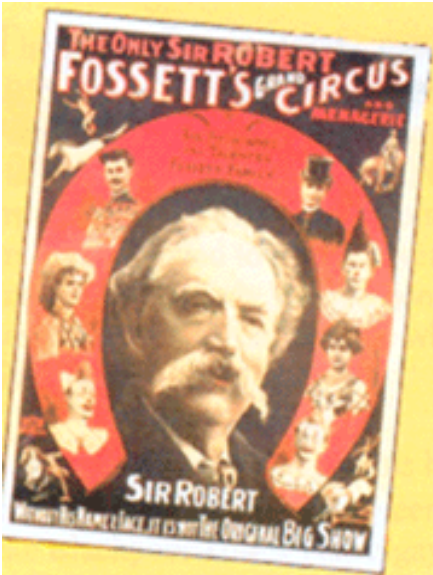


This photograph was taken around the time of Mr William Eyden, probably between 1900 and 1910.



An interesting feature of the Eydens' garden was a rotating nursing hut, to enable TB patients to convalesce in the sunshine without infecting anyone else!

THE FOSSETTS



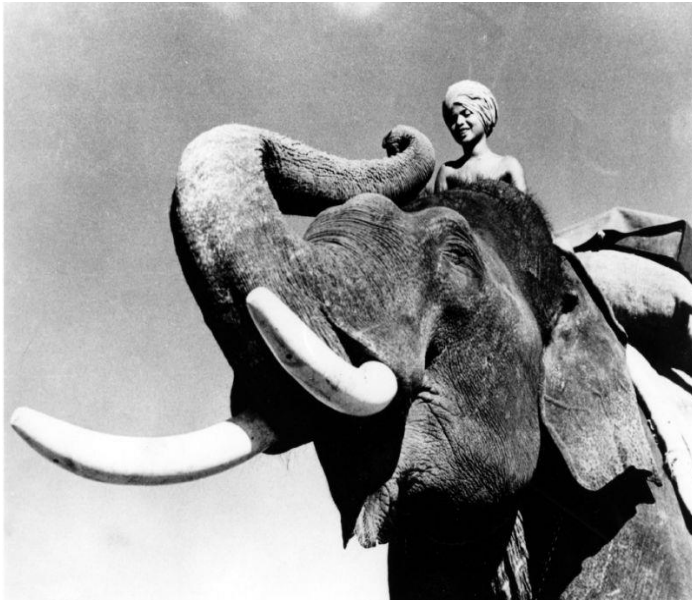
Upper Farm was for many years the winter quarters for Robert Fossett's Circus.

This is because it was relatively close to the railway junction & station at Towcester.



Picture – Loading Fossett's elephants at Bridport station, 1958

In 1927 the circus acquired two young elephants, one of whom escaped from its keeper and rampaged through the village before eventually being captured. Sadly the other one, only 8 years old and fresh from the tropics, contracted pneumonia and died. A horse slaughterer was called in to dispose of the body and as the skull was something of a curiosity it was displayed on a specially built shelf at the Bridge Street level crossing in Northampton for the public to see.



The circus had another elephant, Aga, who appeared with the Indian child actor Sabu in the 1936 film "Elephant Boy." In 1939, Aga came as usual to winter at Tiffield, but now doing war work, felling and shifting timber, and pulling a plough but that winter she fell ill and died. Aga's huge 57 year old

skull joined the smaller 8 year old one on the shelf at the level crossing.



Sir Robert Fossett's Circus closed down in 1992. There are two other branches of the family still, after 120 years, with circuses : Ted Fosset in Ireland and Little Tom Fossett in the UK. Fossett family graves can be found in the churchyard here in Tiffield. The family still owns land in the Parish.

SHOPS AND PUBS



Kelly's Directory for 1898 states that there was a Post Office at 4 High Street South run by Miss Emma Perkins. There was also a grocer (Mr Richard Jolley) and a butcher. In the 1950's there was a shop (see left) at 5 High Street North, run by Miss Jones. Apparently, between 1954 and 1958, the shop twice suffered fire damage.

In about 1960 a new shop was built, run for a while by Mrs Maycock.



David Rook took it over and continued to run it until the mid 1980's, but it was forced to close due to competition from the supermarkets of Towcester and Northampton. However Mr Rook continued a newspaper delivery service until 1999.

During the 1960's there were also travelling vans including those offering fish, grocery, and butchery, as well as the usual milk delivery.

The George has been a pub since at least 1901. Allegedly it was named after the family who owned it. The building dates back to the 14th or 15th century with additions in Georgian times and more recently in the 1980's. It is less well known that, in common with other rural communities, in the past there would have been various ale houses in the village. Agricultural workers would work up a thirst during the day and for a long time, beer was safer than water to drink.

It is believed that there was an establishment known as 'The Goat', or 'Goat and Compasses' at the corner of Donkey Lane and High Street South. In 1753 a licence was granted to John Collins of 'The Swan' authorising him to keep an alehouse. There was a beer retailer on High Street North, a Mrs Emma Collins. The exact locations of these two last noted alehouses are unclear.



The George on the right hand side, looking South, in this 1940s picture from a postcard ! At that time there was no pavement. In the far background, on the right, you can see the Chapel on the South corner of Meadow Rise.

FARMING

Farming used to be the predominant industry in Tiffield; as far back as Saxon times there are records of grazing rights being granted. From Victorian times to the 1950's there were at least six working farms in the village, mostly dairy, a major source of employment for the villagers.



Bridge Farm House used to be run by the Kingston family, farming (cattle & sheep) butchers, touring the villages with their meat and milk rounds. In the 1970's they specialised in the buying and selling of Charolais cattle.

Mrs Kingston with Charolais cattle in 1977



Lower End Farm, built in the late 17th century, was originally farmed by the Beech family and was taken over by Ben Williams in 1958.

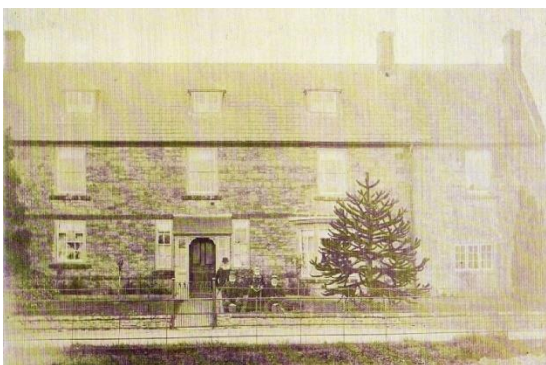
The farmhouse ceased to be the focus of the farm in the mid 1980's when Ben retired and his son Gerald took over Ark Farm and the lands of Lower Farm and the building was converted to residential use.



Manor Farm, built on the site of the original Manor House, was run by Thomas Spinks Stops in the 1890s. By the 1950's the farmer was Ted Flavell. His son Chris was killed in 1955, and is buried by the stile in the churchyard. The East family farmed here during the 1960's, but this is no longer the focus of a working farm.



Hill Farm appears in Kelly's Directory of 1898 farmed by John Henry Pinckard, and by 1958 it was still in the same family. It is said that one of the Fossett's Circus performers, Otto Kleinschmidt, lodged here. He had a couple of sons who attended the school, between 1920 & 1925, when the Circus was at Upper Farm between seasonal tours. Otto rigged up a tightrope from the farm to 'The George' across the road!



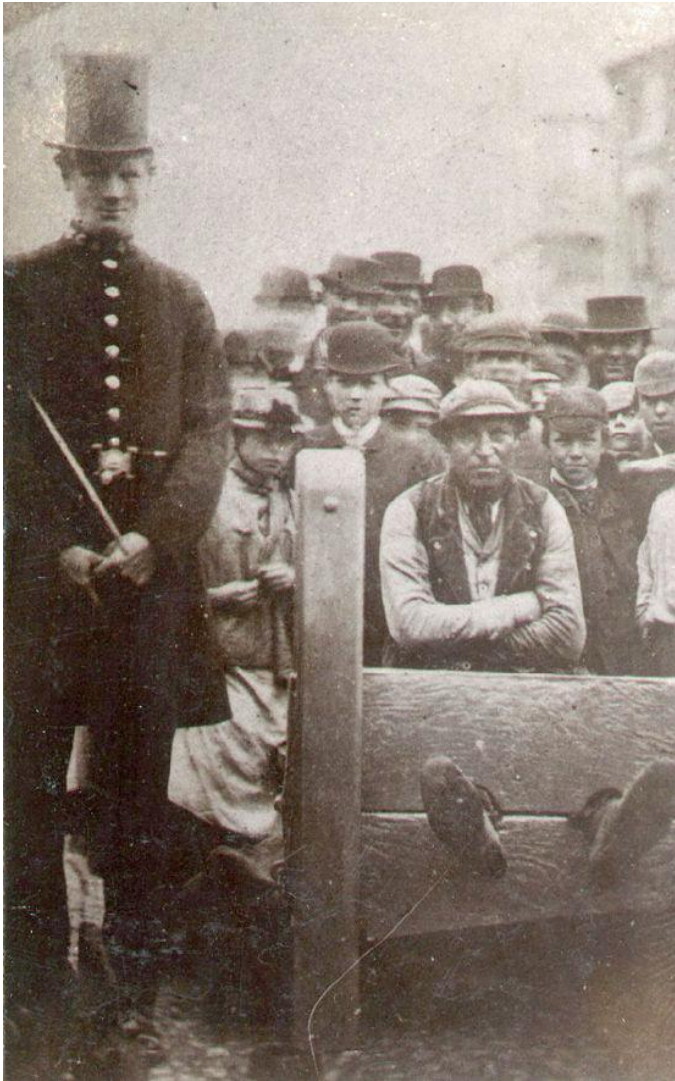
Southview Farm was the focus of the farmland that is now Ark Farm. The near derelict farmhouse was sold to the Milners in 1965.

This picture dates from about 1900.

Other farms include:

Tiffield Wood Farm; Rectory Farm; Top Farm; Tiffield Grange ; Brickyard Farm; Upper Farm; Williams Barns

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT



Picture – Stocks in Warwick Street, Rugby, in 1865
village green.

Before the establishment of uniformed police forces in the mid 1800s, each parish had a constable, locally appointed for one year, with responsibility for enforcing the law in the village. The constable could confine criminals and deliver them to the courts. He (invariably it was a man in those days) was also being expected to prevent crime within their parish; they were expected to read the 'Riot Act' if a riotous assembly arose in the parish. They were also expected to punish poachers, drunks, hedge-damagers, prostitutes, church-avoiders, and fathers of bastards. It is likely that there were stocks in Tiffield, probably situated on the

There is no record of serious crime in the village but there was a robbery at the High Street North shop in the 1950's. The shopkeeper Miss Jones was attacked and stabbed by a Mr Anderson from Milton. She sustained serious wounds; it was said that her dog was killed during the attack, presumably trying to defend her.

TODAY

Today Tiffield is a vibrant village, with around 370 inhabitants in 2001, that still has its school, church, and pub. There is a pocket park, originally part of the SMJ railway track, which is now a Local Nature Reserve. There is a playing field, with play equipment, which was officially opened in 1979 after 8 years of fundraising so it could be purchased from Mr Claydon after whom it is now named. The village has its own magazine, edited by villagers, and issued 4 times a year. The George pub is the social hub of the village and hosts meetings of many of the village societies. Other groups meet in the Reading Room. The industrious Parish Council, looking after villagers' interests, meets in the school hall or Reading Room. The PC finances and manages the village web presence at <https://www.tiffieldparishcouncil.org.uk/> in which more information about the village can be found.