

Chapter 6

Egleton: A Glimpse into the Past

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(with extracts from *Egleton, Rutland*
by Mary and David Parkin)

Historical Introduction

The name of Egleton is interpreted as Ecgwulf's *tun* or homestead, suggesting that it was originally an Anglo-Saxon settlement. It is not mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 but it may be one of the five berewicks which the survey attaches to Oakham. The first recorded use of the name, as 'Egiltun', is in the Forest Rolls of 1209. By then the church already existed, indicating an established settlement. The carved chancel arch, the south doorway, part of the south wall and the upper part of the font are all twelfth century. From its earliest days, the church, like those of Langham and Brooke, was a chapelry attached to Oakham, served by a curate appointed by the Vicar of Oakham who owned a third of the village tithes. Now it is a separate parish within the Oakham benefice. Baptisms, marriages and burials have been recorded in the church registers since 1538.



Egleton village sign stands on the green near the church (RO)

Egleton Church in 2006. It has undergone many structural changes in its long life (RO)





The twelfth-century south doorway at Egleton Church in 1910 (Hart)

The church has undergone many structural changes in its long life. A north aisle with a clerestory, the tower and the porch were added in the 1300s and the chancel was rebuilt in the fifteenth century. The north aisle has since been demolished and only the lower part of the original tower remains, the upper part, together with the spire and the porch, having been rebuilt in the nineteenth century.

In 1305, when most of Egleton belonged to Margaret, Countess of Cornwall, a survey of the taxes payable by the inhabitants indicates that there were then about 26 houses in the village. Egleton was also included in the military survey of 1522 when Henry VIII ordered his chancellor, Cardinal Wolsey, to devise a survey that would discover people's wealth. One purpose of the survey was to prepare subjects for war against France, but the main reason was to establish the level of forced loans which were to be demanded later. It names

seventeen male heads of household in the village. Two years later the lay subsidy included nineteen heads of household.

Medieval guilds, like modern friendly societies, were associations of people who contributed money which was then used to help members in need. One such guild, dedicated to the Trinity, is recorded in Egleton in 1551. Its priest was Thomas Kelso and he lived in one of the four houses owned by the guild in the village. It also owned property in Oakham. All the guild's property had been confiscated by the Crown by 1553.

During the Civil War (1641-49), most of Egleton belonged to the Duke of Buckingham who was a supporter of the King. Consequently the Commonwealth considered him a traitor and confiscated his lands, but they were returned to him after the Restoration (1660). A survey at the time of the confiscation identifies fourteen farms in Egleton with acreages varying from 13 to 89. Some of the dwellings described were substantial, with a parlour, a hall, a kitchen, a buttery and lodging chambers as well as farm buildings. At the other end of the scale there were cottages with only two rooms. There were also two shops, one of them a butcher's.

The Hearth Tax Return of 1665 lists 31 heads of household in Egleton, which suggests that the population was probably about 140. Ten people were not taxable because they were considered too poor.

The Rent Rolls for the Duke of Buckingham's estate, compiled in 1686 and 1690 (ROLLR DG 7/1/13 & 56), list two cottages 'on the Lord's waste' occupied by William Corner and Austin Hubbard. These were probably the poorest households in the village as the annual rents for their cottages were only two shillings and one shilling respectively and they were excused from paying the Hearth Tax.

Wills made in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries give a good idea of the villagers' possessions as household contents are often listed among the bequests. Faith Ward, who lived at what we know today as Home Farm, made her will in 1642 and left to her daughter:

‘ . . . the sealed bed [a four-poster bed with hangings] in the chamber and the furniture belonging to it, a featherbed, two mattresses, fower pillows, one bolster, two blankits, one chest in the same chamber next a bed, ten pairs of sheetes, three pairs of pillowboards [pillowcases], two board clothes [tablecloths], eighteen napkins, two boxes, three pannes, one brass pott, one posset [small cauldron], one dripping pan, one spit, one pair of cobirons [irons for supporting the spit in front of a fire], one salt box, one brazen candlestick, one pestell and mortar, the cupboard in the hall and the table and frame, three buffet stools, a joined chair at the cupboard end and one other chair, two linen wheels and one linen wheel, one rackiron, three hookes, one pair of tongs, one bolting tun [a container for sifting flour], an elting trough [for kneading dough], two tubs, three pales, one other little tubbe, a cheese presse and all the milk vessels, two little barrels and half the provisions that I have the house throughout, half the pullen [poultry] in the yard, one stock of bees, one bed more in the kitchen chamber, one churme, one henpen, one load of wood, one little board logge in the yard, one oatmeale skip, one strike [half a bushel] of oatmeale if it be to be had, one flax heckle [a comb for dressing flax], all the pewter and brass little and big that is about the house.’

In 1558 Robert Tymson left to Alice Tymson:

‘ . . . my best carte and ploughe and ploughe geares and six yearne [iron] harrowes, the hovel where the spares lie. She shall have all the other hovels of a reasonable pryse if she occupye the farme styll, half of all the plough tymber and board about the house abrode saving those over the millhouse.’

In 1598 Robert Longsett (or Longfoote), a mason, left to his daughter ‘so much board as shall make her a framed table of joinery work with frames and stools needfull for the furnishings of tables’, and Michael Dodgson, a weaver, buried in 1661, left a long list of textile bequests.

Some wills mention money owed to the testator. In 1627 Eliza Smith’s will records that ‘Old Black’s wife ought me 10s. and I have forgiven her 2s. of it’, and it was not unusual for people to leave two shillings to each of the four bearers at their funeral.

A terrier of 1566 lists holdings in the open fields and provides the names of many of the village farmers at that date. This and later documents show that a number of families were farming in Egleton for several generations and even longer.

Members of the Seaton family were living in Egleton almost continuously from the early sixteenth century, and possibly earlier, until the death of Ernest Seaton and his wife Sarah Elizabeth in 1950 and 1963. They lived and worked at what is now 11 Church Road.



The seventeenth-century dovecote in the farmyard of Home Farm, Egleton (RO)

Memorial inscriptions to the Tomsons, who lived at Brook Farm, can be seen in the church. Eleanor Tomson married Joseph Tirrell jun and continued to run the farm with Eleanor's mother, Catharine. Joseph's father, Joseph Tirrell sen, had come to the village in 1801, when he married Eleanor Meadows of Home Farm and farmed there with her. Father and son both lived into their nineties. The stained glass in the east window of the church is a memorial to Joseph sen and other members of the Tirrell family.

The east window in Egleton Church is a memorial to members of the Tirrell family (RO)

Members of the Towell family lived at what is now known as Barnett's Farm for more than a hundred years. They are recorded as living there in 1652. Nicholas set up a charity for the relief of the poor by his will dated 21st December 1774. Money for the same purpose was being provided by the Finch family of Burley in the 1770s and many village wills included bequests for the relief of the poor of Egleton. Nicholas Towell's charity has only recently been discontinued owing to lack of funds. Nicholas Towell's memorial is on the north wall of the nave of Egleton Church. He died on 23rd February 1776.



The Bradshaw family first appears in the census of 1881 when they were farming Longcroft Farm with 360 acres. At this time Robert and Elizabeth had nine children living with them, aged from six to twenty. The eldest son, Frederick, died in 1927, having taken over the farm. His widow continued to farm there, with her nephew, Rowland Hubbard, acting as farm manager. He took over the farm when she left the village and was followed by his son, Norman Hubbard. Another son, John Robert Bradshaw, farmed at Home Farm from the end of the nineteenth century for about 40 years. The youngest son, Robert Lee Bradshaw, farmed at Brook Farm until his death in 1934. Members of the Bradshaw family gave the oak gates and the pine vestry furniture to the village church.

The number of farms in the village had dwindled from fourteen small-holdings at the time of the Commonwealth survey to five at the end of the 1700s and to three by 1871. The acreages farmed increased to an average of over a hundred by 1790. Of the four farms listed in 1851, one had 350 acres, two 200 acres and one 100 acres.

The common fields of Egleton were enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1757. The implementation of the Act resulted in the stream which runs through the village being straightened and a windmill being demolished. The mill belonged to Thomas Carter of Egleton. The site of his mill became the property of George Finch (9th Earl of Winchilsea and 4th Earl of Nottingham) of Burley on the Hill, the lord of the manor. In return, he was given a site in Oakham field where there had formerly been a windmill and which the Commissioners claimed was a more suitable position. Until quite recently, there was a Mill Way in Egleton. After enclosure, there was still a common cow pasture where cottagers had the right to graze their cows. This

The map of Egleton in 1797. This image has been enhanced to improve clarity (ROLLR DG 7/4/27)

right still existed after the Second World War but fell out of use as individual cottagers gave up their holdings.

Among the Finch family papers there is a notebook (ROLLRDE7/4/27) dated 1797, with later additions, prepared when John Crutchley was agent to the Burley estate. It includes a map of Egleton and descriptions of the residents, the first document to give such detail. Sadly, several of the villagers were in poor health or lame, two children suffered from fits and one resident was caring for a 'foolish sister'. Occupations mentioned include baker, cavalryman, exciseman, farmer, schoolmistress, servant, under-gamekeeper and weaver. One cottager spun stockings for Lady Charlotte Finch, one is described as 'cross, but a good woman', one woman is thought to have had 23 children and 'has taken to drink', one couple are 'not good people'. Others are praised as 'remarkably industrious'.

The nineteenth century is better documented. Detailed census returns are available at ten-yearly intervals from 1841. During this period there were 30 to 34 houses in occupation, and the population varied from 111 to 138. Many villagers were still employed in agriculture or in service. Trades include baker, blacksmith, brickmaker, builder, carpenter, dressmaker, milliner, nurse, schoolmistress, shoemaker, tailor, weaver and wheelwright.



Egleton Men who served in the Cavalry in 1797

In March 1794 the Government circulated its ideas for individual counties to raise auxiliary forces. These were to include mounted corps of 'Gentlemen and Yeomanry'. Through its Lord Lieutenant, the 9th Earl of Winchilsea, Rutland had already submitted a proposal to the Government to create its own 'Volunteer Troop of Cavalry'. Therefore it was not surprising that the first mounted Yeomanry corps to be raised under the new Act was from Rutland.

The Earl of Winchilsea initially offered the services of three troops of 50 men each. Originally nominated as one of the three captains, the Earl soon assumed command of this new corps with the rank of colonel. By 1797 each troop contained 73 men and by 1803 the county could muster four troops with a rank and file of 168.

The 1797 notebook names three men from Egleton who were in the cavalry. They were

Farmer Cunnington, who lived at what is now The Old Bakehouse in Hambleton Road (24 on the map), the son of Farmer Thompson (Tomson) who lived at what is now Brook Farm in Hambleton Road (14 on the map), and the son of Farmer Stimpson who lived at what is now Longcroft House in Main Street (10 on the map). It is assumed that these men were members of the Rutland Yeomanry rather than the Rutland Fencibles as they would no doubt be loyally bound to their landlord, the Earl of Winchilsea.

Another similar organisation was the Rutland Fencible Cavalry, raised in 1794 by Gerard Noel Edwards. It comprised part-time regulars for whom he had built a Riding School (now Rutland County Museum), complete with stables and quarters, opposite Catmose, his mansion in Oakham.

Wheelwrights and Carpenters at Forge Cottage, Hambleton Road

Forge Cottage almost certainly gets its name from the occupation of its tenant in 1881. He was William Henfrey, a wheelwright, and he was living here with his wife Catherine, and children Ida and Harry. Kelly's *Directory* of 1904 records that William was a wheelwright and carpenter. The business was taken over by Albert Ward and his son, also Albert, and it was still there in 1948 when the Finch estate at Egleton was sold to the Merchant Venturers of Bristol.



This workshop at the rear of Forge Cottage was used by Albert Ward for his wheelwright's business. Shown here, circa 1925, with a new dray are (left to right) Mr Guy, Frederick Shelton, Albert Ward jnr, Marmie Elliott, Albert Ward snr and two workmen (May Wheatley)

The nineteenth century saw the coming of the railway, and the Syston & Peterborough Railway was the first line to pass through Rutland. It opened in 1848, and the railway still passes through the western side of Egleton parish. A railway gatehouse and a signal box were built at the side of the Oakham to Uppingham road, opposite the road leading to Egleton. The cottage had become uninhabited by 1968 and both cottage and signal box have now been demolished. There was also a toll gate in this vicinity prior to 1870. The gate was erected at 'Egleton Lane', having been ordered by the Trustees of the Turnpike on the 21st December 1825. It was to be 'at or near and on the North side of the entrance of the highway leading to Egleton, branching out of the said turnpike-road' (Traylen 1982, 74). The nineteenth century census returns record gatehouse keepers, a platelayer, a railwayman, and a toll collector among Egleton's residents.



Egleton signal box and crossing keeper's cottage circa 1930. Both have since been demolished (May Wheatley)

Egleton school, provided by George Finch, was opened in 1867, but children in the village were being taught long before this date. In 1773, Mrs Ann Adcock was paid three shillings per week by the Finch family for teaching here. She was succeeded by her daughter, Charlotte, who was still schoolmistress at the age of 73, when the 1851 census was taken. By 1871 she had been succeeded by Harriet Emma Elliott who was born in Markfield, Leicestershire. She lodged with the Gregory family in the cottage known today as 5 Church Road. The village school was closed in 1919. It reopened briefly during the Second World War to cater for both evacuees and village children. It is now the village hall.

The plaque over the entrance porch to the former school (RO)



The Great War of 1914-18 affected every village community in Rutland, and Egleton was no exception. The parish chest contains a roll listing seventeen men from the village who served, including two who died in battle. Reuben Carpendale was an able seaman on *HMS Black Prince*, which went down with all hands at the Battle of Jutland. Chief Petty Officer Charles Throsby was in the Naval Brigade and was killed at Arras in August 1916. A third man, Thomas William Gregory, is listed as paying the ultimate sacrifice, but he actually returned safely from the war. During the Second World War, both Land Army girls and Italian prisoners of war worked on Egleton farms. Some of the prisoners cycled to work from Whissendine and others were

The former Egleton School is now the village hall (RO)

housed in farm barns. There were also evacuees from Walthamstow, London, in the village. One bomb fell in a manure heap in Henry Griffin's farmyard at Home Farm, demolishing a poultry shed.

The connection with the Finch estate ended in 1948 when, with the exception of 14 Orchard Close, all the property in Egleton was sold to the Merchant Venturers of Bristol. Most of the houses have since been sold again and are now owner-occupied. Since 1948 new dwellings have been built and barns converted. When the mid-Gwash valley was flooded in the 1970s to form Rutland Water, Egleton gained a new perspective, being very close to the largest reservoir in the country. In 1975, Anglian Water established a nature reserve at this end of the reservoir and in 1992 the present bird-watching centre was officially opened on the old Hambleton Road at the south-east corner of the village. This, together with the annual Birdfair, attracts thousands of visitors from all over the world (*see* Chapter 24 – Tim Appleton MBE – Thirty Years of Rutland Water Nature Reserve). At the time of writing it seems almost certain that new lagoons will be built close to the village. The objective of the scheme is to protect the nature reserve from problems caused by lower water levels as a result of increased draw-down of the reservoir.

Since the break with the Burley estate, the nature of the village has changed dramatically. Though there are still three farms in the village, only a

An aerial view of Egleton and Rutland Water Nature Reserve. The birdwatching centre is at the end of Hambleton Road which runs from the lower right of this picture towards Rutland Water (John Nowell, Zodiac Publishing)



few of the residents now work in agriculture. Most earn their living outside the village or have chosen to retire here, and young people have to go elsewhere for their education and to work. Changes in residents are probably more frequent now than at any time in the village's history. Yet Egleton remains a close-knit community with a thriving village life. Many of those who have chosen to come here value the sense of community they find and are prepared to contribute to it. Egleton's older buildings are Grade II listed; they are treasured by their owners and are a permanent reminder, to an increasingly modern village, of its agricultural origins.

1797 Houses in Egleton Today

The 1797 notebook referred to earlier identifies the homes of Egleton families at that time. Twenty-four occupied dwellings belonging to the Finch estate are shown on the map. The accompanying notes indicate that there were a further two which were uninhabitable and awaiting repairs. Reference is also made to four non-estate properties. Five estate and three non-estate dwellings have since been demolished. The remainder, which have been modernised and some extended, have survived as desirable Grade II listed residences. The lost and surviving dwellings are shown on the annotated OS 2nd series 25" map of 1904. The following photographs illustrate these

properties, and extracts from the 1797 notebook give details of the tenants. The number in parentheses, (22) for example, identifies the location of each property.

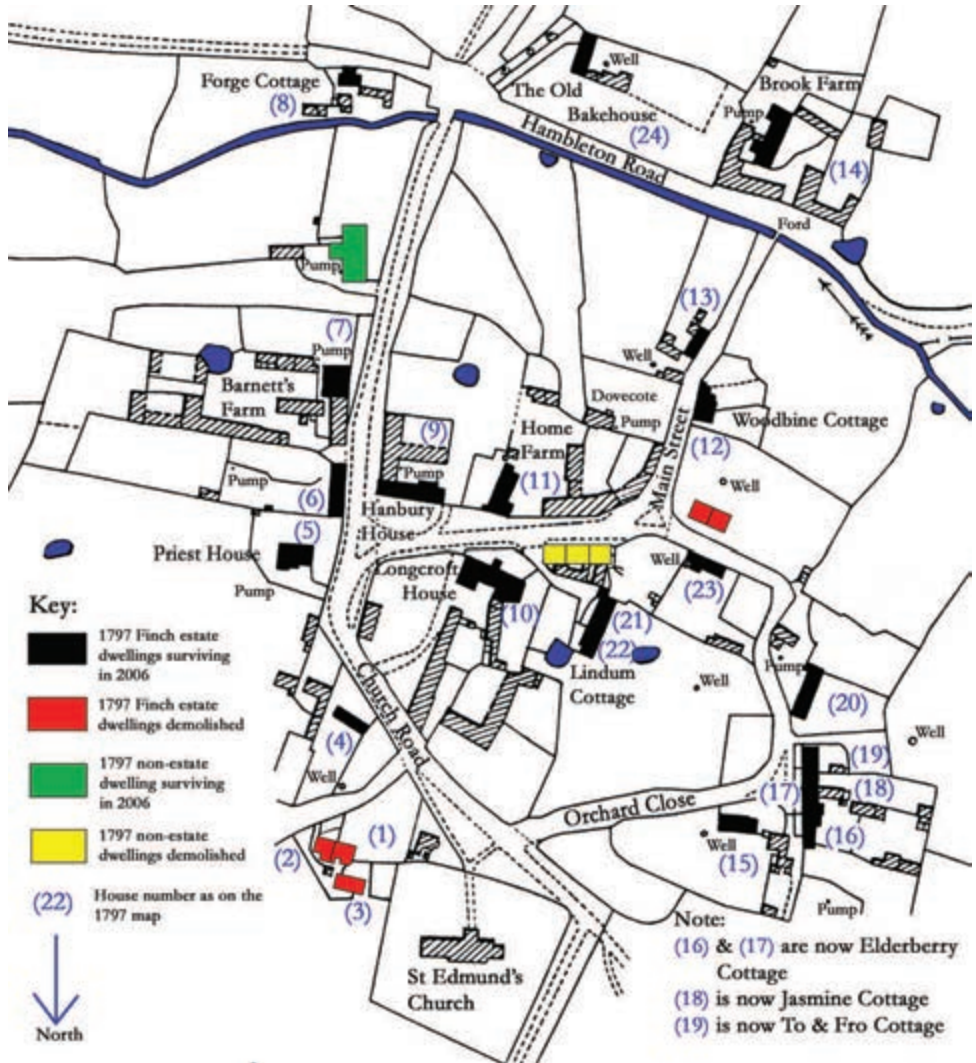


19 Church Road (4) in 1797 was home to Henry Towell, who was 'an old infirm cottager' who had 'built the Cottage himself' (RO)

In 1797 there were three cottages on the site of what are now 1 and 2 Meadow Way, to the north of Henry Towell's house. The occupants at (1) on the 1797 map were Mr and Mrs Osborn, who were cottagers. They were said to have had 23 children. Mr Osborn was of 'a remarkably good Character'. Of his wife, 'it is said the Woman drinks'. Peter Neale, wife and four young children lived at (2). He later moved to (12), now known as Woodbine Cottage, 11 Main Street. At (3) lived cottagers Mr and Mrs Broome and their family. Mrs Broome was lame.

It is probable that all of these houses remained when the village school was built in 1867, but they had all been demolished by 1961. Meadow Way was formerly called Tip Lane as it led to the village tip.

Surviving and demolished dwellings from the 1797 survey highlighted on the OS 2nd ed 25" map 1904



The Priest House, 11 Church Road (5). This is a modern name, and there is no evidence that it was ever occupied by a priest. The tenant in 1797 was Abraham Seaton, 'clerk of the Parish . . . has a [third wife] and a very good House' (RO)

Right: In 1797 The Cottage, 9 Church Road (6), was home to 'the Excise Man', William Booth (RO)



Below: 5 Church Road, Eggleton, in about 1910. It was a non-estate property in 1797 located south of (7). It was the village Post Office until about 1954. Note the Post Office sign over the doorway (Hart)



Above: Barnett's Farm, 7 Church Road (7). In 1797 it was a 'good Farm House' and Farmer Wilcox farmed 115 acres, his farm being one of three large farms in the village (RO)



Left: Forge Cottage at 1 Hambleton Road (8). The original house of 1797, home of Thomas Osborn, is painted white (RO)



Hanbury House, 2 Main Street (9). In 1797 the occupants of this house were Farmer William Seaton and his wife, who were 'remarkably industrious' (RO)

In 1797 the occupants of Longcroft House were Farmer John Stimpson, his wife Frances, and their children. A survey of the Egleton estate in 1790 (ROLLR DG 7/1/86) shows that John was farming just over 140 acres. Farmer Stimpson may have also been a butcher.

*No 10. Farmer Stimpson
manages L^d W's Beasts - charming People - 5
Children at home - eldest Daughter wishes to go
to Service - eldest son going to be married or just
got Herring's Farm at Lower Hambleton -
is in the Cavalry ^{is} married & settled in Herring's Farm 1798*

'L^d W' is the 9th Earl of Winchilsea and 4th Earl of Nottingham who resided at Burley on the Hill, the landlord and employer of John Stimpson. John's eldest son is thought to be Thomas who was baptised in September 1774. 'Herring's Farm at Lower Hambleton' is almost certainly what was in 1970 The Limes at Middle Hambleton (see Chapter 21 – Lost Homes).

A non-estate property in 1797 was located between (10) Longcroft House and (23) 1 Orchard Close. It was on the site of present 5 Main Street. The agent for the Finch estate recorded in 1797 that this was: '... where there are five children & a neat woman & her husband. Cottagers, of the name of [John and Elizabeth] Needham & in part of their house lives that poor most dropsical Woman and her husband.' By 1828 this property had been converted into three cottages.



Upper: Longcroft House, 1 Main Street (10) (RO)

Lower: This group of three cottages in Main Street west of (10) was not part of the Finch estate in 1797. They were demolished about 1965 prior to the erection of the present bungalow (5 Main Street) on the site (Tony Traylen)

Right: Home Farm, 4 Main Street (11). A farmhouse in 1797 tenanted by Farmer Thomas Meadows and his wife Eleanor (RO)



Below: Woodbine Cottage, 11 Main Street (12). Home in 1797 to an elderly couple, Thomas Scott and his wife – ‘a good spinner’ – and one of their daughters (RO)

Below: 10 Main Street (13). William Mould was a weaver and in 1797 lived in this cottage with his wife and ‘six fine children’ (RO)



Right: Aerial view of Brook Farm (14). In 1797 it was tenanted by widow Eleanor Thompson (Tomson) and her two sons, Thomas and Kitt, one of whom was in the cavalry (John Nowell, Zodiac Publishing)



Egleton Post Office, 20 Orchard Close (15)

Harry and Louisa Sharpe (*née* Shelton) lived here from about 1895 until their respective deaths in 1939 and 1951. By 1954 the house was occupied by Florence Gregory and her sister Louisa and it was from here that Louisa ran the Post Office. Sometime later her sister Florence took over the position of postmistress. Florence and Louisa were the daughters of Arthur and Sarah Gregory. The family had previously lived at 5 Church Road where Sarah and then her daughter Louisa had been postmistress.



20 Orchard Close (15) was in 1797 occupied by Thomas Woods, a cottager, his wife and '8 or 9 fine Children'. The left-hand part of this building was Egleton Post Office in the 1950s (RO)

The row of four terraced cottages in Orchard Close is now occupied as three dwellings. Cottages (16) & (17) have been converted into one dwelling known as Elderberry Cottage, (18) is now known as Jasmine Cottage and (19) is To and Fro Cottage. In 1797 the occupants of these terraced cottages were:

'N^o 16 [John and Elizabeth] Peat. Cottagers with Cows – 8 children – eldest boy at Burley under Game Keeper – keep a little shop – a very industrious family.'

'N^o 17 [William] Collingwood. an old infirm Cottager – his daughter & her husband & children live with him – his name is James Neale.'

'N^o 18 Alice Rippon an old maid – cross – but a good woman – had Lodgers last yr but they have left her & she lives alone – teaches children to read.'

'N^o 19 [John] Bryan. Married a Widow [Ann] Carter, who has children by both Husbands – not good people – some story last yr about stealing wood.'



The row of four cottages in Orchard Close (16, 17, 18 & 19) circa 1910 (Hart)

Anne Exton's brother-in-law and sister, Henry and Alice Beaver, were living at (20) on the 1797 map, now 10 Orchard Close. They were still living there in the early years of the nineteenth century. During this period the tenancy alternated between Anne and her brother-in-law. Henry was a baker and a bakehouse was recorded as being part of this tenancy in 1804.

There were two cottages in the field opposite 1 Orchard Close (23). Robert Pettifer sen occupied one and, in 1782, he was requesting 'wood to prop' his house. However it had become uninhabitable by 1797. The other cottage was rented by 'old Brown & his Wife', but by 1797 it was falling down. As a consequence they were lodging with Anne Exton. The Brown's cottage was supposed to be rebuilt but it never was.



10 Orchard Close (20) was tenanted by Anne Exton in 1797 (RO)

No 20. Anne Exton
 an old Woman, unmarried & lame - her sister's
 Husband Beavor a Baker, lives with her - Brown
 & his Wife board with them till Cottage rebuilt.

Lindum Cottage, 3 Main Street (21 & 22) was two semi-detached cottages in 1797. The occupants were William and Mary Hives (21) and Ann Adcock, schoolmistress (22) (RO)





1 Orchard Close (23) home to Ralph and Mary Hammond in 1797. Both were elderly and infirm and their 'son & Daughter unhealthy' (RO)

The Old Bakehouse, Hambleton Road (24)

By 1743, this property was in the hands of the Cunnington family. In 1790 the house, yard and Home Close occupied an area of 1 acre 3 roods, and there was a barn and yard with an adjoining close of over one and a half acres. The total farm was just over 58 acres, and at that time it was the smallest of the five farms in Egleton.

By 1797, the farm had been taken over by James and Elizabeth Cunnington's son, Edward, who had married Elizabeth Preston of Burton Lazars, Leicestershire, in 1794. Edward's wife made Stilton cheese, thus placing Egleton on the list of local villages where this cheese was made in the eighteenth century. The three children recorded in the notebook were Elizabeth, Edward and Peter who were baptised at Egleton between 1795 and 1798.



Above: The Old Bakehouse, Hambleton Road (24). This property had been home to a baker from at least 1891 until well after the First World War (RO)

2024 Farmer Cunnington
 Young Man & Woman - 2 young Children - has in the Lavatory - she makes Stilton Cheeses - 5 Cows another Boy ^{Peter} born in 98 very industrious she comes from Leicestershire her Name Preston, milks 5 Cows keeps Poultry & has only One Maid to assist her.