

II

LIFE IN GRASBY C16th to C18th

There is a little more documentary evidence of life in Grasby from the C16th onwards. Probate inventories from the 1500s suggest villages in the northern Wolds were on the whole small, numbering as few as 12 families and probably not exceeding 35. If, as is believed, the population of Grasby changed little between 1500 and 1800, with around 150 inhabitants, the village would appear to fit the upper range of this pattern. This accords with the 1563 Diocesan Return. In this year the Privy Council required from each diocesan bishop a return of the parishes and hamlets of each diocese, with the number of families resident therein. The return for Grasby, in the Deanery of Yarborough, recorded 28 households. The accuracy of this return may be questionable, for instance neither Searby nor the hamlet of Owmbly are included in the return. On the other hand, some fascinating comparative information is revealed. Bigby had 22 households, Bonby 35, Worlaby 48, and Barnetby 30, each of which is a scarp line settlement. "Clixby chapel", apparently part of Caistor town, interestingly had 33 households, 5 more than Grasby at the time. Somerby, however, had only 5.

The Wolds also had a smaller proportion of waged labourers than the rest of the county (28%) and there were only rare examples of extreme wealth. The absence of congested populations and an abundance of grazing land enabled the middling peasant to get a better living in the C16th than the peasants of clay and fen lands. Farms on the Wolds were relatively large, perhaps on average 50 acres. The scarp line villages such as Grasby, partly on the Wolds and partly in the Ancholme Valley, may have had smaller farms. There is no way of knowing how the land in Grasby was divided but, with 28 families, the average farm size within the parish would have been 38 acres.

The aristocracy was thin on the ground in Lincolnshire and in Lindsey there was a low proportion of rich tax payers, who were for the most part gentry or yeomen. The nearest families of note to Grasby would have been the Tyrwhits of Kettleby, close to Bigby, and the Ayscoughs of South Kelsey and, somewhat later, the Rossiter family from Somerby who first acquired the status of gentry in the C16th. There would have been sharp differences, nevertheless, between the relatively rich gentry and yeomen farmers and the poor in small villages.



North Lincolnshire 1607

The Tyrwhit's link with Kettleby dates back to at least the C14th. Kettleby Manor House was built by Sir Robert Tyrwhit, who was at the height of his influence and wealth in the mid C16th (on the 8th & 9th October 1541 Henry VIII stayed at Kettleby Manor). Robert's daughter, Agnes, married William Hansard, son and heir to Sir William Hansard, who at the time was overlord to the "Manor of Greisby held of the Archbishop of York". William died in 1520 and his heir was his grand-daughter, Elizabeth, who married into the Aysgough family. The Tyrwhit family fortunes declined after Robert's death in 1581, but a "M Turwytt" is mentioned as a land owner on a number of occasions in the 1577 Grasby Terrier. This could have been Robert's brother, Marmaduke Tyrwhitt of Scotter, who in the end was the only member of the family to carry on the Tyrwhitt name. Kettleby Manor was finally demolished in 1697, by which time its lands belonged to Sir Henry Hunloke of Wingerworth Hall, Chesterfield, who had married Katherine Tyrwhitt. Sir Henry died in 1715.

The mainstay of husbandry on the Wolds during these times was sheep. Large tracts of waste land were used as sheep walks, at night the flocks were folded on arable fields for the sake of their manure. Grasby had over 566 acres of wold and scarp land, over half the area of the parish. Sheep were bred for the fine wool in demand by Yorkshire and East Anglian Clothiers. The size of an average flock on the Wolds in the C16th was 34 sheep, the highest in the county other than the eastern marshland. Yeomen farmers had flocks of perhaps as many as 200-400.

On average farms had only 9 cattle, 58% for dairy and breeding, 42% for draught and meat. Pigs were numerous, on average 6 per farmer. Barley and pulses made up 75% of the crops, with only 10% wheat and 4% rye. Barley was sold to maltsters and brewers from outside the shire, both from London and Yorkshire. Pulses were used largely as winter feed for livestock. Other crops grown were oats, hemp and flax. The latter two were used to make, in particular, sackcloth and rope. Ley farming was practised in the open fields to help maintain soil fertility, with some evidence of the use of selected grasses rather than letting the land simply “fall into grass”.

Sheep and barley maintained their pre-eminence until the arrival of the turnip in the early C18th. There were changes being made, however, chief of which was enclosure. In all probability this was a piecemeal process and the dominant motive until the mid-C17th was to increase pasture land for sheep. The full report of the Enclosure Commission of 1607 for Lincolnshire identified 13,500 acres of enclosures and a number of “*great depopulations*”, the closest to Grasby being Searby which, clearly, did not become a classic “*deserted village*”. That said, there were two neighbouring settlements to Grasby, Audleby and Fonaby, which are described today as deserted medieval villages, Clixby was definitely depopulated and by 1600 it is said that much of Caistor’s open-fields had been turned over to pasture for sheep. In addition, Richard Rossiter sought permission to demolish the steeple and chancel of Somerby Church in 1603 on the grounds of cost of upkeep and the fact that the church, built for 100s, now had a congregation fewer than 50. Somerby had, therefore, been depopulated during the C16th and Rossiter had also been accused of being busy reducing the parishes of Searby-cum-Owmby and Great Limber by enclosure at the same time. As Searby still had large open-fields until the middle of the C18th, it’s possible that in the C16th only their boundaries were fenced and what had previously been arable land was converted to pasture for sheep.

The reasons for enclosures may, however, have been quite varied and sometimes, for instance, simply to sort out a landowner’s problems with debt. The arrival of energetic new gentry may also have introduced a more profitable system and involved buying out other freeholders and reducing the number of farms. A need to restore exhausted soils by putting down arable land to grass may also have led to enclosures, as well as a possible genuine need to increase the amount of pasture available for tenants.

Richard Rossiter in 1608 allowed a 100 acres of arable land to fall down to grass in Owmbly: *“To better and make more apt and fit for tillage, which otherwise, if the same should without respite of time be tilled, it would scarce yield increase which could counter all the seed and charges of tilling”* (Thirsk, 1957). Rossiter also defended the conversion of 100 acres of arable land to pasture in Searby on the grounds that his tenants had insufficient grass and had been hiring pastures in other towns. There are records of complaints in the C16th of pasture shortages which were threatening to reduce the number of animals kept in some places to the point that it became impossible to produce enough manure to keep arable land fertile.

Documentary evidence of various forms is available providing an insight into life in Grasby. Glebe Terriers are perhaps the most valuable (a terrier was a survey and inventory giving details of glebe [i.e. church] lands and property in the parish held by the clergyman, which helped provide his income). The Grasby Glebe Terriers provide some valuable insight into the role of the Church in farming and the earliest available in the Lincoln Archive is for 1577 during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I (1558-1603). The vicar was Thomas Alanby and the three signatories of the terrier, all *“inhabitants”*, were Robert Maris, Wylliam Green and Henry Hargryf. Glebe land was identified by land adjacent to it in the ownership and/or occupancy of others who were, in addition to the three signatories of the terrier, M Turwytt, Mark Good, Robert Hansard, Robert Hourd and Thomas Wright. The glebe land was dotted all over the parish and reveals some interesting terms and words for measures and location. Firstly, the measures comprise acre, *“lye”*, *“stong”* and *“land”*. A stong is a Scandinavian word meaning about ¼ acre, but as yet no translation can be found for a lye or land. In total Thomas Alanby had 8 acres, 20 stongs, 45 lyes and 63 lands of glebe. He had land in the West & East Fields, the West & East Ings, between the Ings & Low Gatt, between Low & Dovecote Gatts Dove (Dove-cote Close can be identified today by a pond on Wilmore Lane housing estate), Brae Gatt & Headland, Headland & Barnaby Gatt, Barnaby Gatt & Fery Gatt and at Fery Gatt and upwards. Ings is an ancient Norse word meaning water meadows and marsh. The meaning of Gatt is unknown, but it could be a gate. Barnaby could refer to Barnetby. One can guess that Upwards refers to higher land to the north on the Wolds and the Ings would have been low land in the south, probably adjacent to what is North Kelsey Beck today.

The 1612 Grasby Terrier identifies Thomas Leach as the vicar. He had 7 oxgangs in the East & West Fields (an oxgang in this case is about 7 acres, and so this amounted to about 49 acres). In addition he also had *“8 quarters barley payable to the vicar defrayed by the farmer Richard Rosseter of Somerby”*. One assumes that Richard Rosseter grew and harvested the barley in the parish, paying the vicar the value of the 8 quarters in money as rent (glebe land was tithe free). In 1616, in Bishop Neale’s time, Thomas Leach was the vicar, the living was valued at £13, the King was the Patron (James I 1603-

1625) and there were 80 Communicants (*Grasby – The Ross Manuscript*). Thomas was, according to the Terrier, still the vicar in 1625 and Robert Ledyerd esq. was the patron of the vicarage. Three “sidemen” were named – John Ffarow, Robert Marris and John Johnson.

The 1634 Grasby Terrier provides a little more detail about the living and the village. Thomas was still vicar, shortly before his death in 1637. (On his death an inventory of his goods and chattels lists wheat, rye, barley, beans, lentils, oats and hay in the barn to the value of £13 – presumably derived from tithes). The 7 oxgangs of land and 8 quarters of barley remained unchanged, but it further stated that he had daily use of common land for beast and cattle on Caistor Moor. Villagers were named as William Greene, Timothy Day, John Greene – gent, William Dankin, Robert Marris and Henry Greene. “*In 1635 on the 7th February died Richard Rossiter of Sumerby. Seized of the Rectory appropriator of this village leaving his brother Edward, his heir then aged 18 years*” (*Gresbie – The Ross Manuscript*).

The Grasby “*Protestation Return for 1641*” in the reign of Charles I (1625-1649) listed the following Minister and Officers who took protestation before Sir William Pelham, Knight, 11th March – George Cockdale, Curate (also Minister of Clixby), Robert Marris (Churchwarden), Patrick Johnson (Churchwarden) and Edward Day (Constable). “*43 inhabitants subscribed, none refusing*”. This was shortly before the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642, a war in which Edward Rossiter played an important role. Edward, heir to Richard Rossiter, became a well-known and successful Parliamentarian colonel who fought alongside Oliver Cromwell at the Battle of Naseby in 1645 during the Civil War, was later knighted and served as the MP for Great Grimsby. He built Somerby Hall in 1660, was clearly a major landowner in the area and was also responsible for some of the early enclosures in Grasby (see below). He died in 1669.

Henry Foxcroft succeeded Thomas Leach as vicar after Thomas’ death in 1637. According to the 1664 Grasby Terrier (by which time Charles II was on the throne) he had a hempyard to the value of £30 per annum; 20 acres of arable land in either common field; 7 acres of pasture in the West Field, bordered by the lands of Sir Edward Rossiter, Knight (who survived the re-establishment of the monarchy); a 3 acre close of meadow bounded by the lands of Sir Edward Rossiter to the north and the Beck to the south; 8 acres, bounded by the lands of Barbara Marris and William Green to the north and Thomas Marshall, gent, to the south; 1 close in Acredike Close (3 roods) alongside John Legard, John Chymney and William Ticklat and 6 selions within Ticklat’s grounds. This amounted to about 69 acres of glebe land. The signatories to the Terrier were John Greene- gent, John Legard, Christopher Marris and Frances Hewson.

assume that most of his (glebe) land was let to full-time farmers in the village.

The Terriers are useful in identifying some inhabitants of the village and people who owned and/or occupied land in the parish. Unfortunately they don't appear to distinguish between tenants and land owners. Sometimes "gents" and "yeomen" are identified, but who may still be tenants or freeholders. It was during the C15th that what had previously been servile tenure was transformed into leasehold and copyhold and much freehold came into the hands of former villeins in an unusually active land market. Grasby, as part of the manor and soke of Caistor, was almost certainly returned to the Crown following, in the C16th, the Dissolution of the Monasteries and change in status of Thornton Abbey to Thornton College, a secular college for the training of priests for the new church. The college, however, did not survive for long and closed for good in 1547. How much of and to whom its lands, including Grasby, were sold is unclear, but it is known that Sir Robert Tyrwhitt was granted or bought at least some of the Abbey's lands and it would have made sense to secure land in such places as Grasby which were adjacent to Kettleby Manor. Monastic lands, however, were also bought up, through land agents, by a new generation of ambitious families without direct links to the Crown and even by wealthy yeomen. The age of the English property owner was well underway. Without a resident lord of the manor it is possible that Grasby had more than one landlord and that some of the residents had become freeholders by the C17th. "*A true and perfect inventory of all ye goods and chattels both moveable and immoveable of John Ledgerd of Gressby in ye county of Lincolnshire, Yeoman, late deceased this 27th day of May in ye 22 year of King Charles ye 2 1670*", for instance, provides an interesting insight into village life and a farm, as opposed to a smallholding, at the time. A John Legard appears in the Protestation Return of 1641 and in the Grasby Terrier of 1664, where he is described as a yeoman. His goods and chattels were valued at £275.13s.2d, a not inconsiderable sum for the time. Of greatest value were his "seven score sheep" at £46.13s.4d. In addition he had a pair of oxen, five cows, 10 horses, 2 mares and ploughing equipment, 11 swine, 8 bee hives and poultry. He had 8 quarters of rye and barley remaining in the "*chamber and tyth barn*" (presumably from last year's harvest - 8 quarters = 2 cwt or about 102 kg). He also had a "*pair of gquournes*", almost certainly quern-stones i.e. he had the facility to grind his own grain. His farm comprised 73 acres (18 acres of rye, 5 acres of barley, 12 acres of lentils and barley growing together and 38 acres of fallow land). The crops were valued at £4.10s.0d and the fallow at only £2.0.0. This suggests only that which was growing in the fields was valued, not the land itself, which in turn would seem to indicate that John, despite being classed as a yeoman, was not a freeholder but a tenant. This begs the question, were all residents in the parish leaseholders and was all the land owned by external and possibly large scale landlords who were also rectors?

Inventories of goods and chattels for Dorriethy Ticklatt, widow (died May 1671), and Robert Bell (died April 1679) provide some information about the crops and livestock of two smallholders during this period. Dorriethy left one “*bushill*” of barley (a bushel was a measure of grain by volume and equalled about 8 gallons), 4 beasts, 3 sheep, 1 goose, a gander and 5 gibs (goslings) to the value of £5.8s.0d. Robert had one sack of corn, 5 cattle, one maire, one foal and a “*follower*” (type of plough horse), 4 sheep and poultry to the value of £11.0s.4d. He also had corn in the ground valued at £0.2s.0d. Neither appears to have had any farm implements, although Dorriethy had a wain and a cart.

The final inventory available in the C17th is for Richard Tickler, another smallholder, who died in May 1697. He left 3 horses, 6 cattle, 10 ewes and lambs, 4 ewe hogs, 2 swine and some geese and hens. In addition he had malt and grinding corn, and growing corn and hemp in the field.

The inventories above provide some information about farming in the village during the C17th. There were large and small scale farmers and it would be reasonable to assume that the smallholders provided some of the labour required on the larger farms. The main crops appeared to have been barley, rye, lentils (pulses), hemp and hay. Wheat and oats are mentioned only in Thomas Leach’s inventory. Every inventory appears to include quern stones for grinding corn (rye was almost certainly used to make bread). Milk and cheese were clearly important parts of the villagers’ diet. Both horses and oxen were kept as draught animals; it is possible that horses were already being used in preference to oxen for ploughing the lighter soils. Sheep were kept in significant numbers, notably by John Ledgard. Cattle, pigs, geese and other poultry were also of importance. There has been no evidence to date of village farmers owning their own land.

Moving on to the C18th, Christopher Marris and Thomas Marris, both of Gresby, died in September 1704 and February 1706 respectively. Among several others, the name Marris has featured in Grasby for over a century. Both appear to have been farmers of note, Christopher’s estate was valued at £240.3s.4d and Thomas’ at £99.5s.6d. The inventory of his goods and chattels indicates that Christopher was a farmer on a very similar scale to John Ledgard. He had 9 horses and mares, 4 oxen and 8 cows, 13 young beasts, 9 yearling calves, 160 sheep and 13 swine. The fact that he died towards the end of harvest explains the value of his corn and hay stock (£70.3s. 4d). He also had his own wains and ploughs. Although Thomas farmed on a smaller scale, he still had 7 cows, 2 calves, 6 steers, 2 quees (heifers?), 11 small cattle, steers and quees and a bull (together these were valued at £27.5s.8d.); 6 plough horses, 3 colts and 2 foals (value £19.0.0); 120 sheep (value £18.0.0); 2 sows and pigs. He had rye, barley and peas in the barn and corn thrashed (value £6.0.0) and just 2 loads of hay left (value £1.0.0). He had a wain (waggon), wain gears, plough and plough gears valued at £3.0.0. Finally, he had “*land in tile (till)*” to the value of £3.13.4d i.e.

arable land probably with a winter sown crop. Unfortunately no acreages were provided in the inventories, but again every indication is that Christopher and Thomas, like John above, were leaseholders and not land owners.

The 1707 Grasby Terrier appears to identify no additional glebe land, but the Duke of Newcastle as an owner of land adjacent to the glebe appears for the first time and the name Rossiter has disappeared. The Duke at the time was Thomas Pelham-Holles (1693-1768). A deed trust dated 1738 of estates held for life by the Duke and contingent estate of Henry Pelham, his brother, were granted to John Lord Monson, Charles Monson of Grays Inn, his brother, and Hutton Perkins of Lincoln Inn in trust for payment of the Duke's debts. An account book for the trustees 1738-69 has particulars and valuations for a number of estates which include Owmbly (Searby) and Grasby. The selling off of estates in small parcels may well have provided members of the minor gentry and yeomen farmers with the opportunity to become landowners. There is also reference in the terrier to a number of small areas ("*heads, stong meers and meers*") of glebe land in the "*Upper Hills*" which might suggest individual strips in the open fields.

Following the death of Christopher Potts, his son, John Potts of Gresby, among other sums relating to Christopher's estate, £32.12s.0d had been identified as "*Paid one year's rent for our farming*". Unfortunately no other details are provided about the name of the landlord or the size of the farm concerned, but it gives some idea about how much can be paid in rent in 1716 and suggests a reasonable sized holding. The inventory for Edward Ledgard on his death in September 1720 (a relative of John above one assumes) reveals goods, chattels and credits to the value of £368.14s.4d. These included: 4 oxen, 6 cows and one calf (value £50.10s.0d); 6 small beasts (value £14.10.0d); 12 horses, young and old (value £37); 132 sheep with the wool and 33 lambs (value £65.10s.0d); one sow and her piglets (value £6.4s.0d); corn in the field and barn (value £78.7s.6d); hay in the closes and yard (value £20); land in till- 36 acres, folding and cart manuring (value £10); one waggon, 2 carts, ploughs and plough gears, pair of querns, 2 ladders and other materials (value £12.15.0d). Again, this was clearly a reasonably sized farm and Edward must have been a leaseholder and not a land owner. His death in September also provides a glimpse of the position of the farm at or close to the end of harvest. In contrast, Richard Ticklatt, who died in June 1720, had just 6 beasts and 7 calves, 2 mares and 7 fen sheep. He did, however, have his own wagon and plough and his corn in the field was valued at £24, just over 25% the value of whole estate and must, therefore, have been farming a reasonable sized acreage of arable land.

Gates Longmire was the vicar of Grasby when he died in April 1722. He had in the home closes 3 mares, 5 cows, one pig and 8 old sheep and 4 lambs. Debts owing to him amounted to £60, but the inventory does not

specify whether or not these were tithes. His entire estate, including the £60 owed, was valued at £208.14s.0d.

The inventory for Robert Thomson of Gresby in February 1724 provides the first clear evidence of a smallholder who was also described as a labourer. His estate was valued at £29.11s.6d and included some “*unpilled*” hemp, 4 cows, 18 sheep, a mare and foal, a pig and some hay. He also had 2 fliches of bacon and one pot of butter in the kitchen. It seems that, in addition, he also earned money by making sack cloth as one item is listed as “*one pair of hemp heckles, 2 forms, one wheel, one washing tub and a pair of scales*”. Thomas Robinson, yeoman, of Grassby died in April 1725 and the inventory of his goods and chattels provides a view of an C18th farm in spring. He had hay in the closes, but valued at only £5 at this time of the year. He had corn in the field of various sorts in 46 acres, valued at £30. In addition he had 3 cows, 5 horses and mares, 5 young beasts, 70 sheep (valued at only £21?) and 4 swine, valued together at £52.10s.0d. The total value of his estate was only £102.16s.2d which suggests either that the quality of his stock and produce was poor in comparison to Edward Ledgard’s or that the market value of all farm produce had fallen significantly between 1720 and 1725.

By 1725 the names Carey, Edward Rhodes Hall, Percers Shaft and Arthur Odling were new as owners or occupiers of land and “*Long Chalks and Lower Hills*” were added to the list of field names in the parish. The vicar was Christopher Hildyard.

John Marshall, previously described as a gentleman farmer, died in April 1741. His estate was valued at £267.14s.0d but, again, there is no evidence in the inventory of his goods and chattels that this included land. Of interest is that the inventory states the locations of his livestock i.e. sheep (no number provided, but valued at £32) “*in the Field*”, 8 beasts “*in the Low Closes*”, 3 milch kine “*in the Upper Closes*”, 6 calves “*in the Low Close*”, 11 beasts “*in the Moor*”, 2 pair of oxen “*in the Sand Close*”, 2 calves and 6 horses “*in the Stable*”. In addition he had corn in the Field valued at £60, and wool valued at £4, with 3 bushels each of wheat, rye and barley valued at £5.14s.0d “*in the Garrat*”. The term “*close*” nearly always indicates enclosed fields.

In the 1762 Grasby Terrier the vicar was still Chrispher Hildyard and the vicarage was described as being sited between Collison’s Close on the north-west, Babb Lane to the south and the Street to the east i.e. the location of the Old Vicarage (now a private dwelling) next to the present village hall. Babb Lane (or Bab Gate) still exists as private access to the fields behind the village hall in the west of the parish. The glebe land in 1762 abuts properties occupied by Anderton, Marshall, Brown, Cary, Mitchell, Elwood, Kirk and Smith in one area and Smith, Bernard & Elwood, Brown & Tayler, Marshall and Marris in another area as well as Holmes Close (still the name of a field in the parish today), the Beck North, and the Moor South, elsewhere in the parish.

Tithes from the East and West Fields included hay in kind, lambs every other year, 1d for every sheep sold, wool in kind; 1s/6d for every cow in the enclosure, 1s/- on the common; 6d for every peck of hemp seed, fruits, turnips etc. in kind; pigg(sic) & poultry (1 in 7) in kind; and for every dove or pigeon house 2s/- a year. In addition to this, Easter offerings were expected from every communicant of 2p, as well as an amount of barley from the impropriator, (a landed layman responsible for administering income and tithes). The warden was John Smith and the Terrier was also signed by two "inhabitants", Phillip Tayler and George Douglas.

As indicated above, at the time of the dissolution of the monasteries in the early C16th, rectories and tithes belonging to the dissolved houses were vested in the crown, and most were subsequently sold to laymen. Clearly there were lay impropriators in Grasby in both the C18th and C19th. One assumes that the rectors of Grasby were not resident incumbents or bishops and that the vicar was allotted only a proportion of the revenues of the benefice.

Also, as previously mentioned, it would appear that Grasby had no lord of the manor during this period, but came under the manor of Caistor (documents referring to land rental agreements in Grasby dated 1636 and 1735 state that Grasby is part of the manor or soke of Caistor). In the absence of a lord of the manor in the village it is certain that the vicar would have assumed this role in the community.

It is clear that, apart from home closes (the small areas of land around homes), Grasby had two large cultivated open-fields throughout this period. The 1636 rental agreement above refers to "*Gregsons Acre Dyke Close*" in the East Field (Acre Dyke Close was still the name given to this area of the parish 200 years later as revealed in an advertisement of land to be sold by auction in September 1833: "*Acre Dyke's Close 1.Brick & tiled messuage, 4 acres, 2.12 acres contiguous to village*"- *Stamford Mercury*).

An enclosure agreement dated August 10th 1649 lists seven people who agree the enclosure of their lands dispersed in the "*West low field of Grasby*". In total 93 acres were enclosed and divided into 10 plots, the largest two of which together comprised 55.5 acres belonged to "*Edward Rosseter, esq. of Somerby*". Other owners included the vicar, several "*gents*" and yeoman farmers. Together these formed part of what are described as "*ancient enclosures*" in later documentation relating to the C19th Parliamentary Enclosures. The smaller, more irregular, field patterns closer to the village would appear to be the oldest enclosures, but by the C18th the whole of the area south of the present Vicarage Lane and Clixby Lane, as far as the parish boundary as drawn before the enclosure of Caistor Moor, had been enclosed. The further from the village the larger and more regular the field pattern becomes, suggesting the later stages of piecemeal enclosure. Furthermore, the field boundaries tend to be straight and most of this land was owned by the few large landowners soon to benefit most from the Parliamentary Enclosure. The classic explanation, as referred to above, for

the early enclosures of the C14th to C17th was that wealthy landowners converted arable land to pasture for sheep, with legal support from the Statute of Merton of 1235. As a result many villages were depopulated and several hundred seem to have disappeared. This model does not appear to fit Grasby in that the village seems always to have held its own and was never depopulated. It is possible that most of the land was already owned by a caucus of gentlemen and yeomen farmers who not only enclosed land but also consolidated the strips they owned or bought up from other freeholders. By the C17th there had been a relative fall in wool prices and rising prices for other arable produce. This form of enclosure would establish more efficient and profitable farm units of arable production and new husbandry techniques. The same amount of labour would have been required, hence no depopulation of the village, but this probably involved peasants who had lost their tenancies or had sold up to “*engrossing landlords*”. This also led to the emergence of an “*elite*” peasant class of tenant farmers paying higher rents, but at the same time making greater profits. These changes would have gradually undermined the medieval machinery for collective determination as one farmer could make his own decisions on the annual programme of planting etc.

What is clear is that Grasby’s “*ancient inclosures*” were far greater in extent (nearly 50% of the parish) than those in neighbouring villages before the parliamentary enclosures where they comprised, for the most part, only small home closes in and around the village. Nearly all the land, however, in these neighbouring parishes was already owned by just a few large scale landowners.

Farmers in Grasby still owned both enclosed fields and land in the remaining open fields in the C18th, as shown below. It would be an interesting exercise to count the number of plant species in the various hedgerows and then use a formula based on this number to estimate their various ages.

An important point is that by the end of the C18th 22 people still had sufficient claim to lands, within the 500 acres of homesteads and already enclosed land, to be awarded additional land in the proposed parliamentary enclosures of the remaining open fields and common land from 1801. Admittedly, three landowners (the lord of the manor, the impropriator and the vicar) were awarded 91% of the 521 acres in the open fields, which is an indication of the proportion of the land to which they had title which had been previously enclosed in the parish, but nearly 10% of the land was already in the ownership of a further 19 people, which in turn is an indication of the open nature of the parish.

By the C18th, therefore, Grasby comprised about 500 acres of homesteads and enclosed fields, 566 acres of open fields and access to 2132 acres of common land on Caistor Moor (except, presumably, to the cony i.e. rabbit warren on the Moor belonging to Philip Skipworth, which followed a pattern of land use dating back as far as 1577 when Sir Francis Ayscough

erected a cony warren and settled a warrener there – in 1735 the warren comprised 300 acres and was in the occupation of Charles Fitzwilliam). It is likely that very little, if any, building had taken place far from the centre of the village, with none, other than of the most temporary nature, in the open fields on the Wolds or on the common land of Caistor Moor.

There is no evidence that has as yet come to light about the exact nature of farming in the parish in the C18th, but an advertisement in the Stamford Mercury in 1810 gives some insight into farming practice before the parliamentary enclosures. The property and livestock of the late William Drury were put up for sale “*comprising a farmhouse, a cottage, outbuildings etc., 3 acres of home close plus 176 acres, of which 75 acres were ancient inclosure, conveniently sub-divided, and 101 acres of open field*”. The livestock and other equipment included “*30 beasts, 2 year-old colts, 7 draught and other horses, 21 sheep, 7 pigs, 2 waggons, a cart, ploughs, harrows and other utensils*”. Clearly, this was not a smallholding but a genuinely mixed farm that must have grown corn and other crops. Whether the enclosed fields were largely pasture and used to graze the cattle (as well as make hay for winter feed) is not known, but the 1762 Terrier (see above) suggests strongly that some cattle were kept only in enclosed fields (were these part of separate, better managed, herds kept by gentlemen or yeomen farmers compared with the cows belonging to the poorer peasant farmers which were grazed on the common?) In 1786 41 acres of inclosed land and a farm, stables etc., occupied by Thomas Curtis, along with a further 80 acres in the East and West Fields of Grasby, were put up for sale. As with William Drury above, this farm comprised a mixture of enclosed and open-fields. What is not known is how an individual farmer combined the use of private enclosed and common open land in the operation of the farm.

In his book “*General View of Agriculture of the County of Lincolnshire*”, published in 1813, Arthur Young makes specific reference to Caistor Moor and to Grassby Open Field. Neither observation was complimentary. His comment on the open fields was: “*In riding over Grassby Open Field, and observing miserable crops, and horrible management, I inquired the rent; 9s or 10s. The land is good, and therefore such beggardly doings are terrible; the farms are small*”. On Caistor Moor he writes: “*To the west of Caistor there is a bad moor for some miles extent, which was reported to me so bad as not worth cultivating: on examining it I found it miserably pared for fuel: it is not good; but would pay well for enclosing and cultivating. It belongs to Sereby, Grasby, Clixby, Audleby, Hundon and Caistor; the soil is a peaty sand, on hungry reddish sandstone*”.

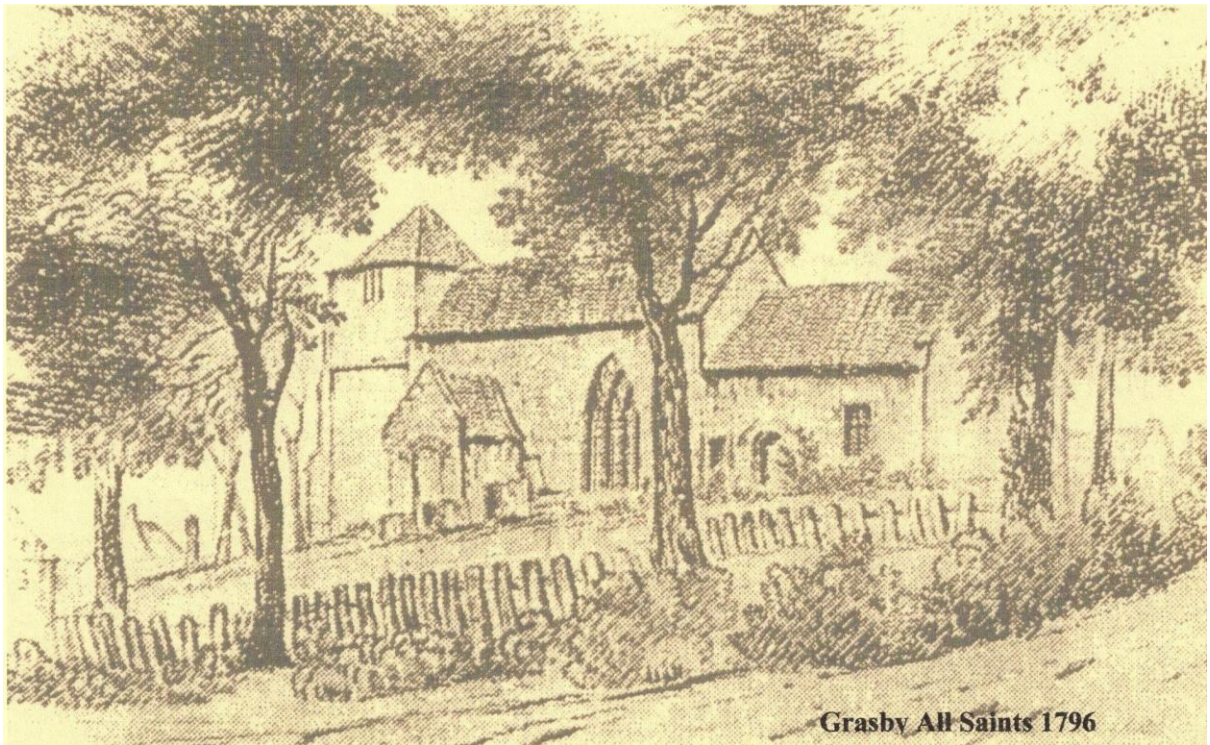
Arthur Young had an agenda to promote enclosure and modern farming techniques. A former farmer, Young had been made the first Secretary of Prime Minister William Pitt’s new Board of Agriculture, which began publishing, in 1793, a series of General Views on the Agriculture of all the shires of England. The Board was an association of gentlemen, chiefly landowners, and the “*90 odd volumes are almost monotonous in their reiteration of the point that agricultural improvement comes through enclosure and that more*

enclosure must take place" (Tate 1967). Despite this bias, however, one can assume that "high farming" was yet to come to Grasby and that the traditional method of fallowing on one of the open fields, as opposed to the new forms of crop rotation involving the extensive use of turnips, was still the normal practice. According to Joan Thirsk, "At Grasby in 1801 it (=fallowing) was still regarded as inevitable since the open-field land was in a state of exhaustion". A traditional system on open fields would have been fallow, wheat and beans or manured fallow, barley and beans. What is unknown was the condition of the 500 or so acres of "ancient inclosures" at the time compared with the open fields and common land. Also, whether these enclosed fields were largely pasture or arable land and, if the latter, was any form of crop rotation practised or, at least, "ley farming" whereby grass was put down for several years at a time to rest the soil from cropping? Equally, although owned by relatively few landowners, were these ancient enclosures farmed largely by tenant farmers and, if so, were they for the most part large or small scale farmers? The sales particulars of the two farms above (Drury and Curtis), show that both owned sizable acreages of open-field. If, by this time i.e. the late C17th and C18th only the scarp and wold land remained as open-fields (the ridge and furrow still visible near to the village would have been within enclosed fields) what is not known is whether they were divided into many narrow strips or much larger blocks. There is no way of knowing whether, in the early period of the village's history, the wold land remained waste and the two original ancient open-fields were confined to land either side of the village below the edge of the scarp, with the wold land being brought under the plough at a later time. What is intriguing is that both Young and Thirsk describe the poor condition of the open fields around the end of the C18th, and yet the village was well ahead of its neighbouring parishes in the amount of land already enclosed some, if not most of which, for at least 150 years. One would suspect that only forward looking landowners and farmers would have gone to the trouble and expense of enclosing this land and that their farming practices would have been advanced for the time. According to Levy, writing at the beginning of the C20th, small holders in the second half of the C18th never sold corn as there was seldom sufficient to cover their own demand for bread. Pigs and cows were also to supply their own tables with meat and milk. Whatever else needed would come from wages working for farms outside their own holdings. Livestock or its products provided the only surplus to sell. He quotes Arthur Young's 1772 formula "12 acre plot to provide wheat – bread corn for the year; surplus – dairy produce; 1 acre barley; sow's annual litter, average 10, 8 sold; 2 acres turnips or pease; poultry reared, including geese" as the minimum for self-sufficiency. "Smallholders excel in producing beef and mutton, pigs and poultry, fruit and veg., eggs, butter and milk. The wife of the small farmer would go to market with a basket of butter, pork or poultry on her arm". It was considered at the time that only small holders would give the time and care needed for livestock. Wives and

daughters played a vital role in taking goods to market, and to customers' houses. Often women took sole responsibility for poultry. Although labourers' wages rose significantly during the C18th, a series of poor harvests 1765-1791, a growing population, even worse harvests during the Napoleonic wars (1792-1813), pushed up corn prices even higher. (Things became even worse, in many parts of the world, following the eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in April 1815. The dust from the ash ejected into the atmosphere caused the "*sunless summer of 1816*" which led to crop failures throughout Europe and Britain. The cause of the sunless summer was not, of course, understood at the time). "*The effect on the mass of people was terrible, with prices rising at 130% compared with 60% for wages*" (Levy). This led to the introduction of the "*allowance system*" by which each parish made up the shortfall of a wage based on the price of bread, which was reflected in an enormous increase in the Poor Rate 1801-1811. Even small farmers were ploughing up pasture to grow wheat with its high price during this period. Often little thought was given to the future fertility of the land, much of which was unsuitable for wheat production. By 1799 Arthur Young found that a small holding had now to be 20 acres, not 12, to be self-sufficient. Most small holders who were also day labourers couldn't give up pasture to the plough as they didn't have enough time in the evenings to do the work necessary to produce corn. In these circumstances, a wife looks after cows, pigs and poultry while her husband goes to work. Livestock, therefore, continued to hold first place in the unenclosed parishes, especially with, as in the case of Grasby, access to common land outside the open field system. The population of the village was just 168 in 1801, which increased to a maximum of 433 by 1861. This increase has been attributed to the open nature of the village, unlike neighbouring parishes such as Clixby, a closed (or close) village. The open-closed village model was conceived by C18th poor law writers and attempted to explain behaviour on the basis of the different distribution of power within different types of village. In the closed village land and property ownership was confined to perhaps a single resident member of the gentry who controlled all employment and building in the parish providing, in the case of estate villages, all the housing for its tenants e.g. Great Limber or, where there were just a very small number of, possibly absent, landlords little or no housing was provided in order to keep down the poor rate. In some cases landlords pulled down cottages and drove out inhabitants to other parishes. Labourers may well have been better off in estate villages than in open villages – employment was more likely to be continuous, wages marginally higher for the skilled men who were selected to reside close to their work and cottage accommodation was cheaper and of higher quality, often with larger gardens, than in open villages. Often single men's accommodation was provided to deter potential tenant labourers who might bring large households with them.

Where, as in the case of a medieval deserted village, depopulation had already occurred it was much easier to control growth and villages such as Clixby, Audleby and Fonaby appear to fit this pattern. As was usually the case in the non-estate closed village, there was a shortage of labour and workers were compelled to walk to and from the farms from neighbouring parishes or townships, taking as much as an hour out each morning and an hour home in the evening in some cases, covering from 40 to 50 miles a week.

Grasby fits perfectly the model of an open village where property was divided between as many as, or even more than, 40 owners. How this situation evolved in Grasby may never be fully understood but, for whatever reasons (possibly, simply accidents of history), over time a range of people became freeholders of land and property in the village. Some were clearly minor gentry and yeomen, who probably owned the majority of the land in the parish, lived elsewhere and put in tenant farmers, but others were small-scale peasant farmers, artisans, shop keepers, speculative builders etc. who were of sufficient number to influence decision making in the parish and widen its economic base. Given that there were only 168 residents in 1801 it would seem that the number of people owning land and property rose rapidly in the first part of the C19th as the population expanded. To date detailed information about land and property ownership is unavailable for comparative purposes, but the 1826 poor rate for Grasby does demonstrate the open nature of the village by the C19th. At this time there were 82 houses (5 uninhabited), 5 shops and one public house in the village. There were 43 owners of property and land, 33 of whom were residents. Of the houses, 24 were owner occupied with 53 tenanted. There were 10 non-resident landowners, with George Tennyson and the Rev. Samuel Turner having by far the greatest acreages, 516 acres in total, with two tenant farmers (F Isles and C R Haddersey). George Tennyson also owned 5 houses. The largest resident landowners were John Burkinshaw and William Barnars with 145 and 83 acres respectively. Other farmers were a mixture of owner occupiers and tenants with farms ranging from about 10 to 25 acres. By this time, as well as farmers and farm labourers, there was a range of tradesmen in the village including a tailor, shopkeeper, cattle dealer, grocer, bricklayer, beer retailer, butcher, miller, potato merchant, blacksmith, fellmonger (=slaughterman) and shoe maker.



Source: unknown