

CHAPTER IV.

1. STATISTICS, &c., OF FINCHAM.

Of the population of Fincham, as of any other parish, at the time of the Conquest, it is exceedingly difficult to form a correct idea, since the Domes-day survey was not intended to be a record of the population, further than in ascertaining the owners and occupiers of land, for certain political purposes. Scarcely any notice is taken of any other classes. The total population of England there recorded is only 283,242, according to Sir Henry Ellis, when there cannot have been less than three or four millions. It will be interesting to put down the number of persons mentioned in the survey, as resident in this parish ; but it will not be safe, by making calculations for persons not employed in agriculture, or for women and children, to draw any conclusions :-

There were “liberi homines”	...	70
“ bordarii ”	49
“ servi ”	23
“ villain ”	3
	Total	<u>145</u>
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From early times, extraordinary grants, of the nature of taxes, were made by Parliament to the Crown for various purposes. These were called *Aids* or *Subsidies*,

which are terms in some respects corresponding with the more modern word *Supplies*. They were levied upon lands and goods, and even wages, at a rate according to the necessities of the sovereign. From the *Subsidy Rolls* in the Public Record Office, I select one *exempli gratiâ*, bearing date January 20th, 16th Henry VIII. The rate unaccountably varies from 6d. to 1s. in the pound on the several valuations:-

“Hundred of CLACKCLOSE.”

“FYNCHAM.”

	Valor.	Subsidie.
“John Fyncham, Esquire, in londes	ciii ^l	iii ^l vi ^s viii ^d
“Thomas Drury, in goodes &c., &c. (42 others)	xxii ^l	xxii ^s
“Robert Stylon, in wage &c., &c. (22 others)		vi ^d
“St. John's Gylde	xi ^s	xii ^d

The whole list contains 44 assessments on lands and goods, and 23 on wages, and some most probably were excused.

Another kind of supply was called *Devotion Money*, being perhaps for religious or charitable purposes, whether particular and local, or more general. This was collected, with the sanction of the Bishop, in the parish church, and forwarded through his Commissary. It was most probably what was afterwards known as the *Church Brief* or *King's Letter* collection, and extended down to our own times.

The returns are in the following form, which is copied as an example:-

“This Indenture, made 14th March, 35 Henry VIII,

“(1544) John Keith being Commissary of the Deanery of
“Fincham to the Bishop of Norwich, &c.”

“CHURCH-WARDENS”		
“John Dreury	Fincham, Martini	three shillings sixpens halfe peny.
“William Peace } “Nicholas Rixx }	Fincham, Michaelis	too shillings threepens halfe peny.

The *Hearth Tax*, or *Hearth Penny*, of Charles II, affords a good idea of the size of a village and its population at that time. The charge was one penny on every hearth or stove beyond the first, those persons having only one being excused. From “A duplicate of all the fire harths and stoves “within the county of Norfolk, taken upon view, for the year “endinge at the feast of St. Michael, 1672, by Rd. Browne, &c.,” it appears that at “*Finsham*” 41 persons, including “Thomas Hare” and “Ladye Guybon,” paid for 121 hearths ; and 48 were excused. The number of householders, therefore, was 89, the population about 445.

From the first keeping of *Parochial Registers* in 1538, to the taking of the first census in 1801, the population does not appear to have increased or varied much, the baptisms being on an average about 18 annually. Taking these as being 4 per cent. of the population, the total will be about 450 souls.¹

From 1801, however, there appears to have been a regular and rather rapid increase. This may be accounted for by the facilities afforded in such parishes as this for building cottages on small freeholds, when

¹ The number of births is nearly twice the number of deaths, in a given a half population ; and the latter vary from two to two and a half per cent., according to locality, &c.

in the neighbouring villages the larger landowners were beginning to adopt a contrary course, to save parochial charges. The following table is compiled from Parliamentary population returns, which have been abstracted and copied into the Registers, and shews the progress of this increase :-

Year.	Houses.	Families.	Males.	Females.	Total.
1801	84	104	251	250	501
1811	109	125	297	304	601
1821	141	155	372	336	708
1831	151	154	371	385	756
1841	177	---	389	418	807
1851	183	196	391	457	848
1861	190	195	399	487	886

The average number of deaths for the last ten years is nearly 17 per annum, or two per cent. on the population, and rather higher than in the first ten years of the present century. We should have expected to find the difference in favour of our own times, for obvious reasons, namely, better dwelling houses and medical attendance, and extensive sanitary improvements. The cause lies probably in the fact of many strong and healthy persons having emigrated, and consequently the average of the deaths among the remaining residents would be disadvantageously affected.

2. PARISH ACCOUNTS.

The usual accounts, both of the Church-Wardens and the Overseers, are perfect from an early date ; the one from the year 1729, the other from 1730. From the earliest times a *Church Rate* has been customary, and regular accounts of its disbursement are

preserved. The whole parish has been bought and sold again and again for centuries under this liability. The best adjustment of this vexed question would perhaps be a commutation charged upon the land, and payable by the landlord.

From the books of the Overseers I have made out a brief tabular statement of the expenditure for the relief of the poor, at certain intervals during the hundred years preceding 1856. This will be found, I think, important and useful, as it is certainly very striking, and may be relied upon for its perfect accuracy. I would first premise that the total disbursements for the relief of the poor in 1729 were only £21.

Year.	Rateable Value.			Rate disbursed.			Pop.	Average pr head.		
	£.	s.	d.	£.	s.	d.		£.	s.	d.
1756	920	0	0	83	10	0	450	0	3	8½
1801	2729	2	0	524	6	8	501	1	0	11
1821	2824	7	0	776	14	8	708	1	1	11¼
1856	4368	10	0	519	15	9	868	0	11	11½

From this it appears, by the second column, that the *Rateable Value* of the parish increased nearly 300 per cent. during the first 50 years of the period taken, and 160 per cent. more during the succeeding similar period, or a total of 460 per cent. in 100 years.

But the increase of *pauperism*, as shewn by the third column, is in a far greater ratio ; for in less than 50 years it had risen 627 per cent., and in 20 more 924 per cent, just double the increase in the value of property ! We cannot enter into the causes of this great demoralization of the agricultural labourer. The interests of agriculture were only saved, at length, by the passing of the new Poor Law in 1837. The results of its operation in this parish are very remarkable. The expenditure has been reduced back again to that of 1801, whilst the population has increased more than 50 per cent ; the cost per head now being little

more than one half of what it was at that time, and for 30 years after. The poor, too, themselves have certainly adopted a higher style of living, both as to food and raiment ; with what propriety in some respects is, at the same time, questionable.

In turning over these old books, I met with some rather quaint and curious items of expenditure, particularly from one “bought at the sign of the Bible,¹ in the High street, “Lynn.”

Year.		£.	s.	d.
1731.	Paid the dog-whipper ²		05	00
“	Dec. 26, Thos. Copsy for dog-whipping		05	00
1732.	Goody Cook for waiting of the poor people		02	06
1734.	Widow Saltier's burial wool, to wind her in		01	00
“	14 hedge hogs, 17 dozen sparrows		05	02
1737.	Marrying and removing Margaret Stimpson, and carrying the bride and bridegroom to Well	6	14	00
1738.	For killing a mad dog	01	00	
“	Gave to three poor men that had been slaves		01	06
1739.	Church-Wardens name on the pulpit		05	00
1743.	Six badges for the widows		02	00
1744.	Sparrows, 131 doz. and half	1	01	11
“	A badge for widow Copsey			04
1745.	Work done at the High and Low Church	2	14	00
1759.	To the burial of a poor stranger, over the things he left		07	00
1766.	The dauber's bill (for the church)		12	00
1780.	Hitching Nell Claydon into Workhouse		02	06
1786.	Paid Mr. Copland town stock, nien pound nineteen shillings and seven pence, three fair things, at a Vestry, &c	9	19	7¼
1789.	Thomas Harvey a quarter shavin.....	03	09	

¹ The Bible, or the Bible and Crown, was a favourite and very common sign with booksellers.

² *This ecclesiastical officer* is noticed in the chapter which includes “Parish Clerk and Sexton.”