

In 1932, Kathleen Ward of Farrer Farm in East Farndon produced a map of the parish, on which she had recorded all the names of the fields. As her family had farmed in the village since before the First World War and continued to do so until the 1970s she was in a good position to discover these names. Many of these names had probably never been committed to writing, so on occasion she had to invent her own spelling.

Many readers will recall Kathleen's brother Norman, a well-known figure in the area and founder of Ward's Electrical.

The accompanying map (based on a 1932 map) shows the result of Miss Ward's research. Each field is numbered and the key gives the name attached to each number. The names are printed as Miss Ward recorded them.

A PARISH HISTORY IN FIELD-NAMES

By Alan Langley



working the land at the time the map was made are still farming in the parish today. But some changes have inevitably occurred. Four types of name on the 1932 map cover a good proportion of the fields:

1) Names describing the size, shape or use of the field. Size is obvious in unromantic names like 'forty acre' and 'four acre.' Field shapes can be seen in the name 'Bellow's Pipes' (15 on the map), while usage clearly accounts for names such as 'Ploughed' (18) and essentially 'Flat Meadow' (20 and 22), 'Dairy Close' (73) and 'Wheathill' (70).

2) Names deriving from former owners or tenants. Examples of these are 'Dick's' (14), 'Ashtons' (81), 'George's Hill' (32). This category represents the names most likely to change, as the memory of earlier owners fades.

3) Names describing the field's location or a landmark within it. An example may well be 'Estersic' (76), which may mean the stream or 'sike' at the east of the parish. A report in the local paper in the nineteenth century calls the field 'Hestersic', presumably on the dubious grounds that all village people drop their aitches. The reporter no doubt felt he should therefore supply one. Other names of this type include 'Mill Hill' (29) and 'Marston Gates' (42 and 43).

4) Perhaps the most interesting category contains names which may have no obvious explanation and have perhaps survived from before the enclosure of the open fields. They may go back several centuries. Examples are 'Hampton' (3 and 4), 'Cobra' (59 and 60) (which is likely to be a version of 'Cogborough' or 'Cockborrow' - see below), 'Cesston Gate' (8), 'Rodmere' (27) and 'Morton Leas' (or Leys) (16).

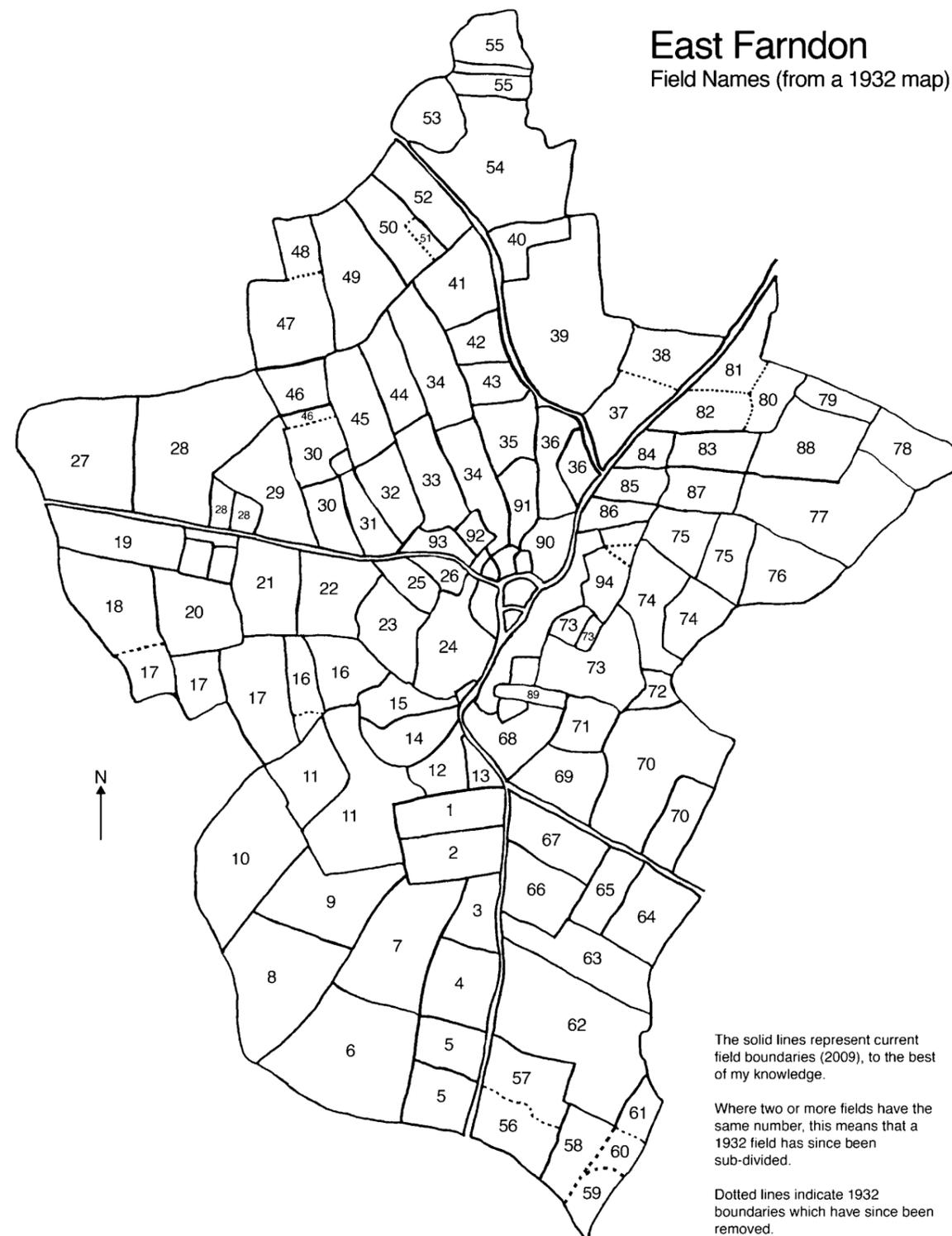
These field-names are largely still used today. This is due to the fact that some families

Field Names in East Farndon

Number on map	Name of field in 1932	Number on map	Name of field in 1932	Number on map	Name of field in 1932
01	Haddon's Close	33	George's Meadow	64	Bland's
02	Town Close	34	First Close	65	Slade
03	Little Hampton	35	Goodman's	66	Lever's Close
04	Great Hampton	36	Leas	67	Corner Close
05	Far Seeds	37	The Plain	68	Church Leas
06	Low	38	Wellingborough Close	69	Beggar's Bush
07	Clark's Close	39	Cover Close	70	Wheathill
08	Cesston Gate	40	Hovel Meadow	71	Hall's Pens
09	Mill Stump	41	Lane Close	72	Gooselands
10	Wranglands	42	Top Marston Gates	73	Dairy Close
11	The Glebe	43	Bottom Marston Gates	74	Deep Dale
12	Townsend	44	Bridle Close	75	Patch
13	Mount Hill	45	Lodge Close	76	Estersic
14	Dick's	46	Holm's Meadow	77	Dal's Hill
15	Bellow's Pipes	47	Bandlands	78	Twitchfields
16	Morton Leas	48	Ashers	79	The Slip
17	Whitgrass	49	Judith Stone	80	Nether Field
18	Ploughed	50	Seeds	81	Ashton's
19	Bottom Farndon Field	51	Hog Pit	82	Debdale Field
20	Flat Meadow	52	Gravel Hole	83	Hill Field
21	Top Farndon Field	53	Fox Cover	84	Four-acre field
22	Flat Meadow	54	Whitley	85	Farndon Close
23	Tom's Hill	55	Four Acre Meadow	86	Townsend
24	Hall Close	56	Cobra	87	Kettle Hill
25	Hovel Meadow	57	Cobra	88	Eighteen-acre field
26	Green's Close	58	Eight-acre field	89	Lyons Orchard
27	Rodmere	59	Cogborough	90	Home Close
28	Oak Tree Close	60	Bottom Cogborough	91	Levitt's
29	Mill Hill	61	Four-acre field	92	Four-acre field
30	Staines Hill	62	Forty-acre field	93	Diamonds
31	Mill Field	63	Sixteen-acre field	94	The Coombes
32	George's Hill				

Sometimes fields may be owned by someone in another parish, and this might explain why two fields within Farndon are called 'Top Farndon Field' (21) and 'Bottom Farndon Field' (19). No farmer within the parish would be likely to use such a name - after all, they are all Farndon Fields. Currently they are known as 'The Cricket Field' and 'Roundabouts'.

It is curious that 'Marston Gates' (42 and 43) is applied to two fields which are on the present Lubenham road rather than the Marston road. Perhaps an older route to Marston went this way, via what are now the grounds of Thorpe Lubenham Hall, where a footpath still runs. Thorpe Lubenham is part of Marston parish, so in a sense the road does lead to Marston, though not currently to the actual village. The present Marston road may be largely a creation of the enclosure re-organisation.



'Cogborough' or 'Cobra' (56, 57, 59 and 60) is a name with a long history. A legal document of 1455, for example, refers to 'Cockborowe' and there are several others showing how land in this area has changed hands as well as spelling. Standard spellings are relatively recent. 'Cobra' must be Kathleen Ward's attempt to convey 'Cogborough' or 'Cockborough' if there are some silent consonants. Compare the surname 'Cockburn' (pronounced 'Coburn').

To investigate category 4 (above) some research into old documents is necessary. Doing this type of research involves consulting a Glebe Terrier, which is not a breed of dog, but rather an inventory of the Rector's estate. Several can be found in Northamptonshire Record Office.

The enclosure of the open fields of East Farndon was carried out in 1781. Prior to this, land-owners or tenants had strips of land dotted round the three large open fields. The Rector's estate in the 1777 Glebe Terrier has to list as many as 125 different locations within the parish where his land was situated. So to describe the Rector's (or anyone else's) estate in those times meant listing a large number of these strips and attempting to describe their location, such as naming the owners of the strips on either side. These descriptions include a large number of place-names within the parish. Most of the names have now disappeared from use, though in some cases they help to explain the field-names on the 1932 map.

The Glebe Terrier of 1777, just a few years before the enclosure was carried out, describes a parish divided into three large open fields, called 'Old Mill Field' (the south west portion), 'Brokenborough' or 'Mill Field' (north and north-west) and 'Depdale' (to the east of the main road). Each of these had many different named locations within it, the precise whereabouts of each is now impossible to ascertain, except where the name continued in usage after enclosure. In 'Old Mill Field' we find 'Hampton', 'Whitgrass', 'Morton' and 'Long and Short Roadmore.' These can be seen, sometimes with different spelling, on the 1932 map (3, 4, 17, 16 and 27). Similarly 'Langlands' in 1777 might have become 'Ranglands' (10) (usually 'Wranglands') by 1932. However some wonderful names have disappeared since 1777: where were 'Quales Acre', 'Bustard's Nest', 'Nether Catsdirt', 'Weasel Bush', 'Cheesecake Pitts' and 'Crum Hill'? A shame that these names have fallen out of use.

In 'Brokenborough Field' in 1777 we find 'Mill Hill', 'Marston Gate', 'Band Lands', 'Ashes' and 'Whitley', all echoed in 1932 (29, 42, 43, 47, 48 and 54). In 'Depdale Field' (sometimes written 'Debdale' and clearly meaning 'Deep Dale', which anyone visiting 'Farndon Gosse' could appreciate as accurate), exists 'Kettle Hill', 'Patch', 'Gooseland Furlong', 'Corkborough' (clearly the same as 'Cogborough', above), 'Slade', 'Beggars Bush', 'Wheathill' and 'Coomb Hollow'. All these can be found in some form in 1932 (87, 75, 72, 56, 57, 59, 60, 65, 69, 70 and 94). The name 'Depdale' has survived for part of the area as 'Deep Dale' (74).

It is well known that up to the 1890s Farndon Mill lay on the hill to the north of the Marston Road (see 'Mill Field' (31) but the existence of 'Old Mill Field' as one of the three open fields before enclosure, towards the south, shows that at one time a mill was at that end of the village, towards Clipston. Perhaps this was the location of the mill mentioned in the Domesday Book.

One of the Rector's strips of land in 1777 is described as 'butting to Bowden Hedge', a reminder that Market Harborough has expanded to take over Little Bowden and some fields formerly part of East Farndon. Once Farndon and Little Bowden shared a border.

It is easy to see how the names used to describe the various strips of the open field and the field names used since enclosure, can offer many insights to the history of a parish. It seems that many of the names on the 1932 map are largely being used today, although changing ownership is likely to mean more old names will slip out of usage. Will they be replaced by new descriptive names, like 'Potters Home' or 'Caudwell Willows' from the 1777 document, or will they give way to DEFRA's field numbering system? The odds are that people will always want to give names to places they know. This is well observed in a poem called 'For A Journey' by Alan Brownjohn, which begins:

House Field, Top Field, Oak Field, Third Field:

Though maps conclude their duties, the names trek on
Unseen across every county. Farmers call hillocks
And ponds and streams and lanes and rocks
By the first words to hand; a heavy, whittled-down
Simplicity meets the need, enough to say
Where has yielded best, or the way they walked from home. ¹

This describes the way names arose, and even as 'walked' becomes 'drove', the process of naming familiar places will doubtless go on.

¹ Published in Alan Brownjohn 'The Railings,' 1961, Digby Press.