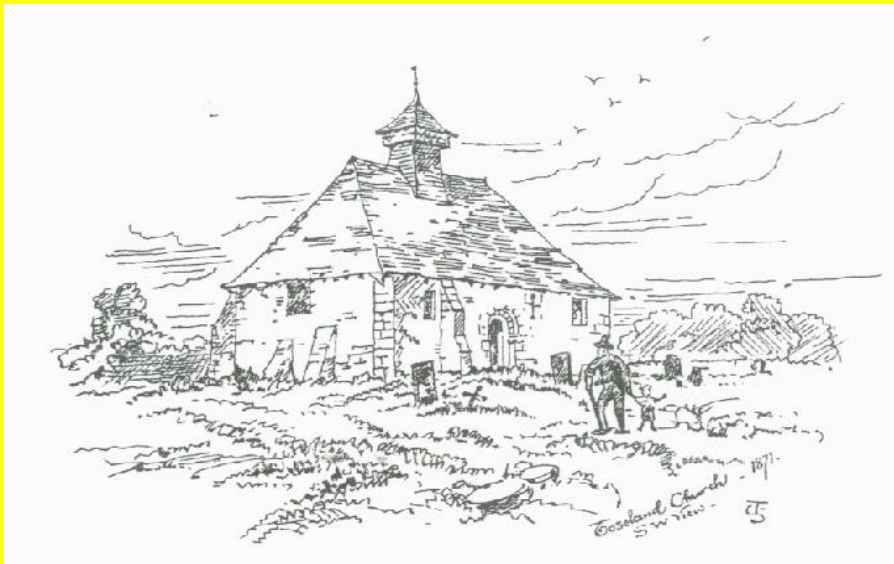


TOLI'S GROVE



NOTES ON TOSELAND AND ITS CHURCH



TOSELAND CHURCH IN 1871

TOSELAND

Toseland is an ancient settlement and in early times was an important one. The name comes from the two Norse words, Toli – a personal name – and land or lund – a grove. So it may have been originally a Danish Viking settlement called Toli's Grove. Possibly the grove was a sacred one, a centre of pagan worship which may help to explain why it was an important place, although never very big. Other people may have lived in Toseland before the Vikings, Neolithic flint flakes have been found and also, reputedly, Roman remains south of Toseland Hall, while the brideway is (erroneously) locally believed to be of Roman origin.

Toseland gave its name to the Toseland Hundred, a unit of Saxon government. The Hundred Court met here until the C17th. There is a large stone outside the south wall of the church, known as the moot stone that may have marked the original site where the Saxon Hundred Court met. The bridlepath was known to some locals as 'Moots Way', although others called it 'Water Lane'.

The village had lost its importance by the time of the Norman conquest. There is no entry in the Domesday Book. By that time it was one of the three berewicks (barley farms) belonging to the manor of Great Paxton. In 1086 the manor belonged to the Countess Judith, a powerful local landowner. During the Middle Ages and thereafter the manor changed hands many times until it passed to the manorial lordship of Croxton under the Leeds family in the C18th. Their heirs, the Newtons held it until the estate was broken up after World War II.

In Toseland wood stands a medieval moated site (Scheduled Ancient Monument) connected to a system of fishponds that was

state of the art between 1250-1350. Another sign of medieval prosperity is the record of a windmill worth 20s in 1323. The Manor House was moved to its present site by Sir Nicholas Luke between 1566-1613. The remnants of the medieval fields were enclosed in 1811.

During the C19th the population grew from about 100 to 230 by 1851. At this time it had two shops and two pubs, the *Blue Ball* closed in 1978 and the *Hand in Hand*, an alehouse in the back room of the present Wayside Cottage. There was however no school, most children walked to Yelling.

Also in the C19th Methodism came to Toseland. A Methodist meeting was started in 1826 with 13 members. By 1849 this had grown to 22 and William Maine, a prosperous farmer living at Toseland Hall financed the building of a chapel at the cost of £162. Membership stayed around 30, especially after the meeting at Yelling closed. There was also a flourishing Sunday School at the turn of the century. Until recently the chapel functioned both as a place of worship and as a community centre, but is now a private dwelling.

Few villagers now work in agriculture but there are still names, such as Manning, Hedge and Topham that link back to farming families recorded in directories for 1854. It is said that the man in the cover picture was a Manning and the boy was a member of another old Toseland family, the Surketts.

THE CHURCH

There may have been a small wooden church at Toseland before the Norman conquest. The original stone church was built about

1130 as a chapelry of Great Paxton which was designated as a 'minster', almost like a cathedral. After 1066 the right of appointing rectors of Great Paxton was given to the Bishop of Lincoln, then to the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln Cathedral. They held it until 1977 when Toseland was separated from Great Paxton and joined with Yelling. It has now become part of a broader group ministry.

The relationship with Great Paxton was sometimes complex. A C13th document records the resolution of a dispute over dues, in which Toseland parishioners were required to attend and pay dues to Great Paxton church on Trinity Sunday, in return for which the Rector would provide a chaplain three days a week and on all other festivals. Until 1702, births and deaths were registered at Great Paxton and marriages at Little Paxton. After 1702 Toseland had its own registers. Toseland always had its own churchwardens, however.

At some point the chancel became ruinous and was demolished leaving the church almost square with a hipped roof and central turret. The church was rebuilt by the architect A.W. Blomfield of London, on its original plan in 1875, costing £933, which was raised by subscription, and using Bath, rather than the Barnack stone used in the original construction. Part of the south wall, including one window and the Norman doorway, was left and the rest built on to it. The brick north wall incorporates fragments of original Barnack stone window facings. The pulpit was donated in 1894, the nave roof was lined with wood and a vestry built, the gift of Miss Clara Towgood. Further restoration work in 1906-8 cost £100. The bell made by George Mears of Whitechapel was recast and rehung recently.