

# THE BOOK OF LINGWOOD

A village held hostage to history

Stephen Peart

*The Book of Lingwood* is part of the award-winning Community History Series from Halsgrove; high quality books that provide a richly illustrated lifeline to the past and a link for future generations to treasure.

Lingwood in Norfolk is younger than the Domesday Book. When King William commanded his grand survey in 1086, the village was part of Blofield, its present day neighbour and, ever since, this idyllic village has been a hostage to history.

The district workhouse was sited here in 1837; a result of the Poor Law Amendment Act, reminding Lingwood that 'the poor are always with us'. After World War I the village's future was faced with more changes when its parental estate was auctioned and Norfolk County Council outbid all others to claim the acreage for allotments for returning WWI soldiers. An army of smallholders contributed to feeding the nation with produce despatched from Lingwood's own railway sidings. In 1939 another war intervened and the old soldiers began fading away.

By the 1950s the need for housing brought Lingwood's council property into the lime-light. Arable land was turned over to building developments; the railway sidings became redundant while the demolished workhouse made way for more houses. Today, Lingwood's lively population, the size of a small town, has fine community spirit.

Historians of English cricket remind us that Bill Edrich who famously played for Middlesex and helped England win the Ashes in 1954-55 was born a Lingwood boy.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Newmarket born Stephen Peart proudly claims his Norfolk roots. After writing *The Book of Strumpshaw* in 2010 he was approached to do likewise for Lingwood. Taking up the challenge, the author went in search of his family namesakes who helped lay the railway through the village in 1880.

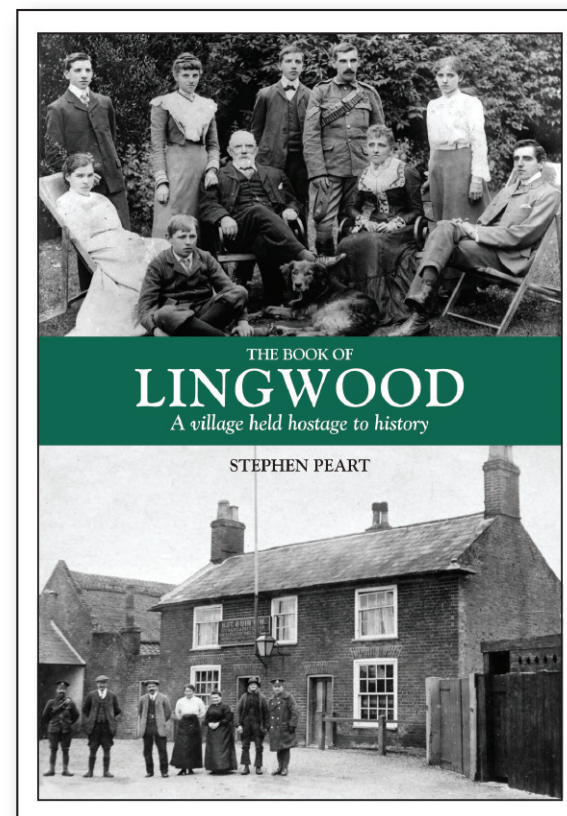
Stephen believes that community history is bound in the lives of its people. For *The Book of Lingwood* he brought a forty year experience working in regional broadcast television and applied it to giving celebrity status to the village and its people. Before the books of Lingwood and Strumpshaw, Stephen wrote two volumes and several magazine articles on 'his other hobby' the history of East Anglia's cinemas.

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A demonstration at the Red Cross hut in Chapel Road, c. 1942. Left to right: Mrs Dixon, Mrs Rowland, Mrs Mingay, Mrs Tipple.

Ron Mingay by the site of his family home and small-holding, April 2013



Lingwood school's gardening class in 1925 with Headmaster, Mr Rutter. Arthur Carter is in front row, extreme left.

Example of a double-page spread.

◆ MEN OF INDUSTRY ◆

Chapter 12  
**Men of Industry**

When England was unrestricted by endless legislation, Lingwood businessmen made impressions in the world of trade. The village was noted for its entrepreneurs but there are few memorials to their incalculable achievements.

First, came Spencer Rix, an enterprising merchant. He took the tenancy of Lingwood Manor soon after 1863, moving into the locality from his native Thrandesham in Suffolk, where he farmed 52 acres, employing four men. It was a notable achievement for a man of twenty-nine in 1871.

Spencer started his business at South Walsham, as miller, corn merchant and maltster, leasing the corn mill at neighbouring Upton. Mary, his wife, was the daughter of William Smith another Norfolk corn merchant of Dickleburgh. While at Lingwood Manor their youngest child William was born in 1889 and they became a prominent family in the village. Eldest son Thomas served in the Beer War and son Hugh emigrated to South Africa in 1903.

Lingwood Manor House, c.1900

Spencer Rix

Thomas Rix in Beer War uniform, in the grounds Lingwood Manor.

The Rix family at Lingwood Manor, c. 1902. Left to right, standing: Albert, Grace, Frank, Thomas, Effie. Seated: Oliver, William, Spencer, Mary, Hugh.

The granary at Lingwood station was taken by Spencer as his business depot. By 1892 he traded as a corn, coal and seed merchant and fruit grower, supplier of artificial manure, salt, oil, cake and flour merchant. He was a boat owner, farmer and prize fight breeder. For business he was contactable by telegraph, the label means of communication, with the address, "Rix, Lingwood Station".

Spencer Rix specialised as a wine and spirit merchant. He offered his own label brands: Rix's Thistle Brand Scotch Whisky and Rix's Old Mike Shamrock Irish Whisky. There was also port, brandy, gin, rum, champagne and sherry, with all stocks carriage paid to any railway station in England.

Spencer's grounding in farming had given him a good knowledge of barley growing. He was invited to judge competitions and joined a political furrow over the quality of beer being brewed in the 1890s. English farmers and merchants, like Spencer Rix, campaigned for tighter control of beer ingredients. Their aim was to increase demand for English barley and hops and to limit, or in some cases prohibit, the use of sugar, rice and other "substitutes". There had been cases of poisoning, traced to contaminated

brewing sugar and a new bill was being put before Parliament. Spencer wrote to *The Standard* newspaper in May 1886:

*'I have been writing, before taking any notice of this matter, thinking that your columns would have been crowded with correspondence supporting the incontestable necessity you adduce only the national beverage should be pure; but instead of support no notice has been taken on the side of the right. When will the voters of your free press make it certain they get what they ask for? When will the farmers of this country make to their own interests? When will the British nation understand that the character of that nation is maintained to a very large degree by the character of its national beverage?'*

This campaign had taken a course of twenty years. In 1909 another Pure Beer Bill, requiring a publican to supply to the customers beer made from 95 per cent of barley malt was rejected by the House of Commons by 161 votes to 109, having been considered unworkable.



Alice Manthorpe in Post Office Road c.1915 showing The Old Post Office.