

# 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.

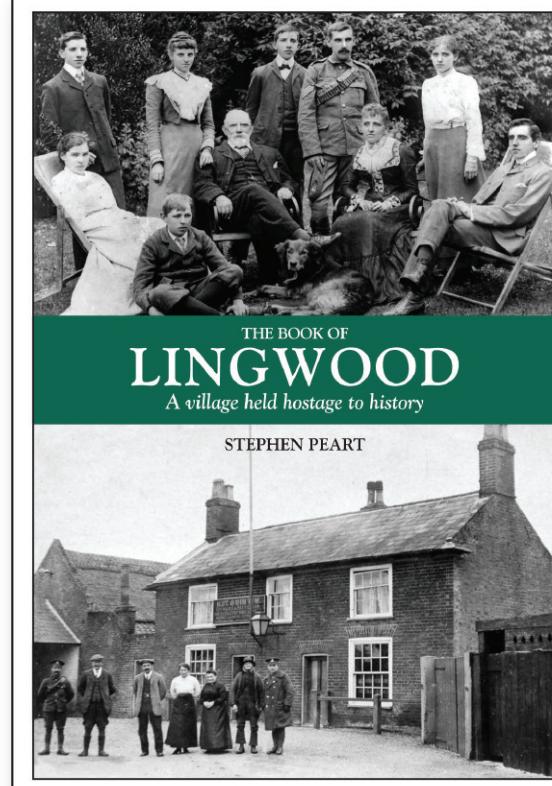
Stephen believes that community history is bound in the lives of its people. For *The Book of Lingwood* he brought a forty year experience working in regional broadcast television and applied it to giving celebrity status to the village and its people. Before the books of Lingwood and Strumpshaw, Stephen 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

Example of a double-page spread.

**Chapter 12**

### Men of Industry

When England was unrestricted by endless legislation, Lingwood businessmen made impressions in the world at large. The village was noted for its enterprising but these are just a few of their industrious achievements.

First, there was the money of Lingwood Manor, which had been in the family since 1883, moving into the locality from his native Thrandeston in Suffolk, where he farmed 92 acres, employing 12 men and 12 horses, and achieved a record for a man of twenty-nine in 1871.

He became a miller, an engineering merchant. He built the manor of Lingwood Manor soon after 1883, moving into the locality from his native Thrandeston in Suffolk, where he farmed 92 acres, employing 12 men and 12 horses, and achieved a record for a man of twenty-nine in 1871.

Spencer started his business at South Wibbham, a miller, then moved to Upton, where he had a housing corn mill at neighbouring Upton. Mary, his wife, was the daughter of William Smith another Norfolk corn miller. They had nine children, of whom three survived; their youngest child William was born in 1889 and they became a prominent family in the village. Elder son Thomas served in the Boer War and son Hugh emigrated to South Africa in 1903.

Lingwood Manor House, c.1900

Spencer Rix in Bear Skin uniform, in the grounds Lingwood Manor.

Spencer Rix

The gramey 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, and a brewer. He also had a business as a general fowl breeder. For business he was contactable by telegraphy, the latest means of communication with the outside world.

Spencer Rix specialised as a wine and spirit merchant. He offered his own label brands; Rix's Special Blend, Rix's Special Whisky, Rix's Shamrock Irish Whisky. There was also port, brandy, gin, rum, champagne and sherry, with all stocks coming from the best sources.

Spencer's grounding in farming had given him a good knowledge of barley growing. He was invited to judge competitions at a number of fairs, and travelled on the quality of his beer-brewing in the 1880s. English farmers and merchants, like Spencer Rix, campaigned for tighter control of brewing ingredients. The aim was to increase the use of English hops and hops 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 waiting, before taking any notice of this matter, thinking that your column would have been crowded with correspondence supporting the movement. I have now seen the bill, and it is evident that no notice has been taken on the side of the farmers. The bill is a bad one, and it will not make it certain they get what they ask for." Who will tell the farmers of this country exactly to their own interest to support this bill? It is a bad bill, and it is evident that no notice has been taken on the side of the farmers. The bill is a bad one, and it will not make it certain they get what they ask for."

This campaign had taken a course of twenty years. In 1906 another Pure Beer Bill, requiring a minimum to supply to bars, was passed, which 85 per cent of barley malt was rejected by the House of Commons by 181 votes to 109, having been considered unworkable.

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



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