



# The Hundred Parishes

Introduction to a famous local person . . .

## JAMES BLYTH (1841 – 1925)

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James Blyth was the son of a Chelmsford grocer. At the age of 11, after the death of his father, he was sent to live in Holland where he became fluent in several languages including French. He returned to England and worked with his uncle Henry Parry Gilbey, in the wine trade, travelling frequently to France. Throughout his life Blyth was an ambitious and very active man. As a partner in W & A Gilbey, a highly successful wine and spirits business, he became a wealthy man.

In 1875 James Blyth bought Wood House, close to the windmill in Stansted Mountfitchet, and employed the young architect, W.D.Caroe, to remodel the house. He created an imposing residence which was renamed Blythwood House.



Blyth had a keen interest in dairy farming and in 1892 Caroe designed a model dairy with electricity installed and Carrera marble surfaces. Cows were imported from Jersey. All this was with the aim of producing the highest quality milk. The dairy was opened by the Lord Mayor of London and visited shortly afterwards by Edward, Prince of Wales.

Blyth enjoyed lavish entertaining and in 1894 organised a magnificent luncheon for 700 members of the Dairy Farmers' Association in a marquee in the grounds of Blythwood House. There were similar lavish occasions at his London home, 33 Portland Place. At the end of one formal dinner, keen to impress, he served port in large wine glasses and the Prince of Wales wittily commented: "Wine in buckets, Mr Blyth!"

When the Prince, as patron of the National Association for the prevention of Tuberculosis, announced there would be a Congress on the progress towards understanding TB, Sir James Blyth, as he had become, was chosen to be honorary treasurer of the Congress. During the proceedings of the Congress in 1901 it became clear that more research was required to determine whether bovine TB could be transmitted to humans through drinking infected milk. Blyth immediately offered his two farms in Stansted where the research could be carried out and another property where a laboratory would be erected. The work continued for nearly 10 years and James Blyth was raised to the peerage in 1907 as Lord Blyth in recognition of his generous contribution. The Medical Research Council cites its origins as evolving from this Royal Commission on Tuberculosis.

Blythwood House was destroyed by fire in 1926. The model dairy is now a private house.