Huntingdon and its region: a study of urban settlement in an agricultural region

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THE TOWNS & VILLAGES OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE

HUNTINGDON AND ITS REGION; A STUDY OF URBAN SETTLEMENT IN AN AGRICULTURAL REGION.

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Abstract.

The thesis presents an account of Huntingdon in which site and situation are examined in detail so as to provide a background for a survey of property usage, of which several categories occur. It is considered possible to relate property usage to the dominant activities of the entire locality, of which the town may be regarded as the centre. The functions of Huntingdon town as evidenced by its market, shops, offices, transport facilities, industries and cultural activities are consequently studied in relationship to the wider region of which the town may be said to be a focus.

In a final section the usefulness of the method is discussed, brief reference being made to similar studies by other investigators.

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C O N T E N T S

LIST OF MAPS, GRAPHS AND DIAGRAMS

Reference should be made to the frontispiece when identifying towns and villages of Huntingdonshire.

ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Huntingdon is an ancient borough and county town of the small county of Huntingdonshire (233985 acres). It lies within the Oxford Clay Vale, some eight miles west of the Fens. The town is built on firm land above flood level, controlling the crossing of the River Ouse.

A market town with a small weekly general market, it serves as a shopping and distributing centre for an agricultural countryside and is one of the three remaining market towns of the county. Peterborough, Cambridge and Bedford, all within a 15-20 mile radius, are larger shopping and social centres, attracting the attention of some part of the county's population; while London, only 60 miles to the south has a predominating influence on the life of the county generally.

The presence of many local and central government offices indicate that Huntingdon is of much greater importance than a population of 5282 (1951 census) would suggest. An increasing variety of industry, and the probability of a London "overspill" project are threatening to change the character of the old borough.

The town survey which afforded material for the thesis was made in 1955-1958 with the aid of the 6 inch and 25 inch to the mile maps of the Ordnance Survey.

The 6 inch to the mile map provides the general morphological pattern of the town, but can only be used for an individual property survey where units are comparatively widely spaced, as between villages

and towns. Only on the large scale maps of for example, the 25 inches to the mile, are the boundaries of separate buildings in a town shown. Consequently, it is a map on which a detailed classification of property usage can be made, as the basis of an analysis of a town's functions.

In collecting the data of property usage, each separate building shown on the 25 inch map was regarded as a single unit of property, whether it occurred detached from or adjoining another property, as for example in a row of undetached houses where each house as shown by the party boundary on the map, was considered a unit of property.

Six categories of property usage were selected, and these units of property which are shown on the map were visited and classified accordingly. This survey involved modifying the map according to changes since 1925. The categories of property are as follows :-

1. Residential.
2. Government and Public Utilities.
3. Social.
4. Commercial.
5. Transport.
6. Industrial.

The classification, so as not to prove unwieldly, has been limited to six groups. This, however, poses a problem in the case of certain property usage, which can with equal validity be placed into

more than one category. In such cases a property is classified according to what its most obvious and useful function would appear to be. A good example of this is a library, which comes under the control of the local government administration and could with justification be placed in this category, but having a social function it is classified accordingly. The Gas Board is composed of offices and show-rooms which carry out the function of a shop, and the gas production plant is industrial. In this case no subdivision has been recognised, and the whole is categorised as a public utility.

1. Residential. Habitation units comprise all property used as living accommodation, of which the house, bungalow and flat are typical examples. Living accommodation occurring together with, for instance, a shop or office, is classified as a residential subdivision of a property unit. Thus a compound unit of property has been shown on the M.S. map by dividing a property unit into as many parts as there were separate usages. When the actual boundary is difficult to ascertain with the residence behind or above a shop, the residential subdivision has been placed behind the other usage, the boundary being drawn parallel to the frontage.

2. Government and Public Utility units include those public services associated with local or central government authorities, with certain notable exceptions which are placed elsewhere.

3. Social units carry out a variety of functions as they provide

educational, health, recreational and cultural services.

4. Commercial units include those primarily concerned with buying and selling of goods. Those closely allied, but which sell a service in place of goods, such as banks, auctioneers and solicitors are also included. No distinction has been made between the retail and wholesale trade, as units of the latter are limited, the warehouses being usually attached to retail shops.

5. Transport includes premises occupied by those concerned in offering facilities for the movement of people and goods.

6. Industry. In the human occupance of a region, productive units may comprise those of agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining and manufacturing. In Huntingdon factories are the main production units, though the small craftsmen still exist. Service industries such as the laundry and printing are included in this category.

W.D.Jones in his paper "Procedure in Regional Investigation"(1) suggests that in the investigation of human occupance, several closely related groups of phenomena are involved including, "the material works of man which occupy areas on the surface of the earth - works constructed and used for production of commodities, for transportation, for sale of commodities and for services, for habitation, for recreation, for government, for education, for religion, and other purposes." Hence a marked feature of human settlement is the variety of structures which man has erected to satisfy a diversity of needs.

Brunhes postulates that the habitation must be specially considered in human geography since, "every form of human labour on the earth's surface is accompanied by human dwelling,"(2). The primary need is that of shelter and the structure providing this will have three characteristics, viz. site, form and function. In the groupings of buildings to form a hamlet, village, town or city these three characteristics are invariably found, as well as in the isolated rural houses. Size is not the sole differentiation in considering examples of human settlement, since the conception of 'settlement' embraces the function for which man throughout time has designed it. "The definition of an urban settlement is fundamentally a question of function, not of population. Further, the urban status of a town depends on the character and variety of its function with which it is endowed"(3). In rural areas the urban settlement originated in the concentration of specialized activities or services, and their selection developed according to the factors of site, nodality and nature of their functions. The higher the functional status, the more the settlement approached that of the town rather than the village. Smailes (4) gives full urban status to settlements with three or four banks and a Woolworth's store which reflects a well-equipped shopping centre; which together with cinemas, secondary grammar school, and hospital are the hallmarks of townhood.

As settlement arises from human forethought working within the

range of human environment, there is the necessity of considering the settlement in relation to its locality or environment, the outstanding factors of which are structure, climate and economic exploitation.

Vidal de la Blache and Brunhes, as Bryan points out in "Man's Adaptation of Nature" (5), stress the co-operation between man and his environment rather than coercion by environment.

The primary factors in environment are structure and climate in so far as they provide limitations of selective possibilities, as for example rainfall deficiency, the permeability of local rocks and the nature of the water supply, the steepness of the slope or the flooding of alluvial land.

Economic exploitation, a secondary factor is dependent on the result of man's development of the environmental possibilities. For example, possibilities of the area for agriculture, or the lack of them, will affect both the siting and the intensity of the resulting settlement.

While both the form of individual buildings (shape, size, materials, condition etc.), and their aggregation which composes the settlement provides data, it does not of itself fully describe a settlement. It is the function of the structure which more nearly details the characteristics of the settlement that provides an answer to the crucial question. To what purpose is the settlement directed?

Recognition of the structure as the plastic material by which man expresses his purpose, in relation to the environmental possibilities he is able to develop, forms the basic idea of the survey.

Furthermore, the survey suggests that the classification of buildings according to their usage forms the approach to the determination of a settlement's character; while investigation of the past provides enlightenment on some of the characteristics of the present.

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PART ONE

THE REGION

CHAPTER I.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING

A. POSITION AND RELIEF.

Huntingdonshire lies on the north-western boundary of East Anglia. It is a small county, with a population at the time of the 1951 census of 69,273 persons. The county covers an area of 233,985 acres, and no part of it rises more than 300 feet above sea level. It is situated almost entirely within the Great Oxford Clay Vale (Fig.1). From the Nene boundary in the north to Waresley in the south it is a distance of 30 miles; from Earith, where the Ouse leaves the county in the east, to the western boundary near Bythorn is 23 miles. Huntingdon the County Town, is situated at the centre of a triangle formed by Peterborough, Cambridge and Bedford, all within a distance of 15 to 20 miles; while London is 60 miles to the south.

The region under survey slopes gradually towards the Fens in the east (Fig.2). Erosion of the western uplands has produced an undulating landscape; ranging in altitude from the highest point of 255 feet above O.D. in the parish of Covington to the lowest point in Whittlesey Mere, where the surface of the Fen peat lies at sea level. The expanse of the Fens in the north-east is for the most part no more than 8 to 10 feet above O.D. The roads and embankments stand above the level of the land, which has been lowered as a result of the shrinking

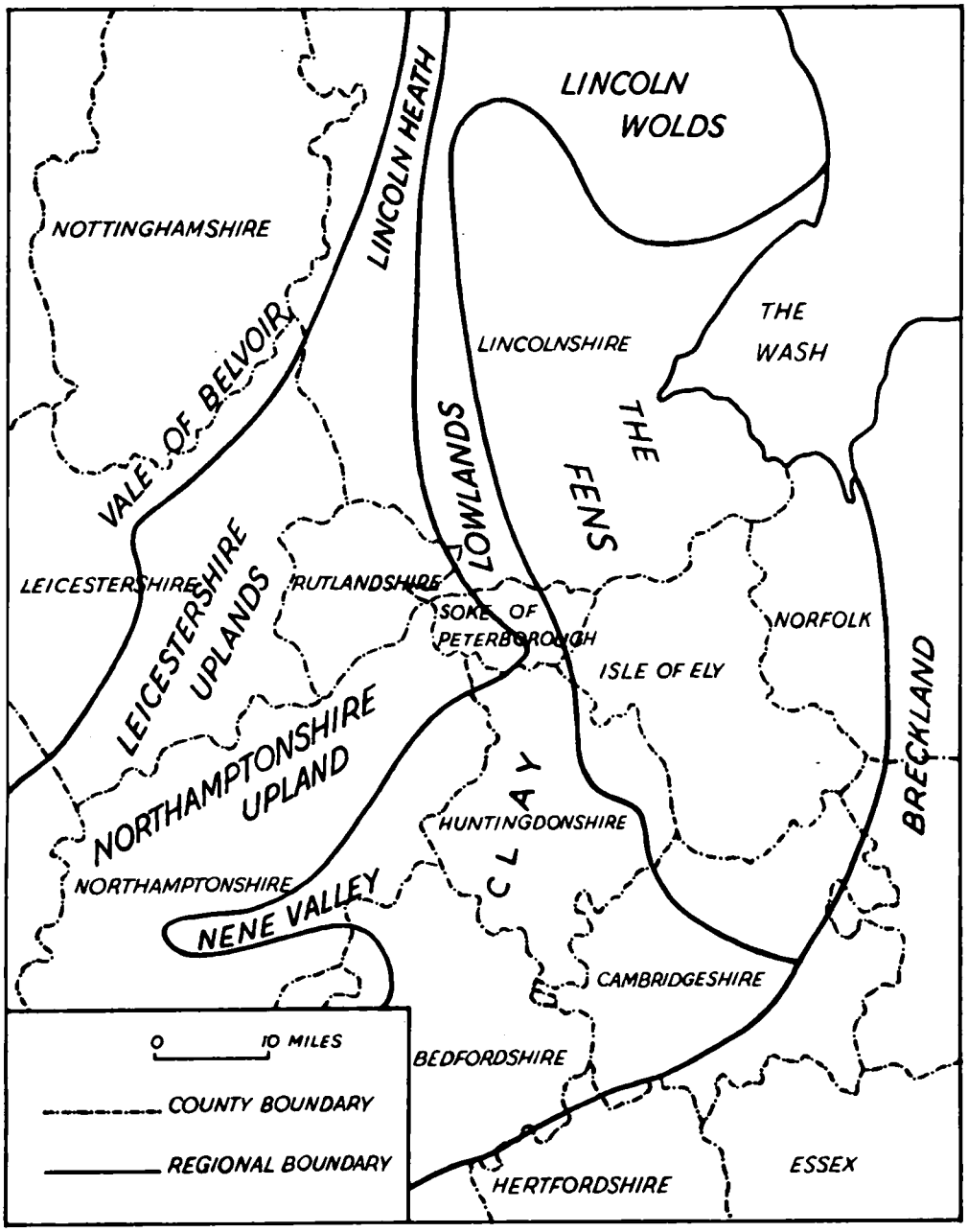

FIG. 1. NATURAL SETTING

and wastage of the peat, due to drainage and cultivation. The flatness and monotony of the Fens is broken occasionally by islands rising out of the peat, the highest point in the Fens of Huntingdon being the island of Ramsay. To the west of the Fens is the Boulder Clay plateau, the junction of which corresponds closely to the 50 foot contour. Thus south of the Fens the Boulder Clay area forms a neck of higher ground separating the former from the lowlands bordering the River Ouse. To the south of the Ouse the Boulder Clay again forms the higher ground, stretching across the county boundary into Cambridgeshire. In the west the Oxford Clay has been exposed in part, by erosion of the overlying Boulder Clay by the action of streams flowing eastwards in conformity with the dip of the strata.

Nearly the whole of the county is drained by the Ouse and its tributaries, except for the north-west corner which is drained by the Nene. From Bedfordshire the Ouse enters the south of the county below the 50 foot contour near St. Neots where it is joined by the River Kym. It continues to flow northwards through water meadows until it reaches Huntingdon, where it turns eastwards and is joined by another left bank tributary - the Alconbury Brook. Continuing slowly eastwards, it meanders extensively, through St. Ives, until it leaves the county on the edge of the Fens at Earith. In spite of this river system much of the upland is still inadequately drained. The drainage of the Huntingdonshire Fens, formerly depended on an old branch of the

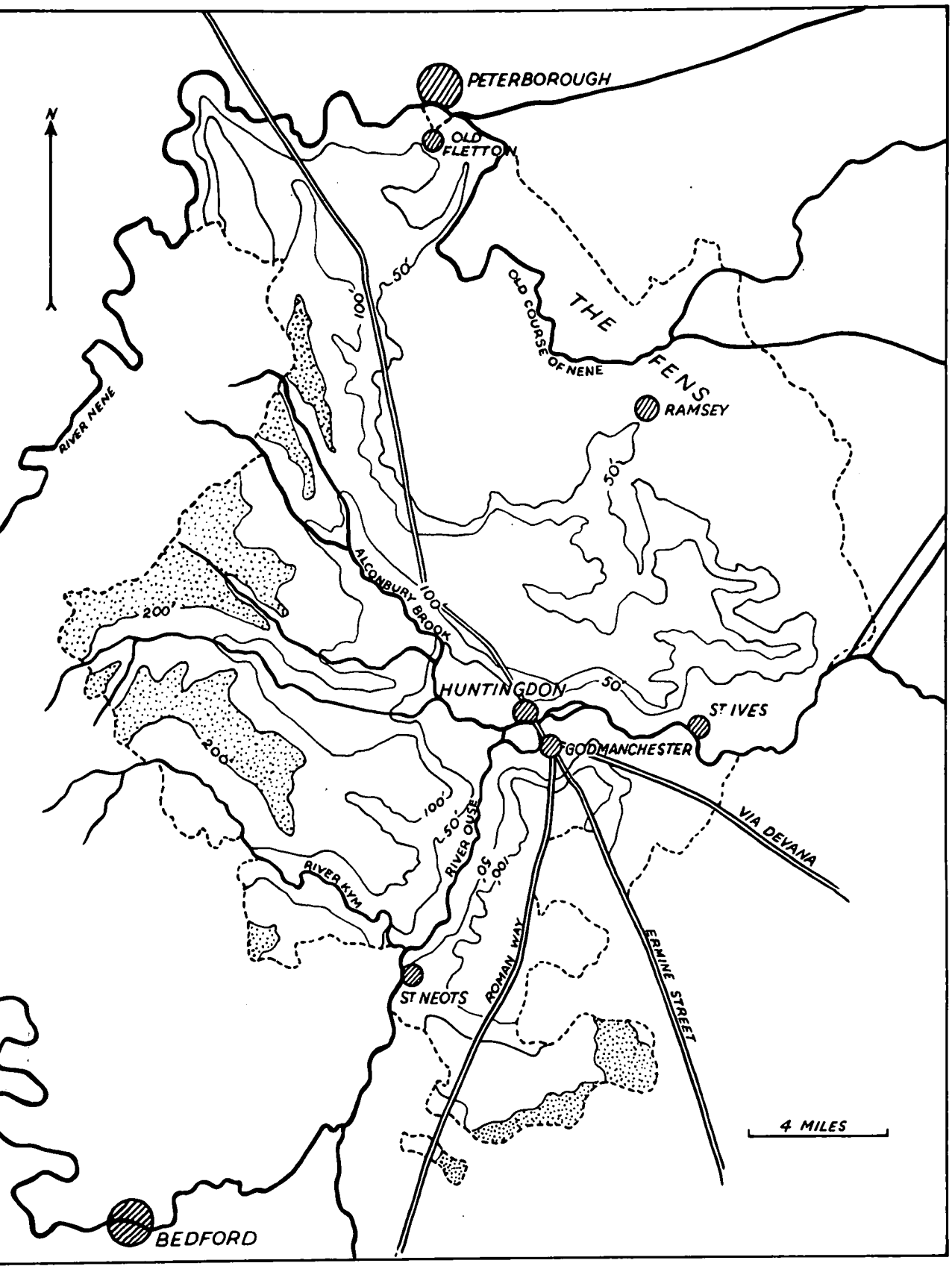

Fig.2. HUNTINGDONSHIRE, RELIEF AND ROMAN ROADS.

River Nene flowing south by way of Horsey Bridge to Whittlesey, and thence north of Ramsey to Benwick, March and Upwell. This branch still exists, though the drainage is now entirely artificial and dependent on man-made channels and power pumping.

B. GEOLOGY.

The Mesozoic rocks of Huntingdonshire strike roughly north-east to south-west, with a gentle dip towards the south-east, but its solid geology is almost entirely masked by Pleistocene and Recent deposits (Fig.3). The Fens cover a large area in the north-east of the

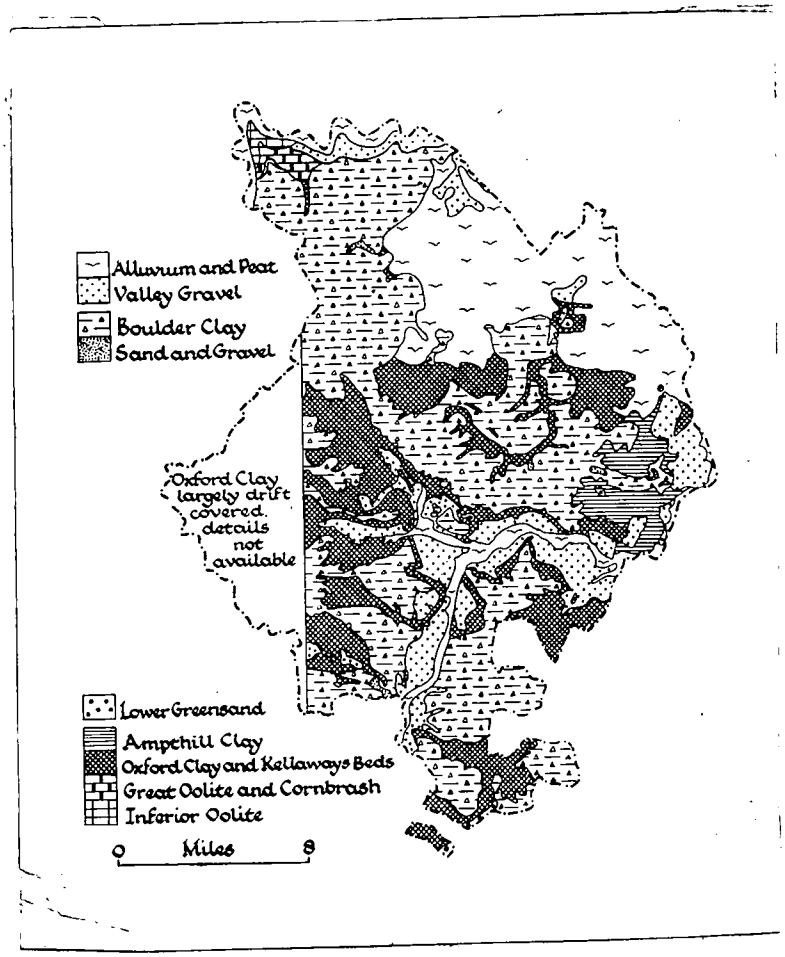

Fig.3. HUNTINGDONSHIRE, SURFACE GEOLOGY.

county, while Boulder Clay covers much of the remainder. As the Jurassic rocks dip towards the south-east, the oldest strata therefore underlie the north-west of the county, and remain exposed along the valley of the River Nene. Here can be seen representatives of the Inferior and GreatOolites and Cornbrash. These are made up of limestones, sandstones, marls and marly clays, which give rise to a variety of soils; some light and unproductive, others stiff clays difficult to work, and in more favoured areas dark and extremely fertile soils (1).

Much of the Oxford Clay, which forms the greater part of the foundation of the county, is concealed by Boulder Clay and later deposits, and only appears at the surface where these have been eroded away. The formation consists almost entirely of clays, which give rise to the great brickyards of the Fletton - Stanground - Woodstone district to the south of Peterborough, though the best bricks are said to be made from the Kellaways beds at the base of the Oxford Clay (2). The Oxford Clay breaks down to a heavy clay soil, difficult to work.

The Corallian is represented by the Ampthill Clay, very similar in lithology to the Oxford Clay, and is exposed in the St. Ives - Bluntisham area in the east of the county.

The Kimeridge Clay, if present, is covered with drift, while the Lower Greensand covers only a very small area in the extreme south

of the county in the vicinity of Tetworth and Waresley.

Of the post Tertiary deposits the Boulder Clay is the most extensive, resting irregularly on the older strata. Its composition varies according to the rocks in its neighbourhood and at its base. The close connection between the Boulder Clay and its underlying rocks has given rise to the theory that the Boulder Clay was of local and terrestrial formation (3). It is obvious then that the Boulder Clay is by no means uniform, and its influence on land utilisation is correspondingly varied. But as the local formations in Huntingdonshire are mainly clays, the Boulder Clay gives rise to strong, heavy soils.

The gravels of the Ouse Valley, the most prolific water-bearing strata in the county, occupy considerable tracts, generally below the 50 foot contour line. They occur on both sides of the valley from St. Neots to Earith, upon which are sited the main towns and larger villages.

The flat valley floors of the rivers are covered with a fine, black alluvium which forms rich meadows and grazing land, which are subject to flooding after heavy rain.

The Fens of Huntingdonshire are composed entirely of peat, reaching a maximum thickness of 18 feet near Earith and Warboys (4).

C. SOILS.

Before 1944 when the National Land Classification took place,

no comprehensive soil survey of Huntingdonshire had been made. The nearest approximation before that date was the drift map, upon which too much reliance could not be placed, as the nature of the soil depends upon factors such as drainage as much as on the nature of the parent rock. Soils derived from heavy clay can be profitably worked when the drainage is adequate, but if undrained only provides pasture of second-rate quality. Fryer recognised three broad soil zones, based on geological outcrops (5).

1. The black, peaty soils of the Fens.
2. The gravelly soils of the Ouse Valley.
3. The clay soils of the uplands.

The National Land Classification recognised 5 major subdivisions of land, based on soil type (6). Their distribution is shown by Fig.4. 1.A. First Class Land, capable of intensive cultivation, the soils being deep, well-drained and easily worked at all seasons. Of this class an excellent example are the black Fen soils which are very fertile as a result of their high humus content. They have usually been marled, either by digging down into the underlying clay and spreading it on top of the land ready to be ploughed in, or when the peat is too thick to permit this, clay has been brought from elsewhere. Also in this group is a tract of boulder clay land, adjoining the Ouse Valley on both sides northward from St. Neots to Huntingdon.

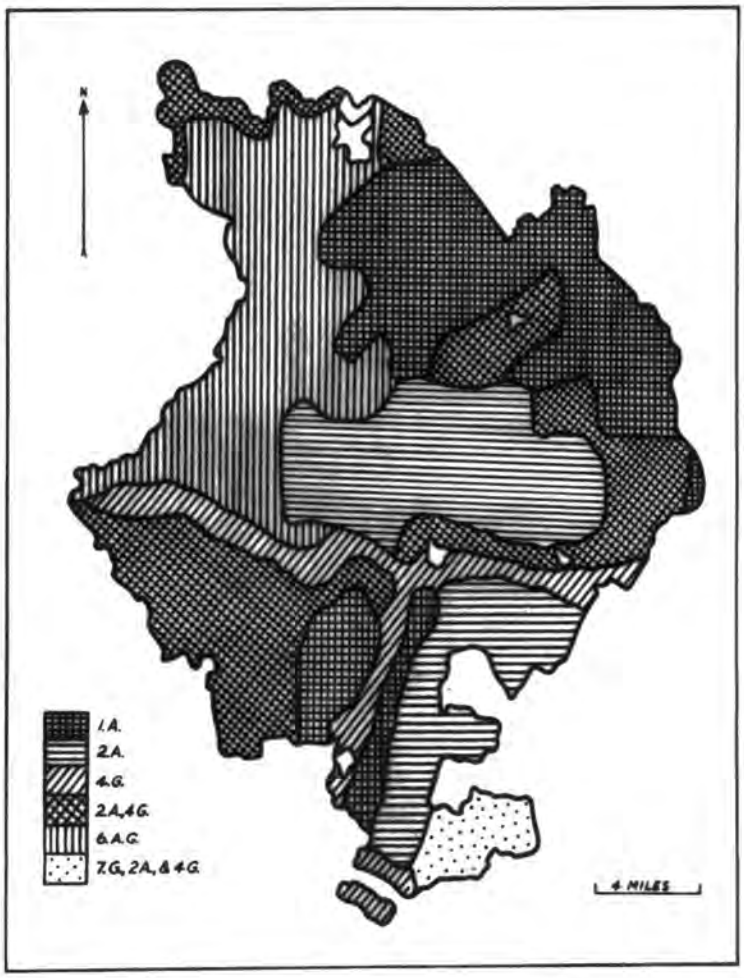

Fig 4. HUNTINGDONSHIRE. MAIN SOIL TYPES.

2.A. Good General Purpose Farmland, similar to 1.A., but with certain limitations, such as the presence of stones or an occasional liability either to drought or wetness. These are represented by the best clay soils of the uplands of the centre and south-east of the county.

4.G. Good but heavy land, with soil from clay and heavy loam, of good depth and natural fertility, but as the period of working and the

range of possible crops is restricted, it is predominantly under grass. This soil is found along the valley floor of alluvium.

2.A., and 4.G. A mixed type, found along the valley gravels and part of the clay uplands in the south-west of the county.

6.A. G. Medium Quality Farmland, corresponding to the clays in the west of the county. These have suffered from neglect, and being badly drained are often of low productivity.

7. G. Poor Quality Heavy Land, including the more intractable clay land which is usually under grass. This is found in small patches intermingled with types 2. A. and 4. G. in the extreme south-east of the county.

The condition of the land has improved considerably since the pre-war years, due to better farm management and improved drainage, in contrast to the situation at the time of the Land Utilization Report, when the possibilities of the soils of the county were summaried thus, "there is little first-class soil in the county apart from the Fens, though adequate drainage would accomplish much."(7).

D. CLIMATE.

The first recorded description of the climate of Huntingdonshire was by Maxwell in 1793 who stated, "the climate, on the whole, is pretty healthy, considering that all the east or north-east part of the county is skirted by the fens"(8). Even at the present day few official climatic statistics are available, but from such records as there are,

it is possible to give a general account of the climate and weather experienced.

The average annual rainfall for the standard period 1881 - 1915 over the county varies from 21 inches to slightly over 24 inches. The monthly and annual rainfall averages, analysed by seasons for this period for Brampton to the west of Huntingdon is given in the table below (9).

Rainfall In Inches

Huntingdon	Mean monthly		Mean seasonal		
(Brampton)	Dec.	2.34			
(Alt. 47 ft.)	Jan.	1.80	Winter	5.60	
	Feb.	1.46			
	March	1.77			
	April	1.47	Spring	5.22	
	May	1.98			Total
	June	2.11			24.21
	July	2.12	Summer	6.52	
	Aug.	2.29			
	Sept.	1.78			
	Oct.	2.80	Autumn	6.87	
	Nov.	2.29			

It will be seen that February is the driest month and October the wettest, the spring being slightly drier than the winter.

The typical oceanic climate shows a winter maximum and a summer minimum; the typical continental type vice versa. The oceanic influence at Huntingdon is indicated by the precipitation of the winter half of the year (Oct. to March) being greater than that of the summer half (12.47 inches to 11.74 inches);while to the north at Whittlesey Mere and to the south-east at Cambridge the continental influence is more noticeable, both having a slight summer maximum.

The continentality of the region is shown by the high peak of rainfall in early summer, with a rapid rise from April to June. There is a fall in September, followed by an assertion of the oceanic influence giving a seasonal maximum in October. From a consideration of its position in relationship to the continent and of its annual rainfall figures, the climate of Huntingdon may be described as transitional between the oceanic and continental type of climate.

Since 1868, the wettest year at Huntingdon and over most of the county was 1912, when 32.48 inches of rain fell in the town. The driest was 1821, with a fall of only 12.17 inches (10).

No temperature statistics are available for any of the Huntingdon weather stations, but from the isotherm map the following can be deduced (11). The monthly means range from approximately 39°F. in January to approximately 61°F in July, giving an annual range of about 22°F., and a mean annual temperature of between 48° and 49°F. The annual range is a value typical of the more continental climate of

south-east England.

The number of hours of bright sunshine is important in an agricultural area, and though no figures are available for Huntingdonshire, those of nearby Cambridge may suffice to indicate its extent (12).

Averages of bright sunshine (daily means in hours).

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.
Cambridge	1.71	2.66	3.90	5.53	6.52	6.70	6.52	6.06
	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.				
	5.03	3.35	2.07	1.29				

The variation of the number of hours of bright sunshine shows little difference from October to April for Valentia, Cambridge and Berlin. From May to September the variation between them is appreciable, the Cambridge area occupying an intermediate position, being sunny when compared with the west. In September, Cambridge has the greatest sunshine average, which doubtless contributes not a little to high sugar content of its beet, and the maturing of fine quality wheat.

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CHAPTER II.

AGRICULTURE IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

The only fully comprehensive account issued this century of the agriculture of Huntingdonshire is that made before the war by the Land Utilisation Survey. The Huntingdonshire Development Plan of 1951 and official statistics provide further information. This brief survey is mainly based on these sources.

Fryer recognises four natural regions of Huntingdonshire (1). Fig.5 shows the division of the county into land use regions. The four regions are :-

1. The Fenlands.
2. The Nene Valley region of north-west Huntingdonshire.
3. The Ouse Valley and the Fen Gravels.
4. The Clay Uplands, which may be divided into
   (a) Central and Western Uplands.
   (b) South-Eastern Uplands.

REGION 1. THE FENLANDS.

Some 80,000 acres of the Fens lie within Huntingdonshire, and constitute the most valuable farmland in the county. The few inhabitants of the low-lying fens are scattered in isolated farms, and the bulk of the population lives on the border of the claylands. The fields are small, with boundaries formed by ditches and drains. Many

of the holdings are small, often less than 50 acres. Generally only farm units over 50 acres have proved to be really economical with increased mechanisation (2). Some of the older fens are not as productive as they used to be, as peat shrinkage has taken the land down to the underlying clays, and fertilizer has had to be used extensively. This has been largely compensated for by production from the new fens, such as Conington, Wood Walton, Yaxley and Holme, mostly drained since 1939 (3).

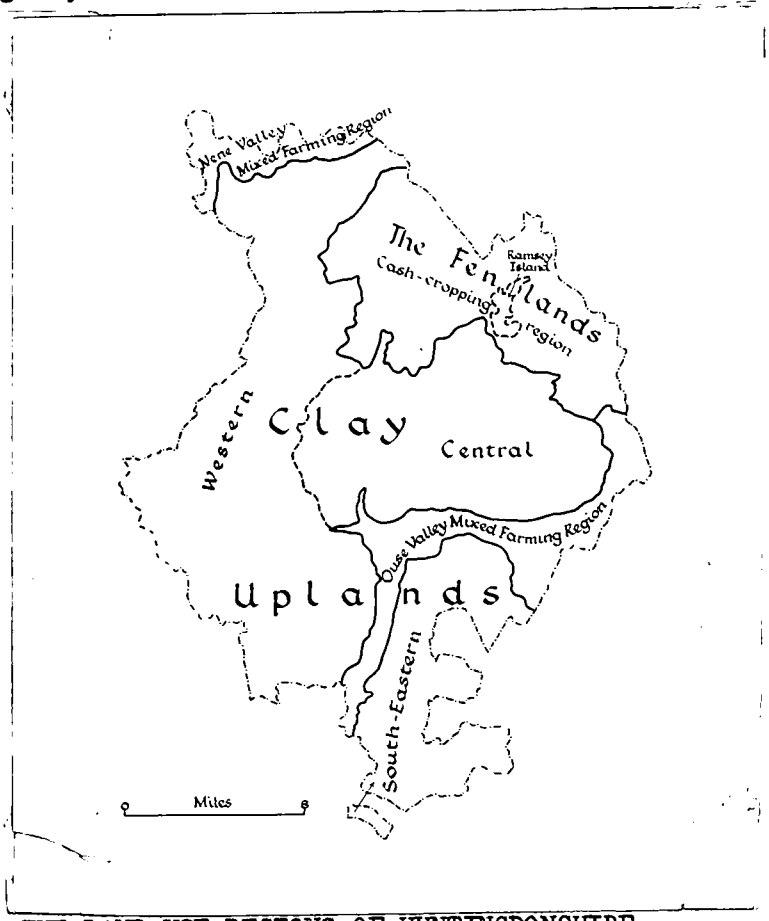

Fig.5. THE LAND USE REGIONS OF HUNTINGDONSHIRE.

Wheat is the crop grown most extensively, usually on the larger holdings. Sugar beet, potatoes, peas and celery are found more profitable on small farms. After wheat, potatoes cover the largest acreage.

In pre-war days when the market for potatoes was uncertain, the acreage grown was much less than that sown with sugar beet. This position was quickly reversed when a market for potatoes was guaranteed and sugar beet has taken second place ever since (4). Of the vegetables, by far the most important are peas, their cultivation being encouraged by the nearby canning factories.

The only large stretch of permanent grass is found on the Ramsey Island.

REGION 2. THE NENE VALLEY.

This is a region of mixed farming. The high percentage of permanent grassland is required by the dairy farms, which produce milk for the Peterborough market.

REGION 3. THE OUSE VALLEY AND THE FEN GRAVELS.

This area covers some 50,000 acres consisting mostly of alluvium, river and fen gravels. Much of the grassland bordering the river, is liable to be flooded in winter. It is widest in the east, and narrows considerably towards the south, where arable cultivation of the finer gravel soils more closely approaches the river. The valley is one of mixed farming, though specialization occurs in parts. In the east, especially on the fen gravels of the Somersham, Colne and Bluntisham district, fruit growing predominates. Plums are the chief fruit, though apples, pears and cherries are also grown. Orchards are often under-cropped with small fruits such as currants and gooseberries. As this

area is an extension of the Cambridge fruit growing region, most of the growers belong to a branch of the Cambridgeshire Fruit Growers' Association.

Along most of the valley, farming is very mixed. Cereals are usually sown on the heavier land on the side of the valley, rather than on the gravels and alluvium bordering the river. As a result of high water table, the alluvial land is subject to flooding. Its rich grass supports many dairy cattle whose milk is consumed locally. The gravels are usually reserved for crops such as peas, beans, potatoes and roots. In the south of the county around St. Neots, Little Paxton and Southoe and Midloe is an extension of the Bedfordshire market gardening.

Most of the produce of the Ouse valley is consumed locally, and any surplus is usually sent to London, either by road or rail.

REGION 4. THE CLAY UPLANDS.

This district consists of heavy soil, mainly boulder clay, with outcroppings of Oxford Clay. The majority of the farms are over 150 acres. Farms of less than 100 acres are considered small. Before the war this region of the Clay Upland and the West Cambridge Clay was the most depressed in the Eastern Counties. About 60 percent of the land was arable, but badly in need of drainage (5). Then, as now, there was little dairying. The Huntingdon clay lands, unlike those of south Essex, were unable to turn to dairying during the farming depression, because development was hindered by inadequate water supplies and insufficient

capital (6). The cattle are mostly beef animals, mainly wintered stock. This number remains fairly stable (7).

Before 1939 wheat was the staple crop. The other crops were mainly for feeding to stock. These included barley, oats and beans, the latter occupied the greatest acreage after wheat (8). By 1870 most of the land was well drained, but after this date it was largely neglected and drainage lapsed. During the Second World War with the aid of government grants a large amount of the land was redrained and many districts formerly under grass were ploughed up. Particular use was made of machines such as the gyrotillers hired from the Huntingdon War Agricultural Executive Committee. These machines cut through and broke up the iron pan which, formed by hundreds of years of ordinary ploughing, had prevented the land draining itself.

By 1944, three-quarters of the land had come under the plough, and this level of cultivation is maintained at the present day. About half of the arable land is under cereals. Although wheat has always been the staple crop, the high prices for barley in recent years have led to an increase in this crop since the end of the war. Both peas and beans are commonly grown, but the acreage of potatoes, sugar beet and other crops is small.

(a) Central and Western Uplands.

The Central Uplands form the principal arable area, as the soils are more easily worked and have always been better drained and less

neglected than those to the west. Considerable numbers of sheep are found, particularly in the west on the temporary and permanent grasslands of the more highly elevated land.

(b) South-Eastern Uplands.

The area conforms to the general pattern of the claylands. The better arable land is in the north of the district.

The 1860's and 70's marked the peak of high farming in England, by which time Huntingdonshire could be regarded as predominantly an arable county (151,135 acres out of 229,544 acres in 1871). The Fens had been drained. Considerable tracts of the clay uplands were well drained and in some places there had been improvement in the grasslands, but much poor grass still remained, particularly in the west (9).

Between 1870 and 1880 there was a number of years of unusual cold and damp which caused poor crops and deterioration in the pastureland (10). At the same time competition from the mid-latitude grasslands resulted in falling prices. The heavy clay lands, producing mainly wheat and beans, and the grassland farmers suffered badly (11). Except on the Fens, there was a steady conversion of arable land to grass, so that in 1914 a minimum of 122,013 acres under arable cultivation was reached. Not until 1917, under the stimulus to cereal growing provided by the Corn Production Act was there any real reversal, and in 1919 with 135,397 acres, Huntingdonshire attained its greatest acreage of arable land since 1889. From the 1920's onwards the process of laying arable land to grass was resumed and at a much faster rate, so

that by the 1930's arable acreage had dropped to less than 116,000 acres, reaching a minimum of 112,365 acres in 1933. Much of the grassland was allowed to tumble to third-rate pasture, while marginal land became derelict, and was known as bushland. From 1910, when 27 acres of rough grazing is recorded, there was a gradual increase to 1,250 acres in 1920 and a further rapid increase to 6,090 acres in 1938.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, the trend of falling arable, was suddenly reversed as economic considerations became of little account, the increase was mainly on the heavy clays (Fig. 6). The Huntingdonshire War Agricultural Executive Committee was set up with compulsory powers. Ploughing-up grants became available from the outset of the war; fertilizer was provided below cost price; drainage of the clay soils was carried out and bushland was re-claimed. The heaviest clay lands after being reclaimed were sown with flax or peas (crops immune to wire worm) in the first year, and wheat or beans in the second year, and the increased use of leys became an important item of policy (12). As a result of this, there were 150,736 acres of arable land in 1944, and the permanent grassland had been reduced from 82,797 acres (1939) to 44,509 acres (1944) and rough grazing from 6,516 acres (1939) to 2,318 acres (1944).

In the post-war period, here, unlike some parts of the country, there has been no decline in arable acreage. The war time improvements have been maintained, and better varieties of seeds and greater

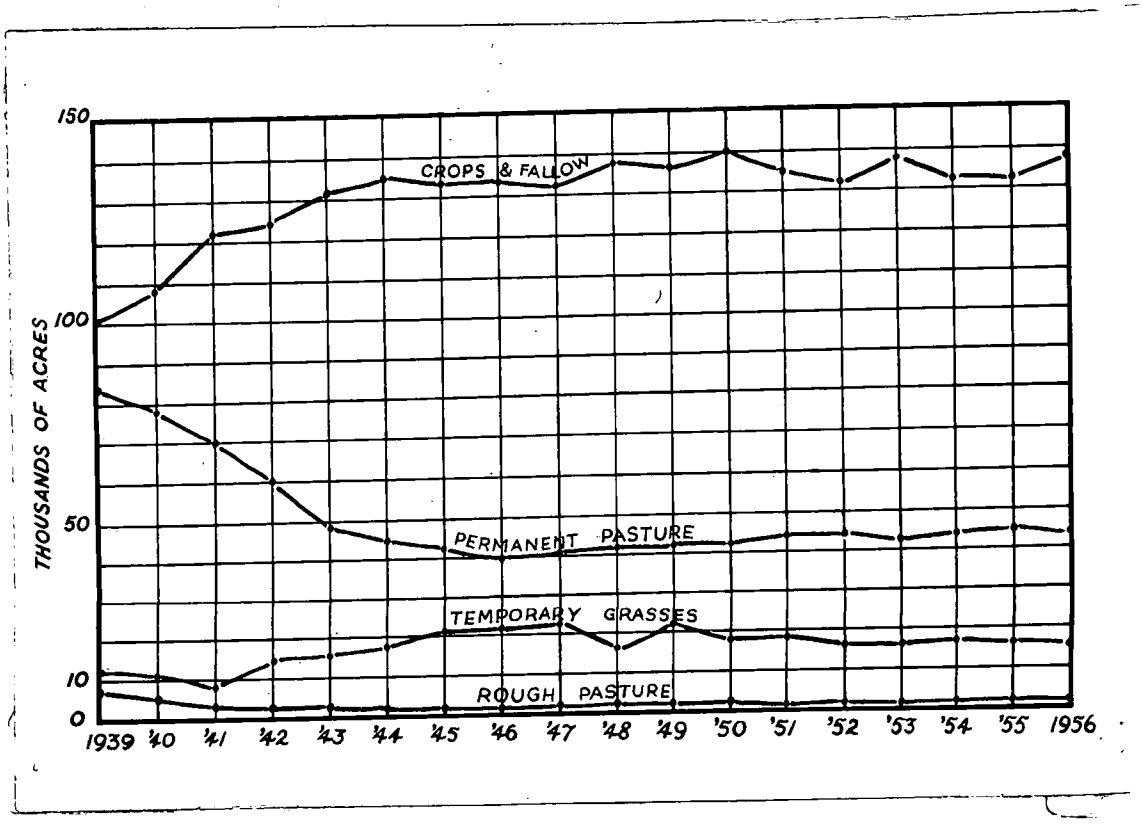

Fig. 6. CHANGES IN LAND USE, 1939-56

mechanisation have increased yields up to 50 percent on pre-war yields. Mechanisation in the county has continued rapidly; the number of combines, for instance, has increased from 96 in 1948 to 385 in 1954 (13). Wheat has remained as the most important crop, though in some seasons such as 1949 barley was a close second when high prices were ruling for it.

Though the claylands of Huntingdonshire were the first to feel the effect of the agricultural depression, the local Agricultural Executive Committee consider that they are well prepared to withstand

any future depression, even though some of the farms are still under-stocked.

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7. D.W.Fryer, op cit., p.442.
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PART TWO

THE TOWN

CHAPTER III

SITE AND EARLY HISTORY

Huntingdon is situated on the left bank of the River Ouse where it changes course towards the east and is joined by the Alconbury Brook. Beds of river gravel close to the river provided a dry point upon which to build, and their presence determined the site of the town. These gravels ensured a good water supply and from this source much of the town's water is still obtained. The land, which rises gradually from 30' to 50', is composed at the lowest level of alluvium of the water meadows; then river gravels upon which the old part of the town is built; and at the highest level of a belt of heavy clay land overlooking the built-up area (Fig. 7).

Before the Roman Ermine Street was built in the middle of the first century, it is doubtful if there was any settlement of importance in the Ouse Valley, as its natural resources were inferior to those of the Nene valley to the north. With the arrival of the Romans, a settlement developed on the site of Godmanchester half a mile to the south of Huntingdon, across the flood-plain. Ermine Street, striking north from London, turned north-west at Royston along the margin of the claylands. The road ran as far east as was possible, to avoid higher, undulating, heavily-forested clay uplands, and the necessity of crossing the main

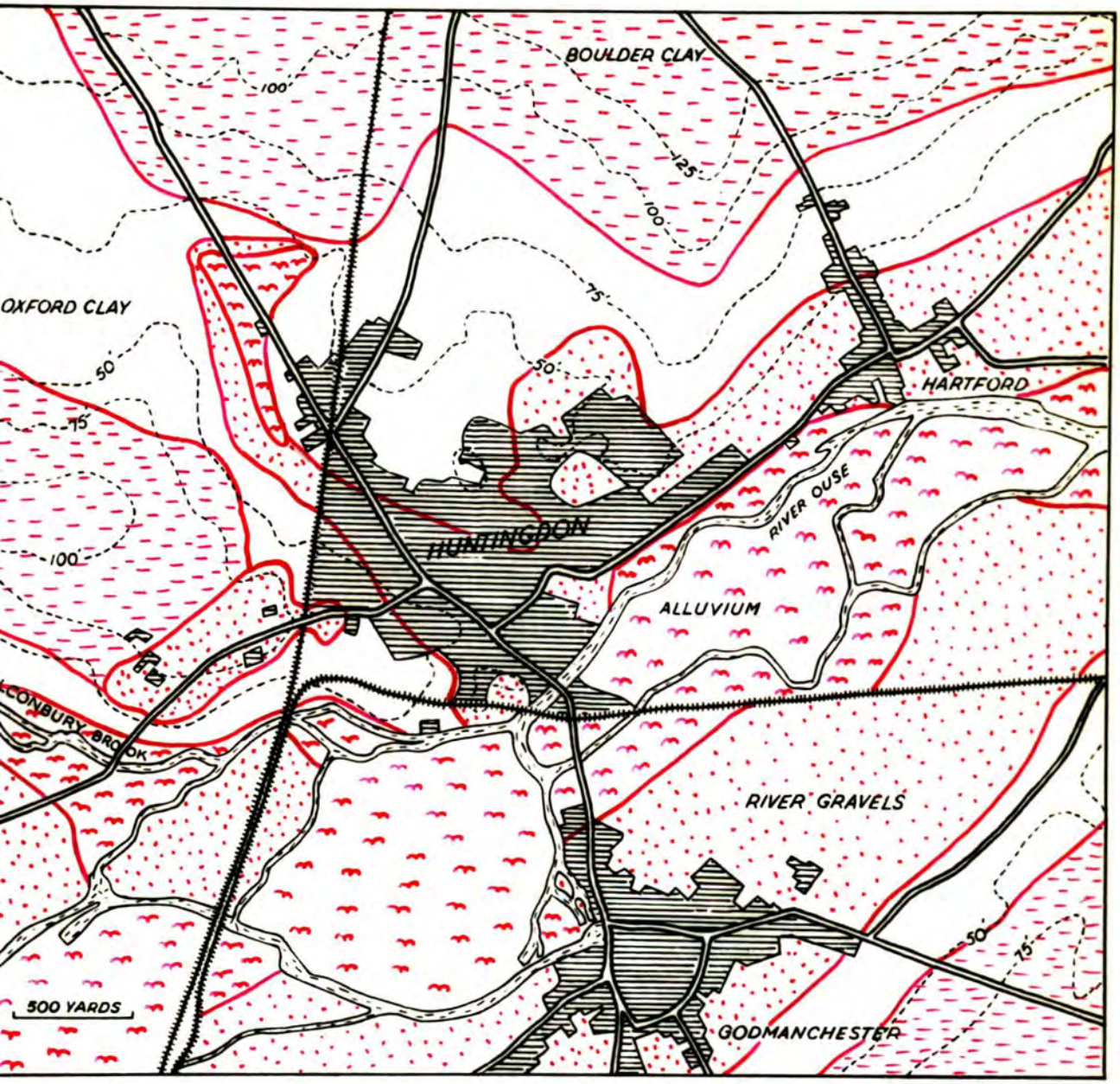

FIG. 7. HUNTINGDON - SITE. BUILT-UP AREAS SHOWN BY SINGLE HATCHING.

left bank tributaries of the Ouse; and also in order to skirt the undrained Fens to the east. North of Godmanchester the flood plain of the lower Ouse is at its narrowest, the upland in the form of Alconbury Hill soon being reached. The river gravels above flood level and protected to the north and west by the Ouse formed a defensive site for Roman settlement at Godmanchester to control the crossing of the Ouse.

The Roman road, known as Via Devana, from Colchester to Chester via Cambridge, and a less important road from Sandy and the South Midlands, joined Ermine Street at Godmanchester helping to give it nodality (Fig. 2). Formerly there was little to indicate the Roman origin of Godmanchester other than some Roman pottery and the polygonal town plan, and it was considered that the town was of little importance, merely a stopping place and posting station, and possibly acting as a market for small nearby villages (1). However, during the last few years excavations have uncovered remains of a thick town wall and ditch, as well as Roman buildings, including a large bath house, which would suggest a settlement of greater importance than was previously realised (2).

Though there is no direct evidence, there may have been a small village at Huntingdon during Roman times, perhaps a bridge head to the more important settlement at Godmanchester.

After the withdrawal of the Roman legions at the beginning of the fifth century, a succession of Anglo-Saxon invasions took place.

Arriving at the Wash, the invaders travelled inland by the rivers, which became of paramount importance, in contrast to the roads in Roman times. In the ninth century the Danes invaded the country and it is in connection with the Danish campaigns of the tenth century that Huntingdon is first mentioned (3).

The Danes, as a military and trading people advancing up the Ouse, were not slow to see the importance of the site of Huntingdon to control the river crossing, which already had nodality as a result of the three roads from the south converging on Godmanchester, and track-ways from both east and west joining Ermine Street to the north of the river. The Danes naturally chose the northern bank of the river, which was the side in touch with their base; in the same way as the site of Godmanchester, lying on the south bank, had been selected on the side nearer the Roman headquarters in London, the river forming a natural line of defence. Early in the tenth century the Danes constructed a burgh, a defensive earthwork, close to the ford, deflecting the old Ermine Street a little to the east of the former crossing. By controlling the crossing Huntingdon had considerable strategic importance in time of war, as the Ouse was the first real barrier or defensible line from London on the Ermine Street route to the north. Probably at the same time a wooden bridge was constructed across the Ouse, which would be the lowest bridging point before the St. Ives bridge was built in the twelfth century.

By this time Huntingdon was a centre of Danish government and a garrison was maintained in the town until 921, when Edward the Elder captured the town in his successful campaign against the Danes. The burgh, whose ditch still remains on Mill Common, was repaired by the Saxons, and the rising town began to grow in importance (4).

Indirect evidence from the "Anglo-Saxon Chronicle" indicates that the town had a market before 974, when a charter to Peterborough states that there was to be no other market than Peterborough between Stamford and Huntingdon. A charter to Thorney Abbey likewise shows that St. Mary's Priory existed at this date (5).

A further indication of the importance of Huntingdon was the existence of a mint, of which there is no documentary evidence. However, some of its coins are extant, the earliest of these being of Eadwig (955 - 959) (6).

Following the Norman Conquest and the visit to Huntingdon in 1068 of William the Conqueror, a castle was built outside the remains of the earlier fort. The entire site was surrounded by a deep moat, and a great earth mound was raised, on which was built a wooden keep. The castle continued to be used as a military fortress until 1173, when it was captured by Henry II, who had it dismantled; and today only the great earth work on which it stood remains (7).

The two hundred years immediately following the Norman Conquest saw the town attain its greatest importance and prosperity. During that

period, not only did the building of the castle take place, but the Augustinian Priory and Hinchingbrooke Nunnery were founded, and sixteen parish churches, and three hospitals were established.

During the fourteenth century a series of factors, culminating in the Black Death of 1348 - 1349, wrought havoc with the town. The Royal Charter of 1363 records that a quarter of the town was uninhabited and the remaining population was practically destitute (8). This blow seriously retarded the town's progress, and the dissolution of the religious houses in the early sixteenth century added further to the distress, as the burden of poor relief, previously undertaken by the monasteries, was thrown on the impoverished townspeople. By 1550, twelve of the ancient churches, two of the three hospitals, and all the monasteries had disappeared. Gradually, however, conditions improved and with the advent of the coaching trade of the seventeenth century prosperity started to return (9).

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CHAPTER IV.

MORPHOLOGY AND TOWN GROWTH

As the old maps of the town suggest, Huntingdon has developed along both sides of the old Ermine Street, and commands the crossing of the River Ouse. This north - south thoroughfare forms the High Street for just over half a mile from the thirteenth century stone bridge over the river, and becomes Ermine Street by name again at the northern end of the town, where it passes under the railway bridge and thence north into the Stukeley Parishes.

Various trackways running from nearby villages into Huntingdon developed into the roads which lead into the High Street of today. From St. Ives via Hartford (incorporated by the boundary extension as part of the borough in 1934) is Hartford Road, the main outlet through Huntingdon from the Fens. It joins the High Street near St. Mary's Church (Plate I). North of the junction of Hartford Road and High Street is the main shopping centre, extending to the Old Grammar School and All Saints' Church, which occupies the north side of Market Hill. Brampton Road, the only thoroughfare westwards from the town leaves the High Street between All Saints' Church and the old coaching house, "The George", passing the Post Office, Chivers' Canning Factory, the County Hospital and crossing the bridge over the railway. It leaves the town

by the Nun's Bridge, after passing the New Grammar School and Hinchingbrooke House, some half mile from the town centre. South of the road bridge are the two railway stations, Huntingdon North on the main line, and Huntingdon East on the branch line from Kettering to St. Ives and

Plate I. HARTFORD ROAD, from its junction with High Street.

Cambridge. The Market Place, or Market Hill as it is often known, is the civic centre for the county and borough. Large Georgian mansions housing the Library and various county offices line the Market Hill on the west. The Town Hall in the south faces All Saints' Church. South-west from Market Hill is Prince's Street, which contains the Fire Station

and more government offices. The Walks, where the Bus Station is situated, with Mill Common to the west, leads by way of a level crossing to the Gasworks, and by a wooden bridge to the large meadow of Portholme. Between this small bridge and the main river bridge in the south of the town is the large earthwork known as Castle Hill.

Northwards from the George Hotel, the High Street continues as a less important shopping area, and, becoming Ermine Street again by name, eventually passes through a residential area of rows of drab Victorian houses. Joining Ermine Street south of the railway bridge is St. Peter's Road which leads north-east to Ramsey.

The form of the modern town is a result of the factors that have influenced and controlled the growth of Huntingdon since man's first settlement on the site. The paramount factor has been the position of Ermine Street, beside which has always been the main settlement. The evidence concerning the nature and extent of ancient Huntingdon is meagre, though Ladds (1) with the aid of the Domesday Survey was able to throw some light on it, summarizing his conclusions as a map (Fig.8).

At the time of the Domesday Survey in the eleventh century the borough was divided into four quarters or ferlings. As Ermine Street traversed Huntingdon from north to south, and was joined near the centre of the town by two other roads from east to west, it is probable that these roads formed the divisions of the quarters. The road from the west is assumed to be George Street, but that from the east is difficult

to identify, though it may be St. Germain Street, which was the principal outlet eastwards until the last century. The line of Ermine Street has been altered several times throughout the ages and the course of the old street would have formed the quarters' boundary.

Originally Ermine Street crossed the Ouse, probably by a ford, considerably west of the present crossing, passing through what was to be the site of the castle, and continuing along a course between the

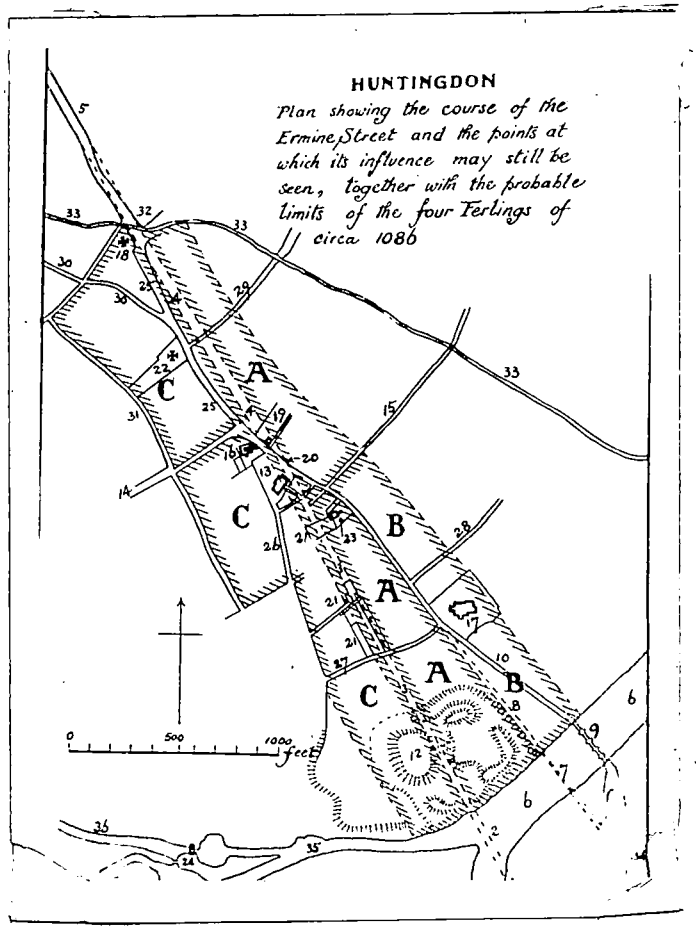


Fig. 8. LADDS' MAP OF HUNTINGDON

(Map index at end of the chapter).

present High Street and Prince's Street to the eastern end of All Saints' Church. In several places south of Market Hill the boundaries of present day properties coincide with the course of the old road, which has been identified in several excavations. North of the Market Hill the line of Ermine Street has not been proved, but it must have run somewhat east of the present High Street. The old town ended at Balmeshole, where the past and present roads coincide. When the first bridge was built, in the time of King Edward the Elder, it occupied a position between the present bridge and the older crossing. The bend in the present High Street near St.Mary's Church, was caused by the alteration of the road to suit the present bridge built in the fourteenth century to the east of its predecessor. This necessitated a minor town planning scheme.

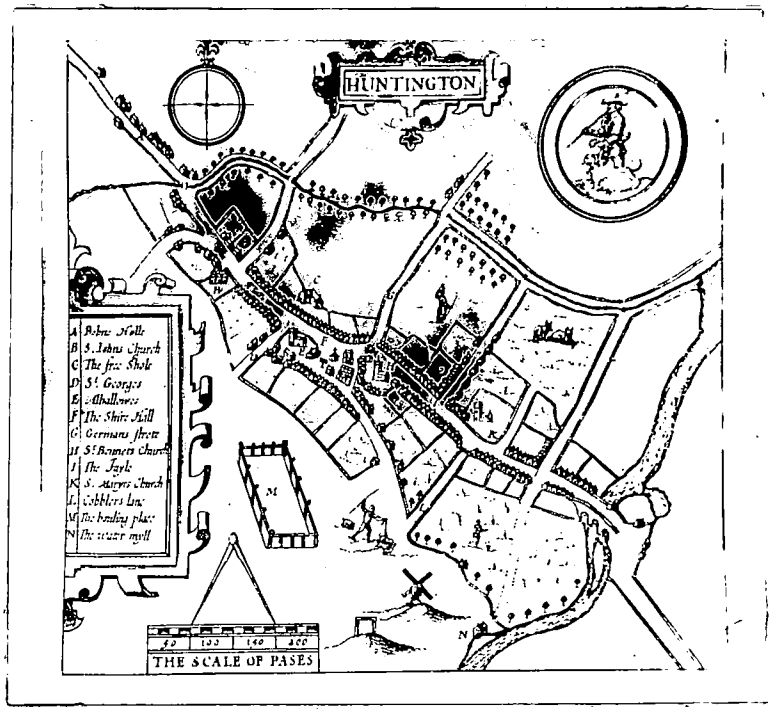


Fig. 9. SPEED'S MAP OF HUNTINGDON IN 1610

Speed's map of 1610 (Fig. 9) shows Huntingdon as it was in the time of Oliver Cromwell. Cromwell, born in the borough in 1599, was educated at St. John's Grammar School, listed as "The Free Schole" on the map. By this time the pattern formed by the roads was similar to that of the present day. Buildings extended along the High Street from the bridge to Balmeshole, where a small stream, now carried underground, crossed the road. As was usual in many small market towns, the width of the town was limited by the gardens and paddocks of the houses on each side of the road.

Until the seventeenth century the roads of England had been so bad that few people ventured on a journey in winter. Trade now demanded better communications, so that new roads were made and old ones improved. The introduction of stage coaches caused Huntingdon to increase rapidly in importance as it was a suitable "stage" on the journeys between London and the north. During this period of growing prosperity of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Huntingdon was practically rebuilt, with brick replacing timber as the material used.

Jefferys' map of 1768 (Fig. 10) shows the town at a time when it had largely assumed its modern appearance, many of the existing buildings having been erected, though not for their present purposes.

The prosperity brought by the coaching trade lasted until the middle of the nineteenth century, by which time at least twenty-five inns and taverns had been established to cater for the traffic (2). The opening of the railway in 1850, instead of bringing benefits, as with many towns,

brought disaster, for the coaching trade upon which so many people depended was killed.

From then onwards, general economic conditions and the limitations of the Huntingdon site - with its shortage of land for building - have restricted the growth of the town.

Huntingdon, as Fig. 11 indicates, is bordered by the Ouse in the south, and surrounded almost entirely by land which for various reasons has been unsuitable or unavailable for building development.

Benefits from the railway might still have come if the Great Northern

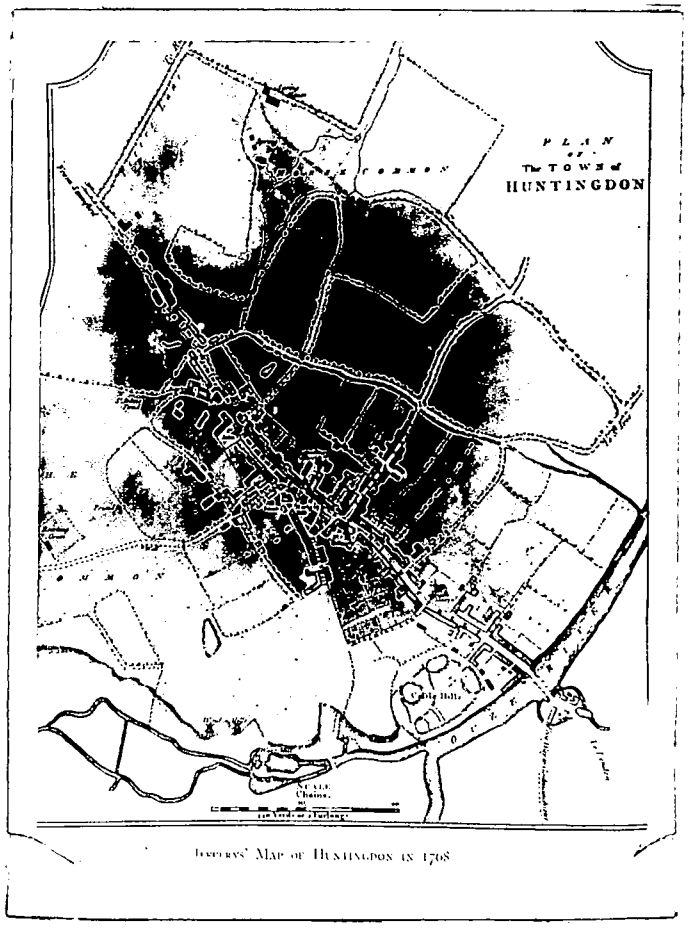
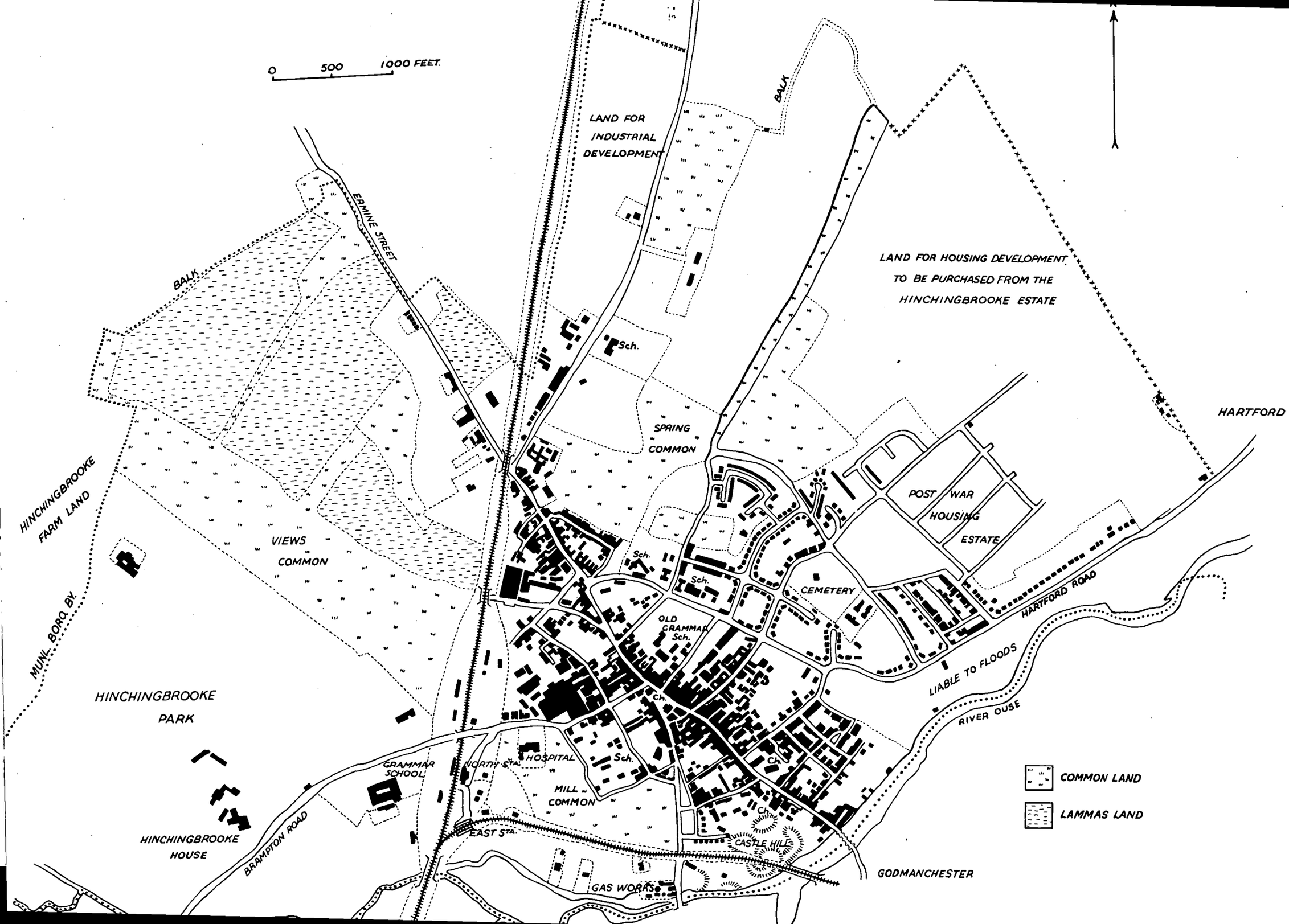


Fig.10. JEFFERYS' MAP OF HUNTINGDON IN 1768


0 500 1000 FEET.
LAND FOR INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT
BALK
ERMINE STREET
BALK
LAND FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT TO BE PURCHASED FROM THE HINCHINGBROOKE ESTATE
HARTFORD
Sch.
SPRING COMMON
HINCHINGBROOKE FARM LAND
VIEWS COMMON
POST WAR HOUSING ESTATE
Sch.
Sch.
CEMETERY
HARTFORD ROAD
MUNI. BORO. BY.
OLD GRAMMAR Sch.
LIABLE TO FLOODS
Ch.
RIVER OUSE
HINCHINGBROOKE PARK
GRAMMAR SCHOOL
NORTH ST.
HOSPITAL
Sch.
MILL COMMON
Ch.
EAST ST.
CASTLE HILL
HINCHINGBROOKE HOUSE
BRAMPTON ROAD
GODMANCHESTER
GAS WORKS
COMMON LAND
LAMMAS LAND

had built their railway works, as proposed, on Views Common. The then Earl of Sandwich, however, refused to have the project adjoining his estate, even though the Freemen of the town were in favour (3). The works were established at Peterborough instead.

The main Hinchingbrooke estate-home of the Earl of Sandwich - is situated to the west of the railway, with an extensive acreage to the north-east of the town. Only now that the estate is starting to break up is this land becoming available for urban development.

Building has also been prevented by the unsuitability of the

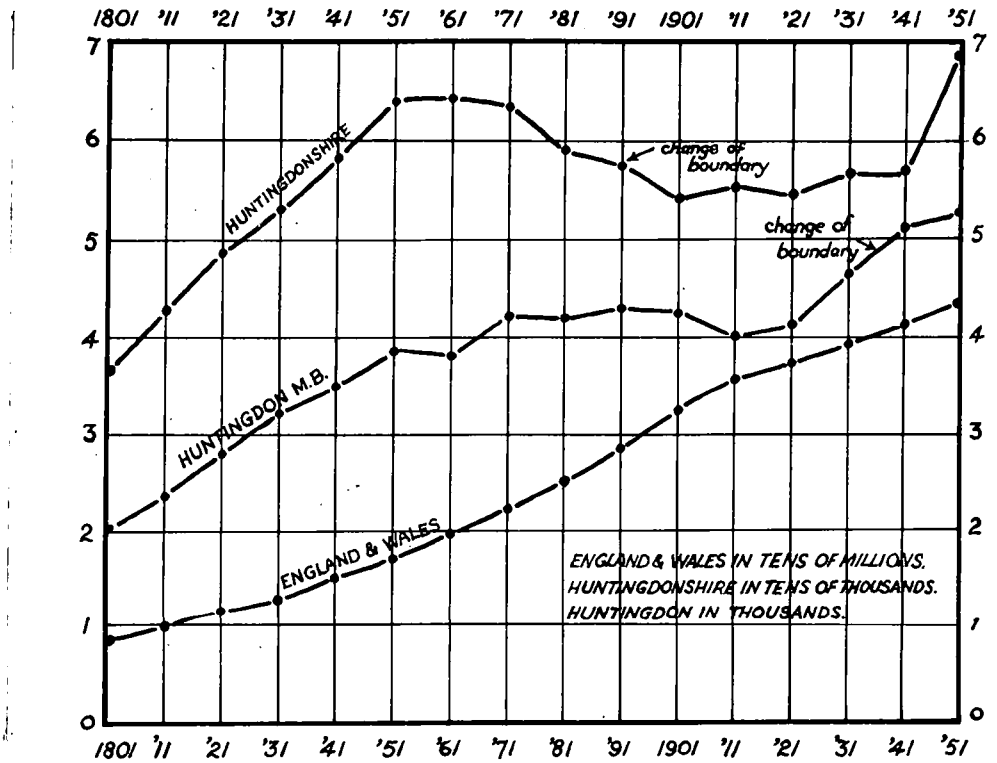


Fig.12. POPULATION, 1801 - 1951

meadows alongside the river, which are under water at times of flood, and by the extensive areas of Common and Lammas land which help to enclose the town.

The Commons are the absolute property of the Freemen of the Borough and consist of three major portions - Mill Common (once Cow Common); Views Common (formerly part of Mill Common); and Spring or Horse Common. As at Stamford, the proximity of common lands to the town has helped, in the past, to restrict expansion. Attempts have been made by the Borough Council to acquire the Commons, but though the Freeman have been willing to negotiate, legal and other difficulties have proved insurmountable. The Commons, owned by the Freemen and Burgesses from time immemorial, remained in their possession after the Act of 1835 which continued the Burgesses-by-birth, so that at the present there is a small body of Freemen who draw profits from the land by way of rent. Over certain fields called Lammas lands, belonging to other owners, the Freemen have the grazing rights when the fields are fallow. These lands take their name from Lammas Day, when they are thrown open to the Freemen's cattle, for a period extending (at Huntingdon) from the 1st August to the 2nd February. If the owner sells this land, the Freemen are entitled to two-fifths of the sale price, a fact which no doubt acts as a deterrent to any disposal by the owner.

The railway embankment coinciding with the borough boundary in the north-west has also formed an effective barrier to development in

that quarter.

The slow growth of Huntingdon and corresponding lack of much new building is reflected by the population graph of 1801 to 1951 (Fig. 12). During this period the population of England and Wales more than quadrupled itself, while Huntingdonshire's increased by 84 percent and Huntingdon's by 159 percent. From 1801 until 1851 Huntingdonshire followed the national trend and the population increased rapidly, but between 1851 and 1951 Huntingdon's population increased by only 36 percent against the national average of 144 percent.

With the advent of the railway (and the death of the coaching trade) at Huntingdon there was a small decrease in population before natural increase restored the position, which remained almost constant until the 1920's. The decline in agricultural prosperity in the county, and the continued expansion of industrial and trading centres attracted people away from the rural areas to more lucrative employment in the industrial towns. During this period Huntingdon, with little industry, was dependent on its functions as an administrative and service centre to a largely depressed country side.

With the increase in the importance of road transport between the wars, Huntingdon became not only a centre of some historic interest but also a convenient point to break a journey to the north. Several new industries were established, business increased and multiple stores started to open branches in the town. The increase in employment helped

to stop migration from Huntingdon, with the result that the population started to rise.

During and since the war, this trend has continued. The migration of industry from London, together with the renewed prosperity of the agricultural countryside and the nearby air bases have all promoted increased trade and stimulated new business concerns to open in the town.

With the expected arrival of London's "overspill" population, and the availability of building land, principally from the Hinchingbrooke estate, Huntingdon seems likely to be entering upon a period of rapid growth and expansion.

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2. Old directories of Huntingdon, notably those by Hatfield (1854) and Pigot (1839) list 25 inns and taverns; but P.G.M.Dickinson, Historic Huntingdon, Huntingdon, 1944, p.5., states there were 60 inns in the town at the time.
3. Unpublished documents in the Huntingdon archives, also P.G.M. Dickinson, op. cit., p.27.

Index to Ladds' Map of Huntingdon.

A,A,B,B. Ferlings I and II. C,C. Ferlings III and IV.

1. Line of Ermine St., in Godmanchester.
2. The Ford.
3. Line of the Ermine Street.
4. Probable line of the Ermine St. in the northern end of the town.
5. Ermine St. outside the old Town.
6. River Ouse.
7. The first Bridge.
8. Old Bridge St. (Road from the first Bridge).
9. The C14 Bridge.
10. Bridge St. (now High St.) (Road from the C14 Bridge).
11. Road in Godmanchester, leading to the Bridge.
12. The Castle.
13. The Market Hill.
14. George St.
15. St. Germain St.
16. All Saints' Church.
17. St. Mary's Church.
18. Site of St. Andrew's Church.
19. St. John's Hospital.
20. Column in Messrs. Murketts' Shop.
21. Properties with boundaries influenced by Ermine St.
22. St. John's Churchyard.
23. St. Benedict's Churchyard.
24. The Mill.
25. Northern end of High St.
26. Prince's St.
27. St. Mary's St.
28. Hartford Road.
29. Ashton's Lane.
30. The Bullock Road (now Ferrar's Road).
31. St. John's St.
32. Balmeshole.
33. Watercourse, later the Town Ditch.
34. The Causeway in Godmanchester (C18).
35. Alconbury Brook.
36. The Mill Stream.

C H A P T E R V.

PROPERTY USAGE OF HUNTINGDON.

The present distribution of property usage in Huntingdon is shown in Fig. 13. The nature of the classification used has been detailed in the Introduction.

RESIDENTIAL.

The older zone of residence, built largely prior to the nineteenth century, lies on both sides of the main thoroughfare with its quaint ramifications of old lanes, streets and courts and has a threefold division.

Northward from the main river bridge to the junction with Hartford Road are large residential units alongside smaller ones. A few are partly converted into small shops, but retain their residential usage. Most notable of these houses is the early eighteenth century building of red brick, facing down Hartford Road, in which the poet Cowper lived in the second half of that century.

Then follows a second area, extending to Market Hill, where most of the larger proprty units - once the better class dwellings - have been converted into shops, though the residential units in the passages and courts behind the High Street remain (Plate II).

Plate II. NEWTON'S COURT, one of the many small passages and courts leading off High Street.

Lastly, from the George Hotel to the north of the town, the proportion of shop frontages gradually decreases until rows of drab, terraced Victorian houses dominate Ermine Street and the adjoining roads (Plate III), with occasional shop premises forming subdivisions of the units of residence. Several of the older properties still retain pumps by which they originally obtained their water supply from the underlying gravels.

PLATE III. GREAT NORTHERN STREET, with its terraced Victorian houses.

In roads such as Ferrar's Road, St. John's Street and St. Germain Street, which adjoin the main road, more old property is found. Here were the homes of the lesser burgesses; later (supplemented by the Victorian property in the north of the town) those of the working classes when the population doubled in the nineteenth century.

Westward along George Street, near the top of the hill and overshadowed by Chivers' Factory, is a row of eight almshouses, erected

in the early part of the last century. Opposite the Hospital is a terrace of good class Victorian houses, several of which are used as a nurses' home.

Building during the twentieth century has with few exceptions been in the east of the town, as land became available. Along Hartford Road for the first three hundred yards from its junction with High Street, and south of it to the river, are early twentieth century houses. Further along, but to the north of the road, thereby avoiding the low-lying river meadows, are the more modern, well-spaced buildings, both Corporation and private. Between the wars a little private building was carried out, most of it along Hartford Road from Tennis Court Avenue nearly into Hartford Village, some on St. Peter's Road and along Ermine Street north of the railway bridge. The Corporation Housing estate extended slowly towards the east in the period between the wars until, with the additional post-war building, it linked with the pre-1914 housing estate known as Newtown (Plate IV).

Though since 1939 the demand for houses has increased rapidly, wartime restrictions and the shortage of land have limited development. As most houses erected since the war have been built on land acquired from the Hinchingbrooke estate and are owned by the Corporation, many private householders have been forced to build in neighbouring villages and towns.

Plate IV. NEW HOUSING ESTATE, built since the Second World War.

GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC UTILITIES.

Such units are mostly found along or closely adjoining the High Street. Many occupy large old buildings which originally were the homes of the wealthier trade and business men of the town.

The Local Government Centre is the Town Hall, built in 1745, it stands on the southern edge of Market Hill on the site of an earlier building (Plate V). It incorporates the seventeenth century staircase from the former Court Hall. The ground floor, as was often the case, was originally open to the market-place; its pillared area was later

Plate V. TOWN HALL, standing on Market Hill.

bricked in to form an entrance hall. The ground floor has two Courts of Justice; the first floor forms the Corporation Offices; and above are the Mayor's Parlour, Council Chambers and a large room for public meetings and social functions. Close by on the west side of Market Hill are three old large houses occupied by various departments of the County Council. Walden House, a late seventeenth century building, houses the County Departments of the Surveyor, Land Agent and Planning Officer. For many years it contained the County Library before that moved to Gazeley House. The Old County Club (Wycombe House) is now occupied by the Youth Employment Bureau. Twenty yards to the south is Gazeley House with the County Library on the ground floor and the Education Offices above.

The Fire Station occupied property on both sides of Prince's Street; Lawrence Court, close by, is the office of the local Taxation and Licences Authority.

The office of the Town Clerk is in the High Street to the north, and shares the building with a local solicitor and an architect. Next door is the early nineteenth century Montagu House which was for a time last century a young ladies' seminary, one of the numerous small private schools in the town at that period. It contains the Huntingdon Rural District Council Offices and Fuel Office.

Plate VI. OLD GRAMMAR SCHOOL, now used as offices by the County Council.

Nearby, Ambury House, acquired since the last war, houses various borough departments. The Old Grammar Schools, renamed the County Buildings, was occupied towards the end of the war by the War Agricultural Executive, but has since been taken over by the County Council. Distributed throughout the buildings are the departments of the Archivist, Architect, Clerk, Children's Clinic and Medical Officer. (Plate VI).

At the corner of St. Mary's Street is Castle Hill House, built in 1787. During the Second World War it was used as a clinic and later by the Air Ministry as headquarters of the Pathfinders. When they were disbanded at the end of the war it was converted for the use of various government offices. With the help of numerous huts in the gardens, Castle Hill House provides accommodation for: the Employment Exchange, Inland Revenue, Ministry of Pensions, National Insurance, National Assistance and the County Agricultural Executive. The National Health Service shares a property unit with a variety of professional concerns a few houses to the north in High Street.

The original post office was in a building facing Market Hill, but in 1887 it moved to a house in George Street, which had just been vacated by the Windover family. Behind the main building is the garage where vehicles are serviced by post office mechanics. The Telephone Exchange is close by in St. John's Street. A sub-post office, sharing the property unit with a shop, is at Newtown, serving the needs of the

old and new housing estates in the east of the town. Several public call boxes occupy widely spaced sites throughout the town.

The Eastern Electricity Board occupy new offices and showrooms centrally placed along High Street. Gas is supplied by the Eastern Gas Board, which has its gas plant alongside Alconbury Brook, on the north side of Portholme. The Gas House was erected in 1832 when gas was first introduced to the town. The office and showroom is on High Street close to Hartford Road corner.

On Views Common to the west and overlooking the town, stands a watertower.

SOCIAL.

Property units of a social nature are widely dispersed throughout the town, though most of them are along High Street or close to it.

The County Hospital, erected on high ground to the west of the town, is small (sixty-three beds) but well-equipped. It was built in 1853 on a site purchased from the Freemen for £600. It had its origin in a dispensary established in 1789, which was reconstituted as the Huntingdon Infirmary and Dispensary in 1831.(1). For many years it occupied premises in the Walks North (now All Saints' Rectory) until the present hospital was built.

Primrose Lane Hospital in the east of the town, occupies a slight eminence and was in use as an isolation hospital until 1956, when it was converted into a ten-bedded maternity unit, with twenty beds for

chronic sick patients.

Walnut Tree House, or the Public Institution as it is more commonly known, is a welfare establishment for old people. It stands at the junction of St. Peter's Road and Ermine Street in the north of the town. Formerly the Union Workhouse, it was erected in 1804 to replace the Brideswell, or House of Correction which once stood on the present site of the Chivers' factory. Another old people's home is in the south of the town, opposite the Old Bridge Hotel.

The main clinic is situated in the Old Grammar School, and a dental clinic in Prince's Street.

Two doctors and an optician have widely separated premises on High Street. Both the town's dentists are in George Street. The local veterinary surgeon has his private residence, clinic and kennels in St. John's Street.

Of the licensed premises (excluding the registered clubs), eighteen are fully licensed. Most of these had their origin in the coaching era. The George Hotel is the only one of the three main posting houses that still retains its former usage. The Fountain Inn, which flanked the east side of Market Hill is now Murketts' garage and the Crown Inn has been sub-divided into several property units.

At the other end of High Street near the river bridge is the Old Bridge Hotel, built at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Originally it was the home of the Veasey family and later of Bateman Brown, one

of the founders of Trinity Church and, at one-time, owner of the old corn mill on the Godmanchester side of the river. In 1913 the building became a hotel, but during the First World War it served as the headquarters of the Old R. F. C. who had their flying field on Portholme meadow. After the war it reverted to a hotel. Both the George and Old Bridge Hotel have extensive garage and parking facilities to deal with the busy road trade that has developed in the last thirty years.

The Norman building, situated in the narrowest part of High Street, facing All Saints' chancel, became the Grammar School in 1565 (2). It had been formerly the medieval hospital of St. John the Baptist. Only sons of burgesses were admitted to the school, and they were taught Greek and Latin free. Hence it was sometimes called the "Latin" school. Any other subject, such as English or Mathematics had to be paid for. The schoolmaster, whose salary was very small, was allowed to take in boarders to eke out his existence (3). As he was also in Holy Orders, he was usually an incumbent of one of the local churches. During the seventeenth century, the school had both Oliver Cromwell and Samuel Pepys as pupils. The red brick building was added in 1873. Complete reorganisation was undertaken in 1895, when Lionel Walden's school was merged with the Grammar School. In 1939 the school was transferred to its present site in the west of the town (Plate VII).

Walden's School was built in 1736 after a lengthy legal dispute over the will of Sir Lionel Walden, who died in 1719. He left a sum of

Plate VII. HUNTINGDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL, the new building in the west of the town.

£500 to found a free school for twenty poor boys of the town. It was an early type of elementary school and those subjects - English and Mathematics - which the Grammar School did not teach unless a fee was paid, were taught gratis (4). The school stood at the back of what is now the Woolworth's store, in High Street; parts still remain and are used as warehouses.

Several other schools of less importance were to be found in the town during the last century. Of these, the County National School for Boys was the most important. It was built in 1813 and situated in the

northern end of the town, on the corner of St. Peter's Road and Ermine Street. It is now a garage. It took seventy to eighty pupils from the borough, Hartford and Stukeley.

The forerunner of the present Secondary Modern School was to be found in the old Union Chapel in Grammar School Walk, from where, in 1906, it moved to new premises on Brookside. At the end of the Second World War the school expanded, taking over the neighbouring building when the Primary School moved out. In 1957 a new school costing £149,000 was opened on the east side of St. Peter's Road, though the old buildings on Brookside are still retained as additional classrooms. On the front of the site occupied by the new school buildings, there was during the war an army camp and, after the war, a camp for displaced persons.

Two Primary schools are in the town; the old Church School in Walden Road, with its outdated accommodation, and a modern building with its attached nursery school in Cromwell Walk.

Ecclesiastical buildings in Huntingdon date from the Norman period. In the fourteenth century the town contained three monasteries, three hospitals, two dependent chapels and sixteen parish churches (5). There can hardly have been another town in England containing so many ecclesiastical buildings in such a small space (Huntingdon occupies practically the same area now as it did then). It shares with such large towns as London, Norwich, Ipswich, Cambridge and Colchester the distinction of having a disproportionate number of parish churches. Many towns of much

greater size than Huntingdon (such as Maidstone) had only one or two churches.

The Huntingdon Priory, founded at the beginning of the twelfth century, passed an uneventful existence until it was closed in the sixteenth century (6). Itsextensive buildings stood to the east of the town, partly on the site of Tennis Court Avenue and the old tennis courts adjoining. Its precinct wall approximated to Priory Road, Primrose Lane, Hartford Road and Nursery Road. No trace of it now remains. The present Hinchingbrooke House has incorporated much of the ancient masonry of the Benedictine Nunnery, which was founded in the twelfth century and dissolved in the sixteenth century (7). A third monastery, the Augustinian Friary, stood along Ermine Street, occupying a site upon which Cromwell House now stands.

The two dependent chapels were to be found in the south of the town. Though Huntingdon Castle was destroyed in 1173, the chapel associated with it continued in use until the fifteenth century. Another chapel was built in the early fourteenth century on the bridge itself, as its north-east end, but had only a short existence (8).

Only four of the sixteen parish churches remained after the havoc wrought by the Black Death in the fourteenth century and the dissolution of the religious houses in the sixteenth century. Of those remaining, St. John's and St. Benedict's were destroyed in the Civil War of 1645, so that only All Saints' and St. Mary's are still in existence at the present

day.

Many of the older streets and courts of Huntingdon are named after the old churches, fifteen of which were dedicated to the Trinity. Dickinson with the aid of old histories of Huntingdon has been able to indicate the approximate sites of these ancient churches (9). Of the two destroyed in the Civil War of 1645, the churchyards may still be seen; St. John's (Oliver Cromwell's church) stood opposite Cromwell House, and St. Benedict's stood in the churchyard adjoining W.H.Smith and Son's premises. St. Clement's was in Orchard Lane. St. Edmund's was between the old County Gaol and St. Clement's Passage. Down St. Mary's Street stood St. Lawrence's, and St. Martin's and Holy Trinity faced each other in the High Street near Hartford Road corner. St. Germain's stood in the street of the same name and St. Botolph's in Prince's Street. St. George's Church was a short distance up George Street at its junction with St. John's Street; it is said that one of its pillars stands in the buildings of the George Hotel. St. Andrew's stood on the north side of Dryden's Walk adjoining Ermine Street, with St. Michael's a little farther to the north. St. Peter's Church stood at the junction of St. Peter's Road where the north abutment of the Iron Bridge now stands. The site of St. Nicholas' is the only one not known.

The Archdeaconry Library, founded in 1716 in the Walks East, contains about 1,200 books, chiefly of an ecclesiastical nature, and is intended particularly for the clergy of the Archdeaconry of Huntingdon.

All Saints' Rectory is in Walks North on the corner of Walden Road, but it has been acquired by the County Council for demolition, to improve the bad corner when the proposed ring road is built.

Of the modern churches, the Roman Catholic church of St. Michael's erected in 1901, stands in Hartford Road at Newtown. Two nonconformist churches occupy sites on High Street. Dominating the town and visible for miles around is Trinity Church with its 182 feet high spire. Serving a community of Baptists and Congregationalists, it was built in 1867-8, to replace a smaller chapel, dating from 1823, in Grammar School Walk. This is the building that was used as a school before the opening of the one on Brookside. It is now a china shop, with a printer's establishment on the upper floor (10).

The forerunner of the present Methodist Chapel was a barn off Castle Hill Lane, in which John Wesley preached in 1780. A plain brick chapel was erected in the High Street in 1811, to be succeeded in 1878 by the present church and adjoining manse (11). The Spiritualist Chapel is a wooden building in St. Mary's Street.

The Hall, in George Street, east of the Post Office, now the club and offices of the Huntingdon United Conservative and Liberal National Association, is a building that was erected in 1845 as a church and known as the New Church. It was built on the site of an old theatre and had a chequered career, as for thirty years it was not consecrated, being neither church nor chapel. It was deconsecrated in 1925 and became a

clinic during the war, before it assumed its present usage.

Several other clubs and societies occupy property units widely distributed through the town. The principal ones are the Masonic Lodge in Priory House, at the north end of High Street, and the Montagu Club, founded in 1897, in buildings specially built on Hartford Road. The Old County Club which closed in 1952 occupied an early Georgian House on the west of Market Hill, a building now used by the County Council (Plate VIII).

Plate VIII. COUNTY CLUB, an early Georgian building on Market Hill, now occupied by the County Council.

Facing Trinity Church in the High Street is the building which once housed The Literary and Scientific Institution. Erected in 1842, it

provided recreational facilities for members, with its library, games room and reading room. It also housed a small private museum. When it closed it was bought by the Huntingdon Commemoration Hall Fund, with the intention that it should become a community centre.

The two cinemas occupy property units along the High Street. The Grand Cinema, opposite Market Hill, is an early nineteenth century building which was at one time the Corn Exchange, it became a theatre at the beginning of the century, and a few years later a cinema. The larger and more modern cinema, the Hippodrome, with its private car park, was built in the mid-thirties. The two local newspapers have their offices on High Street. The County Library in Gazeley House is in the south-west corner of the Market Square. Previously it had been housed in Walden House, a few doors to the north.

COMMERCIAL.

Commercial property is distributed almost entirely along both sides of High Street, having taken over property which was originally residential.

Small back street shops are comparatively few, since Huntingdon is a thoroughfare town developed primarily along the north-south axis. Along High Street is a threefold division similar to the residential property. From the river bridge to the junction with Hartford Road, some of the smaller buildings have been partly converted into small shops, with the residential units behind or above (Plate IX). The main shopping

Plate IX. HIGH STREET, looking south towards the river. Old houses, some partly converted into shops.

centre is from the Hartford Road junction to the George Hotel. Both large and small private firms occupy premises in this area, alongside multiple and chain stores. Most of the property is old, with modern frontage and extensions behind. North of the George, the number of shops rapidly decreases. Until quite recent times it was considered almost impossible to succeed in business in this part of the town. Most of the shops have warehouse facilities backing on the retail premises.

Wholesale property is limited to two wholesale grocers and a wholesale tobacconist and confectioner in the High Street. W.H.Smith and Son have their building, from which the wholesale distribution of newsprint is carried out, adjoining Huntingdon North Railway Station. 'Esso' have a petrol depot alongside the railway, just to the north of the bridge, from which they can distribute to the numerous garage and petrol stations along the main roads that traverse the county.

Four solicitors, two accountants, two architects, five insurance companies, two estate agents and auctioneers and four building societies occupy premises on High Street or close by on Market Hill. Some occupy buildings on their own, but the majority are subdivisions of large office blocks.

From the middle of the eighteenth century Huntingdon has had some form of banking situated then, as now, along the main road. The banking premises of Barclays, Westminster and Lloyds, are the successors of a number of private banks once established in Huntingdon.

Perkins' Bank was the first established in the town, in 1745. Its offices were probably in the Market Square. Bankruptcy overtook it in 1804, when it was taken over by Messrs. Rust, Sweeting and Veasey.

Pusheller's Bank was in existence before 1790 and was the rival of Perkins' Bank. It also stood in the Market Square, north of the Fountain Inn (Murketts' garage) in premises now occupied by a shoe shop. Failing in 1827, it was also taken over by the bank of Rust and Veasey.

The firm of Rust, Sweeting and Veasey was established in 1804. During the ninety-two years of its existence, it changed its name twelve times, as new partners came in or old ones dropped out. Its original office still stands just south of the Old Bridge Hotel. Later it moved to premises on the corner of Market Hill, now occupied by its successor, Barclays Bank Ltd., who took over the business in 1896. Ideally situated in the main business and shopping centre, it is the largest bank in the town.

Westminster Bank Ltd., is situated in the northern part of High Street, a little way out of the main business centre. As the London and County Joint Stock Bank, it came to Huntingdon in 1845. Its first office was in the finest position in the town, the Old County Club or Wycombe House as it was then known, in the Market Square. In 1870 it left these premises for its present building, which had just been erected. The movement is attributed to a desire to be near the proposed railway works which were going to be built on Views Common - a project that came to naught (12).

Lloyds have their building on High Street, facing the George Hotel.

The Trustee Savings Bank, just to the north, on the same side of the High Street as the George Hotel, opened in 1956.

Finally, the Midland Bank have acquired premises opposite the Hippodrome Cinema, due to be opened in 1958.

TRANSPORT.

Little evidence is now to be found in the town reflecting the importance of river transport in days gone by. Locks and staunches are in a state of disrepair, though the old wharfs can still be seen alongside the hosiery factory (one time corn mill) in Godmanchester and also in places on the Huntingdon side of the river (Plate X).

Plate X. HOSIERY MILL (formerly a corn mill) with landing facilities, viewed from the bridge spanning the Ouse. Behind, the water meadows in Godmanchester.

Of the eight petrol and garage units spaced to serve the four traffic streams entering the town, only one is post-war in origin. Five

of the eight garages are along the High Street or its continuation as Ermine Street, chiefly in the north of the town where the road is wider or where it has been possible to build a "run-in". The two largest and most important garages are of long standing, having their origin previous to the automobile age. Murkett Bros. Ltd. are an interesting example of the development of this type of property usage. The firm began in a small way in a shop opposite St. Mary's Church in 1890. There the Murkett brothers built cycles and repaired them until the invention of the motor cycle and the car at the turn of the century. Changing over to the manufacture of motor cycles, they were the first English firm to export to Norway and Australia. Soon the firm moved along the High Street to the one time Walden School, and in 1910 purchased the George Hotel at Bedford, and converted it into a garage and showrooms. In 1911 the old Fountain Hotel, on the east side of the Market Square - Murketts' present Huntingdon premises - was acquired, together with the Corn Exchange which is now the Grand Cinema. The front of the hotel was rebuilt to provide showrooms and petrol pumps on either side of the entrance to the workshops which are at the rear. Since then other branches have been opened at Peterborough, Cambridge and March. Maddox and Kirby Ltd., the other large garage with petrol and extensive repair facilities,is situated on Hartford Road near the High Street. It had its origin in one of the old coach and carriage building firms of last century. In the north of the town, beyond the bridge, is a depot and garage of the United Counties Omnibus Co. Ltd. Premier Travel Ltd., whose head office and garage are at

Cambridge, have a booking office opposite All Saints' Church.

The Bus Station, opened after the war on Mill Common, is well placed, as it is only a few minutes from the shops and railway stations.

Market Hill serves as a municipal car park, except on market day when the park on Mill Common has to be used. Two private parks, the Hippodrome's and the George Hotel's, allow non-visitors to park for a small fee.

The two railway stations and sidings abut on the western outskirts of the built-up area, within easy reach of the town centre and bus station. Huntingdon North Station (Eastern Region) opened in 1850 and is on the main line from King's Cross to Edinburgh. It is joined to Huntingdon East by a 100 yards of open pathway. This station is on the branch line running from Cambridge to Kettering via St. Ives and Godmanchester, and tickets have to be obtained at Huntingdon North. The contrasting sizes of the stations and of their goods yards indicate the relatively unimportant services provided by the East Station.

INDUSTRIAL.

The two largest industrial concerns are conveniently situated near the railway. One, Chivers' Canning Factory was formerly the coach building premises of Windover's. The premises have been greatly extended and to a large extent rebuilt. Just to the north-east the Silent Channel Company has occupied since 1936 premises which were vacant for a number of years after the closing down of the Edison Bell Company. In Godmanchester parish, adjoining the stone bridge is the Huntingdon Hosiery Mill

in the premises of a defunct flour mill. Along the main thoroughfare are the Fen Potteries and Amplion Ltd., small factories established since the war. In these cases, old factory sites were taken over and adapted to the firms' needs. The old-established soft drink plant of Gogg and Osbourne Ltd. is centrally placed on High Street. The two factories in St. Germain Street also occupy old property units. Oriental Confectionery Manufacturers Ltd. opened in the town during the war and Ruston's Engineering Company, across the road from them, took over the premises of a large nursery and seed business after the last war. To the north of the town, the P. and H. Engineering Company has a modern factory on the Butts (the scene of medieval archery practice), a site occupied up to the end of the war by a timber yard. The development plan makes allowance for industrial development on St. Peter's Hill where are situated the small up-to-date factory of the Acoustical Manufacturing Company and the assembly and repair plant of Weatherhead's agricultural machinery.

Of the old rural handicrafts in the town little remains. The two smithies, still in existence at the end of the war, have both now ceased with the death or retirement of the old craftsmen. The premises of one is now a warehouse behind Woolworth's and the other is occupied by a carpenter. Four printing works, a laundry and several builders' yards occupy widely spaced property units throughout the town. Two small boat builders are alongside the river, one on the Godmanchester side.

Mention must be made of the former sites of two industrial

concerns, both very typical of this type of town, that have in recent years become defunct. The town nursery of Wood and Ingram in St.Germain Street was acquired by an engineering firm, and a Cambridge firm took over the seed and floral business and shop in George Street. The Huntingdon Brewery, which amalgamated with an Ely firm in 1950, closed its Huntingdon branch in 1957. The brewery occupied large premises on the east side of the High Street in the shopping area, and had maltings off St. John's Street.

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PART THREE

FUNCTIONS

CHAPTER VI.

HUNTINGDON AS A CENTRE OF TRANSPORT FACILITIES

All through its long history Huntingdon has been the centre of communications for the area by both road and river, and in modern times it rapidly became an important railway centre.

RIVER TRANSPORT.

For the greater part of its history the goods of Huntingdon were mainly transported by water. This method of transport was developed after the withdrawal of the Romans in the fifth century, by the Anglo-Saxons and later by the Danes who had invaded the country and settled on the river banks. In succeeding centuries the rivers draining into the Wash became important highways. The Ouse was linked to the Nene by the Old West River, which was navigable until the Fens were drained, when it ceased to exist. The former course which can still be traced, forms part of the eastern boundary of Huntingdonshire.

The first sign of decline in this form of transport seems to have started in the twelfth century with the building of the bridge at St. Ives with the result that Huntingdon was no longer the lowest bridging point, and the larger boats from King's Lynn no longer came as far up-stream. It was not however until the fourteenth century that the decline became appreciable. We are told, "The promising impression of Huntingdon in the thirteenth century was superseded in the following century by something different",(1),and one of the reasons given was that communica-

tion with King's Lynn by water had become increasingly difficult owing to the obstruction of the mill pools and sluices below Huntingdon constructed by the Abbot of Ramsey, and other owners of the reaches of the river.

However, even until the coming of the railway in the middle of the nineteenth century, the Ouse was still one of the chief highways of the county. It was navigable up to Bedford with Huntingdon being regarded as the most southerly of the Wash ports (2). In 1839 Pigot describes a private company operating boats on the Ouse and maintaining the locks and staunches, while "the inhabitants are supplied with coal and wood etc. by barges and other small craft, from Lynn Regis, and return laden with corn and other produce from the adjacent fertile districts"(3). With the coming of the railway the company went out of business, and now there is no traffic on the river.

ROAD TRANSPORT.

Early tracks developed into Roman ways, declined, then developed into the coach roads and so to the modern roads. Roads are the main arteries of the country, and Huntingdon stands astride a great and historic main road, famous from Roman times as the Ermine Street, and the busy traffic along this thoroughfare increases the importance of the town year by year. Huntingdon's function as a centre for road transport is clearly reflected in its linear form, and alike by its ancient inns and coach houses, and its modern hotels and garages lining the main road.

The importance of Ermine Street in determining the site of

Huntingdon has already been mentioned, and also the adverse effect on the prosperity of the town caused by the decline of the coaching trade, and its welcome revival with the advent of the automobile.

Huntingdon like most English towns owes its importance largely to the fact that it has always been the natural centre of many routes crossing the county. In Fig.14 Huntingdon is clearly shown to be the nodal point of these main roads. Again, as in other centres throughout the country these roads have proved to be completely inadequate to carry the great increase of both through ahd local traffic of this century. This has caused an acute traffic problem in the towns, especially in Huntingdon where it is seriously hindering many of the amenities of the town. The High Street of Huntingdon is the most important shopping street of the county, and separates the main residential area from the railway stations, the Bus Station, the Hospital and the Grammar School. This busy street is part of the north-south trunk road A.14, linking the dock area of London with Royston and Huntingdon, and joining the Great North Road at Alconbury Hill to the north. It also carries additional traffic from its tributary roads; notably the A.604 from Cambridge, Kettering and the Midlands; from the east by routes A.141, A.1123 and by the B.1043. In 1947 an Origin and Destination Traffic Census recorded that 4,397 vehicles and 2,917 cyclists passed along the High Street during a twelve hour period, and that 70 percent of the vehicular traffic was of a "through" nature (4). Much of this traffic consists of heavy goods vehicles, many of which carry exceptionally large loads. This may be compared

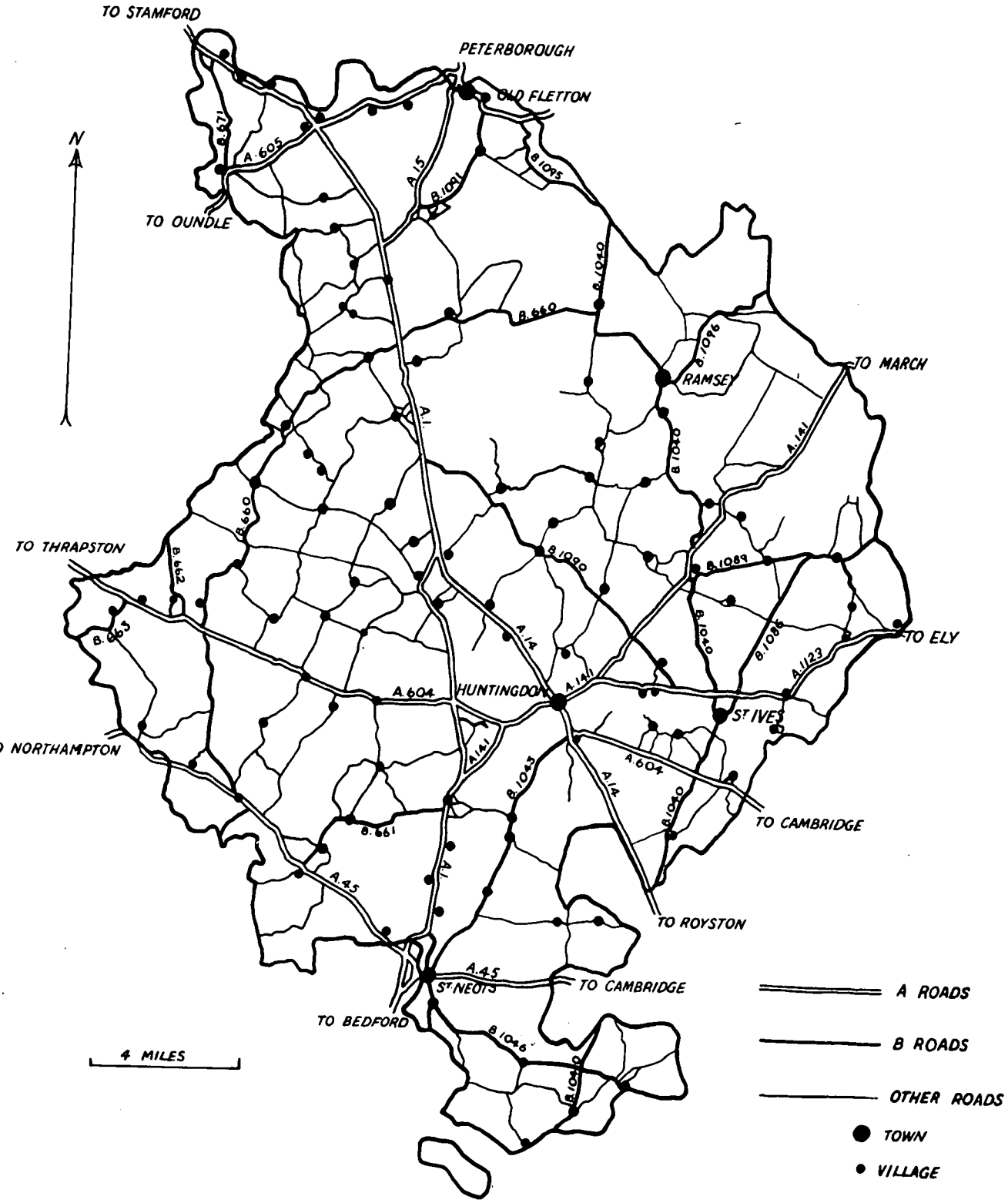
TO STAMFORD
PETERBOROUGH
OLD FLETTON
N
B.671
A.605
A.15
B.1091
B.1095
TO OUNDLE
B.1040
B.660
B.1096
RAMSEY
TO MARCH
A.1
B.1040
A.1141
B.660
TO THRAPSTON
B.662
B.1090
B.1089
B.663
A.14
B.1040
B.1086
A.1123
TO ELY
A.604
HUNTINGDON
A.1141
ST IVES
NORTHAMPTON
A.1141
B.1043
A.14
A.604
B.1040
TO CAMBRIDGE
B.661
A.45
A.1
TO ROYSTON
A.45
ST NEOTS
TO CAMBRIDGE
TO BEDFORD
B.1046
B.1040
4 MILES
A ROADS
B ROADS
OTHER ROADS
TOWN
VILLAGE

FIG. 14. ROADS

with another typical census carried out over sixteen hours along the route A.1 (the Great North Road) in Huntingdonshire which recorded the transit of 5,320 vehicles (5), a total that emphasises the congestion of traffic in the High Street. This modern problem is aggravated by the extremely inadequate carriageway, which narrows to just over fourteen feet on the river bridge. Only in a few places does the width of the footpaths exceed six feet, and at their narrowest they are little more than kerbs, thus endangering pedestrians, particularly alongside All Saints' Church (Plate XI). The authorities of All Saints' have allowed

Plate XI. TRAFFIC CONGESTION IN HIGH STREET, south of the junction with George Street. All Saints' Church on the right.

pedestrians to use a small path at the back of the church so that there is now a safe way from the Market Place to George Street. Shortly before the war the narrow exit from Hartford Road into High Street was widened, but this has proved to be the only improvement the authorities have been able to make. Further congestion has resulted from the development of the new housing estate to the east of the town, so that the extremely narrow St. Germain Street has become one of the main outlets from High Street, right in the centre of the shopping area.

The solution suggested in the Development Plan (6) is to build several new roads designed to free the High Street for its principal purpose as the town's shopping centre and to faciliate the quick and easy passage of through traffic.

It is considered neither desirable nor practical to reconstruct the High Street, as it would involve a major disturbance of business and would involve the rebuilding of a substantial portion of the town. The proposed overspill from London would seem to necessitate an acceleration of building plans, and it is intended to carry out this work in three stages. Firstly, it is proposed to improve Walden Road, and to extend it beyond the present Bus Station to join High Street north of the Old Bridge Hotel, so as to afford some immediate relief to the central and main part of the congested area. Work has commenced with the widening of the Walden Road exit to George Street, and the rectory of All Saints' Church at the other end of the road has been acquired in preparation for demolition. Secondly, a trunk by-pass road will be constructed to pass to the

west of Huntingdon. It will cross the railway and George Street close to the railway bridge, and the river flats by a viaduct, and so pass to the north and east of Godmanchester. This road will divert all the present through traffic along the A.14 and A.604 roads. The third and final stage will carry the Eastern Counties through traffic, and almost all the local traffic so as to avoid the High Street. At present the only route for such traffic is by George Street, High Street and Hartford Road. It is proposed to extend George Street due east by demolishing a few shops, so that it will pass along the margin of the Old Grammar School fields to join Nursery Road and so to Hartford Road.

The twelve taxi services of the town are one-man businesses. Their regular hire is from the Huntingdon railway stations to the town and adjoining countryside. The increase of these services from three to twelve since 1945 not only demonstrates the effect of the relaxation of war-time restrictions, but also a growing demand, particularly by the personnel of nearby airfields, especially that of the U.S.A.F. at Alconbury.

For most people the main link between town and country is by bus. This service developed in the inter-war years, discovering by the process of trial and error the most economic routes. As Huntingdon is a small town it depends very little on public transport for internal movement; but is a bus centre as defined by Green (7), that is, a centre from which operates any bus service serving no place larger than itself.

Four bus companies have an interest in the Huntingdon area. The

Eastern Counties Bus Company operates a regular service from Cambridge to Peterborough via Huntingdon. Whippet Coaches, a small private company, with offices and garages at Hilton operates regular services from Huntingdon to the villages in the south-east of the county and to Cambridge. This company also operates several regular express services from Huntingdon to London on certain weekdays, and from Wyton R.A.F. camp at weekends to large towns such as London, Peterborough, Leicester, Coventry and Birmingham. Premier Travel Ltd., another private Company with head office and garage at Cambridge and an office at Huntingdon, provides services in the sector of the county from Ramsey to St. Neots and Bedford. The United Counties Omnibus Company Ltd., with garage and offices in Huntingdon, runs services throughout the county, especially in the west. There is then a mingling of routes and no monopoly of any area by any particular company, except that of Whippet Coaches to the villages in the south-east, and of United Counties in the extreme west.

Frequency of services and accessibility of the villages are dealt with elsewhere in the chapter.

RAILWAY FACILITIES.

British Railways provide two essential services; the transportation of goods and of passengers. The railway network of the county is shown in Fig. 15. The London to Edinburgh main line of the Eastern Region almost exactly bisects the county. The Kettering to Cambridge line which passes through Huntingdon East Station and St. Ives is responsible for cross-country traffic east to west and vice versa. Both lines

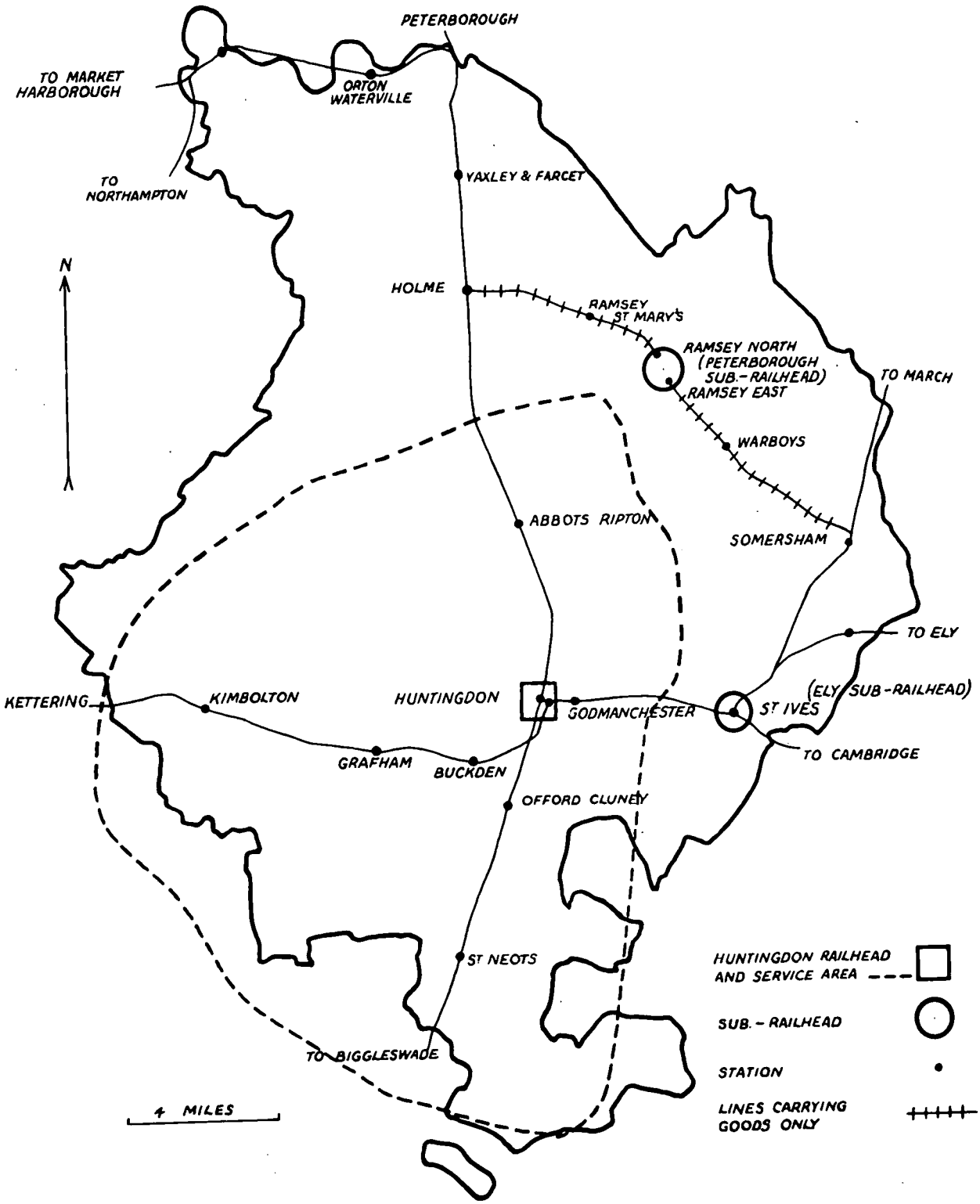

FIG. 15. RAILWAYS.

carry passenger and goods traffic. The branch lines from Somersham to Ramsey and from Ramsey to Holme now carry goods only. In the north of the county communications eastward are provided by the line from Peterborough to March and the Fens, and to Northamptom and Rugby in the west.

Passenger Traffic.

The Cambridge to Kettering line has three trains each way on weekdays, stopping at all intermediate stations.. It provides somewhat limited facilities for train connections to other parts of the country; to Ely and King's Lynn via Cambridge, to March and the Cambridgeshire Fens via St. Ives and to the Midland Region of British Railways via Kettering. The main north-south line carries seven trains from the north to Huntingdon, and eight to London on weekdays, with an extra train on each line on Saturday. Eleven trains from London to the north stop at Huntingdon on weekdays, except Saturday when the number increases to fifteen. Many of these trains stop at intermediate stations within the county. Lately cheap return fare facilities have been introduced between Huntingdon and King's Cross on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays on the 11.30 am train from Huntingdon, returning on the 6.30 pm from King's Cross. A half-day excursion train to London on Saturdays has proved very popular. It leaves Huntingdon at 12.43 pm and the return journey is by the fast 10.45 pm non-stop train from King's Cross. Thus, the business men and housewives of Huntingdon have opportunities of travelling to larger towns - Peterborough, Cambridge and London if they so

desire. However, many Huntingdon people consider that the express train service to and from London is inadequate, especially as Huntingdon is now the road focal point from a number of large aerodromes, both of the R.A.F. and the U.S.A.F. (8).

Goods Traffic.

Since the war, to facilitate speed and ease of movement, British Railways have developed certain stations known as railheads. Each of these stations has been allotted a service area, which usually contains one or more sub-railheads. The remaining stations in the area are known as, "absorbed stations" and these now handle goods traffic in full truckloads only, such as road metals, fertilizers, potatoes and coal. All carted traffic, or "smalls" - that is, traffic in less than truck loads - is sent by rail to the railhead where it is sorted, and that for sub-railheads is forwarded by trunk motor. At the sub-railhead it is amalgamated with traffic received there for local places, and deliveries are then made by radial road motors throughout the sub-railhead area. Similarly, outward traffic is collected by road at the sub-railhead from the absorbed stations, and then sent by road in trunk motors to the railhead where it is put on rail.

A large area of Huntingdonshire and part of Bedfordshire is served by the Huntingdon railhead (Fig. 15). There is no sub-railhead in this service area, and all deliveries and collections are made by radial motor services operating from the main station.

The remainder of the county is served as follows :-

1. The northern area is served by Peterborough, with Ramsey North as a sub-railhead.
2. The eastern part of the county is served by St. Ives, which is a sub-railhead of Ely.
3. In the extreme south-east, the Gransden district falls within the Cambridge railhead.

Before the railhead system was inaugurated just after the last war, Huntingdon had a large tributary area of approximately ten miles radius. The area extended northwards to the Stukeleys and Alconbury, places beyond these points were dealt with by Abbots' Ripton; eastwards to Hartford, Houghton and Wyton, beyond by St. Ives; west and north-west to include the farms and villages as far as Spaldwick; southwards and south-west to Godmanchester, and for certain traffic, the Offords, Buckden, Gravely and intermediate area. Huntingdon was the natural choice as a railhead with the railways converging on it. Its value was enhanced by the number of sidings, warehouses and cranes it possessed so that even before reorganization traffic was sometimes dealt with at Huntingdon which otherwise might have been dealt with at another depot.

Though many concerns - industrial, agricultural and commercial - now use road transport to a greater or lesser extent, an analysis of traffic passing through the Huntingdon stations serves to indicate the resources and nature of the tributary area.

Analysis of Traffic Forwarded (9).

1. Agricultural.

Wheat: Direct to flour mills, or to agents in other towns for transfer to millers.

Barley: Usually to breweries, such as those at Burton and Leeds.

Vegetables: Potatoes, brussels, cabbage, green peas, etc. according to season to markets in large cities.

Sugar Beet: To specified factories such as Peterborough, Spalding, Ely, etc.

Hay and Straw: To various parts of the country for feeding and bedding.

Timber: Periodically during forestry clearance.

Live Stock: From farm to farm.

2. Industrial

Canned Vegetables: To numerous centres (Chivers).

Hosiery and Underwear: To wholesalers in London and elsewhere (Huntingdon Hosiery Mills).

Confectionery. To wholesalers (Oriental Confectionery Manufacturers.

Motor and Electric Industries: Motorcar body accessories, rubber mouldings, radio and electrical components, etc. (Silent Channel, P. and H. Engineering, Acoustical Manufacturing, Amplion Ltd.).

Agricultural Machinery: To all parts, including ports for export (Ruston's).

3. Miscellaneous.

Household Removal.

Distributive Trade.

Public Traffic.

Mail and Government Traffic. Especially from local airfields.

Analysis of Traffic Received.

1. Agricultural.

Seeds, Patent Manures and Fertilizers. From a variety of centres.

Farm Implements. Direct to farmer via agricultural distributors.

Feeding Stuffs.

Live Stock. Farm to farm, or sale to farm.

2. Industrial.

Yarn and Dyes. For hosiery manufacture, from Yorkshire and Lancashire.

Timber.

Salt and empty tins for canning.

Coal and Coke. Including steam coal from South Wales, and coke from gas companies in large towns.

A variety of raw materials for industries in the town.

3. Miscellaneous.

Building Materials. Bricks; roadstone, slag tar, cement, etc. for road repairs and use on local airfields both R.A.F., and U.S.A.F.

Petrol. Large storage tanks adjoining the railway.

Government traffic, household removal, public traffic, mail, newspapers and a large amount of general shop traffic.

The traffic movements clearly illustrate some of the main functions

of the town, the type of industry carried on, the services provided and the predominantly agricultural nature of the area of which Huntingdon is the centre.

The industrial firms particularly, transport a large amount of their traffic by their own vehicles, or by British Road Services, for example the firm of Chivers receives most of its raw vegetables direct from the farms, and distributes the bulk of its products by road. However, the industrial traffic is so heavy that the warehouses and other facilities of the station are fully extended, and it seems probable that extensions will be necessary in the near future.

MOVEMENT WITHIN THE HUNTINGDON AREA.

To analyse with accuracy the movement of people within the Huntingdon area is difficult. Though there is local movement from village to village, the main flow is directed towards the towns to which many people look for their employment and services. The amount of movement to and from Huntingdon can be judged by the accessibility and frequency of the services provided by public transport. Private transport services are less readily analysed, but their importance is shown by the fact that driving licences in Huntingdonshire for private vehicles increased by about 75 percent between 1939 and 1949, and the number of private cars registered in the county is over eighty per thousand of the population, compared with a national average of 40 (10). As this figure shows that on an average two families out of every seven own a private car, the countryside is much less dependent than it was two decades ago on public transport. Petrol derationing too resulted in a decrease in the number

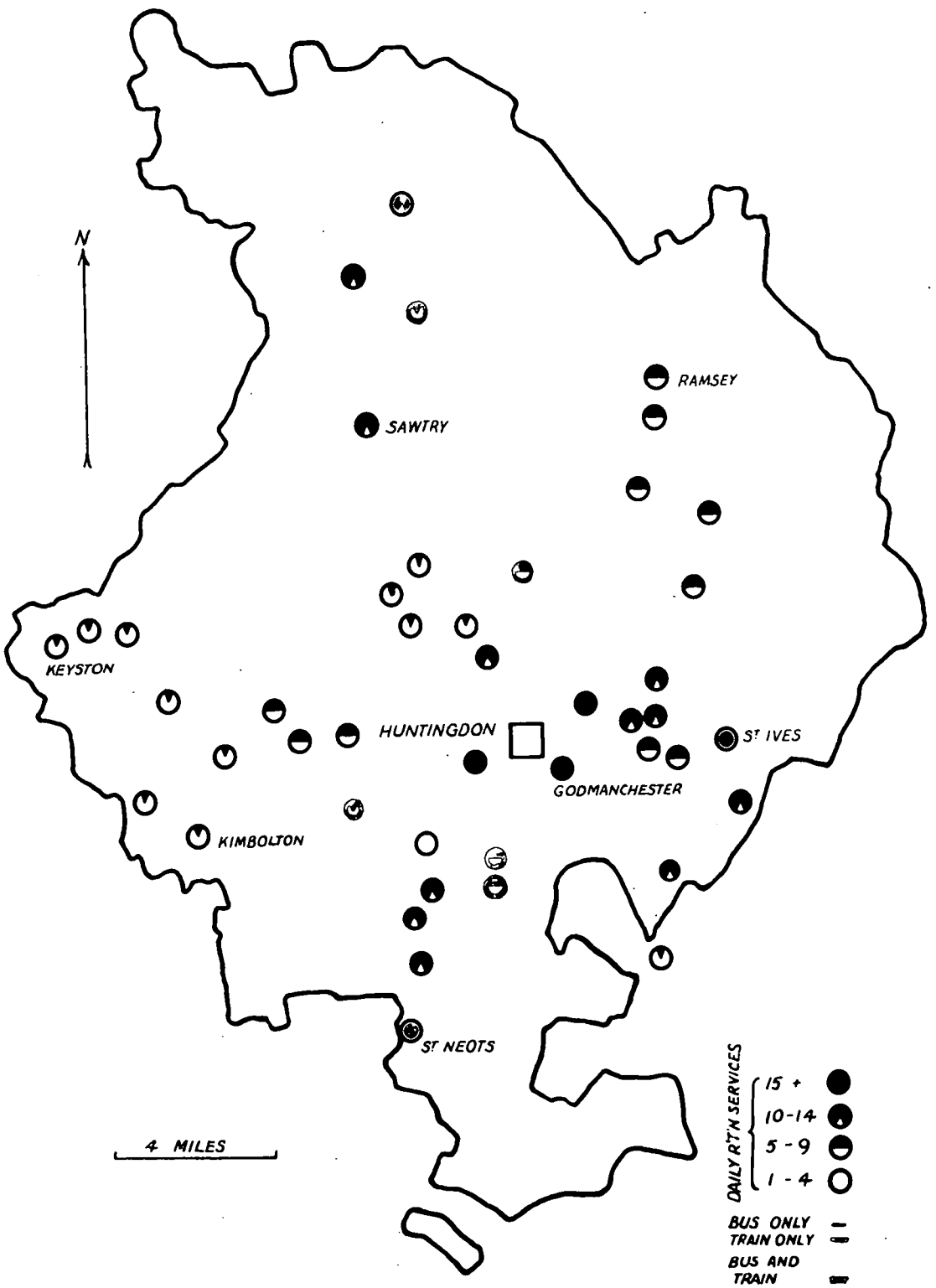

FIG. 16. TRANSPORT FREQUENCY FROM VILLAGE TO HUNTINGDON ON WEEKDAYS, 1957.

of bus services.

Frequency of Services, 1957.

Figs. 16 and 17 illustrate the frequency of public transport services between the villages and small towns of the county with Huntingdon.

Four orders of frequency have been distinguished for ease of analysis. Services which provide fifteen or more buses or trains each way daily are described as of first-order frequency, those with ten to fourteen as second-order frequency, those with five to nine as third-order frequency and services which give less than five each way as of fourth-order frequency (11). For this analysis 1957 bus and train schedules have been used.

The frequencies must of necessity be largely dependent on bus traffic, though the rail services are important in some cases. To the great detriment of their traffic receipts some of the stations are a long way from the villages from which they take their name. For instance, the Offord and Buckden Station in Offord Cluny, is over a mile from Buckden; while Kimbolton Station is nearly two miles from Kimbolton. In such cases they have nottbeen taken into account in calculating the frequency. Some bus services are similarly placed, as for example the Huntingdon to Kettering bus along the A.604 road stops at Leighton Turn and Catworth Fox, junctions with secondary roads. In both cases the villages of Leighton and Catworth are a mile from the stop and therefore have not been recorded, as it is considered that the distance is too great for that service to be readily available to all residents of the village. On the same route, stops at Molesworth, Bythorn and Keyston Turn

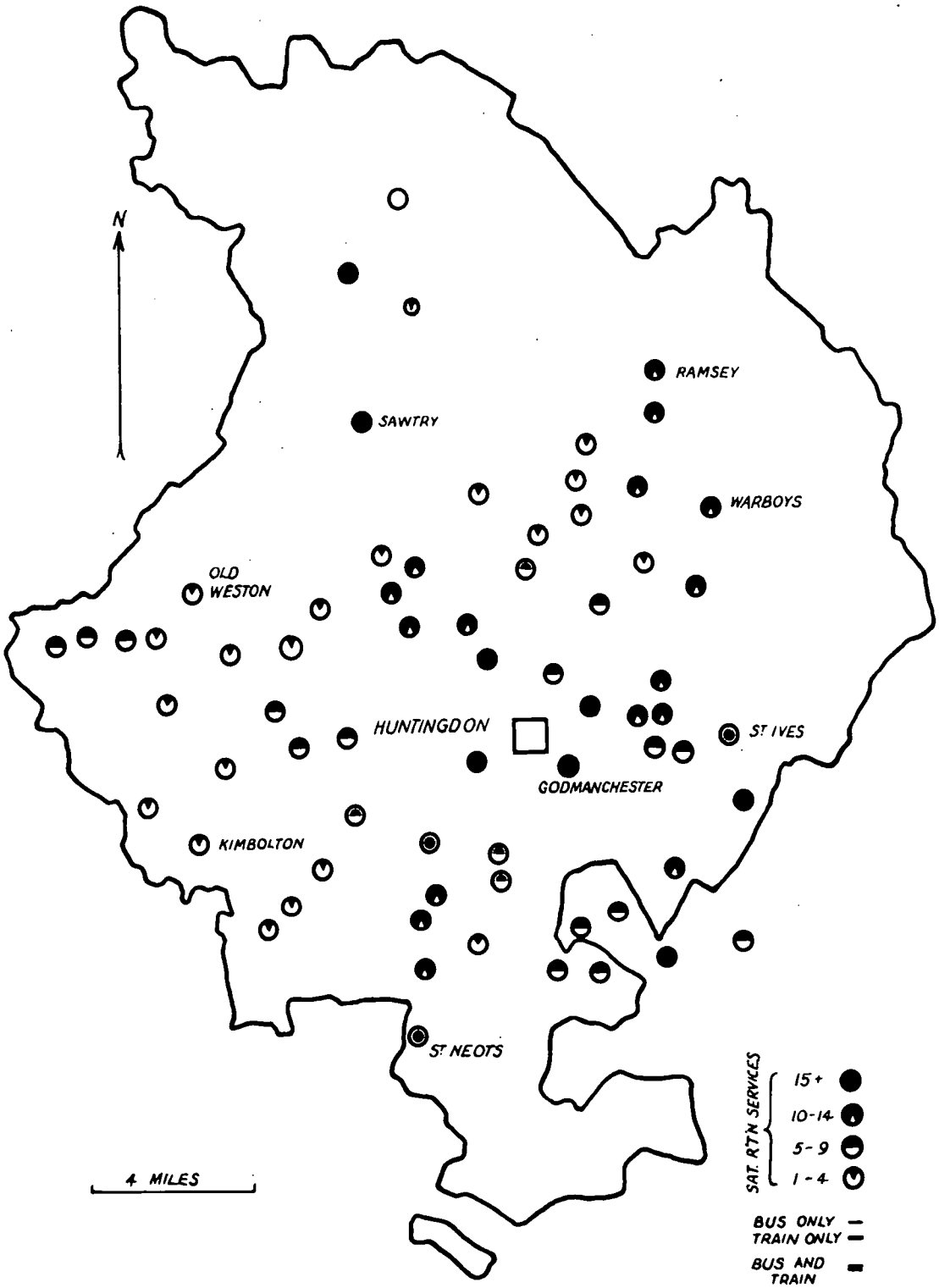

FIG 17. TRANSPORT FREQUENCY FROM VILLAGE TO HUNTINGDON ON SATURDAYS, 1957.

are taken into account as the villages stand within half a mile of the main road. Thus the frequency in some cases may be higher than that shown on the frequency diagrams.

In country areas, the low density and dispersal of population in small villages combine to make adequate bus and train services impracticable. Abbots Ripton is a good example of this, having on weekdays a third-order frequency completely dependent on railway services, while on Saturdays in the same frequency three of its seven return services are by rail. The station is shortly to be closed and demolished by order of the British Transport Commission, with an estimated saving of £2,000 a year(12). This decision was justified by a census taken during a week in May 1957 when the total number of passengers joining trains daily from Monday to Friday averaged six. On the Saturday the figures were respectively thirty-eight and twenty. These numbers of passengers were considered inadequate. A petition to the B.T.C. appealed against this decision on the ground that village life was very dependent on the station, as it was the only means the ordinary parishioner had of visiting Huntingdon for shopping. It emphasized the fact that there is only one shop in the village itself; and argued that the population might rapidly become smaller as workers would not stay at Abbots Ripton when they found there was no way of getting into the towns. When this takes place Abbots Ripton will then have no services on weekdays and only a fourth-order frequency service on Saturdays.

The residents of the towns of Ramsey, St. Ives, St. Neots and

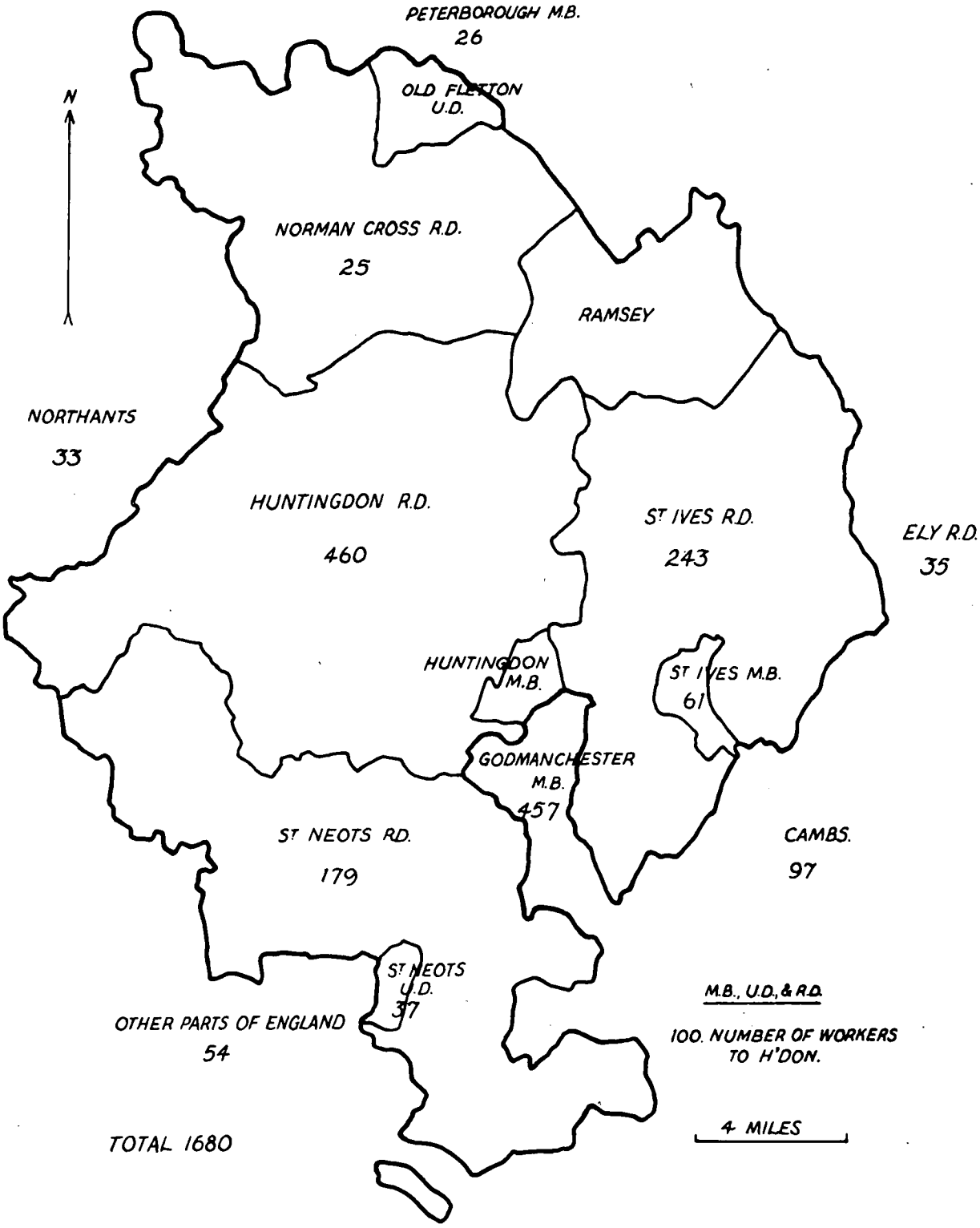

FIG. 18. DAILY MOVEMENT OF WORKERS TO HUNTINGDON.

the adjacent villages make little use of the services provided to and from Huntingdon for shopping, though many find them useful for getting to their work. In these cases the frequency loses much of its significance.

From Monday to Friday the full network of services is not completely developed. Those villages which are not on or close to the main roads linking Huntingdon to the neighbouring towns are badly served by bus. Along the main roads the frequencies have been encouraged by the linear settlement pattern which offers a higher total population per "bus mile" than obtains under less concentrated settlement. Westward along the main road, the villages lie on the Huntingdon, Thrapston, Kettering bus route; southwards along the Huntingdon, St. Neots, and Bedford route; south-east to Cambridge; eastward to St. Ives and north-east to Ramsey. Very few villages have first-order frequencies except those most closely adjacant to Huntingdon which happen to lie on more than one bus route. Along the main roads, villages have either a second or third-order frequency, while those villages away from the main road that are served by public transport (excepting those on a railway) have a frequency of the fourth order.

Market-day in Huntingdon is on Saturday, and in common with other centres the crowds of people pouring into the town to do their shopping, to transact business and to avail themselves of the other services and amenities, necessitates maximum schedules and the fullest possible use of transport facilities. Along the main bus routes there is no great increase in frequency, though several of the villages have moved up one place in frequency order. Those villages not on the main routes,

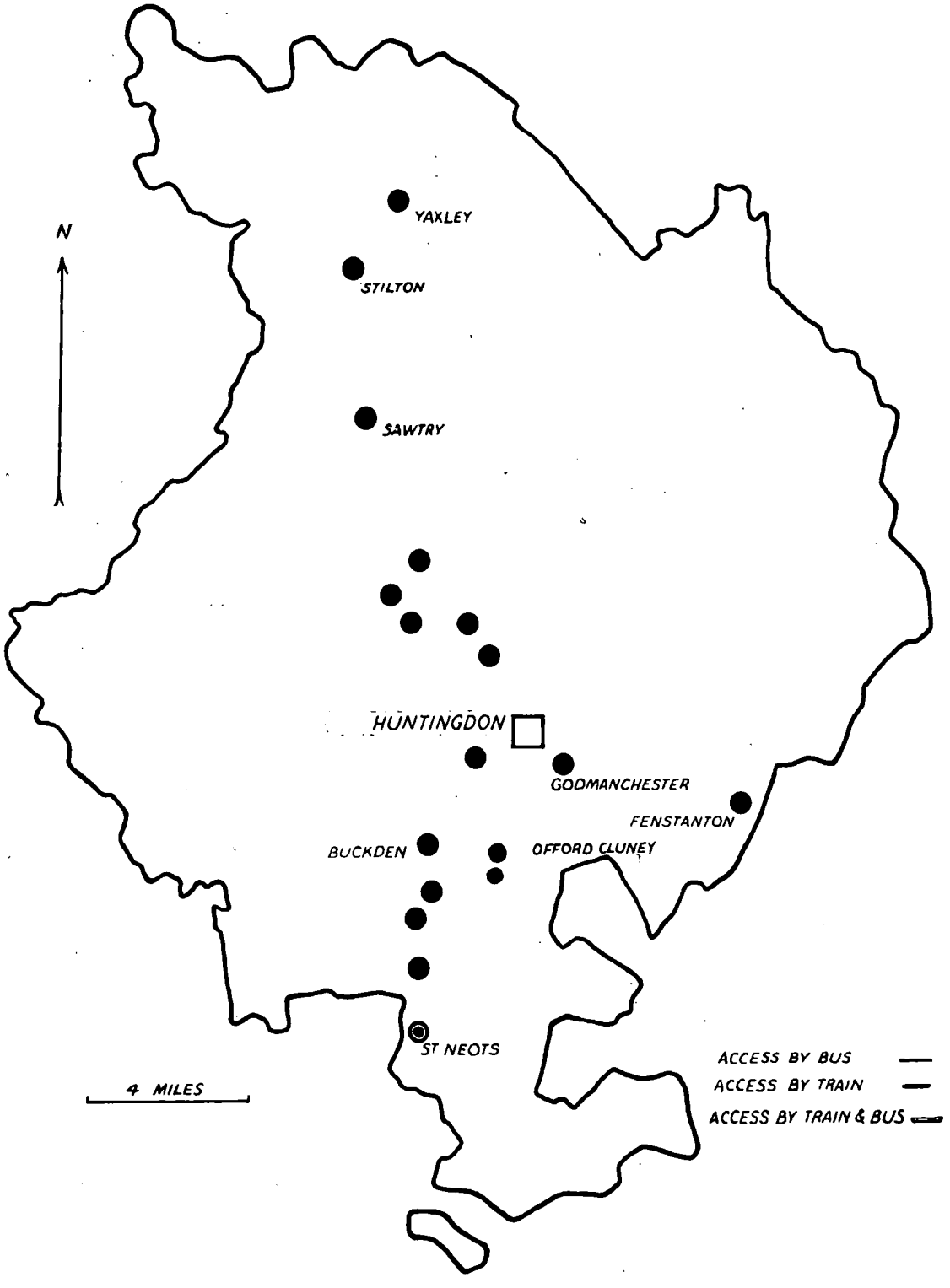

FIG. 19 ACCESS TO HUNTINGDON BY 8 A.M. MONDAY TO SATURDAY. 1957.

but which are served by bus, usually have a fourth-order frequency. There are a few notable exceptions, especially in the south-east of the county, where the Whippet Coaches run a circular service from their garage at Hilton to Huntingdon linking the small villages in that area. It is noticeable that some villages like Abbots Ripton and the Clunys, served only by train from Monday to Friday have bus transport as well on Saturdays, but the three return bus services do not change the frequency order from third to second.

Urban Accessibility by Public Transport.

The accessibility of Huntingdon by public transport services is determined only partially by existing routes and frequencies. Many schedules make no provision for the transport of workpeople or schoolchildren; others leave many of the villages in a state of isolation for the greater part of the evening. It is therefore necessary to direct attention to early morning and late evening services.

8 am Accessibility, 1957.

In many parts of the country 8 am accessibility indicates clearly the extent of the "employment orbit" of a town, but for Huntingdon this is not the case. Not less than 1680 workers make the daily journey into Huntingdon (13) (Fig.18), many to start work before 8 am in factories in Huntingdon and Godmanchester. These provide employment for approximately 1150 persons, 40 percent of whom live outside the two boroughs (14). As access by public transport is only possible by bus from the villages directly to the north and south along the main roads, and from the Offords

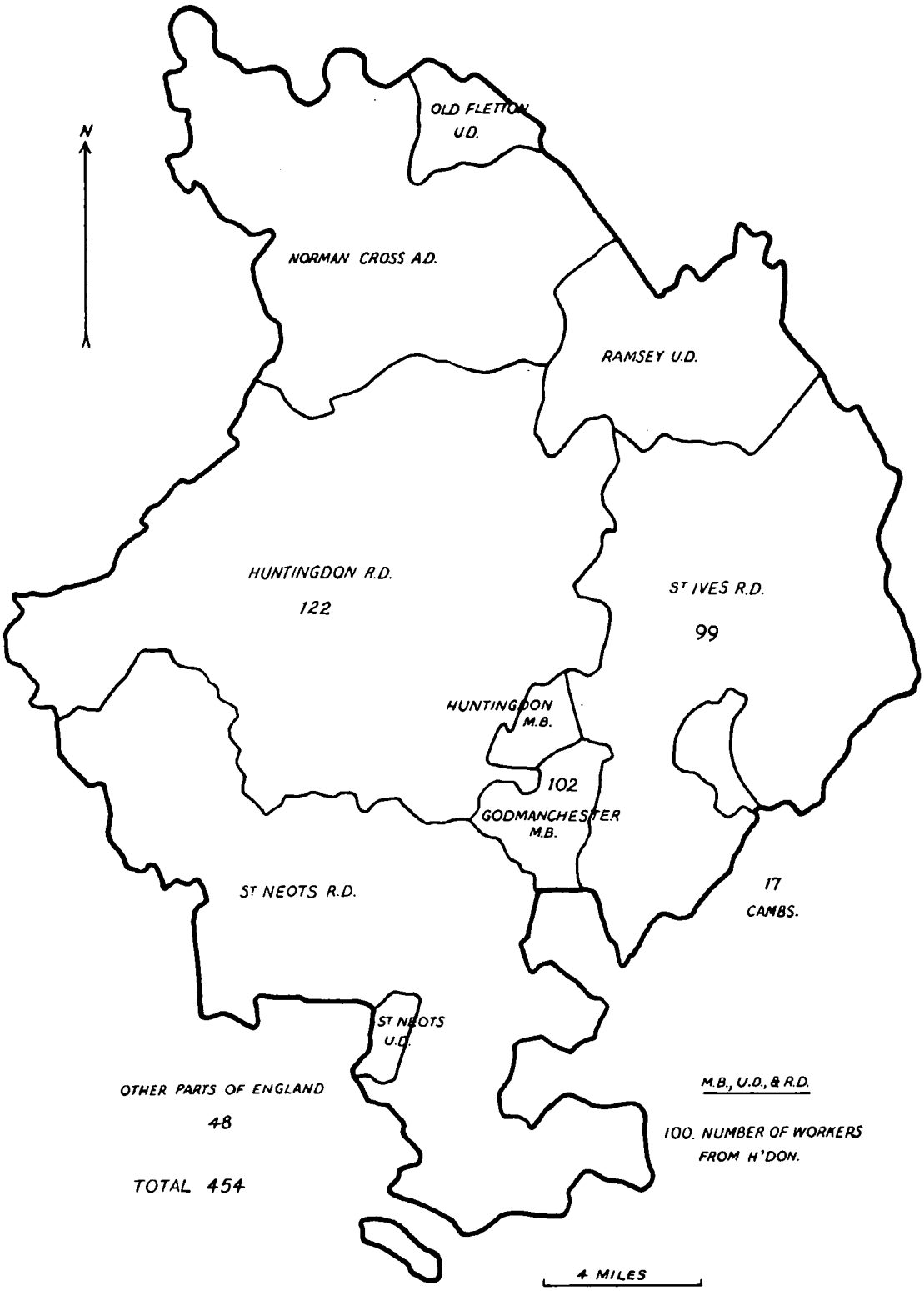

FIG. 20. DAILY MOVEMENT OF WORKERS FROM HUNTINGDON.

by train, there is little correlation between 8 am accessibility and employment orbit (Fig.19). This lack of accessibility for workers is particularly noticeable from the east, St. Ives and St. Ives Rural District. The larger firms in the town find it necessary to run special buses to transport their workers. An excellent example is supplied by Chivers, the largest employers in the town, who bring by special bus employees from March and Chatteris to the east, Peterborough to the north and from St. Neots picking up employees from the south and the west, not to mention many living in the intervening villages.

The magnitude of movement by workers out of Huntingdon is much less than the inward movement (15)(Fig.20), especially as at least a quarter of the outward movement is to Godmanchester, just across the river.

9 am Accessibility, 1957.

Comparison of Figs. 16 and 21 shows that the general pattern of the public transport services has taken shape by 9 am. Services timed to reach Huntingdon by 9 am are of special value to schoolchildren and professional workers. In the latter group, the salaried class, asmight be expected private transport plays an important part. Many black-coated workers live well outside Huntingdon, either by choice or by necessity, and any day a large number of cars can be seen parked in the public and private car parks and roads of the town.

Late Return to Villages, 1957.

Public transport services which leave town late in the evening are essential if village residents are to return to their homes after

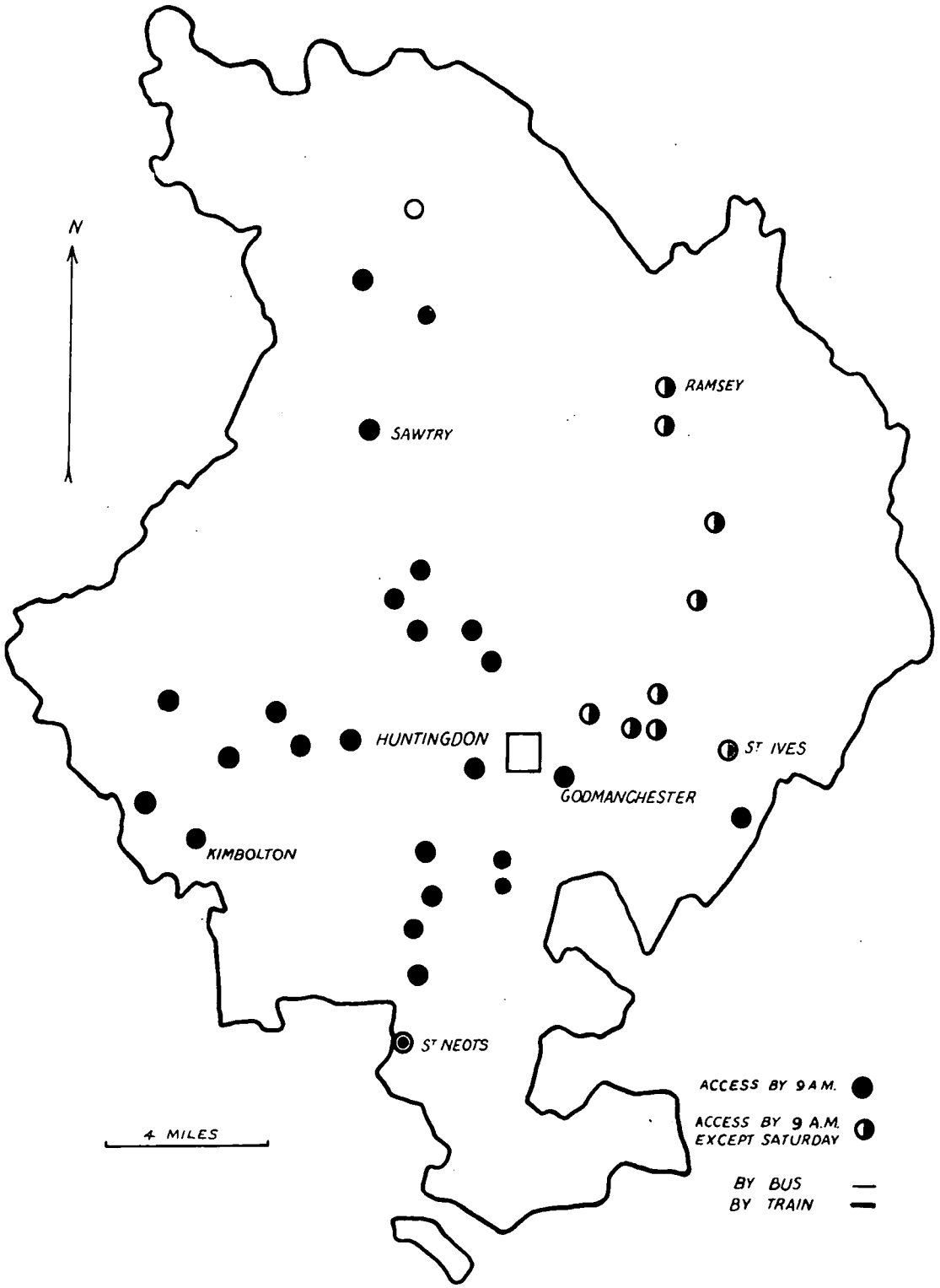

FIG 21. ACCESS TO HUNTINGDON BY 9 A.M. MONDAY TO SATURDAYS 1957.

attending evening functions, which for many people means a visit to the cinema. The second evening performance at the two cinemas usually finishes between 10.00 and 10.30 pm., but as the cinema opens before 5 pm, return services after 9 pm may allow patrons to return to their homes. In certain cases, such as the bus from Huntingdon to Great Paxton via Brampton and the Offords, the scheduled time of departure is 10.30 pm, or when the cinema performance concludes. Late return to villages is very limited from Monday to Friday (Fig.22). Only adjacent villages can rely on a bus leaving Huntingdon after 10 pm, and proceeding eastwards to Wyton and westwards to Brampton, both of which have R.A.F. stations. It is possible to ride westward to Spaldwick by a 9.45 pm bus during the week, and an hour later on Saturdays. The Peterborough to Cambridge bus also provides a late return service to villages along its route, and this privilege is also available to the group of villages to the south-east of Huntingdon on Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Many more villages have late return services from Huntingdon on Saturday, than on other days of the week, as Saturday is the most popular day for people to visit the town to shop and attend the cinemas. The interdependence between the late night return to the villages and the cinemas is clearly illustrated by a comparison of Fig.22 and Fig.35 (Cinema Area).

Public Transport Hinterland, Saturday, 1957.

Those villages to which public transport facilities are better to Huntingdon than to any other town on Saturdays are shown on Fig.23.

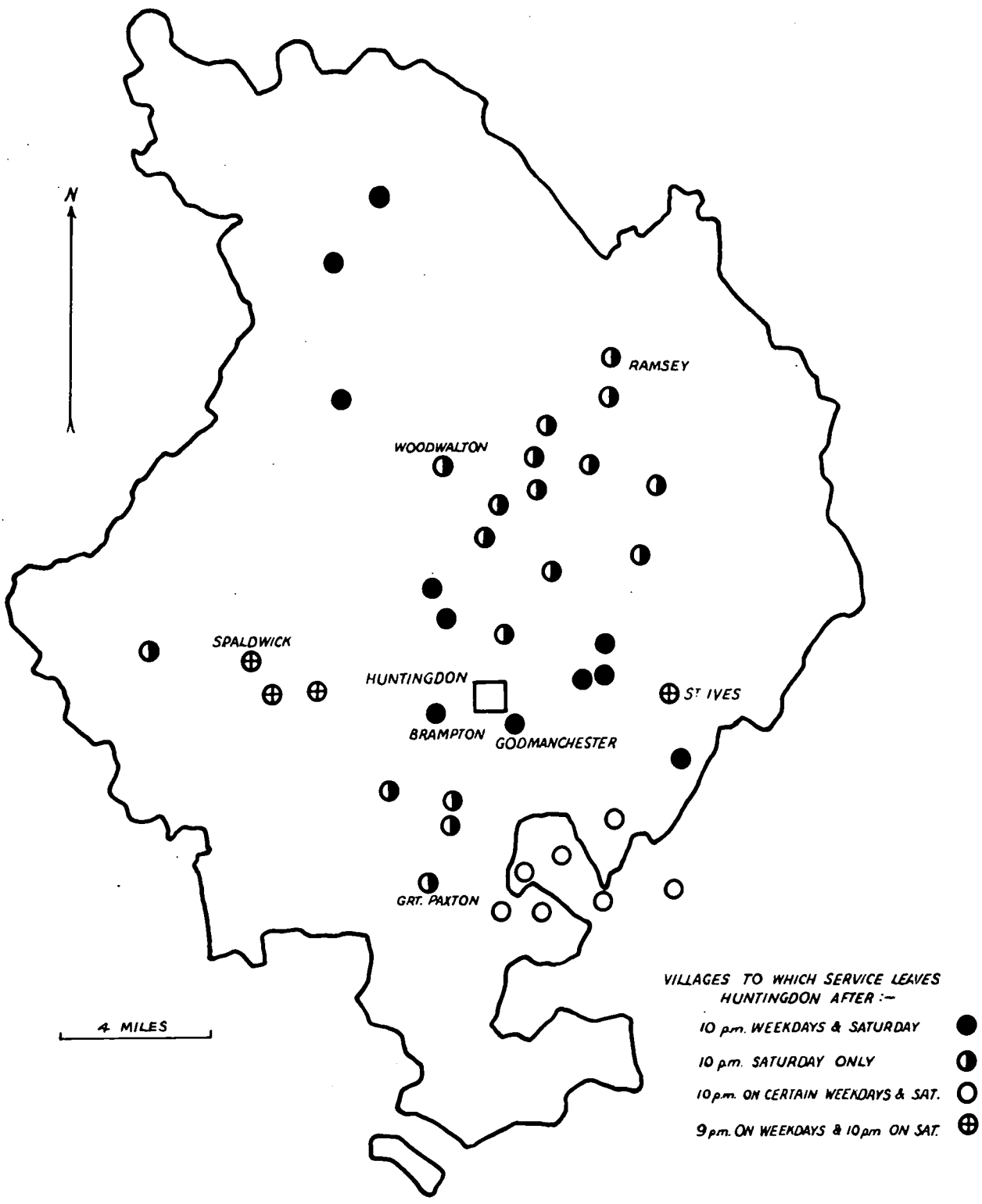

FIG. 22. LATE RETURN TO VILLAGES FROM HUNTINGDON, 1957.

The factors involved are the frequency of service and convenient journey times. On through routes, the latter is the determining factor. When there are circular routes from more than one bus centre passing through a village, frequency has also to be considered. From Old Weston for example, it takes less time to reach Thrapston by bus than Huntingdon, but frequency is greater to Huntingdon, therefore the village is considered to be marginal to the Huntingdon hinterland. The line enclosing these villages on the map represents the boundary of an area, within which public transport facilities are better to Huntingdon on a Saturday than to any other town. Within this area all persons who depend entirely on public transport will of necessity look to Huntingdon for their services. However, on the outskirts of the area, people capable of walking or cycling a short distance may find centres other than Huntingdon more accessible. For instance, the village of Upwood is less than two miles from Ramsey; residents of Perry and Dillington have only to make their way to the A.45 road near Great Staughton, to pick up a regular daily service to St. Neots, the service to Huntingdon running on Saturdays only. Though these villages appear in Huntingdon's hinterland, as regards public transport facilities, their inhabitants will often prefer Ramsey or St. Neots because of their better accessibility.

FIG. 23. PUBLIC TRANSPORT HINTERLAND - SATURDAY, 1957.

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CHAPTER VII

HUNTINGDON AS A MARKET AND DISTRIBUTING CENTRE.

The problem of the disposal of agricultural surplus from the locality of Huntingdon suggests a study of the methods of marketing. If a farmer has haulage facilities, either by ownership or by hire, produce can be taken directly from the farm to distant markets without reference to Huntingdon, either in movement of goods or in use of its business services. The efficiency of marketing depends largely upon the existence of some form of distributing medium, such as, for example, road or rail transit of a large bulk of collected goods, or by a salesman's representative extending the area of his firm's services. Much of the produce is disposed of by telephone, while seeds, artificial manures and machinery are ordered in the same way, or through travelling agents. The development of these services has enabled the farmer to be less dependent on a market.

The extent to which Huntingdon acts as a market centre for the farmers of the locality is demonstrated by the market in the town itself. No livestock market is held as this service is provided by the neighbouring market towns, such as St. Ives, St. Neots, Cambridge, Kettering and Peterborough. The Market Place has no extensive warehouse area. Warehouses which are present in the town are those associated with the wholesale and retail shops and factories. There is also a complete lack of potato, corn, and fruit merchants' offices, which are normally found in a market town. The offices in Huntingdon

are mostly administrative or commercial in function and not agricultural, except for one large auctioneering firm that operates at markets throughout the county. The Huntingdon market was formerly more extensive and important than at the present; it was established at least as early as the first part of the tenth century and fixed on Saturday by a charter of 1630 (1). All tolls were collected here for pitching stalls and for passing through the town, and all the main roads met in the market square for this purpose. In the late eighteenth century a large quantity of corn was still bought and sold (2), while Hatfield in 1854 tells us, "behind the townhall is the new market for butcher's meat, poultry and fish, erected a few years since .. two rows of covered sheds at right angles facing the street, supported upon iron pillars, defended the tradesmen and their stores from the weather."(3). The firestation stands on the former site of the butcher's shambles and the sheds have also disappeared. Several factors contributed in the decline of the Huntingdon market. One of the most important factors is the lack of a livestock market, a function carried out by St. Ives, which has always had an important livestock market. St. Ives retained its importance in the nineteenth century even in competition with the new Cambridge cattle market, as it caused the St. Ives Council to have a new market place of four acres with modern pens constructed with room for, "a hundred fat bullocks, two thousand store cattle, six hundred fat sheep and lambs"(4). In medieval times the burgesses of Huntingdon obtained all the tolls imposed on wares brought into St. Ives, so there was little incentive to

construct a livestock market in Huntingdon itself. If the burgesses of Huntingdon ever considered the building of such a market at a later date, the lack of space in the market area of Huntingdon prevented it. With no livestock market to help retain its former status, it started to decline when modern means of transport enabled the more important market centres to extend their range to include areas much farther afield than those within the previous three or four mile radius, the distance that could reasonably be covered by a farmer and his wife walking to market and returning on the same day. However, Huntingdon market, unlike some of the other markets in the county, has not ceased to exist altogether. According to Maxwell, regular markets were held at Huntingdon, St. Ives, St. Neots, Ramsey, Kimbolton and Somersham in 1793 (5). This list is not complete, and from other sources it is clear that markets have also been held at Stilton and Yaxley (6). At the present day only St. Ives, St. Neots, Huntingdon and Ramsey retain their market function, the last two having only a small stall market.

The present importance of Huntingdon as a shopping centre has helped to maintain the comparative importance of the small Saturday stall market at which general retail trade is carried out. The market square has room for twenty-two stalls, these pitches always being filled. The regular stallholders in 1957 were mainly concerned with the sale of manufactured goods from various parts of the country. Many of these move to Huntingdon from the Friday market at Chatteris. Seven of the stall holders however, are greengrocers who come from Huntingdon (two),

Godmanchester, Hemingford, Woodhurst, Offord and Cambridge, and sell local produce when it is in season.

The view was expressed at a meeting of the Huntingdon and District Chamber of Trade, when discussing a complaint that stallholders cut prices on proprietory goods, that the market though small helps to attract people into the town on market day, to the benefit of all concerned (7).

As far as the direct disposal of agricultural surplus is concerned, it is obvious that Huntingdon has very limited facilities as a market centre. However, farmers from a large rural area dispose of some of their produce via Huntingdon station, particularly when it is to be sent any distance, such as to the great wholesale markets of the large towns or to factories for processing. The traffic on the railway reflects the fact that agriculture is the staple industry of the area, details of which are given elsewhere. The extent of the district in which the farmers depend on Huntingdon is indicated by Fig.22. This shows the area for which Huntingdon acts as the railhead. Likewise, farms in this area largely receive their requirements, such as seeds, artificial manures and farm implements through Huntingdon.

Many of the farmers grow their produce under contract to nearby firms. In such cases the produce is usually sent by road direct to the factories. For example, sugar-beet is sent to Peterborough and vegetables to the factory of Farrows in the same city. Chivers process vegetables in Huntingdon itself, but fruit in large quantities is sent

by road to their jam factories at Histon near Cambridge.

The importance of the local market was until recently a ready measure of the importance of a town as a centre for other services, but with the disappearance or decline of so many markets this is a criteria that can only be applied to a few towns at the present day. In very many cases the old market town has grown into the modern distributing centre, with its wholesalers, retailers and associated commercial offices and services.

The High Street of Huntingdon, the most important shopping centre of the county, serves both the town itself and a large rural area. As the trade multiplies the importance of the town as a shopping centre has increased and continued to do so since the end of the First World War. An interesting reflection of this is revealed by a study of the hours of business of the large private provision stores. A typical case as quoted by a proprietor, is that prior to 1914, it was necessary to remain open until midnight on Saturdays to attract custom, while even between the wars the shop would remain open until 10 p.m. on Saturdays, until 9 p.m. on Fridays and closed at 8 p.m. the rest of the week. During and since the Second World War custom has continued to increase, and it is no longer necessary to extend business beyond the normal hours, even if labour was available for the purpose.

The increasing prosperity of the town as a shopping centre is also proved by the opening during the 1930's of branches of many of the large multiple stores: Curry's; Woolworth's; Boot's; Freemen,Hardy and Willis'; Lipton's and Smith's. These great shops together with the

building and opening of the Hippodrome Cinema helped to satisfy demands and at the same time create for themselves and the town an added attraction as a shopping centre. This trend has continued since 1945 with Burton's opening a branch and most of the other larger concerns expanding by acquiring or building new property. Alongside this development since the war, growing prosperity has attracted the Midland and Trustee Savings Banks to open branches in the town, in addition to several solicitors, insurance companies, accountants and estate agents.

Several factors have enabled Huntingdon to develop into a much more important shopping centre than the size of the town would at first suggest. Being a market as well as a county town and so an administrative centre it possessed a certain nodality before modern travel facilities allowed it to extend its influence over the adjoining countryside. The progressive improvement of shopping, entertainment and other facilities ensured that Huntingdon did not suffer in competition with the smaller neighbouring centres of St. Ives and St. Neots. The general rise in the standard of living, particularly of the one-time depressed rural population, and the development of industry in the town, has put much more money into circulation. A large percentage of the labour in the factories is female, and has to be drawn from the countryside and nearby towns. Instead of shopping as previously in their own town or village, many housewives now carry out not only their weekly shopping but even their daily shopping in Huntingdon. This is particularly noticeable at Friday lunch time - payday - when the shops in the

town are extremely busy. The American servicemen from the nearby air base at Alconbury have stimulated the local shopkeepers to display goods not normally sold in a country town. Several new coffee bars and cafes have been opened displaying American menus and containing the inevitable juke box. The old established cafes on the other hand are mainly used by people visiting the town for shopping purposes, and by the many administrative workers who live outside Huntingdon and travel in every day to work.

To determine the extent of Huntingdon's shopping area is not a simple task. According to Bracey, "the nearest town with a certain standard of shopping provision is usually the town visited for weekend purchases. Shopping habits vary with the family income, frequency of public transport services, and the range of shopping facilities provided in the town as compared with the village and with other towns."(8). No clear cut boundary can be drawn between the shopping area of one town and the next, as there must of necessity be a considerable zone of overlap. Personal preference often determines which of two towns of almost equal accessibility shall be visited. Such preference may alternate from one to the other week by week, determined, for instance, by the film at the local cinema or by some specialized professional or social service required at the moment.

Several lines of approach are possible in attempting to determine the extent of a shopping area. The first method is by a questionnaire to each village in the area, which automatically reveals which place or

places the local population regard as a shopping centre. Secondly, ascertain the extent of the area within which retailers undertake regular delivery of goods. Thirdly, find the area of greatest accessibility by public transport, which is a ready pointer to the town to which the countryside looks for its services. The public transport hinterland (Fig.23) can be regarded as an area within which most of the population will travel to Huntingdon to do the bulk of their shopping. The marked degree to which a country shopping town such as Huntingdon and the area it serves depends upon bus transport was well illustrated in July, 1957 when the nationwide bus strike was in operation. The local paper at that time described how the High Street on the Saturday presented a scene totally different from the normal thronging bustle of market day, even though many people had managed to visit the town by private transport (9). Elsewhere in the same issue, reports from various business houses described the effects of the strike. For instance, in the Woolworth's Store, "Saturday morning was very, very quiet, and even customers commented on the fact that they could walk round the store with ease instead of having to fight their way as they usually do."(10). The general opinion seemed to be that the average trade was twenty percent down on that of a normal Saturday, which is considerable when allowing for people with transport of their own and their willingness to give lifts.

The heavy traffic passing along the High Street has caused great concern to the local business people. The congestion in the High Street

has made it virtually impossible for anyone visiting the town in their own car to park in the main shopping centre, and as the official car parks are seen full on Saturdays, this congestion often necessitates parking some distance from the shops. There is, therefore, a tendency for people owning their own car, who live almost equidistant between Huntingdon and another shopping centre to visit the latter. St. Ives with its ample parking spaces, but inferior shopping facilities to Huntingdon often attracts residents from the Hemingfords. The concern of the local tradesmen with this problem is indicated by a resolution recently passed by the Huntingdon and District Chamber of Trade, but rejected by the County Council. It proposed that the High Street should be made into a one-way street, at least until the by-pass is built. It suggested that the High Street should carry southbound traffic, and that northbound traffic should pass through back streets to the west of the shopping centre. This would allow limited unilateral parking in High Street, all of which would be advantageous to the tradespeople (11).

Fig.24 shows the retail distribution areas of the International Stores and of the Huntingdon branch of the Peterborough and District Co-operative Society. The International Stores has established branches at Ramsey, St. Ives and St. Neots which cover much of the rest of the county. The countryside over which vans from the Huntingdon branch deliver their wares, covers an area within which it can reasonably be assumed that most residents use Huntingdon for their shopping. There are however, a few villages outside this area which look to Huntingdon almost

FIG. 24. AREAS ILLUSTRATING CHAPTER VII.

entirely, but which the International Stores find it uneconomical to serve by their delivery vans. The Huntingdon Co-operative Society on the other hand represents rather a different form of retail distribution; an assemblage of small village co-operative stores with their central stores, warehouses and offices at Huntingdon. Goods for these stores are ordered via Huntingdon, which draws most of them from its Peterborough headquarters. As this is a grouping organized for ease of administration, it loses much of its significance in determining the shopping area of Huntingdon, but it does help to emphasize the fact of an inner zone of villages dependent on the county town.

A visit to Huntingdon for the purpose of shopping is often combined with patronage of the cinema, or the transaction of business. Typifying the latter is a visit to a solicitor. Fig.24 indicates the business area of an old established solicitor's firm. Many of the solicitor's clients are farmers, most of whom own their own cars, and so the extent of the area is not entirely dependent on public transport. Nevertheless it is of interest to note that the area from which the solicitor draws his clientele falls almost entirely within the transport hinterland of the town, except in the far west where the villages of Keyston, Bythorn, Molesworth and Brington lie just outside it. Although most of the villages use Huntingdon almost entirely for their weekly shopping, many of the local residents make fairly regular visits to the larger shopping centres of Peterborough, Bedford and Cambridge. London, only sixty miles to the south, is also easily accessible.

Huntingdon's limited importance as a wholesale distributing centre is proved by an examination of the property of this nature. Only two wholesale grocers, one tobacconist and confectioner, and one newsagent have warehouses in the town. The wholesale trade in newspapers and magazines for the whole county, with the exception of the Peterborough, Ramsey and St. Ives areas is in the hands of W.H.Smith and Son. Newspapers are brought by night trains to Huntingdon, St. Neots, Holme and St. Ives (via Cambridge) and are distributed by road to local agents and retailers.

The distributing area of one of the wholesale grocers (Fig.24) represents a particularly good example of how personal preference or prejudice can influence the area of operation. This accounts for the rather unusual boundary which may be seen to the north of Huntingdon. Before 1939 this wholesaler served shops in such villages as the Riptons, but during the war when goods were in short supply certain areas had to be dropped. Other villages more distant from Huntingdon which might have lost their supplier were kept up, because the wholesaler had old friends and customers there, even though at the time it was hardly economical to do so. When supplies became more plentiful it was found difficult or even impossible to regain former customers. As with most of the other areas, no single business holds a trading monopoly and Peterborough wholesale grocers come into Huntingdon itself, as well as into the area indicated.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HUNTINGDON AS AN ADMINISTRATIVE, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CENTRE.

A. ADMINISTRATION.

Huntingdonshire, being a small county, is easily administered from the county town. Huntingdon, at the centreof the county with routes radiating from it in all directions, is ideally situated to carry out administrative functions, which are reflected in the large number of local and central government offices.

The areas administered by the different authorities vary in size, but most of them are based upon earlier administrative units. In some cases the area controlled has been extended as a result of the greater mobility of the present day. The nature of the administrative property units and their areas, makes it possible to determine the functions of the town in this respect.

Local Authorities.

The local authority areas are shown by Fig.25. The County Council and Borough Council both meet in the Town Hall, while they have their offices in different parts of the town. The Huntingdon Rural District Council Office is in Montagu House.

The triple system of local authority administration, with parishes as the smallest unit, rural districts together with urban districts and non-county boroughs as larger units and counties as the largest of all. This division of land is related to, though not identical

with the ancient pattern of township, hundred and shire. Counties or shires were originally aggregates of hundreds, grouped so that each hundred could be easily reached in one day from a fortified administrative centre. One of these centres ultimately became the county town.

Not until the early eleventh century had Huntingdonshire become fully organized as a shire, with its earl, sheriff and shire court. At the time of the Domesday Survey there were probably six hundreds in the county, but by the thirteenth century these had been, by amalgamation, reduced to four, in which form they remained with only slight reorganisation until modern times (Fig.26). The parish had only ecclesiastical significance until its selection as the administrative unit of the Great Poor Law in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

The Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, by which Boards of Guardians came into existence, needed larger groupings, hence the Poor Law Unions were formed (Fig.27). The rural districts constituted under the Local Government Act of 1894, were based on the old sanitary area, which corresponded closely to the Poor Law Unions.

The Borough of Huntingdon has been administered since the first Municipal Corporation Act of 1835 by a mayor, four aldermen and twelve councillors. Of the government of the town before the Norman Conquest little is known. However, by the time of the Domesday Book in 1086 Huntingdon was already a Royal Borough divided into four ferlings (1). Since that date the municipal history can be traced through eighteen successive town charters, fourteen of which are still in existence.

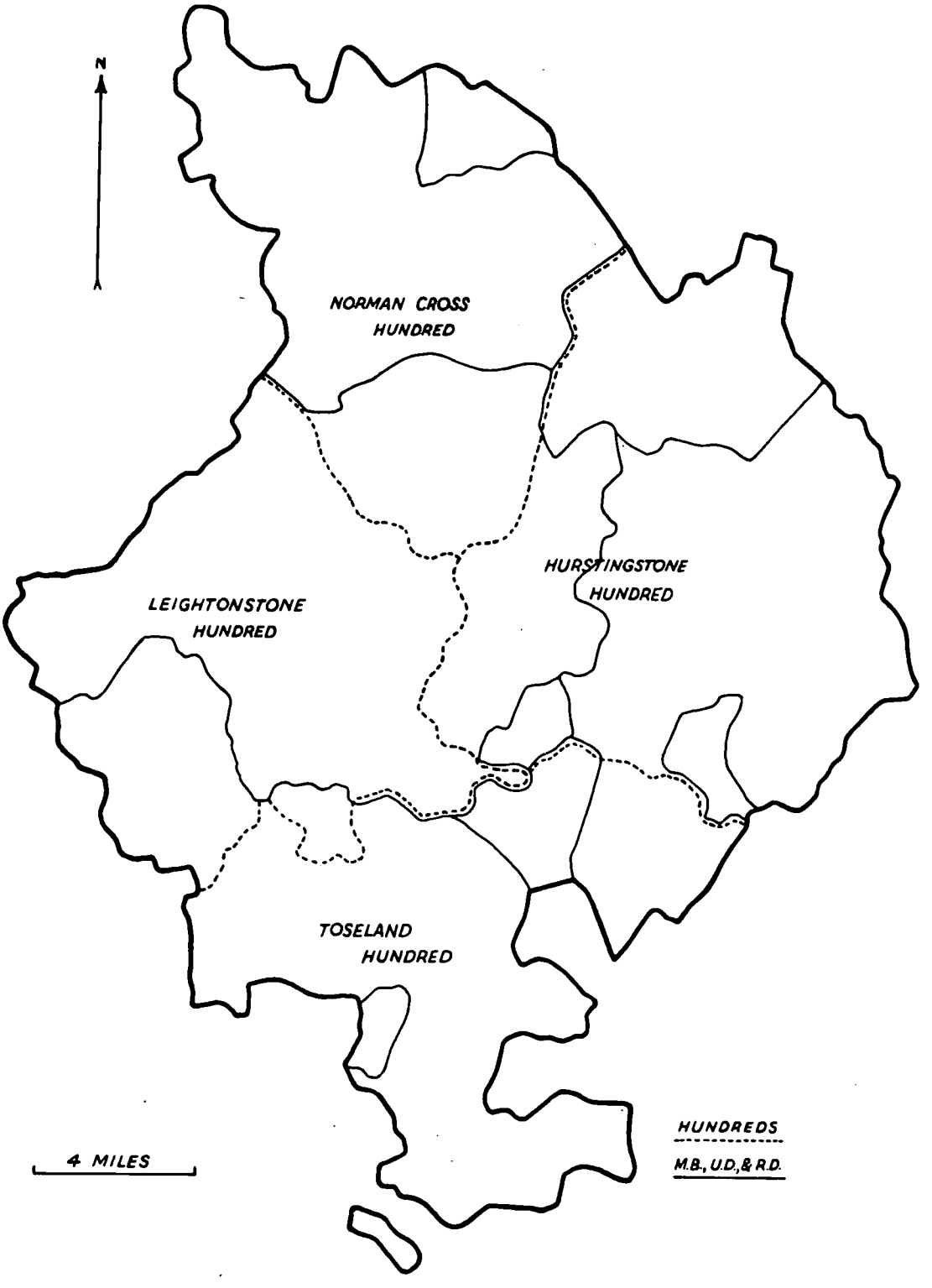

FIG. 26. HUNDREDS.

Today the county is administered by fourteen aldermen and forty-two councillors. For some kinds of local government legislation, such as planning, it has been found necessary to divide the county into two areas, each under a sub-committee. This enables applications to be dealt with rapidly in these days of reorganisation and building. The northern division is formed by Fletton U.D., Ramsey U.D. and Norman Cross R.D; the rest of the county forming the southern division (Fig.28).

Judicial.

Within the two courts of justice on the ground floor of the Town Hall, the following hearings are held: the Assize Court of the Eastern Circuit is held twice a year, in the same court as the County Quarter Session and the Huntingdon County Court. In the other court room sits the Police Court, formed by amalgamation in 1957 from the Huntingdon Borough Division of the Petty Sessions and the Leightonstone Petty Sessions (Fig. 29).

Parliamentary.

Huntingdonshire returns to parliament a member of the United Conservative and Liberal National party, the county headquarters of which are in George Street.

In 1920 when the first members were sent to parliament, Huntingdon returned three members, while larger counties such as Yorkshire, Kent and Northants sent only two. Thereafter the county and the borough of Huntingdon each returned two members. By the great Reform Act of 1832 which redistributed seats Huntingdon was united with Godmanchester

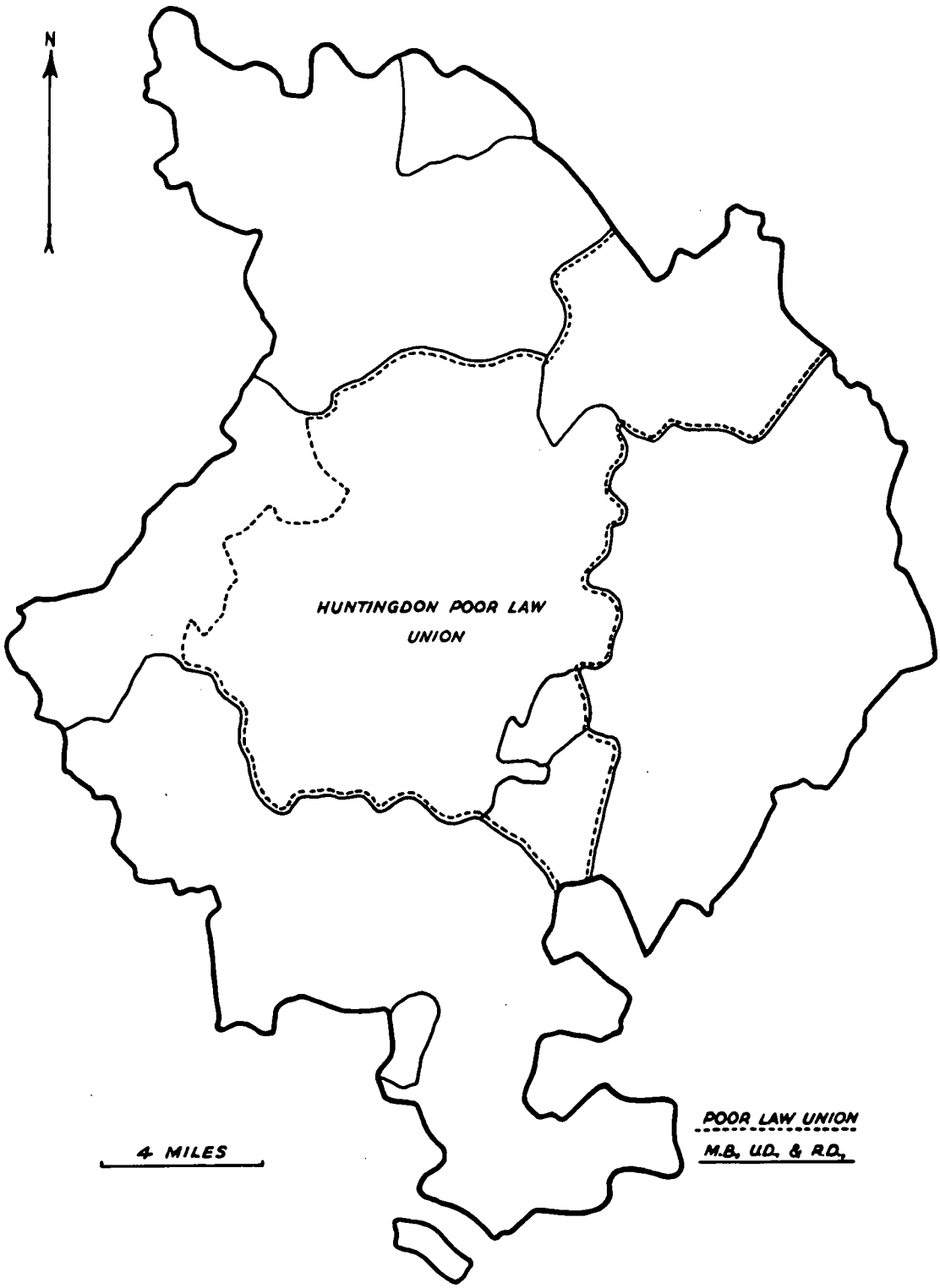

FIG. 27. HUNTINGDON POOR LAW UNION

for parliamentary purposes, retaining two members, until the Second Reform Act of 1867 when the number was reduced to one. Huntingdon was defranchised in 1884, and the county at the same time was formed into two divisions; the northern or Ramsey division, and the southern or Huntingdon division. In 1918 the number was further reduced to one member for the county (2).

Central Government.

The local offices of the Central Government are mostly within Castle Hill House. As they are national and not local the area they administer is not necessarily limited by the county boundary. As they are of more recent origin than those of local government, they have boundaries which are considered convenient and easy to administer at the present day. The Huntingdon National Insurance and Agricultural Executive may serve to illustrate this point.

The county is divided into two areas for the administration of National Insurance (Fig. 28). In the north of the county, Fletton, Norman Cross and Ramsey Urban Districts are situated in the Peterborough National Insurance area. The rest of the county, with several parishes of Cambridge, forms the Huntingdon Insurance area.

Again, the Agricultural Executive offices have jurisdiction over Huntingdonshire and the Soke of Peterborough. Recently the Eastern England Agricultural Executive moved their headquarters to Huntingdon, thereby extending considerably the area controlled. The functions of the Agricultural Executive Committees started as an emergency measure of

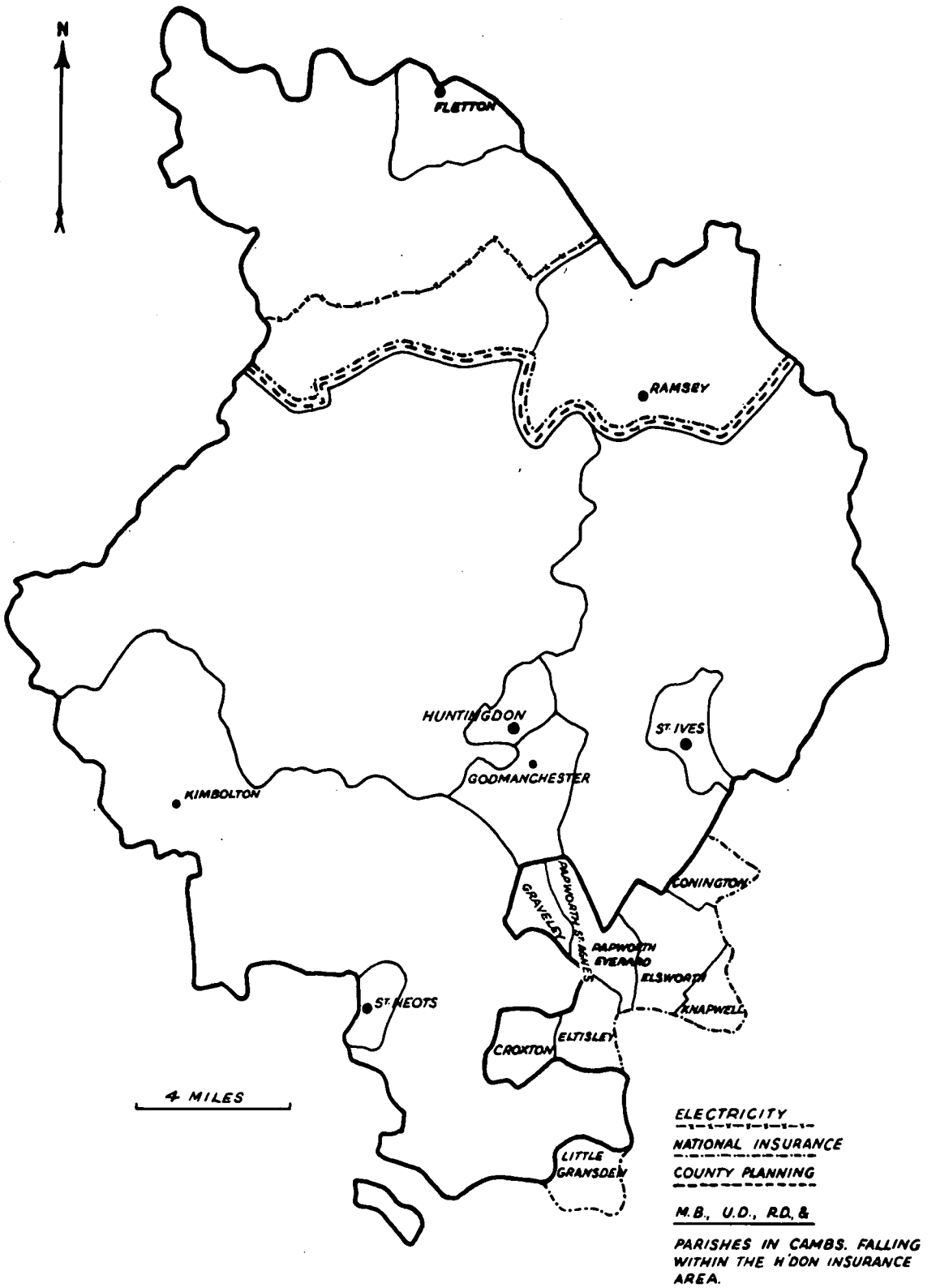

FIG. 28. PLANNING, NATIONAL INSURANCE & ELECTRICITY AREAS.

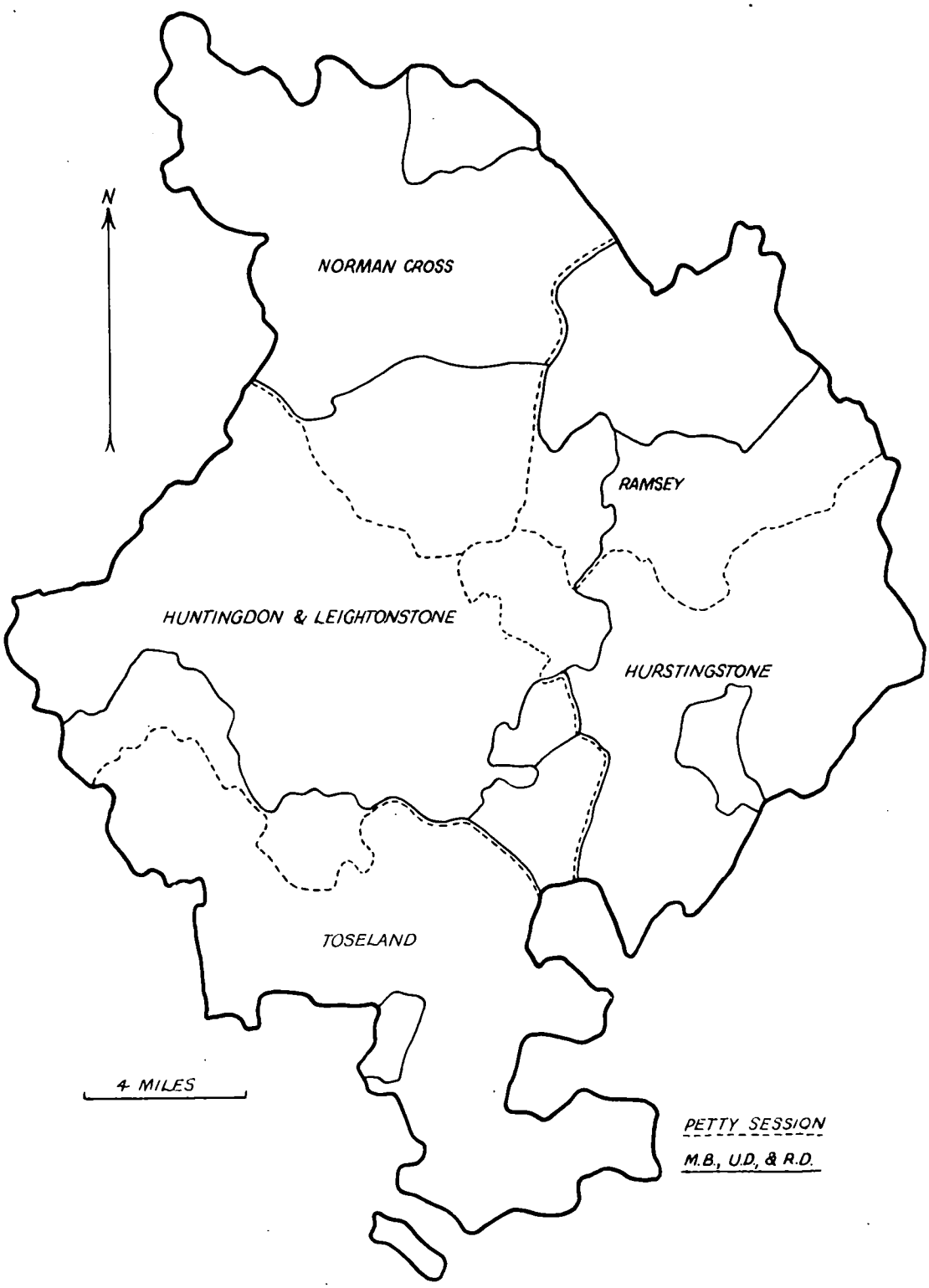

FIG. 29 PETTY SESSIONAL DIVISIONS.

The A.E.C. has helped to stimulate interest in Young Farmers' Clubs, which now have a membership of five hundred in Huntingdonshire and the Soke of Peterborough. Other than these there are no facilities for the agricultural education of school leavers - a sad reflection on a county so dependent upon agriculture for its prosperity.

Police.

The Huntingdonshire Constabulary, with its headquarters in Huntingdon, was formed in 1857 as part of the existing Cambridgeshire Constabulary. The original force consisted of firty-three men, a figure which has now been doubled.

Post Office.

The main Post Office at Huntingdon controls a large postal district (Fig.30) which extends over much of the county, though the northern part of the county falls in the Peterborough postal area. A few parishes in Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire adjoining the county boundary are included in the Huntingdon area for ease of distribution.

As the postal area is largely rural, occupying approximately three hundred and fifty square miles, great use is made of postal vans, of which there are eleven at the head office with four in reserve, and five others at the main sub-offices. To cover such an extensive area a large number of sub-offices are necessary. There are no less than seventy of them, besides two R.A.F. post offices and three major Crown sub-offices at St. Ives, St. Neots and Ramsey.

All incoming mail for the district comes to Huntingdon for

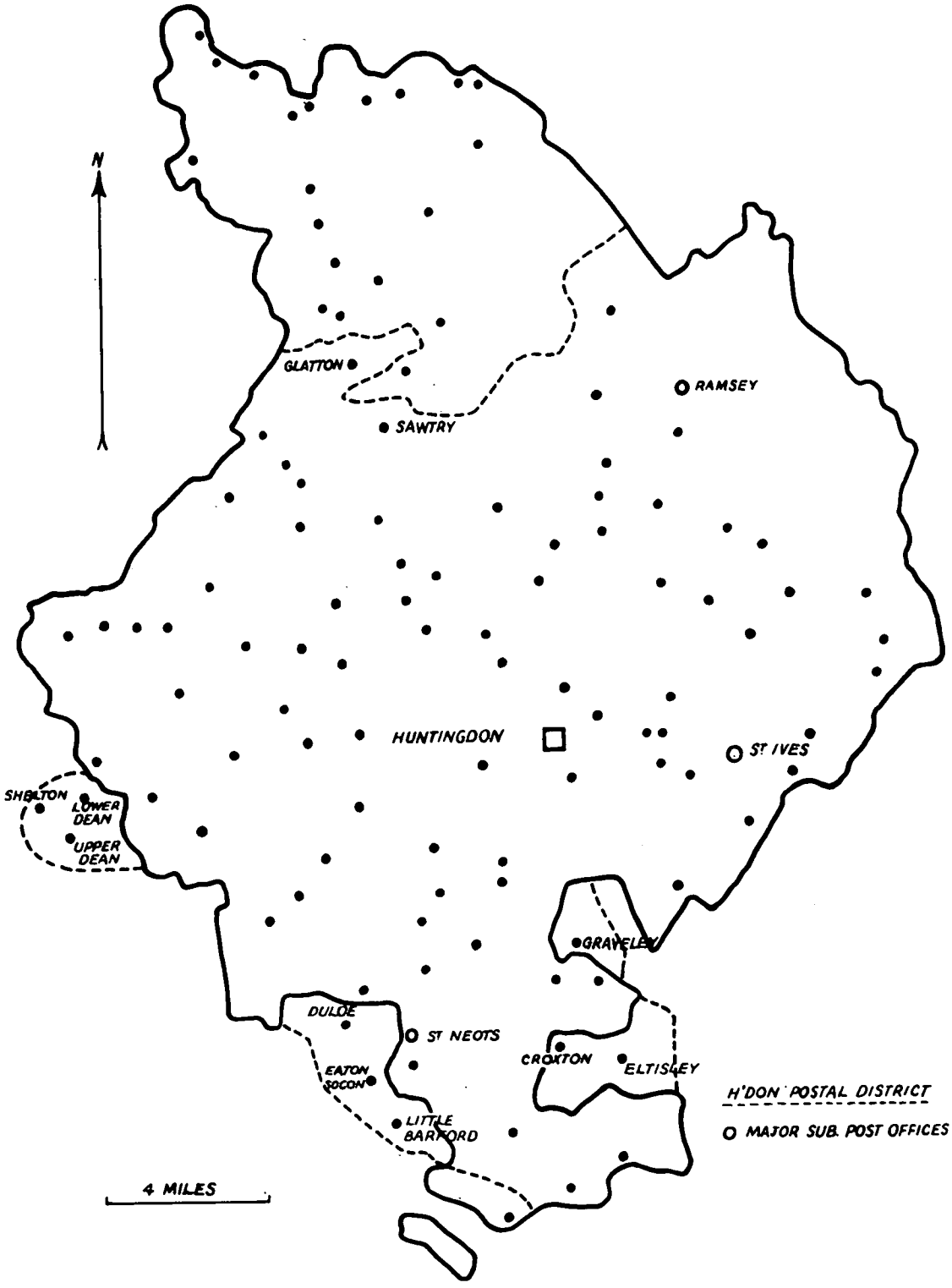

FIG. 30. POSTAL DISTRICT, 1957

sorting and dispatch to the outlying districts. Most of this mail is delivered directly to Huntingdon by train, but some is brought by van from Peterborough and Cambridge. Distribution, other than to Huntingdon and Godmanchester, is made in the first instance by vans. Mail leaves Huntingdon before 6 a.m., going to St. Ives, St. Neots and Ramsey respectively, where it is again sorted into the various divisions of the town and the rural district directly served from that sub-office, and delivered by their own postmen. This leaves the greater part of the postal area, where the Huntingdon vans drop mail at the larger villages for delivery by the local postman, while at the smaller villages and outlying settlements along the route the vans deliver material direct. All the vans return to Huntingdon before noon, bringing in the collections from the sub-offices and letter boxes on their routes. As delivery to the outlying districts takes such a long time, the second delivery has to be restricted to the towns and to those villages and houses on routes used by postmen collecting mail from letter boxes.

Although all inward mail comes to Huntingdon, the three Crown sub-offices mentioned make up and despatch some outward mails direct to London and a few other large towns.

It is interesting to compare the present postal area with that which might be considered to be its equivalent in 1854. Hatfield lists in his directory through which post office the various villages in the county obtained their mail (3). From this it has been possible to construct the past postal areas of the county (Fig.31). These were

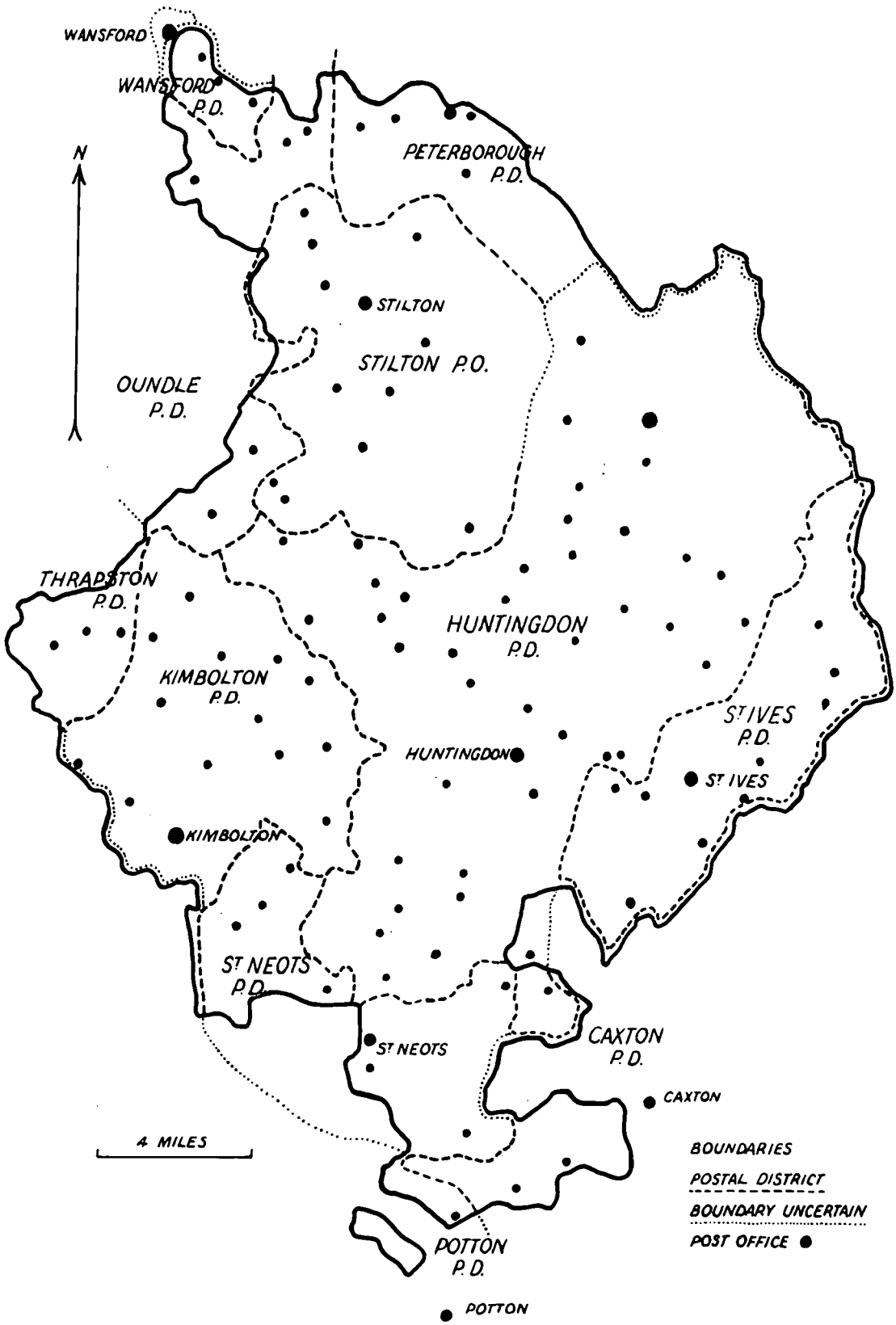

FIG. 31. POSTAL DISTRICT, 1854.

areas of convenience, the villages using the town post office most easily accessible. The size of the areas in the past were naturally limited by slow means of communication. The greater size of the Huntingdon area was due to its status as the county town, and to its favourable position on the main thoroughfare of the county, the Royal Mail coaches breaking their journey there. By the time Hatfield published his directory, the main line railway had been open for four years, but it is doubtful if this improvement in communication had caused any radical revision of the postal areas, but minor improvements would have been made. For instance, the parishes in the north-west of the county used Wansford post office, as the railway now passed through the village, when previously they in all probability depended on Oundle. Only with the advent of the automobile, and the use of post office vans, did greater centralisation take place with the consequent increase in size of the Huntingdon postal area and the relative decline in importance of the other post offices in the county.

As in other parts of the country a telegraph service is combined with the usual postal service, the Huntingdon telegraph area conforming approximately with the postal district.

Huntingdon is a group centre in the Peterborough Telephone Area, and in addition controls the traffic of St. Neots, the only other manual exchange in the district. The following small automatic exchanges dial Huntingdon for their trunk calls: Abbots Ripton, Buckden,

Croxton, Eaton Socon, Earith, Kimbolton, Papworth St. Agnes (Cambridgeshire Postal Area), St. Ives, Somersham, Warboys and Woolley.

PUBLIC UTILITIES.

Electricity.

Electricity is supplied by the Eastern Electricity Board, Fens Sub-Area. The greater part of the county falls within the Huntingdon District of the Sub-Area (Fig.28), administered from its offices in High Street, Huntingdon; whilst the northern region, comprising Old Fletton U.D. and most of the Norman Cross R.D. is included in the Peterborough District.

A main grid line passes north to south through the county, connecting Little Barford Power Station which lies just south of the county in Bedfordshire to the power station at Peterborough.

Before nationalisation electricity was provided by the Bedfordshire, Cambridge and Huntingdon Electricity Company which was formed after the passing of Electricity Act (1925). This company erected the power station at Barford. All the towns and most of the villages in the county are now supplied with electricity.

Gas.

Gas has been available within the borough since 1832, when the first gas works was erected, and as we are told by Pigot (4), "the streets are well-paved, and lighted with gas." Gas production remained in the hands of the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Gas Light and Coke Company, who provided gas for the two boroughs until nationalization.

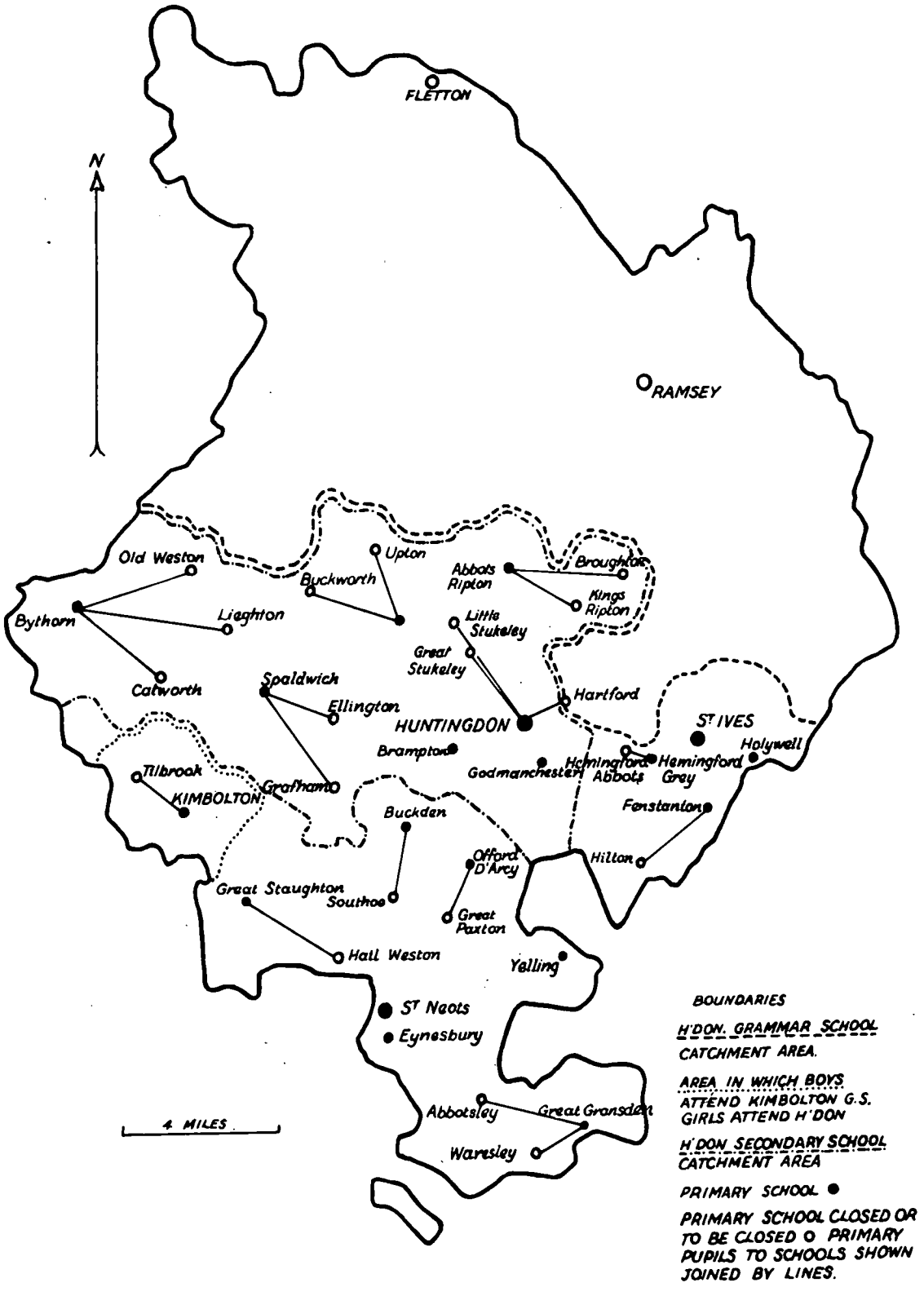

FIG. 32 HUNTINGDON GRAMMAR & MODERN SCHOOL AREAS, 1957.

Direct Grant boys' boarding school at Kimbolton, by special arrangement between the school and the Huntingdon Education Authority. The girls, however, have no alternative but to travel to Huntingdon. The northern part of the county falls within the catchment area of the only two other secondary grammar schools in the county. Both Fletton and Ramsey Grammar Schools are two-form entry co-educational schools. These groupings are largely independent of accessibility by public transport, since special buses are provided by the Education Authorities, where the ordinary services are inadequate. Certain of the primary schools however do not fall in the grouping which would appear from the point of accessibility to be the most desirable. Houghton Primary School for instance, would seem to fall automatically into the Huntingdon catchment area, but does in fact belong to the Ramsey area. The Ramsey catchment area was deliberately extended to relieve the pressure on Huntingdon, which has to take all the children from the southern half of the county, since no other grammar school is available.

The Fletton and Ramsey Grammar School catchment areas between them include forty parishes and the Huntingdon area comprises fifty if Kimbolton and Tilbrook are included. One might be forgiven for wondering if Huntingdon takes a considerably lower percentage of an age group than do the other two. If this is in fact true, it is a position that will remain until a new grammar school is built in the south of county.

Secondary Modern.

Fig.32 also shows the Huntingdon Secondary Modern School catchment area, with its contributory primary schools. This area covers much of the western and central part of the county. It is a great deal smaller than that of the Grammar school, though from it are drawn approximately six hundred children. Two hundred scholars are still housed in the old premises on Brookside, and the rest in the new building on St.Peter's Road. On this extensive site with an area of fifteen acres, there are "three acres of school garden and agricultural land to cater for an agricultural bias in this predominantly agricultural county." (5).

Primary.

Children of the infant and primary age groups are well catered for. In the town itself are a nursery school and two primary schools, with an additional one in Hartford.

Religious Observance.

For ecclesiastical purposes England is divided into two provinces, those of Canterbury and York; the former containing twenty-nine dioceses and the latter fourteen. The county of Huntingdon, with one small exception, falls within the diocese of Ely, which is one of the eighteen ancient English dioceses dating back to Saxon times. Only a small part of the civil parish of Folkesworth and Washingley, which falls within the ecclesiastical parish of Lutton (Ancient County of Northants) is not under the jurisdiction of Ely, but of Peterborough.

The ecclesiastical parish is in most cases of great antiquity, often dating back to a period anterior to the Norman Conquest, but the ecclesiastical and civil functions originally attached to it became disassociated during the nineteenth century. In many cases the boundaries of the ecclesiastical and civil parishes are no longer identical, though in Huntingdonshire firty-seven out of ninety-three parishes are still co-extensive. This is due no doubt to the little change in population, and therefore no great change in administration has been found necessary.

Huntingdon, as we have already noted, once supported no less than sixteen parish churches. This number was reduced to four by the time of the Civil War, during which St. John's and St. Benedict's were destroyed leaving for succeeding generations the two parish churches of All Saints' and St. Mary's. The two parishes are however still known as All Saints' with St. John the Baptist, and St. Mary with St. Benedict.

The other religious denominations are also well served by their own churches and chapels, the sites of which have already been described.

As Bracey points out, Methodist circuits provide useful indications of local groupings(6). Unlike other denominations, which are either purely urban or parochial as with the established church, the Methodist circuit is an association of town and country churches under the superintendent minister. Fig.33 shows the distribution of

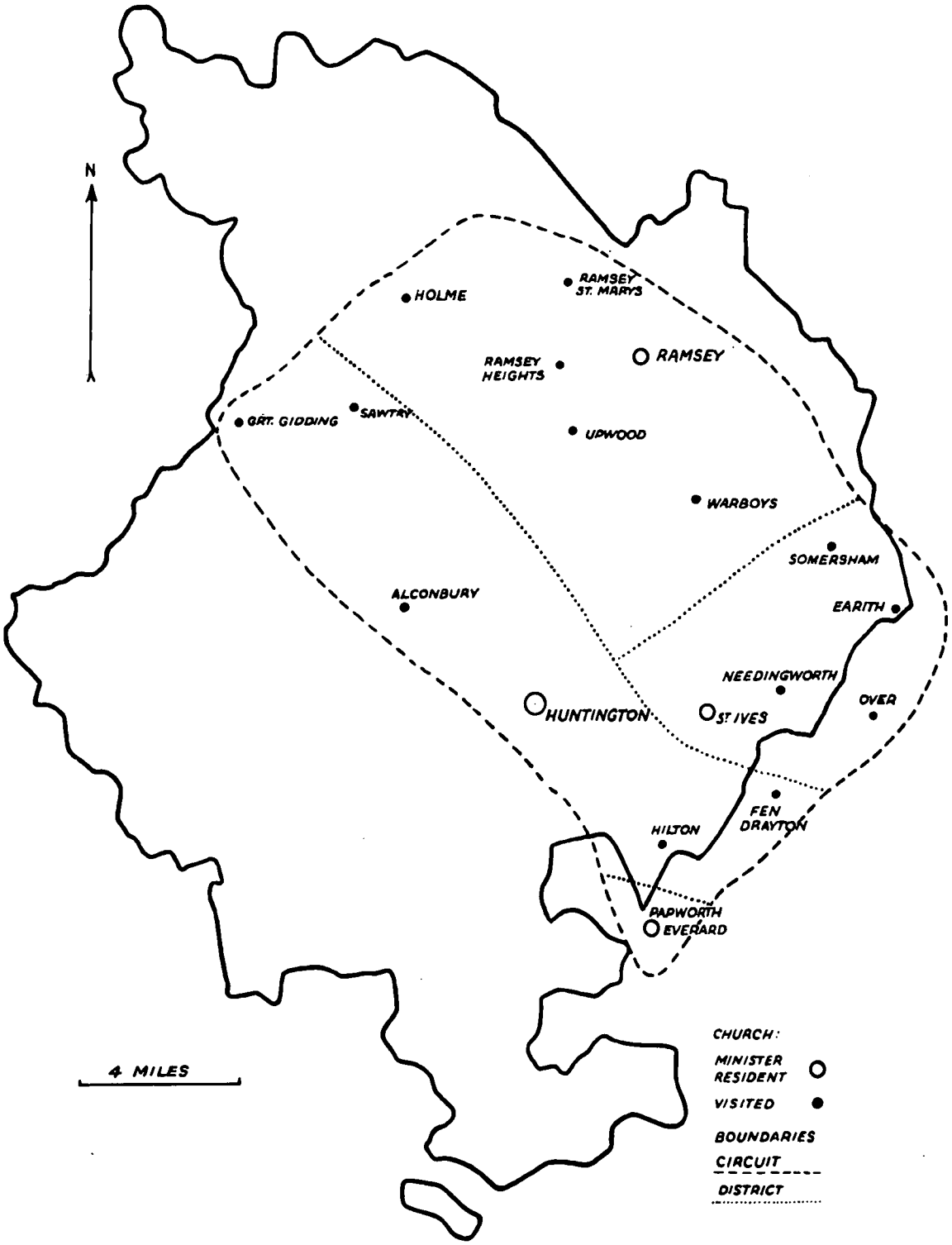

FIG. 33. HUNTINGDON METHODIST CIRCUIT.

churches within the Huntingdon circuit, the boundary of the circuit and its division into districts. These boundaries are purely arbitrary, as many villages within the area have no Methodist church, nor are they within a reasonable distance of one, so that the villagers must of necessity look to the local parish church. The Huntingdon circuit is divided into four districts, three of which have a minister centred on the main church in the district, namely, St. Ives, Ramsey and Huntingdon, while Papworth Everard is a small district whose minister or pastor is appointed by the Home Mission Committee in London. The Huntingdon circuit is rather unusual, in that the superintendent minister resides at St. Ives. Until shortly before the last war the superintendent's manse was at Huntingdon adjoining the chapel, but the house was in such a bad state of repair that the superintendent was transferred to a newer and more up-to-date building in St. Ives.

Medical Services.

Hospitals.

Huntingdon, which is the medical centre of the county, contains the two main hospitals and clinics. The county falls within the East Anglican Regional Hospital Board. The County Hospital in the west of the town is a small one, with only sixty-three beds, but it is well equipped and up-to-date. It serves most of the county (Fig.34), though the northern parishes are served by the Peterborough hospitals. The Primrose Lane Hospital, converted in 1950 from a fever hospital to a ten-bedded maternity unit serves a slightly smaller area, as there is

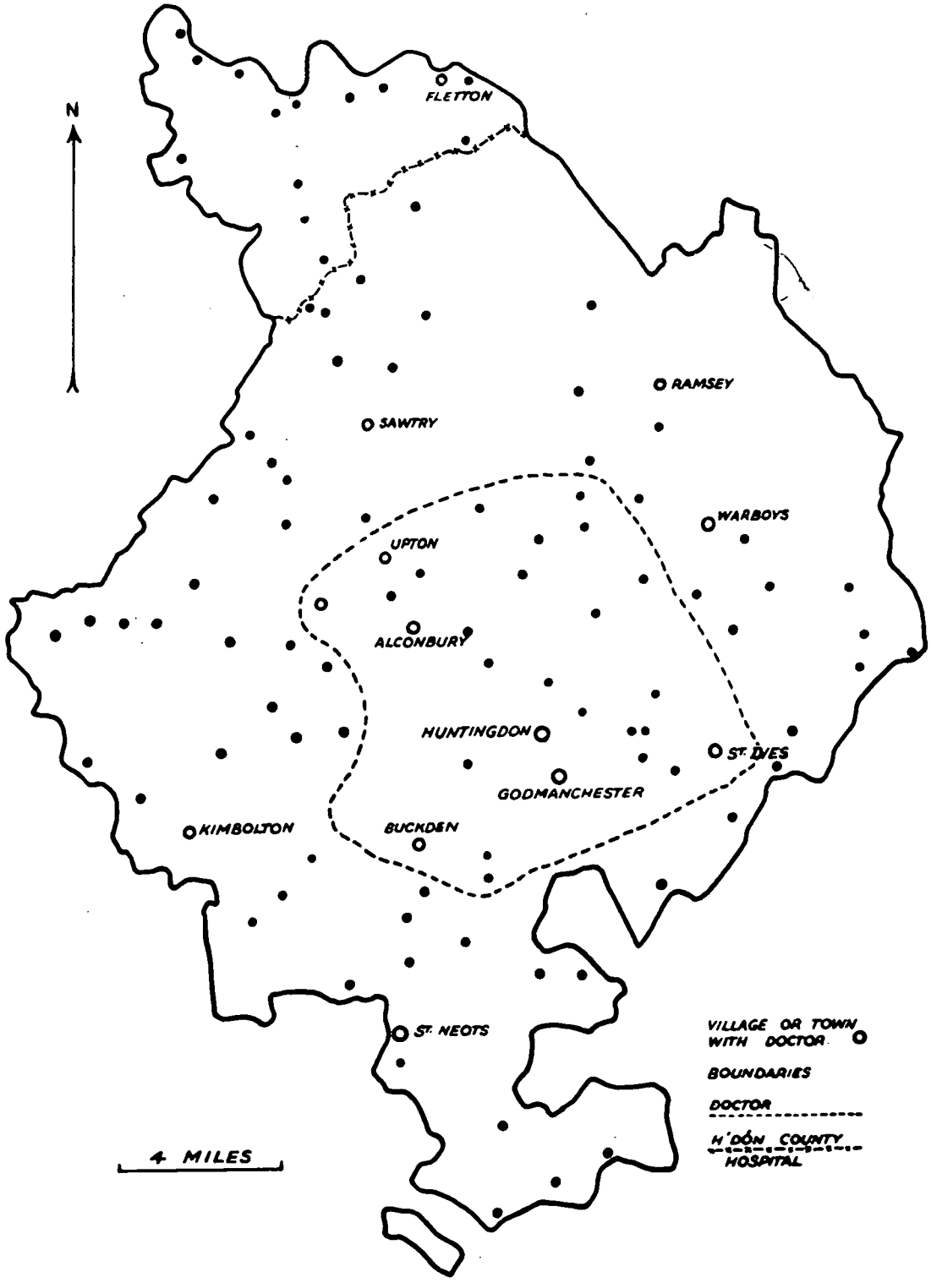

FIG. 34. MEDICAL AREAS

another small maternity hospital at Little Paxton which serves the south of the county. The central ambulance service at Huntingdon, combined with voluntary services in Ramsey and St. Ives, covers the Huntingdon area.

Doctors and Dentists.

The two doctors and the same number of dentists serve both the town and an extensive rural area. Fig.34 shows the extent of a Huntingdon doctor's practice and also the nearby towns and villages with doctors of their own. The size of the rural area covered by these practices is so great that the two Huntingdon doctors between them require the services of no less than four assistants. The Huntingdon doctors by no means hold a monopoly of the area, as doctors from the other towns and villages, with the exception of Kimbolton, also operate within the region. The number of patients attended by the Huntingdon doctors decreases outwards from the town centre and even within Huntingdon itself, some people are on the panel of the Godmanchester doctor. As doctors are mobile, the extent of their practice is not fully determined by availability of public transport but is largely a matter of personal preference, although there is a natural tendency for patients to choose the nearest doctor for convenience of access and in case of an amergency.

Optical.

The Huntingdon optician with his assistant serves a considerably larger area than the doctors in the town (Fig.35), and meets with

little professional opposition. The virtual monopoly which he enjoys is not however quite complete, as opticians from St. Ives, Ramsey, Thrapston and St. Neots draw some patients from the area. Choice of optician is determined in the main by accessibility, though personal preference can be an important factor.

Veterinary.

This service, so important and so very typical of a country town, is exemplified by the veterinary practice situated in St.John's Street. The development of this practice reflects the changes that have come about in the countryside during the last few decades, and the importance of the human factor in determining the area served. The Huntingdon practice employed two surgeons at the end of the war, a number which has since doubled. The premises include a well-equipped operating theatre with X-ray apparatus, dog kennels and cattery converted from dd stables after the First World War, when the car replaced the horse and trap. The enlargement of the Huntingdon practice is a response to the greater demand for its services by the public. A variety of factors are responsible for this development. The car and telephone enable the "vet" to attend to his cases speedily while new drugs and improved equipment make treatment more effective than formerly. One good result is that the farmer is not so often tempted to apply his own remedies, and to call in the "vet" when all else fails. The greatly increased value of animals, both household and farmyard, has resulted in the veterinary service being called on much sooner than it

was formerly. In these days the "vet" is often retained by the larger farms to "keep an eye on" the valuable herds.

The Huntingdon practice covers a large area (Fig. 35) with competitors at Peterborough, St. Neots, Ramsey, St. Ives, Oundle and Kettering. The human element has played an important part in delimiting the boundaries of the practices. Before 1939 the competitors of the Huntingdon practice preferred to treat farm animals rather than pets. However, the Huntingdon veterinary surgeon specialised in pets as well as large animals, which enabled him to extend his area of operation. Often he was able to capture the large animal practices of his competitors,and as a result required more assistants for his growing practice.

National Farmers' Union.

With offices and rooms in High Street, the Union plays an important part in the affairs of the country area. Fig.36 shows the boundaries of the various branches of the local N.F.U. The majority of farmers in these areas join the local branch, but they are under no obligation to do so. It often happens that members moving from one district to another remain members of their former branches.

The Huntingdon group is composed of three branches linked together with a full-time secretary, with their offices at Huntingdon, St. Neots and St. Ives. However, each individual branch retains complete independence and autonomy within the county framework. The Ramsey branch forms a small district on its own. The above mentioned

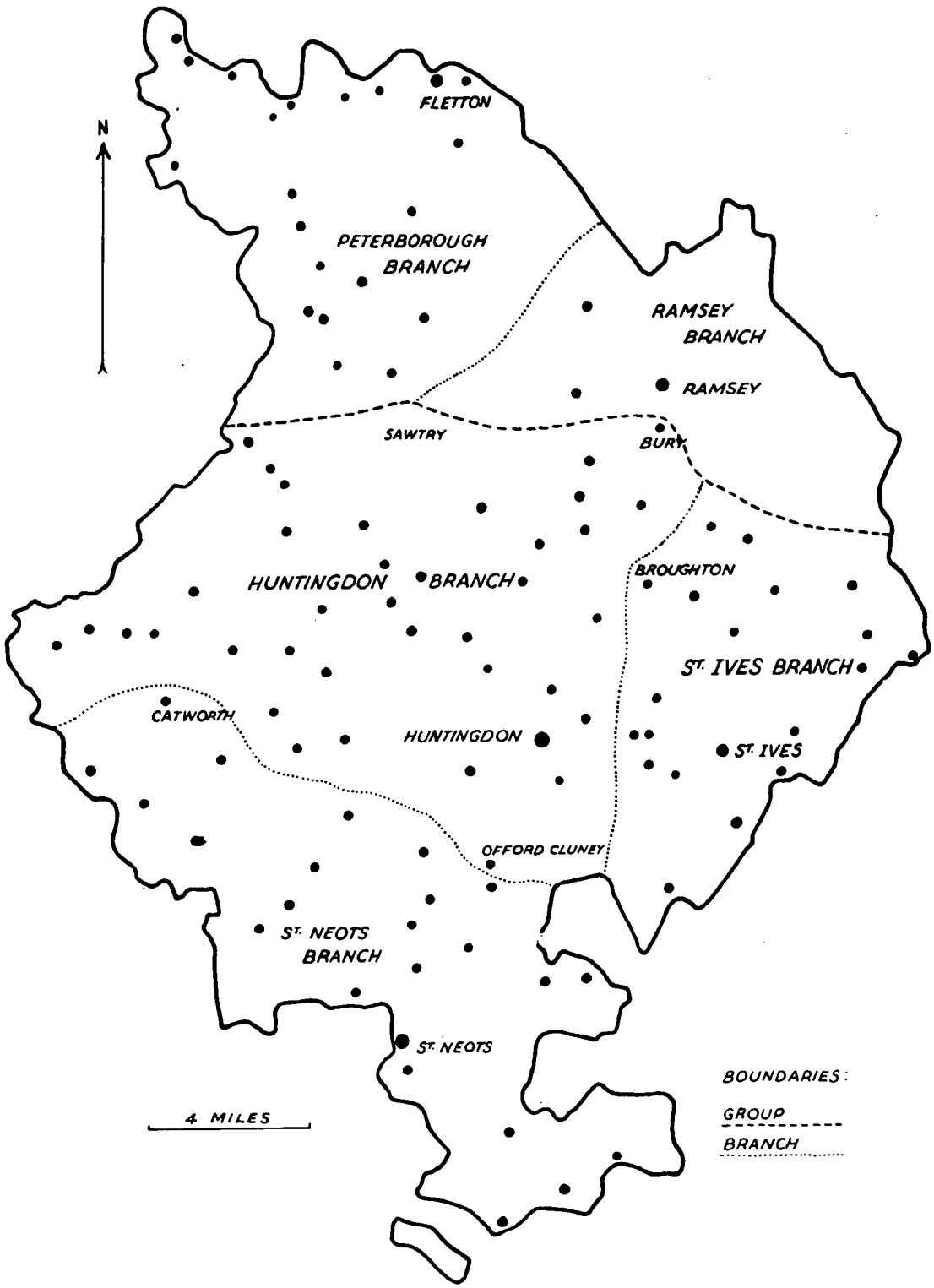

FIG. 36. NATIONAL FARMERS' UNION

organisations together form part of the Bedford and Hunts. County Branch of the Union. In the north of the county, farmers become members of the Soke of Peterborough branch, a sub-division of the Northants County Branch. These branches are purely voluntary associations, based in the main on accessibility and not on the type of farming carried out. In the Huntingdon branch for example are farmers from the clay uplands as well as from the Ouse valley. The members of the Ramsey branch however, have a common outlook as they are composed almost entirely of Fen Farmers.

Each branch returns one county delegate per fifty members, and the county branch sends representatives to the national executive at the London headquarters of the Union, which enjoys close contact with the Ministry of Agriculture. The Union is non-political with a high membership - the one hundred and fifty-six members of the Huntingdon branch represent some eighty-five percent of the farmers with over two acres - and so can exert a great influence on the agricultural policy of the government of the day.

Public Houses and Inns.

The large number of public houses in Huntingdon is due in no small part to the importance of the other services and amenities drawing people to the town, though to many they form an attraction in their own right. The large number of service personnel and labourers from the surrounding air fields help to swell the trade, especially at weekends. The two hotels in the town, with their excellent garage facilities

emphasize the importance of its position on a great trunk road, just as their forerunners, the posting houses did in the old coaching days. The two hotels are always full of people breaking their journey to or from the north. Huntingdon, as well as being a convenient place to spend the night, has the added interest of being the historic and picturesque county town in which Cromwell was born and went to school. Some indication of this is given in a report by the Hunts. Post of an article in the All Saints' Church parish magazine which states that four thousand holidaymakers and tourists visit the All Saints' Church annually. (7)

Cinemas.

Unlike most towns neither of the two cinemas belong to one of the great cinema groups. Between them they can seat one thousand, three hundred patrons. It is difficult to determine accurately the area from which their audiences are drawn, but Fig.35 has been constructed with the aid of the manager of one of the cinemas. It shows the part of the county to which the cinema sends its posters. The cinema area must be regarded with a certain reserve, as in some cases the manager may be over-optimistic in sending posters to villages from which few people visit Huntingdon, while on the other hand neglecting some of the smaller hamlets. As might be expected the cinema area is generally co-extensive with the shopping area, and so with accessibility by public transport, the weekly trip to town being combined with a visit to the cinema. It is, however, when this map is compared with the map

showing late return to villages (Fig.22) that the most important points emerge. Unless travellers possess transport of their own they are completely dependent on late evening buses, the last bus to the villages, in many cases being scheduled to leave at a certain time, or when the last performance of the cinema ends. The cinema manager obviously has not considered it worthwhile to distribute posters to many of these villages which do not have late night return bus services, hence the boundary projects along the roads followedby the late night buses from Huntingdon. Ramsey, St. Ives, St. Neots and Thrapston each possess one cinema, indicating that marginal areas have more than one choice of cinema. The influence of Peterborough and Cambridge is particularly noticeable; in both of these cities are cinemas belonging to the large groups who have an agreement with the film distributors that any film they are going to show, may not be used in the small private cinemas in the area until they have shown it. As many people go to Cambridge or Peterborough to do their shopping, they have often seen the newly-released pictures before they arrive in Huntingdon.

Library.

The County Library with its headquarters in Gazeley House, provides a book service throughout the county, with centres established in almost every village. District branch libraries have been established and developed in the last few years at St. Ives, St.Neots, Ramsey and Fletton, and these provide a wide range of literature which is within the reach of every resident. These four main branch libraries and that of

Huntingdon are each responsible for their own districts (Fig.37).

The boundaries of these districts were established after consultation with the County Planning Office. The prime consideration was accessibility, but they were also fixed to ensure that each library has an area of reasonable size for which to cater. The branch libraries and villages are served by vans from Huntingdon.

Local Newspapers.

As no daily paper is published in the county or in adjacent shires, the region is dependent upon the great London dailies for this service. There are, however, local offices of two county weekly papers which serve the towns and rural areas. Both are printed in Peterborough. Of these The Peterborough Advertiser, which is essentially a Peterborough paper, prints a Huntingdon edition with a page devoted to Huntingdon news. The Hunts Post, established in 1869, is a truly county paper, its fourteen pages being devoted to local news and advertisements. Unlike many country papers it is not printed locally, but in Peterborough and is owned by the Peterborough Press Ltd. It is one of a number of associated newspapers which includes the following: Cambridge Times, Peterborough Standard, Wisbech Standard, Ely Standard, Whittlesey Reporter, Chatteris Advertiser, Littleport Gazette and Soham Advertiser. The head office is at March.

The Hunts Post is widely distributed throughout the county and has a weekly circulation of about fifteen thousand. By means of the local news items and advertisements a map of the newspaper

FIG. 37 LIBRARY & LOCAL NEWSPAPER AREAS.

circulation area was constructed (Fig.37). This was later found to correspond closely to what the newspaper itself considered to be its circulation area. Special St. Ives, St. Neots and Ramsey editions of the Hunts Post are published, differing only in that they have a special page devoted to their own local news.

Smailes points out that local journalism in addition to its practical value as a news and advertising service, is an important agent in promoting and focusing a sense of community, and since the town is invariably the nucleus of the circulation area its leadership of the region tends to be developed and strengthened.(8)

Clubs and Societies.

The number of clubs in the town has decreased in the last few years, leaving only the Masonic Lodge in Priory House and the Montagu Working Men's Club in Hartford Road. The Montagu Club is in buildings specially erected for the purpose in 1897 by the then Earl of Sandwich. The present Earl is still the owner and president. The Club is open to any man residing in the district over eighteen years of age. At the present time it has two hundred and sixty members, including a few from the American Air Force at Alconbury, and more from the Wyton and Brampton R.A.F. Stations. The Club amenities include a bowling green, bar, reading room and billiard tables.

The County Club had premises on Market Hill until 1952 when it closed. The building is now used by the County Council. The Literary and Scientific Institution is another club that unfortunately closed

recently. The Literary Institute, built on classical lines in 1842 provided a library reading room, lecture rooms, and a small museum. In 1956 the Institute was sold by auction and was bought by the Huntingdonshire Commemoration Fund Committee, who intend to develop it as a public hall for concerts and other social functions.

In addition there are well-established societies typical of most towns, such as the British Legion, Archaeological Society, Rotary, Toc H., Women's Institute and Conservative and Liberal National Club.

In 1957 tentative plans were made to develop Hinchingbrooke House as a conference and holiday centre by the Christian Interdenominational Social and Welfare Association, who rented the house from Lord Hinchingbrooke. However, this scheme fell through and the future of the house has yet to be decided.

Sport.

A fairly full range of sporting activities is available in the town. The river provides facilities for boating, boats being on hire from a large boat house by the bridge on the Godmanchester side of the river. The town has a rowing club with its own boat house on the Hartford Road meadows and also an angling club which makes full use of the fine fishing. The river meadows and the other expanses of open land surrounding the town offer pleasant recreational facilities.

The town and county cricket clubs have their pavilion on the playing fields on St.Peter's Hill with the public tennis courts adjoining. The football club rents a field on the Hinchingbrooke estate.

Residents of the town, however, have to travel at least as far as Cambridge if they want to watch first class cricket, or to Peterborough to see professional football.

The two hundred and twenty-seven acres of Portholme Meadow have from time immemorial formed part of Brampton Parish. Nevertheless, it has always been considered one of the amenities of Huntingdon. It is reputed to be the largest meadow in England, and for nearly two hundred years it was the scene of the Huntingdon Races which until the middle of the eighteenth century ranked in importance with the Derby (9).

The races are now held at the new race course to the north of Brampton village. During the 1914-18 war, Portholme became an aerodrome, suitable, when not waterlogged or flooded by the river, for the light-weight aeroplanes of those days.

Though the town offers a wide range of social and cultural facilities, in some respects it is sadly lacking. As well as the closure of the County Club and the Literary Institution since the war, the Huntingdon Golf Club with its nine-hole course on Spring Common has also ceased to exist and golfers now have to travel to St. Ives to play. During the war the tennis club on Brookside closed and has not been reopened, while the river swimming pool situated close to the gasworks closed when it was considered that pollution of the river had reached a danger point. A swimming pool appeal fund was launched in 1957, and it is hoped to build eventually a new pool on the Hartford Road meadows close to the river. Safe swimming facilities were regarded

as such a necessity that the appeal has the ready support of the local air force stations, both British and American.

It is difficult to account for the closure of the above amenities, but the following reasons would seem to have been responsible to some extent. During the war the various concerns lost support and some had to close almost immediately, such as the tennis club, or else continued though with declining vitality, so that after the war, though still in existence, they no longer appealed to the younger people and died a natural death. Another important factor is that before the war, Huntingdon was a small compact community with much of the population either native to the area or of long standing, so that a community life was well developed. The war upset this communal stability and brought an influx of new industry and increased administrative functions. The new residents not having had time to develop a community sense had no desire to support certain of the old concerns.

It is surprising that Huntingdon does not possess a dance hall, though dances are held occasionally at the Town Hall and several of the other larger assembly rooms. The nearest regular dance is held at St. Ives Corn Exchange, a factor which no doubt extends the entertainment field of that town considerably farther westward than would otherwise be the case.

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C H A P T E R I X.

HUNTINGDON AS AN INDUSTRIAL TOWN.

The London County Council in their report published prior to putting into operation the plan for a London "overspill" to Huntingdon, described the town as, "well located for industry, situated as it is at the crossing of several class A roads, and within a few miles of the Great North Road. A lively industrial and commercial centre has grown up round the picturesque and historic buildings of this ancient borough."

"Its existing industries are well-developed, and include food preserving, light electrical engineering, a hosiery mill, a rubber works, ancillaries to car manufacture and the usual service industries."(1)

This is the position at the present day, and one that has evolved gradually over a period of years in response to changing conditions. Pigot in 1839 stated, "it is not a manufacturing town, nor does it possess any prominent trade; but having aprincipal thoroughfare to the north, it has a good road business."(2). The little industry that existed, was purely that of a small country town. Hatfield in 1854 listed the town as possessing: seven blacksmiths, fourteen bread and biscuit makers, four wheelwrights and coachmakers, two millers, four saddlers, two breweries, two nursery and seedsmen and one iron foundry (3). Of these trades not one has survived to the present day.

This is in complete contrast to the industry within the town at the present time, details of which are given below.

Classification.

The industries of the town can be grouped together under several headings. In this classification no account is taken of firms such as builders, printers and laundries all of which are usually to be found in small towns. Two businesses, a nursery and a brewery, are included as they have only recently become defunct.

A. Engineering. (excluding agricultural engineering).	Silent Channel Company Ltd. Huntingdon Rubber Company Ltd. P. & H. Engineering Company Ltd. Acoustical Manufacturing Company Ltd. Amplion Ltd.
B. Agricultural Engineering.	Ruston's Engineering Company Ltd. D. Weatherhead Ltd.
C. Food and Drink.	Chivers and Sons Ltd. East Anglian Breweries Ltd. Oriental Confectionery Manufacturers Ltd. Goggs and Osborne Ltd.
D. Clothing.	Huntingdon Hosiery Mills Ltd.
E. Miscellaneous.	Fen Potteries. Wood and Ingram Ltd. Two small boat builders.

This represents an assemblage of industries similar to that of many country towns. A full description of these industries is necessary before it is possible to discuss the general trends and the factors responsible for them.

A. Engineering.

Silent Channel Company Ltd. and Huntingdon Rubber Company Ltd.

The Silent Channel Company was incorporated in London in 1931, and moved to Huntingdon in 1936, taking over premises which had been derelict since the Edison Bell Gramophone Company closed down. The site was originally used by the Portholme Aircraft Company, who had their works in an old iron foundry in Ferrar's Road, from which they extended their premises on to part of the land now used by the Silent Channel Company. When the Aircraft Company closed down in 1921, the extension was occupied for some years by the Clocks and Gramophone Company, and then by the Edison Bell Gramophone Company, who during their occupation built the existing factory. When it closed down in 1930, the factory premises remained empty until 1936, when Silent Channel took them over. Soon after the Second World War started, Silent Channel became associated with the Empire Rubber Company of Dunstable, which moved to Huntingdon as a subsidiary, and became incorporated in 1953 as the Huntingdon Rubber Company. At present it occupies the premises in Ferrar's Road, formerly used by the parent concern. A large amount of modernisation and new building has been carried out since the war, so that the two factories now occupy one

hundred and fifty thousand square feet. The Silent Channel Company manufactures a wide range of motorcar body accessories, such as window channelling, draught strips and door seals, while its subsidiary produces specialized rubber mouldings, such as television masks. Many of the important motor manufacturers are supplied from this factory, which is the only one of its kind in England producing a special type of window channelling in which rubber, steel and textiles form the basic components. Most of the products are dispatched from the factory by the firm's own road transport, but some is carried by British Railways or by British Road Services.

The prosperity of the firm is reflected in the building extensions as well as by the increase in the numbers of employees from sixty in 1946 to about two hundred and fifty in 1957, half of which are female. The majority of the workers come from Huntingdon, but some are drawn from a widespread area within a fifteen mile radius of Huntingdon. From time to time the labour situation has been difficult, owing to competition from local agriculture, and from other firms in the town and the neighbouring towns of Cambridge and Peterborough also drawing from the country area.

P. & H. Engineering Company Ltd.

This Company began work in 1941 in a garage on Hartford Road under contract to the Ministry of Aircraft Production. They assembled incendiary bombs and embossed metal plates for photographic flashes. In 1947 they moved to new premises, built on the east side of Stukeley

Road, north of the railway bridge, on the site of an old timber mill. Employing about thirty hands, they now carry out contract work for the electronic and radar industries.

Acoustical Manufacturing Company Ltd.

Founded in London in 1936 to make microphones and amplifying equipment for theatres and hotels, the firm moved to Huntingdon in 1941, when its London factory was destroyed in the blitz. The factory was established in small premises in Ermine Street (now occupied by Fen Potteries), and during the war manufactured special radio coils and transformers. In the years immediately after the war the company found it impossible to expand, as they failed to acquire land to build a larger factory. However, in 1950 they obtained land and built their new factory on St.Peter's Hill. The company has about thirty employees. It designs and makes electro-acoustic apparatus, such as amplifiers, loudspeakers and microphones, threequarters of which is exported.

Amplion Ltd.

This company established in 1932 in London, moved in 1946 to its present buildings adjoining the river in Bridge Street. This small factory manufactures electronic photographic equipment used in flash-light photography.

B. Agricultural Engineering.

Ruston's Engineering Company Ltd.

The interesting development of this firm is a direct result of

the rapidly increasing mechanisation of the countryside, which has resulted in a large number of firms specializing in agricultural engineering springing up in many small country towns since the war.

Prior to the war Ruston's had a large ironmonger's shop in Huntingdon High Street, and a small agricultural engineering business with their head office and workshop at St. Ives where they repaired and overhauled farm machinery. At that time the firm employed a staff of ten, including two fitters. The mechanisation of the farms was accelerated by the war and continued rapidly afterwards. This circumstance enabled Ruston's to start a depot and workshop at Huntingdon in small makeshift premises. The present managing director at this point returned from the R.A.F. and set about the task of building up the workshop side of the business. Ex-R.A.F. fitters were employed, mostly men who had been stationed at R.A.F. Wyton, married local girls and wanted to settle down in the district. In 1946, a similar business at Ramsey was taken over. The following year a new invention came to the notice of the firm, an American pea-harvester, far in advance of anything then to be found in this country. Immediately one was imported from the American manufacturers, H.D. Hume and Co. of Illinois. This enterprising project had an exciting sequel. Six of these machines were imported into the district in 1948, one hundred and twenty-eight in 1949 and one hundred and twenty-five in 1950. The demand for them was so great that they were all sold long before they arrived at the main pea growing areas such as

Holderness, Lincolnshire, Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Kent. During this period there was a great increase in pea growing, mostly under contract to the large canneries of Chivers at Huntingdon, Batchelors at Sheffield and Farrows at Peterborough.

In 1950 Ruston's took over the Huntingdon nursery of Wood and Ingram and built their factory there. The following year import restrictions reduced the number of pea-harvesters allowed into the country to fifty-three in 1951, twenty-five in 1952 and twelve in 1953. From its introduction into the country in 1957, Ruston's had been manufacturing spare parts, so that by 1951 they were in a position to manufacture the complete machine. By the end of 1953 they had entered into an agreement with the American firm to construct the machine themselves, and as a result fifty-one were produced in 1954 and one hundred and six in 1955. The manufacturing side at this stage had increased so greatly that it was decided to separate it from the parent concern and form the present company. Since then several new products have been brought out, and the firm now employs seventy men who manufacture a great variety of agricultural machinee. As well as serving a home market, machinery is exported to most European countries as well as to the Commonwealth.

The retail distribution of farm machinery from Huntingdon is in the hands of three sales representatives who call at farms within an area bordered by Peterborough, Corby, Kettering, Wellingborough,

Bedford, St. Neots and Papworth. Two salesmen from the St. Ives branch cover the area eastwards to Ely, and representatives from the Ramsey branch the district towards March and King's Lynn.

D. Weatherhead Ltd.

This firm, with its headquarters at Royston, acting as Massey-Harris agents, set up a depot and workshop on St.Peter's Hill in 1950, but employs only a small staff.

C. Food and Drink Industries.

Chivers and Sons Ltd.

Established in 1873, with head office and principal factory at Histon (Cambridgeshire), the Huntingdon branch was opened in 1931 in the premises formerly occupied by a coachbuilder, which had been empty since 1924. This building was conveniently sited close to the railway, with direct access by a siding leading from the firm's premises. This is one of a line of fruit and vegetable processing businesses bordering the Fens and adjacent agricultural land, which have good road and rail communications, enabling produce to be collected, processed and then dispersed.

The Company farms more than seven thousand, five hundred acres of land situated mainly in Cambridgeshire. There is a small acreage near the Chivers' factory at Montrose in Scotland, where raspberries are grown. The land in Cambridgeshire in mainly fruit growing, though an extensive area is under vegetables for the Huntingdon factory. Most of the vegetables used are grown by farmers under contract, the seeds

being supplied by Chivers from their warehouse in Godmanchester.

The Huntingdon factory is principally concerned in canning vegetables, the seasonal activity being indicated by the table below.

Canned Products	Season	Locality of crop.
Spinach	May to June	Within 25 miles radius.
Garden Peas	June to Aug.	Hunts., Beds., Cambs., S.Lincs., Northants.
Broad Beans	July	
Green Beans	Aug. to Sept.	
Carrots	Aug. to Oct.	a) Early carrots from the Chatteris Fens. b) Later, sandy soils of Norfolk, Suffolk.
Potatoes (for dehydration)	Aug. to May	The Fens
Beetroot	Sept.to Oct.	Fens (March & Chatteris)
Celery	Sept.to Dec.	Fens (Isle of Ely)
Turnips	Nov. to Jan.	Hunts.
Parsnips	June to Feb.	Chatteris Fens & Norfolk.
Processed Peas	All the year.	A wide area.

The vast quantity of vegetables converging on Huntingdon in summer and autumn necessitates extensive warehouse facilities, which are provided by the building in Godmanchester and the old brewery maltings adjoining the factory. Most of the movement both of raw and processed vegetables is now by road in the firm's own vans.

In the factory the busiest time is in the summer. Activity gradually declines during the remainder of the year, and reaches its minimum in March and April, which are largely given over to the work of maintenance. The chief work is the canning of peas and beans, other vegetables being regarded as subsidiary. Until recently all the fruit was dealt with at Histon, though now some is canned at Huntingdon. Not all peas are packed or canned. At the present time many fresh garden peas are frozen in response to a rapidly increasing demand for frozen foods. Since the war the manufacture of lemon curd preserve, the packaging of jelly creams and similar lines have been developed in an attempt to maintain full employment of the staff during the spring and winter months. This step was necessary as the labour problem became increasingly difficult with Huntingdon's expansion as an industrial town.

Approximately five hundred workers are employed, the majority of whom are women. The number varies slightly with the season, so during the summer a number of housewives have to be taken on, to do part time work. Huntingdon itself cannot meet the labour demand and special buses bring workers from as far away as March, Chatteris, Peterborough, St. Neots and from the intermediate area.

East Anglian Breweries Ltd.

As has been the case in many country towns, the brewery has been forced to amalgamate. This was done in order to withstand competition from the great companies, which with the increased mobility

of road transport have been able to expand their service areas into the countryside.

The brewery once occupied extensive premises in the High Street, and was the successor of two breweries of the nineteenth century. The premises stand on the site of the old Chequer Inn and its maltings, the history of which can be traced back over three hundred years. In 1645 during the Civil War, the inn was the headquarters of King Charles I, after he had captured the town.(4) In 1869 Marshall Brothers rebuilt the brewery and erected the present buildings. In 1919 they entered into a working agreement with the other brewery in the town, the Falcon (now a modern cafe adjoining St. John's churchyard),whereby the brewing was done at Marshall's and the malting at the Falcon. In 1927 a similar agreement was entered into with a Chatteris brewery, the joint company thus formed becoming in 1932 the Huntingdon Breweries Ltd., while the Falcon Brewery was closed down. Before this date small breweries at St. Ives and Staughton had also been taken over. At this stage the company owned at least two hundred licensed houses in Huntingdonshire and the Isle of Ely, all within a radius of twenty-five miles of the brewery. Barley was obtained from Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Hertfordshire and Norfolk, and the hops from Kent and Worcester. About a hundred hands were employed in the brewery and maltings.

The year 1950 saw the Huntingdon brewery being absorbed by the East Anglian Breweries with their headquarters at Ely. The Huntingdon premises were then used only as a storage and distributing centre for

the Huntingdon area, and the number of men employed was reduced to less than thirty. Finally, in 1957, the Huntingdon premises were closed and put up for sale.

Oriental Confectionery Manufacturers Ltd.

Established in London in 1925, the firm came to Huntingdon in 1941 after its premises had been badly damaged by bombing. The factory is in old buildings in St. Germain Street, which have been extended since the war. The form specializes in such delicacies as Turkish Delight, Marshmallow and Fudge. Besides serving the home market, sweetmeats are exported to many of the countries of the Commonwealth, as well as to the U.S.A. and various Mediterranean countries. Twenty operatives are employed mostly women.

Goggs and Osborne Ltd.

A small family business established in 1840 to produce soft drinks which are distributed locally.

D. Clothing.

Huntingdon Hosiery Mills Ltd.

Founded in 1924, the hosiery mill occupies the premises of an old flour mill, adjoining the river bridge in the parish of Godmanchester. It is one of the two remaining mills alongside the river in Huntingdon and Godmanchester. These old water mills were put out of business, as were the windmills, when steam was harnessed to grind corn. Of the Huntingdon Corporation Water Mill and the four windmills in Huntingdon, not one remains.

The hosiery mill manufactures socks, stockings, underwear and knitted outerwear such as pullovers and jerseys. The company supplies the War Office and the Admiralty, and is also a contractor to the Crown Agents for the Colonies, the Prison Commissioners and the G.P.O. As well as the home market goods are exported to foreign countries, including many parts of Africa, the Middle and Far East and North America.

Between two hundred and fifty and three hundred hands, mostly female, are employed. They all live within a radius of eight miles. As it is situated outside the usual hosiery area, this factory has to be entirely self-contained and uses a wide variety of machines for plain, ribbed and fancy knitting, and sewing machines for making up the fabric into garments. It also has its own dyeing and finishing departments.

E. Miscellaneous.

Fen Potteries.

A small concern with retail shop adjoining, developed since the war, which manufactures earthenware pottery.

Wood and Ingram Ltd.

This company, founded in Huntingdon, well over two centuries ago, claimed to be the oldest nursery and seed business in Great Britain. The firm had a very extensive trade, serving a large overseas market, especially North America, as well as the British Isles. The headquarters were in St. Germain Street, with a large nursery to the west of the town

at Brampton and a retail shop in George Street. In 1950 the business was closed down for personal reasons, the Brampton nursery and retail shop being taken over by a Cambridge firm and the St. Germain Street premises by an agricultural engineering firm.

Boat Building.

The two boat building firms are both small family concerns, situated alongside the River Ouse. One, on the Gosmanchester side of the river is of old standing and combined the building of pleasure cruisers and boats with boat hire. The other on Hartford Road meadows has been established since the war and confines itself to boat building.

The industrial development of Huntingdon can be considered to fall into four phases as illustrated by the table on page 147.

The type of industry which developed in the town prior to 1914 was of a special character. Its presence was associated with supplies of local raw materials or with the production of goods for the local agricultural and domestic market. Two of the four businesses shown in the table, the brewery and Wood and Ingram have an agricultural basis and all of them supplied a local market. Only the nursery produced for the national and overseas markets. The only other large business/this time was Windover's Coachworks, depending for its existence on the thoroughfare nature of the town.

The second phase of industrial development, the inter-war period saw the opening in the town of what are now its three largest firms, Chivers, Silent Channel and the Hosiery Mill, all of which took over old

DATE OF ESTABLISHMENT OF INDUSTRY IN HUNTINGDON.

Type of Industry.	Name of Industry.	Pre-1914.	1914-39.	1939-45.	1945-
General engineering	Acoustical			X	
	Rubber Company				X
	Silent Channel		X		
	Amplion				X
	P.& H.Engineering			X	
Agricultural engineering	Ruston				X
	Weatherhead				X
Clothing	Hosiery Mills		X		
Food & Drink	Chivers		X		
	Brewery	X			
	Oriental Confectionery			X	
	Goggs & Osborne	X			
Miscellaneous	Fen Potteries				X
	Wood & Ingram	X			
	Boat builders	X			X

premises close to or adjoining the railway. The availability of old buildings suitable for conversion was an important factor both at this time and later, especially for small firms who were either unable or

unwilling to lock up much capital in new buildings. This was particularly important before 1939 when the economic condition of the country and the world generally was so insecure. In addition, land for building was almost non-existent in Huntingdon.

The choice of Huntingdon for the Chivers' canning factory is easily understood. Ideally situated in close proximity to their headquarters at Histon, it borders the great agricultural area of the Fens and has good road communications which facilitate the assembling of raw vegetables and the dispersal of processed goods. This mobility of industrial resources is essential to all successful industrial operations. The railways, though reasonably efficient as far as industry is concerned, tended during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to concentrate industry within the comparatively limited area which they served. The development of road transport, however, mobilised industry by allowing door to door communication within the widespread limits of the road network. Similarly, since the early 1930's, the widespread production and use of electricity as a form of power has reduced the locational significance of the coalfields and of accessibility of fuel supply.

This new mobility has had two chief effects on country towns such as Huntingdon. More distant firms can now compete in the local rural-market, which was previously limited to the country town industry. Conversely it also means that firms in country towns are now in a much better position to compete farther afield in the national market.

This modern trend has been particularly true of Huntingdon, both just prior to and since the war. One great advantage resulting from this is that firms have been less linked to local raw materials and the local market. Some companies, such as the Huntingdon brewery were forced to amalgamate so as to extend their service area. They did so in order to withstand strong competition, which in this instance eventually led to the Huntingdon premises being closed.

The companies opening in Huntingdon during this period were all largely dependent upon female labour, which at that time was easy to obtain, as there was little competition from other firms or from the somewhat depressed countryside.

The third phase of industrial growth was during the Second World War. The year 1941 is a significant one, marked by large-scale bombing of the large towns, particularly London. There was a general exodus of industry from those large towns to the countryside, especially of the smaller industries which could more easily obtain premises and the limited labour they required from their new home. At this period, two firms, Acoustical and Oriental Confectionery moved from London when their factories were destroyed. Huntingdon was chosen as it was close to London, yet comparatively safe from aerial attack, while property was available for renting. At the same time the P. & H. Engineering Company commenced operations in the town.

The problem of obtaining labour during the war was acute and industry was maintained almost completely by female labour. The wartime

position was summed up as follows, "at one time a large proportion of the labour was drawn from the floating population of Huntingdon, including evacuees and servicemen's wives - -. Some cycled many miles from villages to do a 12 hour day, or sacrificed their Sunday rest to raise the weeks production figure."(5)

The greatest period of industrial growth in the town has been since the end of the war, which has seen two firms moving in from the London area and also two agricultural engineers and a pottery commencing operations. At the same time older firms already well established, either extended or moved from their old premises in the town centre to new ones on the northern fringe.

During the last few years thanks to the lifting of building restrictions and land becoming available for the first time, it has been possible for the industrial firms to expand and at the same time has removed the possibility of many of them returning to London. The Town Council are anxious to encourage industrial development and have put aside land for this purpose along St. Peter's Hill. They hope by these inducements to prevent any possible decline in the prosperity of the town.

Probably the principal factors responsible for the recent industrial growth of Huntingdon are similar to those suggested by Weekley (6) in accounting for the industrial development in the country towns of the neighbouring counties; namely, the condition of full employment since the war in the major urban areas and secondly to the policy of

planned control of the growth of many large towns. Much of the recent industrial expansion in country towns, is therefore the result of normal economic forces, the dominant one being the demand for labour; some of it the result of planning to restrict growth of urban sprawl around the large towns.

The small pools of labour in country towns were available before the war as much as today. It is only the coming of full employment that has given them the locational significance they now enjoy for manufacturing industry. In neither Huntingdon nor the rural area is the population large, so that the labour potential is not great. Unemployment statistics sometimes suggest there is no labour surplus at all. However, the reserve is not among the insured workers, but is composed mainly of female and juvenile workers, especially married women and girls living at home. A great part of the labour force is scattered over a wide area of the countryside, since it is composed chiefly of agricultural dependents, for whom Huntingdon acts as the labour market.

The utilisation of the labour pool is largely dependent upon accessibility, and as that provided by public transport is largely inadequate, firms have found it necessary to run their own buses to outlying districts to obtain sufficient labour. With more adequate transport facilities a greater industrial demand could no doubt be met.

As the labour supply is largely female, certain limitations are imposed on many of the industrial firms in the town:

a) the industry must be light in character.

b) The industry must be readily adaptable to considerable changes of personnel because many of the employees will be married women or young women of marriageable age, and therefore liable to leave at short notice.

c) The industry must allow of repetitive work or other work of a kind that does not need long periods of training.

d) The industry has to be capable of using labour for comparatively short and/or irregular periods, so that some shiftwork system may allow the employment of housewives and others with alternative duties.

A further stage in the industrial growth of Huntingdon is to take place in the near future, which will not only maintain but strengthen the industrial links established with London during the war. Huntingdon has entered into an agreement with the L.C.C. whereby at least one hundred and fifty acres are to be developed. About one thousand one hundred and fifty houses are planned for the eventual use of three to four thousand Londoners, while at the same time another fifty acres situated to the north of the town are to be developed for industry. This plan is very similar to the ones now being carried out at Swindon, Bletchley and other places, attempts on the parts of the L.C.C. to deal with its tremendous housing problem of one hundred and sixty-five thousand families on its waiting list. Under the terms of the agreement the L.C.C. will act for Huntingdon and will undertake the housing, ancillary development and the provision of roads and sewers on

the industrial sites. The expansion of water supply, sewerage and sewage disposal systems will continue to be the responsibility of Huntingdon. House building will begin in 1959, but the programme of development will depend entirely on the rate at which industry can be attracted. Light industry is obviously envisaged, excluding those such as canning and meat packing, for which the water supply and sewage disposal is inadequate.

The Board of Trade Regional Controller when meeting representatives of Huntingdon pointed out that the Board had no power to direct industry to a particular area, but said that it would do its best to steer suitable industry to Huntingdon from London. (7) One of the great problems in this type of scheme is which to build first, the houses or the factories. The Londoner will not move unless both a house and a job are available, nor the industrialist unless he can be guaranteed adequate labour.

When this scheme is completed it cannot fail to have far-reaching effects on the industrial structure and the economic life of Huntingdon. Even the community life and old world atmosphere of this historic town, which has changed so little with the passage of the centuries, can hardly hope to escape.

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CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

In the opening chapter it was postulated that the structures which man has erected to satisfy his variety of needs are a marked feature of human settlement.

The structures which have been investigated in this survey all serve specific purposes, such as shelter, transport, recreation, government, education, the sale of services and goods, and the production of consumer goods. It was further stated that human occupance of an area takes place within the framework conditioned by the factors of environment, and consequently the siting and functions of the individual units of property which compose the present town of Huntingdon have been considered in relation to the dominant features of the locality.

The application to Huntingdon of this method of investigating the functions of a settlement is suitable also for larger centres, as well as for any hamlet or village (since their differentiation is considered to be fundamentally a question of function) and shows that the interpretation of different kinds of property usage is a profitable line of study when made in the light of the distinctive features of the locality. An investigation somewhat similar to that adopted in this survey was made in America by C.M.Zierer (1). In that work the building properties of the town of San Fernando were classified into

commercial, industrial, residential and public utility units, and it was shown how these were related to the siting of the town in a district primarily important for its fruit and vegetable production.

In view of the agricultural nature of the Huntingdon area, with its surplus of farm produce, it is interesting to consider what part Huntingdon plays in the disposal of this surplus.

The examination of Huntingdon revealed three main characteristics of the part it plays in the disposal of the surplus farm produce of its district, and these may be summarized as follows :-

1. Local sales, limited to its retail trade as a shopping centre, and to a small Saturday market which is lacking in offices and warehouses for extensive wholesale trade in agriculture. There is no stock market.
2. Processing of vegetables and fruit produce, but no malting or milling of grain.
3. Its function as a thoroughfare town through which agricultural produce passes by road and rail to London and other large marketing and processing centres.

It is also necessary to consider the functions other than the disposal of agricultural produce, that Huntingdon performs in relationship to its locality, and the extent of this region.

Apart from carrying out its functions in relationship to the disposal of the agricultural surplus, Huntingdon acts as a centre for a considerable rural area. In this role its functions are common to

all places of urban status, in that they are centres of employment, distributing centres for goods and social centres. However, Huntingdon, the county town of an essentially agricultural county has certain functions more highly developed than many towns of a larger or similar size; particularly those of distribution, administration and the provision of certain services allied to agriculture.

Reference has been made throughout to the Huntingdon locality or region and it is pertinent to attempt a demarcation of the area functionally dependent on the town. A variety of terms have been suggested for such a region, and these range from, "urban hinterland", "sphere of influence", "catchment area", "umland", to "urban field", a term used by A.E.Smailes, who defines it as, "the area whose residents look to a particular town as their service-centre and whose life is focussed there through a constant tide of comings and goings."(2)

In an attempt to determine the sphere of influence of urban centres, much work has been carried out in recent years notably by A.E.Smailes, H.E.Bracey, F.H.W.Green and R.E.Dickinson, to name but a few. Green, (3) by mapping what he calls the "hinterland" of bus centres, has provided an easy method of determining the approximate boundaries of urban spheres of influence. More detailed studies on individual centres determine the boundaries more accurately. Dickinson, for instance, defined the zones of influence of Leeds and Bradford, "through a regional interpretation of the classified functions with which each city is endowed."(4)

In a similar way, Huntingdon may be regarded as having zones of influence. The extent of these varies according to the particular function which is exercising an influence over an area tributary to the town. These areas, determined when detailing the functions of the town, allow the recognition of composite zones of diminishing influence. By analysing the most significant of the functions for which each village falls within Huntingdon's influence, functional isopleths have been plotted for the values of 70, 60 and 50 percent (Fig.38). These allow the recognition of four zones: a large inner zone within which Huntingdon may be regarded as having little competition from any other urban centre; two central zones within which services are often duplicated, with the population looking towards more than one centre, particularly in the outer of these two zones, in which a "visit to town" may mean a journey to some centre other than Huntingdon; and an outer zone where Huntingdon's influence is largely administrative.

Fig.38 also shows the extent of the public transport hinterland of Huntingdon as well as the sphere of influence as determined by the County Planning Office, "measured by an analysis of village questionnaires, transport services and local knowledge."(5) Although these two methods allow the clear demarcation of areas dependent on Huntingdon, their boundaries are arbitrary. For this reason, the extent of Huntingdon's urban field is more truly portrayed by the composite zones of diminishing influence. These three methods taken in

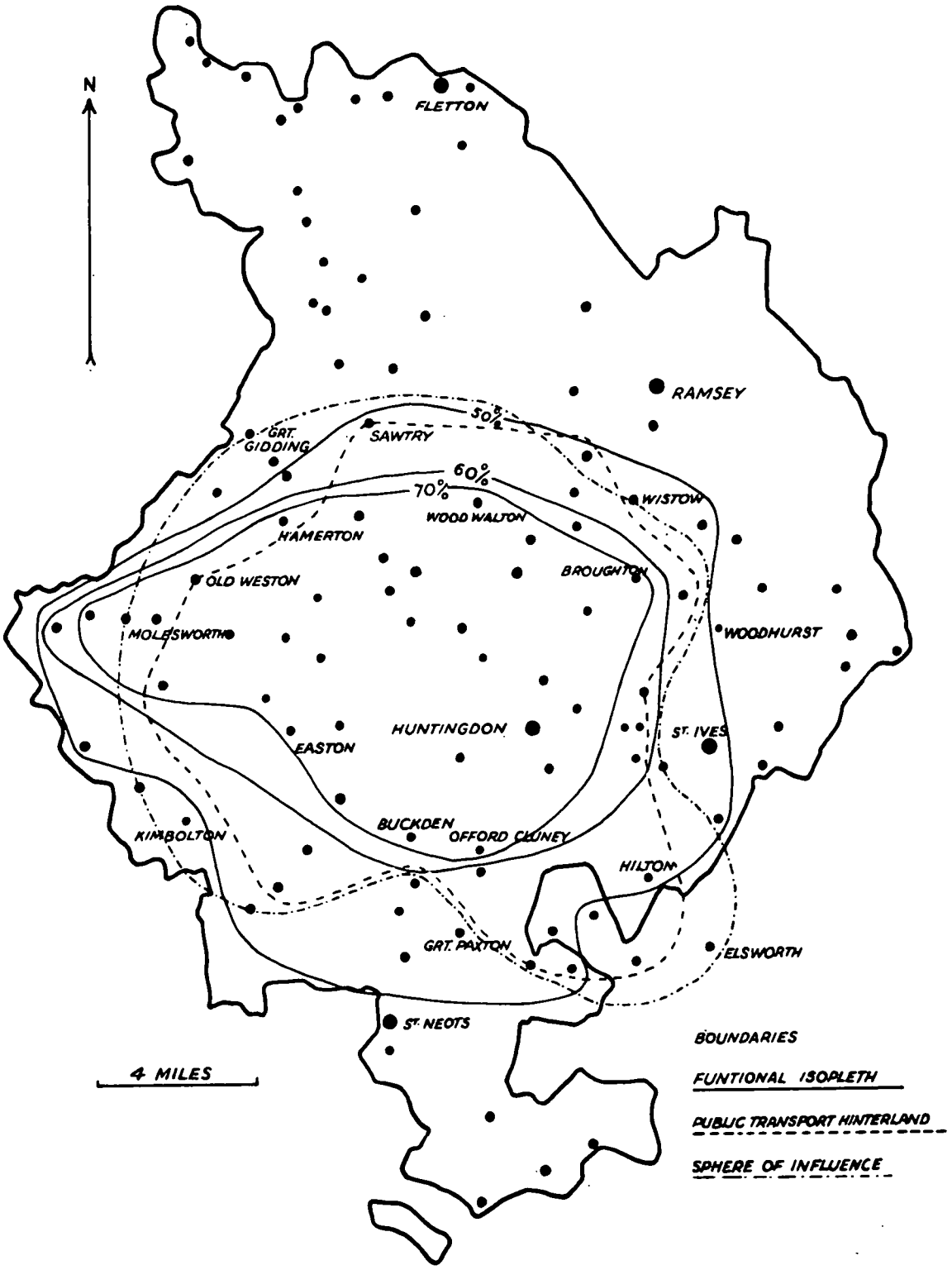

FIG. 38. THE HUNTINGDON ZONES OF INFLUENCE

conjunction demonstrate that Huntingdon's urban field has a definite form, which is determined by the interaction of several factors: administrative boundaries, arterial communications served by good transport facilities, and the size and proximity of neighbouring service centres. For instance, in the south-east the county boundary is soon reached, and although there are bus services to Huntingdon, many villages have equal or better access by bus or car to St. Ives and St. Neots; while the much larger centre of Cambridge exerts a strong attraction, particularly when the village lies outside the county and has no traditional ties with Huntingdon. In the west, the ease of movement along the A.604 road, the lack of competition from other centres and the position of the county boundary all help to account for the westward extension of Huntingdon's urban field. The influence of Huntingdon is abruptly curtailed in the north by that of Peterborough and in the south-west by Bedford.

This property usage survey has provided a satisfying and logical method of interpreting the relationship between man and his environment. Where buildings are contiguous, as in areas of close settlement, the twenty-five inch to the mile map is the most satisfactory for recording individual property units.

The possible modification or reorganization of boundaries by the Local Government Commission, together with the influx from London of both people and industry could change in part the property usage, urban morphology and functional nature of Huntingdon. The cultural

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landscape is never static, but is continuously being adapted by man to his changing needs and demands.

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FIG. 13. HUNTINGDON, PROPERTY USAGE.

SCALE OF FEET
0 500

- RESIDENTIAL
- GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC UTILITIES
- SOCIAL
- SOLICITORS, ARCHITECTS, BANKS, ETC. RETAIL, WHOLESALE, CAFES, ETC. — COMMERCIAL
- TRANSPORT
- INDUSTRIAL

N

Acoustical Manufacturing Co.
Secondary Modern School
Playing Fields
Pavilion
Sports Field
Spring
Ouse Lane
St. Peter's Road
Garage
P and H. Engineering Company
United Counties Bus Depot
Garage
Walnut Tree House
Garage
Garage
H o r s e C o m m o n
Horse Common Lane
Allotment Gardens
Allotment Gardens
Allotment Gardens
Ashton's Lane
Post-War Housing Estate
Post-War Housing Estate
Post-War Housing Estate
American
Allotment Gardens
Primary and Nursery School
Drill Hall
Montague House
Cromwell House (Birthplace of Oliver Cromwell) on Site of Augustinian Friary
Secondary Modern School
AVENUE ROAD
CROMWELL WALK
AMBURY ROAD
WARWICK WALK
Mortuary Chapel
Lodge
Mortuary Chapel
St. Mary's Priory
CEMETERY
PRIORY ROAD
PRIMROSE LANE
NORTH STREET
WEST STREET
Primrose Lane Hospital
NURSERY ROAD
Silent Channel Co.
Police Station
Parish Room
The Priory Masonic Lodge
Doctor's
Ferrar House
Grave Yard
Telephone Exchange
St. John the Baptist's Church (Site of)
Ambury House (Borough Council Offices)
Hessenware Bond
County Buildings (Old Grammar School)
GRAMMAR SCHOOL WALK
Bowls
Continental Confectionery Manufacturers
Printing Works
Market Garage
Ruston's Engineering Co.
Garage
Chivers' Factory
George Hotel
All Saints' Church
MARKET HILL
Walden House (Co. Council Offices)
Town Hall
Brewery
Post Office
Inn
Dentist
Garage
Almshouses
GEORGE STREET
Gazeley House
PRINCE'S STREET
Montagu Club
Ambulance
Laundry
BURGESS ROAD
HARTFORD ROAD
INGRAM STREET
VICTORIA SQUARE
EASTFIELD ROAD
Water Tower
Forest Stores
The Cottage
Reservoir (Huntingdon Corporation Water Works)
COUNTY HOSPITAL
Primary School
Lawrence Court
Clinic
Cinema
Car Park
Bus Station
Rectory
Archdeaconry Library
WALDEN'S ROAD
THE WALKS NORTH
THE WALKS SOUTH
Gas Showrooms
St. Mary's Church
ST. MARY'S STREET
Methodist Chapel
Old Peoples Home
Old Bridge Hotel
Amplion Ltd.
Huntingdon North Station
Grammar School
Gas Shed
Mill Common
Huntingdon East Station
Pumping Station (Huntingdon Corporation Water Works)
Spiritualists Meeting Place
Red Cross
Castle Hill House
Castle Hills
Huntingdon Hosiery Mill
Swing Bridge
Chivers' Warehouse
DOCK
Adelaide Terrace
Inn
BRIDGE PLACE
Gas Works
Inn
Goods Shed
W.M.
Godmanchester Station