



Hillam Historians

celebrate the 200th birthday of the

Hillam Inclosure Award

*An illustrated talk by
local historian Simon Tomson*

VILLAGE LIFE

BEFORE AND AFTER INCLOSURE

**Wednesday 14th September, 7.00 for 7.30 pm
AT THE NEW CRICKET PAVILION, STOCKING LANE**

Admission free Celebratory glass of wine or two

Hillam Historians invite you all to come along and celebrate village life. We are using the 200th birthday of the Hillam Inclosure Award as a focus for an open social meeting here in Hillam's newest building, the new Cricket Club pavilion. Do join us: everyone is welcome.

The Inclosure Acts were a series of Acts of Parliament which enclosed common land in the country. They removed previously existing rights of local people to carry out activities in these areas, for example cultivation, cutting hay, grazing animals or using other resources such as small timber, fish and turf. 'Inclosure' is an old or formal spelling of the word now more usually spelt 'enclosure'.

The majority of Inclosure Acts were passed between 1750 and 1860. Much larger areas than hitherto were enclosed during this time. Under this process there were over 5,000 individual Inclosure Acts, and 21% of land in England was enclosed. This included fields cultivated by the open-field or strip system, wasteland, and the common pasture land.

Strip ownership had worked well for many hundreds of years. Originally, each 'owner' was allocated a number of strips separated from each other by turf borders. The strips were scattered over the open fields so that owners each had a share in various qualities of land. Use of this land was restricted to the planting and growing season. After the harvest, the village livestock was grazed 'in common' on the land, and every year one third of the land was required to remain fallow to be used for common pasture.

The reasons for enclosure were primarily the need to feed an increasing population and a greater financial awareness of landowners, who saw the opportunity of increased profits. The impact of enclosure remains among the most controversial areas of agricultural and economic history in England.

One set of beliefs purports that rich landowners used their control of state processes to appropriate public land for their private benefit. This created a landless working class, which provided the labour required in the new industries developing in the north of England.

The 200th birthday of our own Hillam Inclosure Award offers us the opportunity to explore its social impact and to celebrate the anniversary with an open social meeting. Here, through an illustrated slide show talk by archaeologist and historian Simon Tomson, we will find out more about local village life two hundred years ago and about the local impact of enclosure.