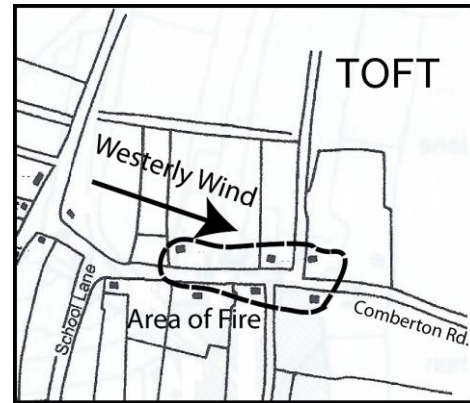




# The Great Fire of Toft

From a newspaper report of February 25<sup>th</sup>, 1865, reprinted in the *Cambridge Evening News* February 19<sup>th</sup>, 1965.



**On the morning of Monday last**, about half past ten o'clock, a fire of an unusually disastrous and destructive character broke out in Toft and so rapidly did it spread, in consequence of a wind of hurricane force, that, with the appliances at hand it was quite impossible to retard its progress until the buildings attached to five farms, in fact all those in the parish, had been, four completely and one partially, consumed. The fire commenced at a building on the premises occupied by Mr. John Tibbitt, junr., and belonging to the Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy, and destroyed the dwelling house, nearly all the furniture, barn, stables, cowhouse, cart sheds and a quantity of farm implements. The property is insured. From Mr. Tibbitt's, the fire communicated with the adjoining premises, occupied Mr. John Pentelow, and owned by Valentine Beldam, Esq., of Royston. There were burnt four barns, two stables, cart lodge, three sheds, cow house, granary and piggeries. These premises were insured. The next to ignite were premises in the occupation of Mr. John Matthews, whose house and furniture and a small bam were burnt. This property too was insured. Five adjoining-cottages next caught fire and were totally destroyed, the poor occupants losing all their furniture, as the first burnt so rapidly, and the alarm was so great that their briskness was considerably obstructed by fright. These cottages were the property of Mr. Wm. Foscil, who resides at Haslingfield, but holds a farm here on the opposite side of the road which next took fire, and the house, occupied the bailiff, all his furniture, three barns, stable, granary and cart lodge, chaff house, sheds, piggeries, a quantity of beans, peas and oats, three wheat, one hay and one stover\* stack were destroyed. Mr. Tibbit, senr., whose premises were not wholly burnt, and seemed as if they might escape, next took fire, and here there were consumed bullock sheds, stables, chaff house, barn, granary, piggeries and seven pigs. The premises of Mr. Wm. Medlow, on the same side of the road as the last that caught, were the last to ignite. Two barns and a cowhouse were destroyed and the house considerably damaged. This was the property of Mr. Charles Ellis, of Meldreth. To give a rough estimate of the damage done, we think it cannot be much under £10,000.

\* A stack made for the purposes of winter cattle feed or a haystack made from clover or straw from the threshing-floor