# *Blakeney :My Native Village*

The following extract, written in 1850, is taken from an autobiographical sketch of the early life of the Rev. William S. Wickenden. He was born at Etloe in 1795 and died in London in 1864. He was a protegee of Dr Edward Jenner, the discoverer of smallpox vaccination, who contributed towards William's education at St John's College, Cambridge, where he gained a Bachelor of Arts degree. He then entered the Church of England, serving as Curate at Lassington Church before leaving to take up professional writing in London, where he achieved good recognition.

***My native village was situated in a natural and beautiful amphitheatre. On the west and south-west arose two lovely hills, clothed in the richest verdure, and interspersed with orchards and white-washed cottages, even to the very summits. A deep ravine separated those hills, through which trilled a pellucid streamlet. After turning a cornmill, the stream flowed through the village, overshadowed in its course by pear and apple trees, and after passing under two bridges in the true Doric style of architecture, it was joined by another stream in the centre of the village. This second stream had previously flowed round the shoulder of the western hill above-mentioned. Both streams united, now rushed impetuously forward, laved the foot of the main street, washed the walls of a romantic gothic cottage, overshadowed by a solitary willow, which dipped its pendant boughs into the very waters, and was gradually lost amid orchards and flower gardens.***

***The main street formed an oblong square. The north side was ornamented with a picturesque chapel, battlemented in the gothic style. The eastern side was adorned with gay gardens, profusely decorated with flowers and evergreens. At the base rolled the united brooklets. No traveller passed but what stopped to gaze on this sylvan, this Arcadian spot, and to wish it might be his lot to pass his days in such a secluded, such a sweet solitude. And now, beloved village ! I am far away from thee, immured in the smoke and fogs of the great City. I pine for thy tranquil recesses in vain: but in my dreams I oft revisit thee, and every day of my existence memory stamps thy beloved image in fresher colours on my heart.***