



William Smith Steam Cultivation

A significant contribution to agriculture



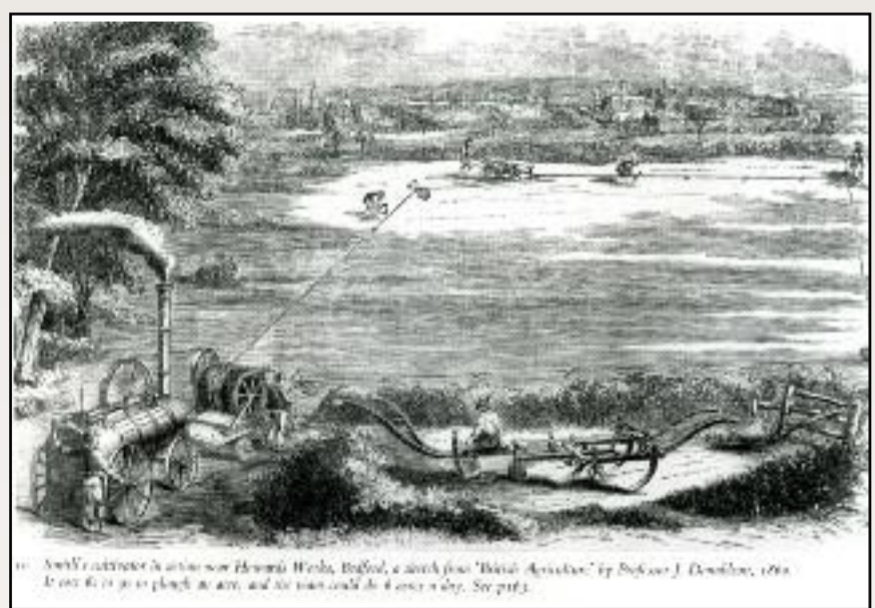
William Smith's cultivating tackle uncovered at Woolstone in 1956



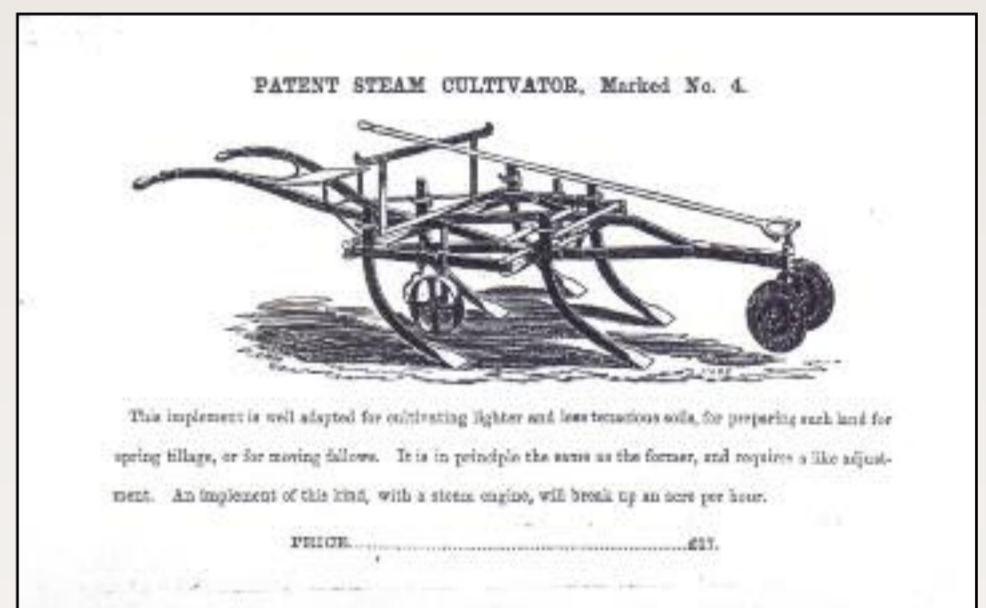
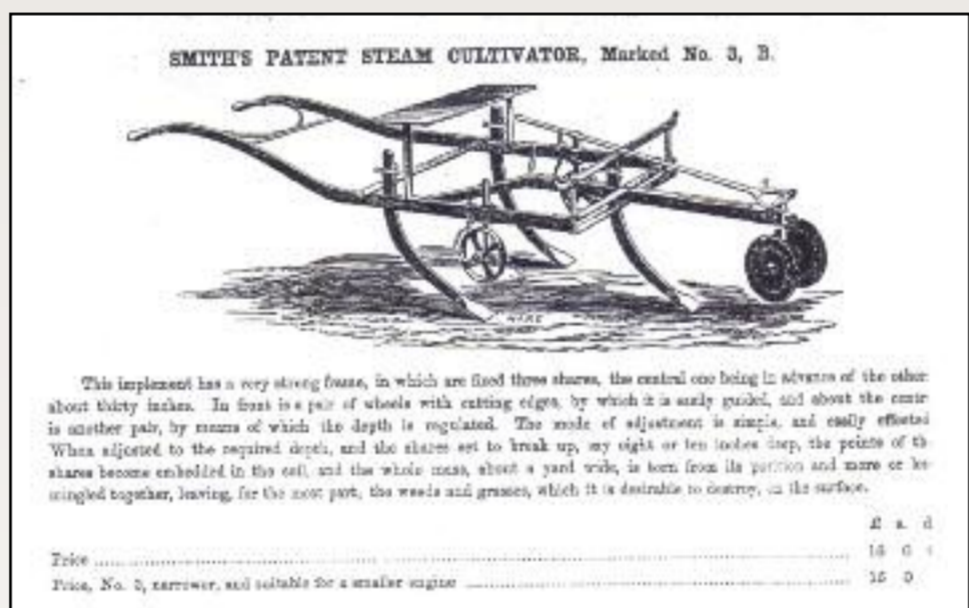
Church Farm



William Smith Close, Woolstone



Steam plough



William 'Billy' Smith was born in 1814, at Church Farm, Woolstone. He was determined to make his farm more efficient, convinced that horse power should be replaced by steam. In 1855 he invented a Steam Cultivation System - a system of winches and pulleys powered by a single steam traction engine. This improvement in ploughing speed contributed massively to the growth in farm productivity during the 19th Century. In 1868 he harvested a field of wheat at Linford, thrashed it by steam driven machinery, took it to be milled at Little Woolstone, and made it into bread in Newport Pagnell, all within 24 hours.

According to one of his letters dated 1879, he was so proud of it that he had a museum built near his front door at Church Farm to show off his system - "built so that it was to remain part of his farm". There it remained until 1956 when it was taken to Shuttleworth College for restoration. It was then exhibited at the Bedford Agricultural Show and the Museum of Rural Life in Reading. In July 2004 the apparatus was obtained by MK Museum where it can be seen in the Farming display in the barn.

William Smith's contribution to agriculture is commemorated by a residential road, not far from Church Farm, being named after him in Woolstone.

