

# Chapter 15

## Table of Contents

Burston and Shimpling .....677

Gissing .....681

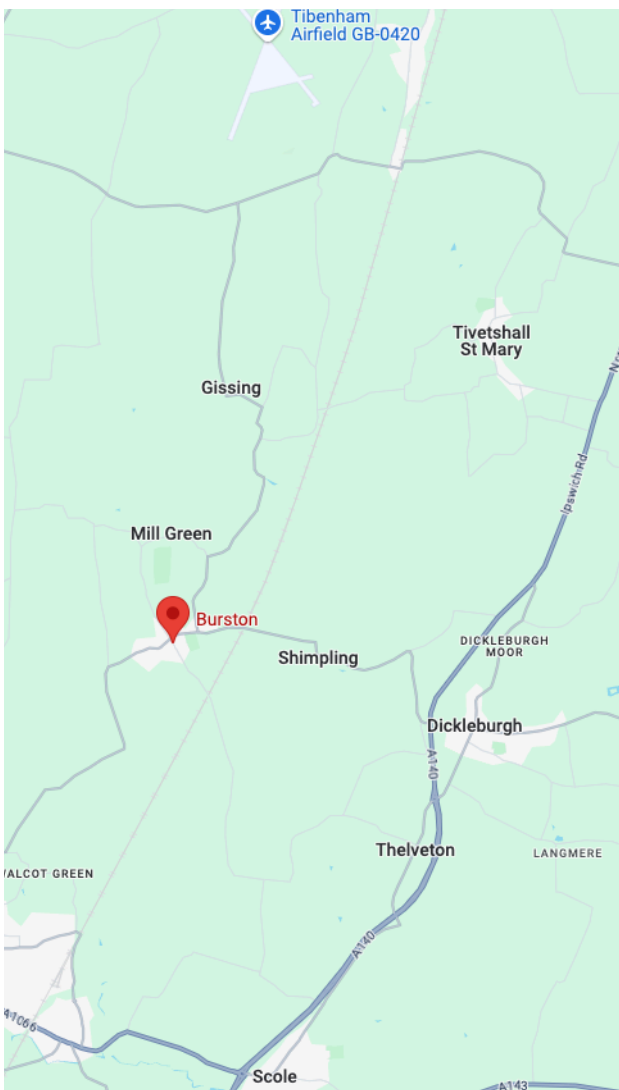
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The Don Swanton community award.



Map of the area. Scole was the breakout point and the Thelveton Estate.

The Norfolk stories.

## Burston and Shimpling

by Jane Fishwick.

The project first started in 2017 by canvassing villagers and encouraging people to buy shares. Fortunately, the government launched the Gigabit Voucher Scheme in 2019 which enabled us to physically start the project.

There were quite a few frustrations, such as obtaining permission from BT to use their ducting across a major road bridge and the railway line in the village. These held up the project for months. Once they were resolved we had confidence that the project was viable.

We formed a small core group of 6 people with various skills, Alison Wakeham is an IT expert, Jim and Lynn Howard, Brian and Jane Fishwick and Chris Humphrys on infrastructure.

Video by The Creative Grid  
([www.creativegrid.com](http://www.creativegrid.com))  
Music by Premium Beat

Beyond the book:

 [The B4SN video](#)





Reeling out the duct.



The infinity fleet.



Waiting for the fibre.



Here's the fibre.



Checking the depth of the trench.

None of us had any experience in this field but we learnt quickly. We had many other villagers volunteering to dig trenches, pull out and lay fibre in all weathers. We worked closely with B4RN engineers and planning departments to move the project along efficiently.

We were fortunate to have a major landowner who was totally on board with the project, which made obtaining wayleaves much easier.

Virtually the whole project was achieved during lockdown and gave us plenty to do, but did add an extra level of complexity.

We laid 37.5km of 16mm core fibre and 91km of 7mm fibre. We met a lot of new people and made some new friends in Burston and Shimpling. We got to know their gardens and houses quite well when we advised on the route to their houses and fitted the house kits and routers.

The core group are all retirees and probably never thought that they would be involved in such a huge project, both technical and physical. We had to contend with flooding, drought, freezing cold and temperatures of 40°C. We also encountered buried buildings and tarmac roads, along with huge flint stones which we find in East Anglia.

There is also an extensive ditch network between fields. It required a substantial amount of galvanised pipes to carry the fibre and to be able to withstand flailing machines when the hedges were cut. Fibre had to be buried 600-800mm in the fields due to the use of deep ploughing. Even so we had a number of instances of fibre being dug up, needing re-splicing or new fibre.

One surprise that we did have was how many businesses were run from homes. This helped enormously with vouchers, contributing about 20% of all connections. The village pub was the first site to be connected in the region, and we also connected





Don Swanton award.



High Sheriff- Michael Gurney & Councillor Florence Ellis formally open the B4RN connection in Gissing..



The team photoshoot.



Ashley and Jorj from B4RN turning a fleet.

the school, church and the famous Strike School Museum which doubles as a community hub. We also helped surrounding villages with advice and volunteering.

The group received the Don Swanton award in 2021 for outstanding service to the village.

Some of the volunteers' dig grant subsidised the Jubilee celebrations in 2022, and this year also partly funded a new petanque court in the playing fields, which has been a great success.

Connections are still being made as new people move into the village, and we will be working on the next phase of promoting B4RN Voice.



Tidy Clive trench.



Another infinity fleet.



## Photo Gallery



Clive and Graham trenching.



Starting a sub-route to a customer.



Soft backfill.



Newly ploughed.



Backfilling.





The blue purchase.



Mike Harrowven going through proposed routes in the workshop with Andrew and James Pitcher.



The splice boys, Graham and Rob.



Paul and Peter at a volunteer training session for handling fibre.

## Gissing

Clive A J Blakesley's story:

Well, today we got to the last chamber in The Heywood. It's been an adventure. B4RN are down this weekend to blow the core fibre to the last chamber. That's where your fibre starts ! So, basically we are at the edge of your village. It's taken four years to go from Billingford through Scole, Thelveton, Tivetshall. Shimpling, Burston and The Heywood. Also, Gissing was completed this year!


I've been a contractor from the start and never did it before. Previously, I couldn't tell one end of a mini digger from the other, but there we were, all signed off ready to go, and no one to put it in. So I bit the bullet, borrowed some money to buy some equipment and started to build.

With the help of the villages we did it!

By Halloween, Burston was LIVE. Well done everyone, champions, contractors and B4RN staff. You did it.

Following an October 2020 visit, the Burston and Shimpling champions got into fusing mode after their summer digs. Lynn became splice girl as well as tea girl, evidence that teamwork makes the dreamwork.

As this project was eligible for vouchers, B4RN made dig grants available, and several households contributed to a community pot for tools and equipment for the volunteers. This went into their bank account and they used it as they needed it, and the surplus was returned to the community. They used it to improve local amenities, like the French Boules court and other things.

Beyond the book:  

[The B4SN case studies](#)



## Bringing Burston live photos



Turning the fleet. Norfolk Infinity.



Another Infinity loop.



Laying the duct in the trench.



Alison Wakeman, the label queen.



Alison installing routers in Covid.



Ashley and James blowing core fibre.



The B4RN civils team, before and after. Sunny days and rainy days.



This was a rainy day.

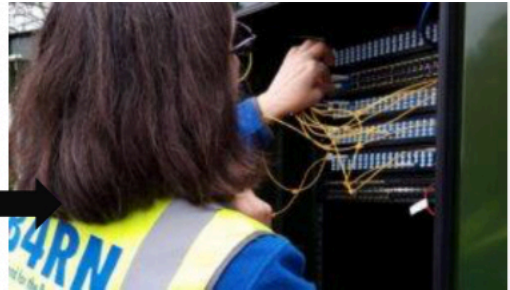


## Some photos sent in by volunteers



*Some volunteers hanging around on a street corner!*

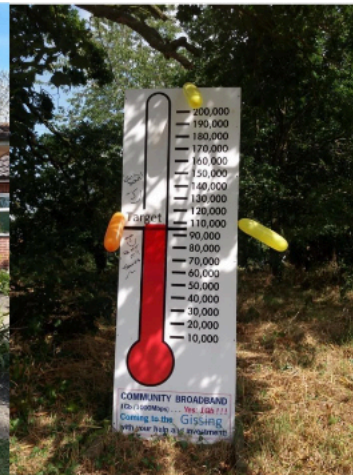
*B4RN volunteer, Alison, patching in the first few customers.*



*Burston Cabinet has landed*



*The first Gissing House kit was fitted.  
Will Santa deliver an Ipad to Miss Colchester?*



*In spite of often inclement weather a neat job is done - Moling*



*We still await a clearer understanding as to the ritual*



*In spite of the ever changing weather and soil conditions a neat job is done - Trenching*

**B4RN**



'Twas on a Monday morning that...



Lynn becomes splice girl as well as tea girl.



Alison gets her MBE spade award.



Tea break on a digging day.



Laying the duct in the trench.

The gas man checking for the line.



The gas man watching the trenching.



James blowing core fibre.



## The B4RN team fusing the core fibre



Robert Staveley and Kit Mackareth fusing in the tent.



Night shift.



One of the northern volunteers, showing a new volunteer (David Evans from Norfolk) how to fuse fibre-optic cable in a field at Dent. David became a B4RN employee and looked after the Norfolk network. Photo by Kira Allmann.



Matt Mercer fusing the fibre at the cabinet.