

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Volume 10

No 3

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Front cover: extract from Wright's map Dec 1839 (Town archive)

Back cover: extracts from tithe maps Aug 1839 from NRO (Parish), top, and TNA (Commissioners), below.

The **JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER** is the publication of the Aylsham Local History Society. It is published three times a year, in April, August and December, and is issued free to members. Contributions are welcomed from members and others. Please contact the editor:

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Maggie Vaughan-Lewis has kindly given us an explanatory article on the maps used for the tithe apportionment and the valuation for the Poor Law Commissioners in the late 1830s that are pivotal to tracing property owners in the parish, as evident in the books she and William have recently published.

The Autumn Course on the Art and Archaeology of the Medieval Church, given by Matt Champion, has been a great success. We look forward to his conducted tour of Aylsham Parish Church on Tuesday 10 March. Daphne Davy has kindly provided a taster from a tour she also conducted recently.

I have added some extracts from the Journal to the obituary of Tom Mollard in memory of his inimitable style as our editor for seventeen and a half years. I am grateful especially to Sheila Mollard, but also to Geoff Gale and Derek Lyons for their input. Tom encouraged me to volunteer in the Aylsham Town Archive and was a wonderful mentor, for whom I have many happy memories. Tom would have been very pleased to know about the current research on the Baptist Church, described by Lynda Wix and Jim Pannell.

We have had exceptionally good attendance for the winter lectures and Jim Pannell has kindly reported on the talks about the Working Horse in Norfolk and the Paston Family. We hope it may be possible to have an outing to Oxnead in the Autumn. John and Pam Peake gave us a great talk on the tidal lands of Blakeney and we hope to visit the area in the summer and will write up both events in the August issue.

Please see the last page for notices about the Social Dinner, the Autumn Course and the lecture by Margaret Bird at Coltishall on 13 May for the Bure Navigation Conservation Trust.

See also our website: alhs.weebly.com

Mapping Aylsham: some clarification

Maggie Vaughan-Lewis



Part of Wright's Map in the Aylsham Town Archive.

Before the Ordnance Survey surveyed the whole country and published detailed maps at large scales of 6" and 25" to the mile (reaching Norfolk in the 1880s) the process of creating maps was expensive and commissioned only when a written survey was insufficient. Wealthy landowners often had their estates mapped for ease of management but this was limited coverage showing limited features. Fortunately government legislation led to the making of detailed maps of most parishes in England in the first half of the 19th century. There has been some confusion over the maps of Aylsham, partly because the only easily accessible version has been the map published by the Aylsham Local History Society in 1995 known from the name of the surveyor as 'Wright's map'. This article will attempt to understand the origins of the map and its relationship to the tithe map.

Parish maps: the Aylsham tithe map and 'Wright's map

The years 1835–1840 were the busiest ever for the vicar, churchwardens and overseers of the poor. The entire system of relieving the poor was changed by the Poor Law Act of 1834, creating unions of parishes run by an elected Board of Guardians. The Poor Law Commissioners, under an act of 6–7 William IV

(1836), ordered an update of the assessment of the poor rates, still collected by the overseers to support the Union to which they belonged. The Aylsham order, dated 6th January 1838, said the guardians were to appoint a competent person to survey, plan and value the entire parish (subject to the Commissioners' approval). The work was to be completed by Lady Day (25th March) 1838. The valuation of land was to be by the acre and the plan to be drawn at 3 chains to 1" (a chain being 22 yards). The parish had to pay but were allowed to charge 1/5th of the rates each year for the expense.

At the same time the Tithe Commissioners under the Tithe Commutation Act of 1836 completely altered (officially) the way in which the vicar or rector was awarded his tithes; this also required complete mapping of property and apportioning of the new rent-charge payments. Technically the tithe owners and payers could agree their own rent-charges before 1st October 1838; after that date it would be imposed by a local enquiry.

So in theory the parish officers had to produce at least one complete survey of Aylsham with two maps and two books of reference, the tithe apportionment and the valuation. The organisation fell mostly on the senior churchwarden William Repton, son of Humphry Repton. William being an experienced solicitor was well placed to take on the bulk of the work.

Who did the surveying?

There were relatively few surveyors at this time and suddenly they were all in great demand. In Norfolk 497 out of the 660 tithe surveys were made before 1841. We have detailed knowledge of the process of tendering for the work as Repton's correspondence survives in the Norfolk Record Office. Tom Mollard has used the material in the introduction to the published Wright's Map but the letters are worth quoting from in detail. It is clear that the two pieces of work - tithe and rate valuation - were being offered together; some surveyors were happier mapping than compiling the facts of owner and occupier details for the books of reference, especially as the tithe apportionment needed an exact breakdown of all lands, buildings and acreages and could be open to appeals if disputed. Many also did not feel able to value the quality of the land for the Poor Law assessment – a valuation which would also form the basis for the tithe work. The preferences (and excuses) of individual surveyors made Repton's work more complicated; even the way in which they quoted varied widely, making comparison of tenders more difficult.

As the valuation act and the tithe acts were passed in August 1836 (with amendments in July 1837 allowing for two classes of maps), Repton had plenty of notice of both. He started sounding out firms (often one man) after a vestry meeting in November 1837 had given him the go-ahead. He wrote first to

William Salter Millard of Norwich inviting his terms for a survey of the whole parish under the provisions of the Poor Law as required by the Poor Law Commissioners with a map and copy and asking how soon he could fulfil the work. Repton needed an answer for the next Vestry meeting on Friday 24th a week ahead. Millard diligently replied on the 23rd giving his terms. A survey, plan at 3 chains to 1" and a book of reference would cost 9d per acre. He added his concerns over the speed:

Considering the time of year and the great difficulty of obtaining assistance while all hands are so fully employed I hardly know how to fix a time for completing the business. I have now two or three parishes in this neighbourhood in progress and fogs or snow may put a stop to our proceedings for weeks together. I am afraid that I cannot ensure its completion before Lady day.

Armed with this information the vestry instructed Repton on 24th November to write to about 10 other men for their terms. The brief was a valuation to be undertaken by two persons of buildings and lands for assessment of the Poor Law rates. He added that, 'Aylsham land exceeded 4000 acres and the present assessment for house and land was over £5,000. The survey, map copy and reference book is to cover the 4000 acres. The lowest Offer will not necessarily be accepted'. He asked for their responses by 4th December.

Not all the replies have survived but at least one refused due to the deadline. Charles Etheridge Startson wrote from Harleston on 2nd December:

I am sorry that I cannot at this time offer to undertake the valuation ... I am just completing Diss and have ten others engaged, most of them large parishes. Should the time for completion be extended to Michaelmas next I should be glad to undertake it either by myself or in conjunction with another valuer at 2 percent upon the valuation when complete or the payment by a percentage be objected to I would contract for a specific sum which judge would be about £100.

Within three days WG Bircham of Dunton offered to survey and map the land, with a plan and book for 7d an acre but separated the detailed work on the town for a separate price of 10 guineas. On 30th November Edward Seppings wrote from the Townshend Arms at Raynham offering:

1½d for valuing all rateable prop except tithes which I understand are commuted if so I will apportion them at no extra charge except a

reasonable one for making the award. Happy to undertake it with any experienced and respectable man of business. I have named a general percentage as I consider that mode of payment will be more satisfactory to all parties, than a proportionate charge per acre would be on the lands and a percentage on the houses and buildings.

Repton noted later Seppings's charges were 1½d for houses and 4½ d per acre.

Perhaps the most entertaining and informative is the extraordinarily long letter from Isaac Lenny. Lenny had worked with Repton in 1821 on the Burgh and Tuttington enclosure. Writing on 27th November from the Three Fishes Inn at Mepal, Cambridgeshire, he asked for clarification of several points before submitting his tender. His ruminations show the process of how he could achieve the task and keep his cash flow intact:

I would like to survey and map Aylsham, I wish to do it at the lowest possible remunerating price and with a View to this, I take the liberty of asking you to inform me how it would be paid for? for as I am so fortunate as to have so much business now I am employing several assistants whom I pay monthly and as I do it so low as to have but little profit it is essential to know this, as it is convenient to me to receive money on account for each job as it progresses; and I am enabled to do it cheaper if I have not to go to other sources to meet current expenses,

If only one person be employed about Aylsham it would probably take about 10 weeks, so that I should like at the end of a month or 6 weeks from its commencement to receive about ¼ of the amount; when the work abroad is completed (ie the survey taken) half; and the remaining ¼ 3 months afterwards. It would also be desirable to know the longest possible time allowed to do it in as the longer I could be allowed, the lower also would be my terms. There is also another stipulation generally approved here, which is that the parish find me at their expense a chainleader for every chain at work and this is preferred by Gentlemen generally because they think there is less probability of error to owners and occupiers of the lands creeping in, and it would save expence to the parish as they could find men cheaper by a ⅓d than I could do, besides the advantage of expediting the business by having a man who knew the lands. I think Sir you will see that it is essential I should be informed your opinion on these points, in order to enable me to fix as low a price as possible which I would do, so as to have a little profit for myself; and you have doubtless considered that to survey and map correctly the Town of Aylsham alone, would occupy much

extra time and trouble. I shall be in Norwich on Saturday Nov 9 when I would arrange for beginning the survey should it be entrusted to me ... As I understand the printed Instructions from the Tithe Commissioners they accept any plans approved by parishes; I should judge that for Aylsham a plan on scale of 6 chains to 1" would be preferable; that and 9 chains are the scales I am using in parishes here for copies delivered and the larger the scale the copies of maps are made on, the greater the expense. I should like to know the decision after this; I suppose only one reduced copy of map and reference book would be required. I presume if my tender be posted on Sunday it would be at Aylsham on Monday morning in time; not that I should drive it off to the last moment, if I am favored with your reply to this earlier.

It is clear that Lenny was aware of the Tithe Commissioners' needs and believed that one survey would be acceptable for both exercises, although produced at different scales. In fact they would not accept a smaller scale than 4 chains, preferring 3, so his would not have been sufficient. His suggestion for avoiding local disputes over land boundaries was to employ a local man to act as 'chainleader' while making the survey.

Repton obviously obliged him with a quick response as Lenny's next letter, now from the Ship Inn at Sutton, Isle of Ely was dated 2nd December. He started quite succinctly but soon offered to alter his quote if necessary. In an extraordinary twist, he ends his letter of tender by asking the officers to commend his ability to another parish!

[He offers] to survey and map at 6d per acre with £20 in addition for the town, which is large and populous and which would take much time and trouble; such map and reference books to accord with instructions from the Poor Law Commissioners, the said prices to include every expense except Chainleader, which I propose that the parish find [repeats his previous letter] ... but should the gentlemen prefer my finding Chainleader, I would do so for 1d per acre in addition.

As to time I would commence forthwith and complete the survey on or before the 31st March. As to payment I would stipulate that the sum of £30 be paid on 1st Feb, a further £30 on 1st March, further £30 on delivery of map and reference book and balance at the expiration of 3 months from the latter time; [he repeats his point about having many assistants], some of whom I pay as much as £4 4s per week ... Permit me to add, that I should much like to survey and map Aylsham ... and having had the honour of doing business for yourself, Mr Rackham,

Mr Warnes etc all of whom I have known many years, I hope should those Gentlemen be present at the meeting, that they would support my appointment; and should my proposition not exactly meet the views and wishes of the parish I beg to state my willingness to agree to any fair and reasonable suggestion from you and the other gentlemen and entertaining as I do the highest opinion of your integrity and sound Discretion I should be happy to leave this matter in your hands.

Whether appointed or not, I should feel much obliged by your writing me the Result to this Place ... and should I be honoured with the appointment as I shall be in Norwich on Saturday next the 9th Dec I should be happy to meet Gentlemen from the parish to sign a formal agreement if required; and I hope that my absence from the Meeting on Monday may not operate to my prejudice, for I would have attended had it been possible, but as it is impossible, I rely upon your kindness to give to my Proposals a favourable and indulgent consideration ... I have the honr to be Sir your obliged and obed serv

Isaac Lenny

I have a parish offered me in this neighbourhood which require to be inclosed; and the Gent' would employ me if satisfied of my competency to go through an Inclosure; when you write me about Aylsham which I hope may be on Monday or Tuesday, would you be so kind as add a few lines stating my Competency as a Surveyor under Inclosure acts and that I acted when you were concerned at Tuttington ... the parish alluded to is Wilburton ... there is a meeting on Sunday at 10 upon the subject so that it would be a great service to me to produce such a recommendation from you as I have taken the liberty to request

Compare this with the very professional and brief tender letter from James Wright writing from 2 Grove Place Brixton Road in London on 30th November:

I beg to acknowledge the rec of yours of 24th inst and in reply beg to offer the following terms, being well acquainted with the parish of Aylsham, I will undertake to survey and map the same, furnishing one three to 1 inch map and book of reference (besides ten pounds extra charge for the town) at 6d per acre or I will furnish the survey and town including 2 maps and books of reference at 7½d per acre

I am sir yr very ob servant

Not surprisingly Wright's letter was accepted.

James Wright

Repton wrote to Wright at Brixton on behalf of the vestry accepting his offer on 4th December 1837; they chose his second option, of two maps including the town to be scaled at 3 chains to 1 inch with books of reference at 7½d per acre. The condition was that Wright must undertake to complete the survey by 31st March 1838. The other part of the work was given to William Millard and Robert Pratt of Norwich in a letter of the same date. After stating that the mapping had been offered to Wright, Repton continued:

but it was resolved to accept your offer to jointly value lands and farm buildings at 6d per acre and all other buildings at 2 percent on annual value. Also to ask if you would be willing to undertake the apportionment of the rent-charges under the Tithe Commutation Acts at 1½d per acre.

Five days later Millard and Pratt accepted the work but they would require a reduced map and reference book before commencing the valuation. However they added:

On the enquiry whether we will undertake the apportionment of the Rent charge under the Tithe commutation acts at 1 penny halfpenny an acre the answer must be a decided negative.

Robert Pratt became the most experienced tithe valuer in the region completing 121 tithe districts in Norfolk and Suffolk. He and Millard did undertake the Aylsham valuation and apportionment so the initial refusal must have been due to the suggested price.

It is likely that Wright's selection was no surprise to anyone. James Wright could indeed claim local knowledge. Born in East Ruston in 1792 and married to a Cawston girl, James was probably trained by Robert Summers, a Happisburgh surveyor who had produced some of the local enclosure maps in the first decade of the century. Wright surveyed some small local maps on his own account in the 1820s including one of a few cottages on Itteringham Common. At this time (1818–1824) he was also a schoolmaster in Happisburgh where his son James and daughter Ann were born. In 1830 he undertook an early tithe map - that of Suffield parish - which was a voluntary agreement between the owners which would later be confirmed under the Act. Wright went on to make his name when he was employed as land surveyor by Lord Suffield of Gunton to survey and map all his estates between Gunton and Cromer in the first half of the 1830s. At this time he lived at North Walsham

where four more children were born. In 1838 James was living in south London, presumably on a job and where Catherine, his youngest, was born, but when the flood of parish surveys started he returned to Norfolk.

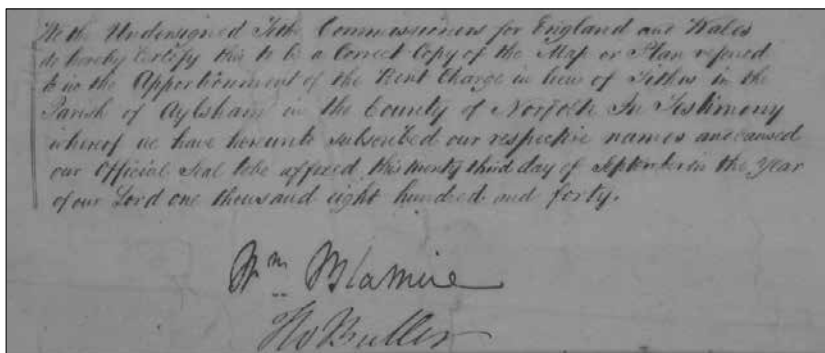
Between late 1838 and up to around 1848 he lived in Aylsham. He may well have stayed initially with his brother William who ran a boarding school for boys aged 7–13 in what is now Bure Way (formerly Workhouse Lane then Commercial Road). By 1841 James and his wife and six children were in Millgate Street where he is listed in the directory for 1845; in January 1848 he and his son James completed a survey of the town drainage and sewers for £10 10s. In all he won the tithe tenders for about 20 parishes including Aylmerton, Banningham, Felbrigg, Gunton, Colby, Tuttington, Thurgarton, Thwaite, Hanworth and Ingworth which kept him and James junior in business throughout the 1840s with offices in Great Yarmouth and Norwich by 1850. The family had moved to Great Yarmouth by 1851.

Tithe apportionment

In Aylsham, the owners and payers of the tithes met on 9th November 1837 and quickly drew up draft articles of agreements for the division of the total sum of the rent-charge, keen to avoid any outside intervention. Barbara Pitman, as the lessee of the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury's rectorial tithes (which comprised the greater part of the great tithes) would be due £716 and Philip Hunt, as the vicar entitled to all the small tithes in the parish and a part of the great tithes, would have £684. The Tithe Commissioners sent the draft for the Bishop's approval in January 1838, asking for a speedy result, 'the parties being extremely anxious' to have the confirmation passed. The articles were confirmed by the Commissioners on 25th April 1838. The more complicated and contentious business of apportioning the rent-charge to each individual landowner, based on their holdings as surveyed by Wright, then followed and the final valuation and apportionment by Pratt and Millard was certified by the commissioners on 23rd September 1840, the same day as the tithe map.

Tithe maps: how many copies were made

Under section 64 of the act three original versions of the tithe map were to be made, all bearing the approval of the Tithe Commissioners – for the parish, the Diocese and the Commissioners. Their embossed seal was reserved for the '1st Class maps' from new surveys, drawn at the preferred scale of 3 or 4 chains to 1" and deemed the most accurate. Second class maps, without the seal and usually based on earlier surveys, were accepted in many instances. The Commissioners' set was kept in London and is the one now available to see in the TNA (IR 30/23/22). William's photographs of it are available to see on disc



The copy of the Tithe Map for the Parish, labelled 'No. 2,' was certified by the Tithe Commissioners as evidenced by the deposit in the Norfolk Record Office under 'Acc Holley'

at the Aylsham Archives and there is a microfilm in the Record Office (MF 747 for the map; MF 754 apportionment). This bears the embossed seal giving it 1st class status. Inexplicably Wright did not date this copy and the date stamp which shows when it was first received in London has been trimmed off, leaving '1839' but no month. Later received stamps of 25 Jan 1840, 18 May 1840 and 7 Sept 1840 suggest some movement of the map, perhaps for additions or alterations.

The second set was for the Diocese; the Norwich Diocesan records are also in the Norfolk Record Office, but the Aylsham map is in an unusable condition. It is titled 'No 1' and was certified by the tithe commissioners on 23rd September 1840. Another map labelled 'No 2' is also in the Norfolk Record Office under reference 'Acc Holley', certified on the same day. Both maps bear Wright's name and survey date of 1st August 1839. Acc Holley also has the stamp of the commissioners showing it was received 18th May 1840. After certification this copy was returned for the parish to keep.

Across the country, the problem was the sheer size of the rolled maps, Aylsham's are over 7' by 9' ; the parish copy was often hung on wooden rollers (still attached to Acc Holley) and adorned church walls or later parish council offices. Some were stood on end in damp corners, suffering water damage. Others were nibbled by rodents. The Commissioners' maps, being far less handled, are usually the best preserved.

As the three sets were hand drawn there are slight differences between them. All were accepted by the commissioners although their set was considered legally acceptable as evidence in disputes. Habitations were depicted in red and all other buildings (from outhouses to churches) were

grey. Extracts from all three are printed on the covers, showing the Baptist chapel in White Hart Street (plot 218); eagle-eyed readers will spot the minor difference. *

Wright's Map in the Town Hall

The 'Wright's map', traced by Geoff Gale and printed by the Society, is almost half the size of the official copies (about 5' x 4') and inevitably less precise in the detail of some areas. Dated 5th December 1839 it is a few months later than the others and consists of two areas. The town centre is drawn at 3 chains to 1 inch (like the approved maps) but the rest of the parish is at 6 chains so creating a far more practical sized map. So 'Wright's map' was a second map made for the use of the town. However in essence the information is the same and the plot numeration is the same for all copies. Presumably the more cumbersome parish copy was stored with a solicitor in the town for safe-keeping – apparently Purdy & Holley's predecessor – and at some time (not known) was deposited in the Record Office.

The three books of reference that are in the town archive seem to be Pratt and Millard's working valuation books on which the tithe and poor rate re-assessment were based. In the text at the end of the main sequence in the 'Collected Reference Schedule' they wrote: 'We do certify that the Valuation comprised in the schedule is made by us in conformity with the Act 6-7 Wm IV [1836] to regulate the Parish Assessment. 7 Sept 1839'. The total rateable value was £9,152 2s 6d. A note in the old cover reveals that there were morning meetings in the Black Boys to examine the valuation (now to be used for the tithe work) on Monday 28th September and another on Thursday 3rd October 1839. Robert Copeman complained he was being charged too much compared to Mr Soame but his claim was denied.

The difference in date between the valuation as it stood at 7th September 1839 and the final apportionment of 23rd September 1840 explains the variations in the names of both a few occupiers and owners that appear when comparing the published 'Wright's Map' table and the tithe apportionment. Obviously tenancies would have changed over a year and some property might have been conveyed. Copeman had already spotted a mistake in plot 493, on the parish boundary, which Wright had thought Lady Suffield's. This was corrected by Pratt for the tithe apportionment. Anyone working on this period should consult both sources to ensure accuracy.

National maps

The Ordnance Survey arose from the need of the army for accurate mapping skills in the Napoleonic period. The maps were at first just printed for the

public (in the second decade of the 19th century) at 1” to the mile so, although fairly accurate, details of buildings are necessarily restricted. More importantly no lists of owners nor occupiers were expected to be compiled, making the maps less helpful to local historians than the tithe maps of the 1830s and 1840s.

However an act of parliament (the Finance Act of 1910) led to what became known as ‘the 2nd Domesday’ and produced the last combination of detailed mapping, with plot boundaries overdrawn on the Ordnance Survey sheets, with a book of reference (field book) giving the valuation and information about ownership and use for the whole country. The maps for most of Aylsham and the field books survive in the National Archives; the Domesday or valuation books have been deposited in the Norfolk Record Office. As the plot or hereditament numbers are unique, the maps must be consulted before trying to unravel the entries in the book. Unfortunately the draft record maps for the county (which would have been deposited as well) have not survived so a trip to TNA is required. A good example of the use that can be made of all three maps - Wright’s, the tithe and the Finance Act - is evident in our recent publication, *Aylsham: Hungate 1622–1840, A Norfolk Streetscape*.

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*There is a small gap at the right hand side of the chapel on the Acc Holley tithe map that is not on the other two.



I took a group of friends around our church, to discuss the writing in churches. This would cover not only what is in Aylsham Church, but the relevance of writing in the church in general.

Being able to read and write was very important to the church, long before schooling was available to all, even to all males. Not as important as it was to the Jews, whose Bar Mitzvah ceremony – son of the covenant, is enjoined on all males, and centres around being able to read scripture. Christianity in the Western world linked literacy with the clergy. The word clerical meant, at one time, both member of the religious community and literate. The system was that clever boys, even low-class clever boys, were educated and brought into the clergy. Cardinal Wolsey was the son of a butcher, who rose to the top of the national religious hierarchy before his catastrophic altercation with his King, and his inability to convince the Pope to agree to Henry the Eighth's demands.

The position known as 'benefit of clergy' was in operation throughout the Middle Ages, and the legislation was not actually repealed until the 19th century. This decreed that if an accused person was literate, then he should be tried by religious legislation, rather than lay legislation. This was considerably more lenient; famously Ben Johnson, the poet, claimed benefit of clergy when charged with the murder of an opponent in a duel, and served a short prison sentence as a result of this.

I studied calligraphy at one time. It has left me with an enduring interest in writing, both the style and the content.

We went around the church, looking at what was written. On show is writing on the floor, on brasses and ledger slabs. On the walls are memorial stones, wooden boards, commemorations of events in the church, community, and further afield. The windows have dedications, texts and titles. Finally, on the ceiling are a few remains of paint, some of which is lettering.

As a result of the ALHS course taking place at the moment, with Matt Champion, we looked at the whitewash on the pillars and walls for traces of graffiti. In our church, going around clockwise from the chancel door, the first piece of writing that we come across is the text at the top of the window above the door. The window is Victorian. The text is from St John's gospel, and explains, albeit rather allusively, the meaning of the cross with a dead snake hanging from it, Moses by the side of the cross, and many dying Jews reaching to the cross in supplication. It reads 'For he that turneth himself toward it was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by He is Saviour of all.'

Next we have a wooden board listing the known incumbents of Aylsham parish. The first is Brithric, who was the priest in charge at the time of the Norman Conquest. Last is Andrew Beane, our current vicar. Geoffrey Ducker, a member of the parish, told me that he has been responsible for all the carving of this board. When he started doing it, it took him an hour to carve each line. Geoffrey is now in his late eighties, still keeping the board up to date. It now takes him an hour to carve each letter.

In the timescale of the talk, it was not possible to talk about every piece of lettering in the church, so we passed swiftly over the written list of churchwardens, and several ledger slabs, to reach the Lady Chapel. On the ceiling of the chapel it is possible to see faded remains of the crowned MR monograms for Maria Regina, the Virgin Mary, Queen of Heaven. To help recognise the monograms, the hassocks in the chapel have been embroidered to show their likeness. The painting is the remains of the scheme from before the Reformation, when the Lady Chapel was 'fitted up new'. Geoffrey told me that one of his first jobs when he worked for his grandfather's firm, in 1939, was to assist in the re-leading of the roof. When the Second World War started, men of fighting age went off to war. Geoffrey was left with one man, past fighting age, to continue the work. He also told me of how, not knowing better, the gang saw the old ceiling timbers as being past their best, and the wood was initially put into a skip, and had to be retrieved.

In the west window of the Lady Chapel can be found the merchant's mark of Robert Jannys. He was a major figure in Aylsham just before the Reformation. He was also Sheriff of Norwich and was one of the donors of the

Rood Screen. One of the pillars near this, the southernmost of the chancel arch supports, has scratching on it. It was not possible to establish whether the scratchings held any meaning. Certainly some of the pillars in the chancel have initials carved into them. Matt Champion has explained that until the early 19th century, it was not considered inappropriate to carve one's name, or more, onto any 'suitable' surface.

Ledger slabs, memorials and writing on windows abound in the south nave aisle, but we paid little attention, walking up to the raised west end, and the SE tower support, on which hangs the list of dead from the two world wars. 'At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.'

In the porch, in the spandrels of the door into the church can be found the initials of the donor of the porch. This was Richard Howard, resident in Aylsham in the 15th century, of whom more later. Over the porch is an upper room. We don't know what ours was used for, but many of these were used as parish offices, schoolrooms, or places of safety for documents. Ours is, apparently, just about accessible via a small aperture, reachable only by ladder.

The west end is now our place of comfort. We developed it using money raised from charitable sales every Monday morning. Previously entry from the porch and the west door necessitated coming down several steps. Raising the floor level and creating a ramp around the north-west pillar has given us disabled access, and in this area we now have a servery and a toilet. On this pillar we have a table of kindred and affinity, once a vital list of rules for marriageability. Some rules were about consanguinity, some were practical, but presumably some were a way of avoiding temptation.

In the ringing chamber above the comfort space is a tripartite carved wood entablature, telling of the Masque of Anne Boleyn, a part professional production at Blickling Park. Nugent Monk, who created the Maddermarket Theatre, produced and directed a pageant. Many of the small parts were taken by Aylsham residents, and some of the profits were donated to Aylsham church for refurbishment. Access to the ringing chamber is via a spiral staircase, and can be arranged with a bell ringer, or the Vicar. Speaking as someone who hates heights, you would be very welcome.

In the north nave aisle we pass several monuments between the windows. At the easternmost end there is a brass commemorating Richard Howard and his last wife Cecilie. He was Sheriff of Norwich, and an Aylsham resident. There were, at one time, brasses to Richard's first two wives, but these have disappeared. The inscription reads "Orate p(ro) animae suae Howard Richard et Cecilie uxor qui obiit xiii dio Januari AD MCCCCLXIII", translatable as "Pray for the souls of Richard Howard and Cecilie his wife, who died 8th day of January 1463". The two cheerful skeletons are much enjoyed by visitors.



Rood screen in Aylsham church. Photos courtesy Aylsham Town Archives.

The rood screen also contains writing along the bottom. It translates as “Pray for the souls of Thomas Wymer, Joan and Margaret his wives, who caused this part....John Jannys...of this work to be gilded who...died A.D. 1507”. It is surprising that this, and the Howard brass, survived the Reformation, given that they refer to praying for souls. This was considered heretical. Possibly during the few decades between the creation of the monuments and the Reformation they were covered up.

Our final visit of the tour was to the sanctuary. There are several brasses, and a wall monument to Bishop Jegen, who resided for some time in Aylsham. One brass in the sanctuary is to Thomas Tylson in vestments with scrolls. The text translates as “Pray for the soul of Master Thomas Tylson, Bachelor of Divinity and also formerly vicar of this church, on whose soul may almighty God have mercy”. Another is to Thomas Wymer, in the form of a shrouded corpse with the abdomen laid open. The text reads “Pray for the soul of Thomas Wymer, formerly of Aylsham, Worsted weaver, who charitably adorned his church with many of his own goods during his life and after death, who died the 4th day of June in the year of Christ 1507, on whose soul may God have mercy”. Behind the curtains of the reredos can be found the Ten Commandments. At one time it was common for these, sometimes the Lords prayer, and sometimes other texts, prayers, or exhortations to be shown in the Sanctuary.

Taken all in all, Aylsham church contains a great deal of writing. Much of this was created at a time when over 90% of the population was unable to appreciate it. Thank the Victorians for mandatory education; thank the Welfare State for the time and inclination to find this out.



The road from Norwich to Cromer originally entered Aylsham along Hungate Street. This is proven by old documents, and the alignment with the Market Place makes sense. However, the continuation of the road is arguable.

One school of thought considers the frontage line of the west side of the Market Place to suggest that the road follows that line to the east of the church to the lychgate and then what has been known as Church Hill and Nethergate – known to us as ‘Old Cromer Road’. Evidence for this route is cited as the alignment of the undercroft below Holman House which appears to be north-south following the line of the road.

Another school of thought suggests that the alignment of the undercroft is not as obvious in terms of access – there are at least two access points and neither of them are from the west. Furthermore, the lychgate steps were built because of the steepness of the slope – hardly a good route for carts especially in winter.

A couple of years ago the retaining walls of the path from the churchyard path to the Heritage Centre were repaired. This involved digging quite deep foundations. No sign of an old track or road was found.

The buildings along Red Lion Street are very old. When repairs have been undertaken, older features than those apparent today have been found. The original road to Cromer could just as easily have run across the Market Place in to Red Lion Street and to Cromer Road, taking a gentler incline than the lychgate with a double bend to further ease the slope.

If anyone can shed further light it would be of interest, but perhaps an open mind until then?

Tom Mollard†



Photo. Derek Lyons

Tom Mollard was born in Stockport on 1 July 1927. His father was a postman and his mother was from a farming family in Ireland. He had an elder sister and a younger brother. He would relate that he remembered being really naughty only once as a small boy when his bossy sister was sitting on the edge of the cellar and he couldn't resist pushing her into the coal hole. He was duly punished, but considered it well worth it, as he'd say with a certain emphasis, a straight look and a winsome smile.

He did well at school and at thirteen won a place at Ushaw College in Durham, a prestigious Catholic seminary that trained novices for the priesthood. Tom was having none of that but relished the outstanding language courses, becoming proficient in Greek, Latin and French, skills in the latter two retained for life. He was gratified years later when he bought a guide book in France and was given the French version because, the lady said, he spoke proper French like a native.

He was called up on his eighteenth birthday just before the end of the War. He served three years in Burma, helping to restructure the country and repatriate prisoners of war after the Japanese withdrawal. He worked in the

Stockport Library for twelve years, becoming a chartered Librarian in 1957. He then came to Norfolk and started at the Hellesdon Library. In due course he was promoted to Downham Market, where he was in charge of Downham, Swaffham and two mobile libraries. He was allowed a little time each day to compile the Index to the East Anglian Magazine 1935-1960, no less than 377 pages, published by the Library Association in 1968. The Association hoped to recompense him in a small way for the work he had put in, but it said it would only be a token payment for if it were paid on an hourly basis they were sure it would break the Association, let alone the Branch. His wife, Sheila, thinks he got £50.

In 1974 he came back to Norwich as a District Librarian by becoming an Assistant County Librarian, a post he held until his retirement in 1988. Aylsham Library was on his rounds and he developed a good working relationship with Ron Peabody. It was a bit of a conundrum to persuade Ron to release long-unborrowed books that could make space for new ones requested by users, but Ron relented more when redundant books could be sold on rather than pulped. Tom enjoyed every aspect of his library work and his services were much in demand when he retired. He started as Librarian for the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society and was then asked to open up the previously closed Cathedral Library. He did this so successfully that it became necessary to employ a full-time paid Librarian. Some members will have happy memories of Tom showing us around the extensive premises above the south range of the cloisters. It was a treasure trove of some 8,000 valuable books, together with maps and manuscripts, collected over centuries, that Tom sorted, neatly shelved and discoursed about so knowledgeably.

Still enjoying voluntary work he followed Ron Peabody to become the Aylsham Town Archivist. He persuaded Derek Lyons to assist him and in this happy relationship Tom took on the massive job of cataloguing the documents while Derek digitised the photographs. In 1985 the Aylsham Local History Society was formed. Tom was a founder member and after one of the preliminary meetings he remarked to Jane Nolan, the Secretary, that the Society would benefit from “a few pages” to encourage people to join the Society. In an instant Jane said “good idea – you can start immediately”. And so Tom meticulously edited the Journal for seventeen and a half years – Volumes 1-6 (1985-2002). He continued as Archivist until 2005.

He loved the by-ways of historical research and helped Jane Nolan and Chris Barringer start the Society research projects, ending up as editor or joint editor of a whole string of publications, *Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century* (1988), with Ron Peabody, *Aylsham in 1821* (1989) and the first edition of *Millgate* (1993). Geoff Gale then brought his expertise in print and design to

their joint editorship of *A Backwards Glance – Events in Aylsham's past* (1995), *Aylsham Remembered* (1995), *A Survey Map of Aylsham* (1995), *Aylsham Directories* (2004) and *Millgate Aylsham*, ed. 2 (2006). He also wrote or transcribed large parts of the Journal and made the indexes to each volume.

He was a friend of Ben Burgess and, with John Pepper and Charles Lewis, advised Burgess on the deposition of his life-long collection of Nelson memorabilia, realised in the Nelson Museum at Yarmouth. Tom appends to Ron Fiskes' account in the Journal of the opening of the Museum on 18 July 2002 "As a final note – it was a memorable day for Mr & Mrs Editor, who not only had the pleasure and privilege of meeting and talking to the Duke of Edinburgh in the morning, but finished the day at the Sandringham Garden Party – slightly overwhelmed by the occasion and all the champagne".

Tom and Sheila had their happiest time when they lived in Erpingham for almost thirty six years. They were much involved with village affairs and Tom wrote a small book he called Notes towards a History of Erpingham, with ten copies he bound up himself in 2000 and dedicated to Sheila. They liked to take holidays touring the continent, generally in France, but Tom also insisted on adventurous visits to Berlin, including the communist eastern sector, and Russia during the Soviet era. They only moved to Aylsham when Tom became ill. He died on 14 November 2014 and is greatly missed. He was a great role model in the elegant and easy way he dressed, his lithesome gait, the precise and expert way he handled and annotated the books and documents he loved, his enthusiasm, his inimitable quiet humour and gentle sense of fun – he was indeed a perfect gentleman.

Below we have transcribed some short extracts of editorials and articles Tom wrote for the Aylsham Local History Society Journal and Newsletter.

We have a stream of pleas for more material, starting with the second issue in December 1985.

"The editor would welcome letters and other material for the further issues of the Newsletter & Journal...."

And sometimes responded to. In June 1986 we have the following.

"Editors should not get excited – a calm and placid role is theirs, however your editor must admit to a quickening of the pulse with this issue of the Journal & Newsletter. Why? Because the issue contains the greatest number of contributions from members since publication began"

He acknowledged the contributors, including Jill Sheringham and Ben Rust. It goes on:

“Confident that there must be even more similar material waiting to be received, the editor has been thoroughly profligate and squandered everything into this issue – saving nothing for the future...

Tom liked to mark the turn of the year with suitable quiet humour, as for December 1987.

“Searching for material for a Christmas Number, it will be apparent by now that the editor has been searching biographies and published diaries for suitable items, and the ‘Norfolk Diary’ of the Reverend Armstrong seemed a likely source. What a disappointment! – although interesting in so many ways, the diarist saw Christmas and the end of the year as a time to record all the disasters which had occurred during the year. Much more likely to depress our readers than to cheer them up, as this example from 1881 shows:-

December 31. As usual the year closes with the most fearful public catastrophes, e.g. three trains smashed up together in a railway tunnel at Canonbury; tremendous colliery explosion at Wigan; destruction by fire of a Vienna theatre with loss of 800 lives; Mr. Powell, M.P., an amateur aeronaut, carried out to sea and never heard of since; Ireland in a fearful state.

However, one little snippet can still raise a smile –

January 1 1868. I have observed how little out of the common one comes across even in a parish of 4300 inhabitants. But to-day I met with an old gentleman of 74 who last week married a lady of 84. He seems well off and had travelled and had “a particular mind to see the land of Goshen”. His grandfather had been Vicar of Aylsham and his great-grandfather had been a clergyman also. He was related to the celebrated Sir B. Wrench, for many years a great M.D. of Norwich. He cannot tell how he came to marry and supposed it was due to Providence. But it is said that the old lady has £800 a year. . . . say no more.”

In an editorial at the beginning of Volume 2 in 1988 Tom muses “if the current rate of publication continues, we should complete another volume every three years. I wonder how far we shall reach?”

By the time of Volume 4 Tom was acknowledging more of his own articles, the flavour of which is evident by ‘A Victorian love story’, the leading article for December 1994.

“If you wanted to read a good love story, you would probably turn to a Mills & Boon novel, or search for something romantic, a bit more up-market, by a recognised author. The last place you would think of finding one is amongst the faded, dusty records of a solicitor’s office. One most remarkable document

has recently come my way. It has probably not seen the light of day for some 150 years, but within its pages there is the most touching evidence of one man's love for his wife and children. The steps which he took to ensure his wife's welfare, after his death, make unusual reading.

It is the story of William Daniel of Wymondham.....As a result he wrote out a 32 page document in which he explains to his wife everything she needed to know about his financial affairs. Nothing is left to chance...

What was the outcome of this touching story? Did William die first? or did he outlive his 'dear wife', in which case all his careful preparations would have been in vain? When I started to write this article I did not know the answer to that question, but now my research spies have ferreted out the answer. William died in 1848, just two years after he had added those additional notes to his document – he was then aged 68. Maria lived on another 13 years dying in 1861....It must have been some consolation to William as he lay dying, to know that he had done everything a man could do to help his wife, and that this help would continue long after his death.”

“Things that go bump in the night:

With such a wealth of history and literature of our county available to us it does make it easier for an editor to find something that will fill those empty pages.

Now this is a dangerous comment coming from an editor who is always pressing for as many contributions as possible from his readers, so can I stress that contributions from our members are still the life blood of a *Journal* such as this. No other contributions can match up to them, and this is giving me a suitable opportunity to keep reminding members that I can never have enough!

That said, it is still interesting to discover previously unknown books that offer tasty tit-bits. One recent discovery is the “*East Anglian Handbook and Agricultural Annual for 1884*”. Priced at 6d. for over 300 pages. It was a jolly good bargain. Amongst the contents is a lengthy feature entitled “Traditions, superstitions and folklore of Norfolk & Suffolk” by John T. Varden. I have chosen two selections from it because of the local connection:- [Sir Thomas Boleyn's Ride, including That very time, at dead of night, Four headless horses took their flight, etc. and The Mannington Ghost, including just as his work was drawing to a close he suddenly saw a large white hand within a foot of his elbow...]”.

In Volume 5 we have “The Cellar Book”...

“My infrequent trips to the local bottle-bank are usually made with a slight

sense of embarrassment. By the time I have loaded up the car with empty bottles, I have convinced myself that nobody else ever had such an enormous quantity to dispose of. As the bottle-bank is prominently sited outside the Village Hall, I have taken to choosing times when I think fewer people are about to witness the event, but I usually get it wrong and arrive just in time to be observed by all the members of the Mother & Toddler group as they leave the hall and witness this wild-looking individual firing bottles as fast as he can through the little hole, and my reputation as the village soak is enhanced even further.

In earlier times, people were not quite as sensitive as this. They did not bother quite as much about the quantity consumed, but they were very meticulous in making sure none went astray, nor that they inadvertently ran out of supplies. This is well illustrated in an interesting little book loaned to me by David Walker. It is called *Rackham's Cellar Book*; or *The Butler's Assistant* in keeping a regular account of liquors. Priced at one shilling, it was printed and sold by Rackham Bookseller of Bury St. Edmunds."

Also in 1997 we have "The Village Lock-Up Association"...

"Now be perfectly honest. Had you ever heard of the Village Lock-Up Association? I certainly had not, and I must confess that when I did first hear of it I thought it might be some sort of leg-pull. But then I thought, why shouldn't there be such a society? It takes all sorts to make a world. We are interested in local history, and the Village Lock-up Association is simply pursuing a rather narrower field in the same subject area.

I first came across the existence of the association when one of their questionnaires was sent to Aylsham Town Council....seeking detailed answers to the most obscure questions...the Town Clerk, very shrewdly passed it straight over to our town archivist, Ron Peabody. Ron has not been feeling very well since then, and I am not surprised. One section of the questions was a complete eye-opener. This is section F [so you realise there are five previous sections to this] quaintly headed Other ancient detention and punishment devices..." Following the partial list that includes Cat's Paw, Darbies, Heretic's fork, N'er-do-wells necklaces and Noise maker's fifes, Tom goes on "I shudder to think, and we are still nowhere near to listing all the items. I know I am prejudiced. I am fascinated by all aspects of local history, and I know we could be regarded as cranks by people who are not at all interested in the subject, but in a way, I feel glad (and relieved) that all our society involves itself in, is struggling to decipher unreadable documents, or ploughing through hundreds of names in a census return.

Rather that, than recording the number of disembowelment racks into a

national database. However if any member is interested, I have the address of the Village Lock-Up Association. I wonder if Ron has finished answering the other questions?”

In Volume 6, the last he edited

“I expect I am not the first person to wonder what exactly the Ian Sears Clinic is, and why it was built, and why was it so named. From anyone strolling down to Key’s Sales it attracts just a passing glance, but this building, at the corner of Palmer’s Lane and Norwich Road has recently celebrated its 65th birthday.

Its birth is recorded in the Eastern Daily Press for November 8th 1935.....

Before I discovered the above newspaper cuttings, I knew nothing about the Ian Sears Clinic and Captain Sears. Now I do, but the story raises as many questions as it answers. Questions I would love to know the answers to are: Did Captain Sears get elected to Parliament in the ‘forthcoming’ election? What happened next to the Orchards? How long did it remain a Labour Party Centre, and was it much used? Who was it sold on to next? Perhaps one of our members could write a follow-up to this piece.”

Penultimately in December 2001, “After the AGM – What next?

At the Annual General Meeting our chairman [Peter Holman] spoke of his problem in trying to report on the past year’s activities, after every previous speaker had stolen his thunder. Not that he needed to have worried; he always rises to the occasion as he did again this year.

In his remarks I was struck by one particular comment. Peter asked whether the society seems to have drifted away slightly from engaging in any original research, either as a society or by individual members. If this is right then it would be a great pity for the society. Some sort of research is the life blood of our society, and in the past we have tackled a variety of topics with some degree of success.....So plenty of research has gone on during the society’s history, and possibly much individual work is going on currently that I am not aware of. If Peter is right, should we not be looking for useful local studies that we could become involved in? No one is obliged to be involved in serious studies; after all, members can enjoy their membership of the society at any level they choose, but should we be creating opportunities for those members who so wish, to become so involved? I think our chairman was right to pin point this as a possible problem. What happens next? – I should think members’ ideas would be welcomed by the committee.”

And finally – From the Editor

“I really should think before I burst into print, but then I probably wouldn’t

print anything. In the last issue I rambled on about a perceived shortage of research going on currently amongst members. A few moments of reflection would have told me that I really have no idea of what members are quietly beavering away at, not even amongst the members I know in Aylsham. Even less do I know of what other members not living locally, are involved in.

This was brought home to me quite clearly. Nicolas Corbin promptly sent in his article on Hubert De Burgh, and Linda Steward, who is a member living in Kent, sent in two remarkable publications which she has produced – one on Blickling Hall and the other on Sheringham Hall. Linda's publications are beautifully produced and make me envious. All the contributions were sent as a result of my appeal for material for the Journal, but it made me realise how much other work probably goes on that I never know of.

....From now on I will just concentrate on typing, but if there are more articles waiting to be sent in, I shall be eternally grateful”

Many of Tom's contributions are anonymous, but here are some we can list.

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SOCIETY NEWS

Aylsham Baptist Church

Lynda Wix and Jim Pannell



In August 2014 we were contacted by Baptists Together to ask whether ALHS would be interested in conducting a survey of the burial ground of Aylsham Baptist Church in White Hart Street. The reason for the survey is that there is no longer a congregation at the chapel, as that congregation amalgamated with the congregation of the Cawston Road Brethren Chapel in 1993 to form Emmanuel Church Aylsham. The White Hart Street premises are no longer needed. We responded positively, and the survey was conducted by we two with Jill Sheringham, Ann Dyball, Sue McManus and Derek Lyons – before the winter weather set in.

The survey was quite demanding, and at times frustrating, because most of the 38 headstones date back to the mid-19th century and some were very worn. A copy of the survey was displayed at the February meeting of the Society, and a copy is held in the town hall archive.

With the help of Arnolds-Keys, the agent, we were also able to access the chapel itself. Derek Lyons has taken numerous photographs both of the burial ground and the outside and inside of the chapel.

Baptists Together agreed to pay us a small amount for expenses and, additionally, agreed to pay for the production of a booklet intended to trace the history of Aylsham Baptist Church. We two have been pursuing this research. As always, lots of interesting connections have emerged, and already we can foresee that it will be quite a problem to edit.

We have read about the early days of Baptists in England, and in Norwich which was one of the two great centres for the Baptist Church in the country. It was this influence which spread to the rural areas and one such outreach was to Aylsham and the White Hart Street Chapel, built in 1789. The early years were quite intimidating and discriminating for the Baptists, and this is well illustrated in Aylsham.

We are fortunate to have at least three good sources of research material. One is an excellent booklet by Ted Doe detailing the history of the Baptist Church from a Norwich perspective. Another is the Norfolk Record Office which holds various minute books, etc. The third is the Baptists themselves.

With regard to the building and burial ground, Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis have carried out detailed research on the site and the various ownerships which is typically thorough, and they are allowing us to draw on their work.

We know that there is a strong Baptist connection with Gordon House and Woodbine Villa in The Meadows. This involves John Whitehead, a famous missionary to the Congo Free State, and the use of a schoolroom for education. We know too that Baptists could not be buried in consecrated ground, and we are looking at burial records with the help of Hilary McCann at the Town Hall.

There is still much to do, and if anyone would like to join us, or has useful information, we would be very pleased to hear from you.



The Working Horse in Norfolk – a talk given by Stephen Pope on 27 November 2014



Stephen began by explaining that East Anglian carts were heavier and bigger than elsewhere, and so heavier horses were needed. In the early 1920s there were over 2 million working horses in the country. The breeds were as follows.

Punch means a short stocky man. The Suffolk Punch is chestnut in colour, and the oldest of the breeds in its original form. Some say it should have been called the Norfolk Punch as it was just as widely used here. In medieval documents, such as psalters, working horses illustrated are very similar to the Punch. It is a horse well-known for its docile disposition, and for managing in the East Anglian soil. A mature horse can weigh a ton and stand 16.5 hands. Show horses are bred even bigger. It was the favoured horse for pulling heavy guns in WW1. Today there are just 516 Suffolk Punch horses which means that it is endangered. Should the stock fall below 300 it will be very difficult to recover.

The Shire Horse is similar in size and weight to The Punch, but is black or grey. It was most common in the Midlands. It was commonly called a 'cart horse'. There are about ten thousand Shires today, and some are still used by the breweries.

The Clydesdale has similar breed origins to The Shire, and has distinctive white legs. It is able to draw a heavy cart very well, and was taken by emigrants

to North America and New Zealand.

Percherons are two breeds; there are British and French breeds, and they are often dapple. They were particularly used for pulling omnibuses, and were used in WW1 extensively.

The Cleveland Bay is a lighter horse and used for pulling carriages and coaches. It is also endangered.

The Norfolk Trotter is also called The Hackney. It is a riding and harness horse and a favourite for drawing carriages and racing.

Most farmers had Cobs. These were cheaper, stocky, thick, utility horses. As farm work required more power than the one cob, farmers would work together and share their cobs. The stallions are only used for breeding. 'Boys' who took their stallions around the countryside for stud were well-known characters.

In medieval times the ox was preferred for farm work. Ox teams had difficulty in turning, and that is why medieval ridge and furrow remains have their distinctive 'S' shape. The late 17th and the 18th century saw increasing use of horses which could turn more easily. However, once oxen became too old to work they could be eaten!

A Victorian farm typically needed one horse and 5 men to work 50 acres. The main job was ploughing. Teams of horses could plough more than one furrow so that 2 acres could be ploughed in a day. To plough just one acre involved 11 miles of travel. After ploughing came harrowing to break up the ploughed soil, and then rolling. The ground was then ready for drilling and horses could pull the seed drill invented by Jethro Tull. Finally a light harrow was used to cover the seed. One measure of a skilled teamsman was that there were no hoofprints or footprints. At harvest time the horses pulled reapers and later they pulled reaper-binders. Finally, the harvest had to be carted away. For some of these tasks the horses had to be changed during the day.

During the 1930s there was a depression which affected farming considerably and progress to mechanization slowed. At the outbreak of WW2 there were still a million horses working, and half a million after the war. Tractors overtook horses as the means of farm work, and many horses went to slaughter.

All the tasks of working with horses involved skills. Teamsmen worked all day for 6 days per week. On the 7th day they sometimes took part in ploughing competitions which are still held today.

By the 1950s tractors had taken over. Some brewing companies have continued to use dray horses. Drays weighed up to 8 tons. Every day the horses worked, and they were known to find their own way home.

The horse was essential for many functions of daily life. Carriers taking goods took passengers as well. These were long, rough journeys. Most

businesses had their own stables and horses. Wagons would be washed down for use on Sunday outings. As coal became widely used in factories and households, carting coal became an important trade. At the bottom of hills, such as Grapes Hill in Norwich, chain horses were kept to help pull loads up the slope, and then led back down. Local authorities kept horses for deliveries and refuse collection. Early fire-engines were horse-drawn. Where water was in short supply, water was distributed from carts. Stone was hauled for roads and building. Horses were used to pull wagons on railways before the use of steam locomotives. When stations were opened, the horse and cart was needed for transport to and from the station. By the 1950s horse transport was phasing out, and the last railway horse was Charlie at Newmarket goods station.

From the 17th century there were increasing numbers of coaches and carriages using the new turnpike roads. Each stage was 7 to 10 miles at approximately 10 miles per hour. The changes of horses between stages was done in just a few minutes. Conditions could be challenging; one driver froze to death but the horses continued to the next stage. From the 1780s travel became faster on roads that were macadamised. In 1846 the last stage-coach left London, but they continued elsewhere. From 1900 to 1911 the Lobster coach ran between Norwich and Cromer. Horses pulling omnibuses had a working life of only 4 to 5 years. In 1879 the Norwich Omnibus Company was set up. The only horse-drawn trams in Norfolk were in Gorleston. Horses worked in pairs, and wouldn't work without the partner horse. In cities, horse manure presented a health problem, and all omnibuses had to carry a shovel and bucket.

Horses were used to turn the pugmills at brickworks. On the beaches, horses were used to haul sand and bathing machines. They also hauled the lifeboat from the shed to the water. Local farmers were expected to bring their horses for this purpose, as at Yarmouth, Gorleston, Happisburgh and Wells. This was a difficult manoeuvre into a rough sea. The last horse-drawn launch was at Wells in 1935.

The army used horses for cavalry. Farmers tried to hide their horses as neither they nor the horses wished them to go. Most horses never returned. The survivors were generally sold off to French farmers.

Today, horses are seen at shows, but are little used for work. Stephen ended his talk by wondering whether, in a time of increasing concern for the environment, there might be a place for the working horse in the future.

Stephen was warmly thanked for his informative and well-illustrated talk which reflected his personal interest in the working horse. He still works with horses at the Gressenhall Museum of Rural Life.

Jim Pannell

The Paston Family – a talk given by Dr Rob Knee on 26 February 2015



John Adey Repton's reconstruction of the seventeenth century appearance of the hall and gardens at Oxnead.

Rob introduced himself, dressed in a wig and three-cornered black hat, as John Fenn of Dereham. He had come by documents and letters from Oxnead Hall, now in a ruinous state. The boxes and trunks of documents were taken away by Mister Blomefield for study, and included a letter from Sir John Falstoff which gave great detail about furnishings, leases, wills, accounts, etc. When Blomefield died, the documents were left to Tom Martin of Diss, and upon his death John Fenn came by the letters; over a thousand folded items, not all dated. John ordered and indexed the letters chronologically and added annotated notes. He managed to construct a family tree, and then transcribed the letters into modern English. This was all done by hand, and ten years later he was ready to publish.

The Paston family tree begins with Clement Paston, described as a wise man with a good marriage to Beatrice, daughter of John de Somerton. Clement sent his son, William, to the Inns of Court in London where he became a sergeant at law and then a very successful judge. He presided over some famous cases in London and Norwich, and amassed a fortune, marrying an heiress, Agnes daughter of Sir Edmund Berry, with land in Norfolk, Suffolk and Hertfordshire. William accepted land as payment for his services. William made sure that his son John 'marry well' to another heiress Margaret, daughter of Sir John Mautby. In his will, Judge William had to divide his estate between

his large family and his bequests to the church, and his eldest son, John the elder, felt that he hadn't enough property to support the estate. John the elder was said by his father to be 'a drone amongst bees', and lived expensively in London, while his brother John the younger was more often at home helping his mother. Although William Paston was described as 'The Good Judge' and admired for climbing from 'ploughman's son to judge', the family was not universally admired and had enemies.

Gresham castle was one property desired by others. A small army gathered outside. John was in London, and his wife Margaret wrote to him requesting arms to defend the castle. She also sent a shopping list which included cloth and food. Margaret was ejected from the house and retreated to Norwich. John petitioned the king without success – by this time the Wars of the Roses had erupted.

John found employment with Sir John Fastolf who owned many properties. On Sir John Fastolf's deathbed, John Paston claimed that all the property had been left to him. The wolves grew in number, and Hellesdon Manor, now a Paston property, was taken by the Duke of Suffolk. Again, Margaret was in the house (while John was in prison in London) and again, she was ejected. The violence of this siege to property was a shock to people generally. John the younger defended Caister castle against the Duke of Norfolk, but finally had to surrender, though his elder brother did eventually get the king to restore Caister to the Pastons.

Both John the elder and John the younger fought for the losing Lancastrians at the battle of Barnet (1471), a decisive engagement in the Wars of The Roses. Sir John the younger fought at the Battle of Stoke for Henry VII in 1487, the last battle of that war.

Among the letters is a lovely, first ever recorded, Valentine letter from Margery Brews to Sir John the younger. A successful marriage was duly negotiated. By the end of the fifteenth century the family was making progress, but the flow of letters is interrupted at this point. Sir John the younger's son, William, married the daughter of Sir Henry Heydon and produced four sons. One son, Clement, was an admiral and made sufficient money to rebuild Oxnead Hall. The siblings all made their marks on North Norfolk life. Erasmus, the eldest son, married into the Wyndhams of Felbrigg. His son William used his considerable wealth benevolently. He also built the great barn and alms houses at Paston and established the famous Paston School in North Walsham.

The letters re-start in the seventeenth century. Katherine Paston wrote a touching letter to her son William Paston asking if he was looking after himself, eating well, etc. He became Sir William and he was well travelled. He

CLEMENT d 1401 m BEATRICE SOMERTON
 ┆
 WILLIAM 1378 – 1444 The Good Judge buyer of Oxnead m AGNES BERRY
 ┆
 JOHN 1 1421-1466 m MARGARET MAUTBY - EDMUND- WILLIAM 11- CLEMENT- ELIZABETH
 ┆
 JOHN PASTON 11 1442-1479 -- JOHN PASTON 111 m MARGERY BREWS -- MARGERY (Calle) – 4 others
 ┆
 CHRISTOPHER – WILLIAM IV m BRIGITTE HEYDON – PHILIP – 2 daughters
 ┆
 ERASMUS m MARY WYNDHAM – ADMIRAL CLEMENT m ALICE – THOMAS m ANNE LEIGH
 (builder of Oxnead)
 ┆
 SIR WILLIAM 1528 -1610 m FRANCES CLERE EDWARD 1550-1630 m M BERNEY
 (Paston School, Paston Barn, lives Oxnead) (Musician, builds Barmingham and
 Appeleton for his 6 sons, 3 daughters, buried Blofield)
 ┆
 CHRISTOPHER 1554-1577 m ANNE AUDLEY MARGARET 1619-1702 m HENRY BEDINGFELD
 ┆
 EDMUND 1585-1632 m KATH KNYVETT (Letters fame) MARGARET m HENRY BEDINGFELD 1826
 ┆
 SIR WILLIAM 1610-1662 m KATHERINE LINDSAY d 1636 bust at Oxnead Church
 ┆
 SIR ROBERT, EARL OF YARMOUTH 1631-1682 m REBECCA CLAYTON
 ┆
 WILLIAM EARL OF YARMOUTH d 1732 no heirs

refurbished Oxnead Hall splendidly, housing works of art from the continent. Dr Thomas Browne visited. Sir William leaned towards Catholic and Royalist causes, and was made a Baronet by King Charles I. However, as the Civil War loomed, Parliament expected a contribution to their army. Sir William was unwilling to do this and went into exile in Holland. Oxnead was sequestered and heavy fines paid. Following some conciliatory letters, William was allowed, in time, to return. His son Sir Robert was also greatly interested in the arts and also in alchemy, and in his many letters he often spoke of his love for Oxnead.

After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the Pastons were somewhat rewarded with a visit from the king – a very expensive guest. Sir Robert, now the Earl of Yarmouth, built a new banqueting hall for the visit. Blickling Hall, the home of the Pastons' rival Sir Henry Hobart was also due to receive a royal visit. So great was the number of visitors that Sir Robert received a request for loan of toilet facilities from his rival at Blickling Hall.

The family had, by this time, accrued huge debts and Oxnead fell into ruin. Another branch of the family, who were based at Barningham Hall, were also ruined and left for France.

John Fenn published the letters successfully, and was very proud of his achievement for which he received a knighthood from King George III. The first edition of 500 books sold out within 2 weeks. The Paston Letters have been in print ever since.

Yet again, this talk was well attended and appreciated.

Jim Pannell



Dr Rob Knee, on the left, with an enactment at Oxnead by the Paston Heritage Society on its 21st Anniversary Celebration.

NOTICES

ANNUAL DINNER

This will be at the Banningham Crown on Thursday April 16th at 7.00 for 7.15. Booking forms are available from Jim (01263 731087) or can be downloaded from the Society website (alhs.weebly.com). Forms should be returned to Jim as soon as possible now.

AUTUMN COURSE

The course for Autumn 2015 will be 'The Pastons and Their Norfolk'. It will be led by Elizabeth McDonald (LDC) from UEA. The course will run at Pegg's Yard at 2.00 on Tuesdays and the provisional dates are September 22 & 29, October 13 and 20, and November 3, 10, 17 and 24. If you would like to join us, please let Jim know on 01263 731087.

AN EVENING WITH THE BURE NAVIGATION CONSERVATION TRUST

Come and hear about Coltishall's glory days as a brewing village supplying a wide area:

'Here for the beer: Coltishall as a major brewing centre'

An illustrated talk by Margaret Bird

On Wednesday 13 May 2015 at 7.30 pm at Coltishall Village Hall, Rectory Road, NR12 7HF

The period 1700-1840 shaped the village we know today. Coltishall was one of the leading centres for beer in the region, with eleven maltings and three wholesale breweries in 1780. Its very early steam brewery of 1795 in Anchor Street could brew more beer than any other in the county. A generation later a fourth brewery was producing more than Lacons of Great Yarmouth.

Margaret Bird, who recently brought out the Diary of Mary Hardy, wife of one of the brewers, will describe the river's role in bringing Tyneside coal to power these impressive enterprises. She will also highlight the contribution of the public houses to the vitality of Coltishall, Great Hautbois and Horstead.



Everyone is welcome. The small admission charge will include a glass of local beer or a soft drink: £1 for Bure Navigation Conservation Trust members; £2 for visitors.