AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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Cover illustration. Doorway of Bank House

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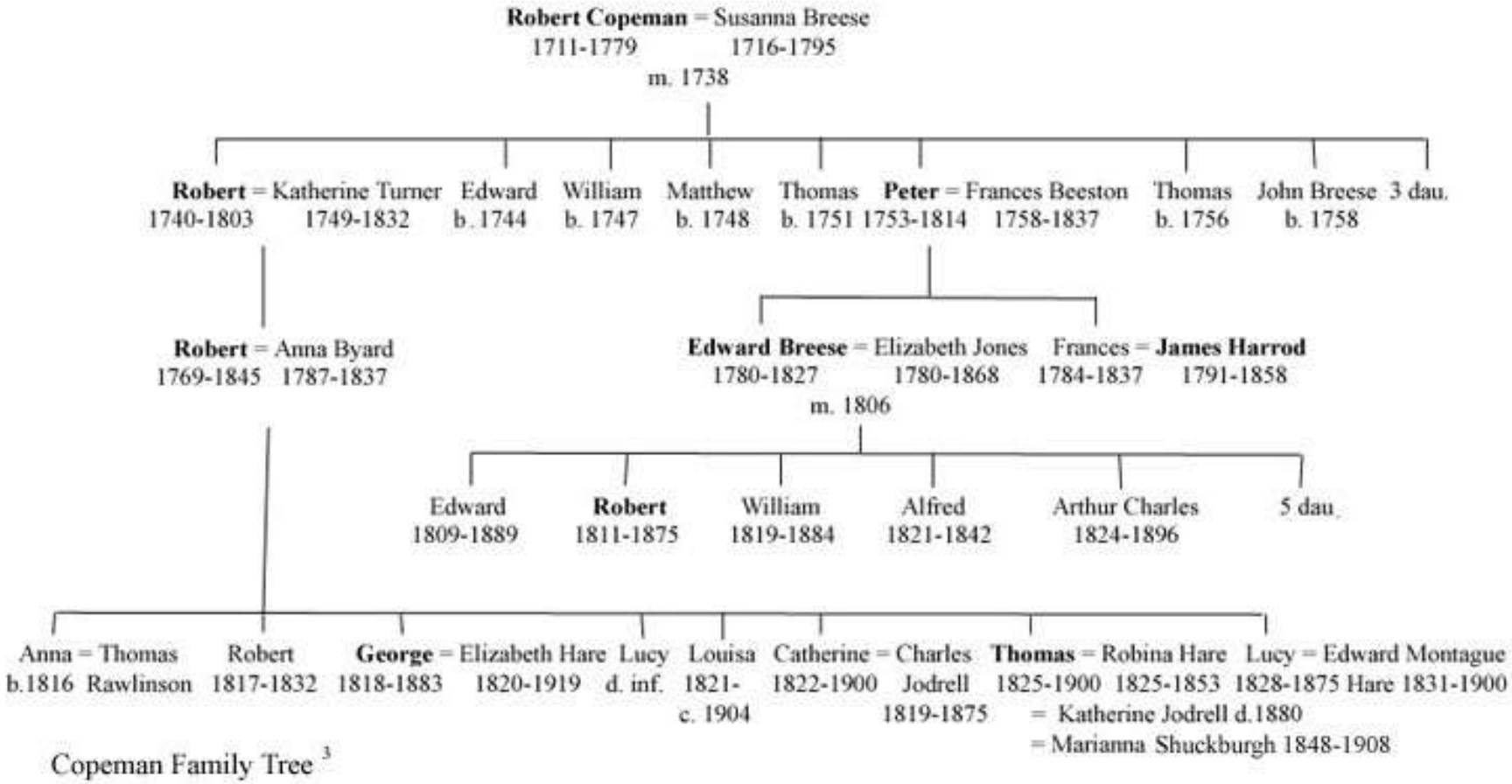
There has been a very good attendance for winter lectures this year despite the weather. We are very grateful to the speakers who have given their time to put on such a memorable series. It is nice when members stay on for tea or coffee afterwards and we very much appreciate the kind folk who make the refreshments – some additional helpers on the roster would be a great help.

We look forward to the Social Evening at *Sea Marge* on 22 April and we thank Jim Pannell for organising this – always rather a complicated business. Ann Dyball has taken much trouble, with Gillian Fletcher's help, to organise an exciting summer excursion to the Marshland churches on 8th July. Please see insert and notice on back cover for arrangements.

The Society is hosting an open day in the Town Hall on Heritage Sunday, 12th September 2–5 pm, under the title *Aylsham: Then and Now.* The arrangements will be similar to those for the very successful event, *Window on Aylsham,* held last year, but the outside talks will be about the old Hungate-Churchgate route and Red Lion Street. Matthew Rice will speak about his book *Building Norfolk.* If anyone would like to contribute background material for the talks and exhibition please contact the organisers on 01263 734408.

The Society has several sets of the Journal in bound volumes, but we are lacking unbound copies of some parts of the first three volumes that we need for making up new sets. If anyone still has unbound copies we could borrow for a short period to make up a new master set for xeroxing please contact the Editor on 01263 733424.



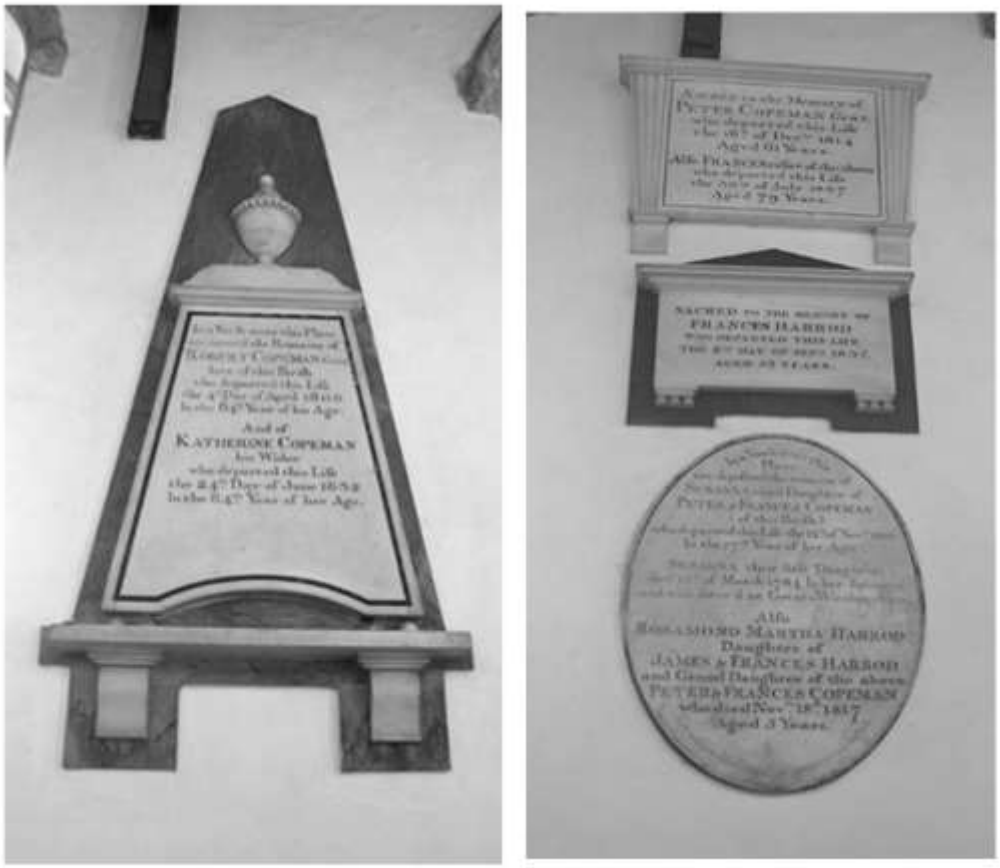
Copeman Family Tree [3]

AYLSHAM BANK by Roger Polhill

Aylsham Bank was licensed to issue notes in 1815 with Robert Copeman as the senior partner.[1–3] He was by then an eminent figure in the town, aged 46, well established as a solicitor, Justice of the Peace, Steward of the Manor of Aylsham Lancaster and with leasehold of considerable property in the parish and elsewhere.[3]

His father Robert was born in 1740, had been land steward to the Second Earl of Buckinghamshire at Blickling from about the age of 30 and lived in the Old Hall, Aylsham.[3] His letter book for 1789–1791 is preserved at Blickling Hall. From this Tom Mollard gets the impression that he was a shrewd man and made sure he never put a foot wrong,[4] and certainly his intimate involvement with the Blickling family would have given him all sorts of connections and considerable influence in the community. By the end of his life in 1803 he had acquired considerable land in Kerdiston, Briston, Foulsham and Aylsham.[5]

His grandfather, also Robert b. 1711, held lands in Sparham, Kerdiston and Great Witchingham, married Susannah Breese b. 1716 of Aylsham and had eleven children.[3] William Vaughan-Lewis[6] thinks the Robert of Sparham might have had a younger brother, Thomas, whose father Edward (1670–1743) lived in Sparham and whose son, another Robert (1755–1832), came to live in Itteringham; it was his son Frederick b. 1807 who built the steam mill in Drabblegate in the 1850s.[7]



Memorials in St Michael's Church of the older generation of Copemans. On left: Robert and Katherine Copeman. On right: Peter and Frances Copeman, their daughters and grandaughter.

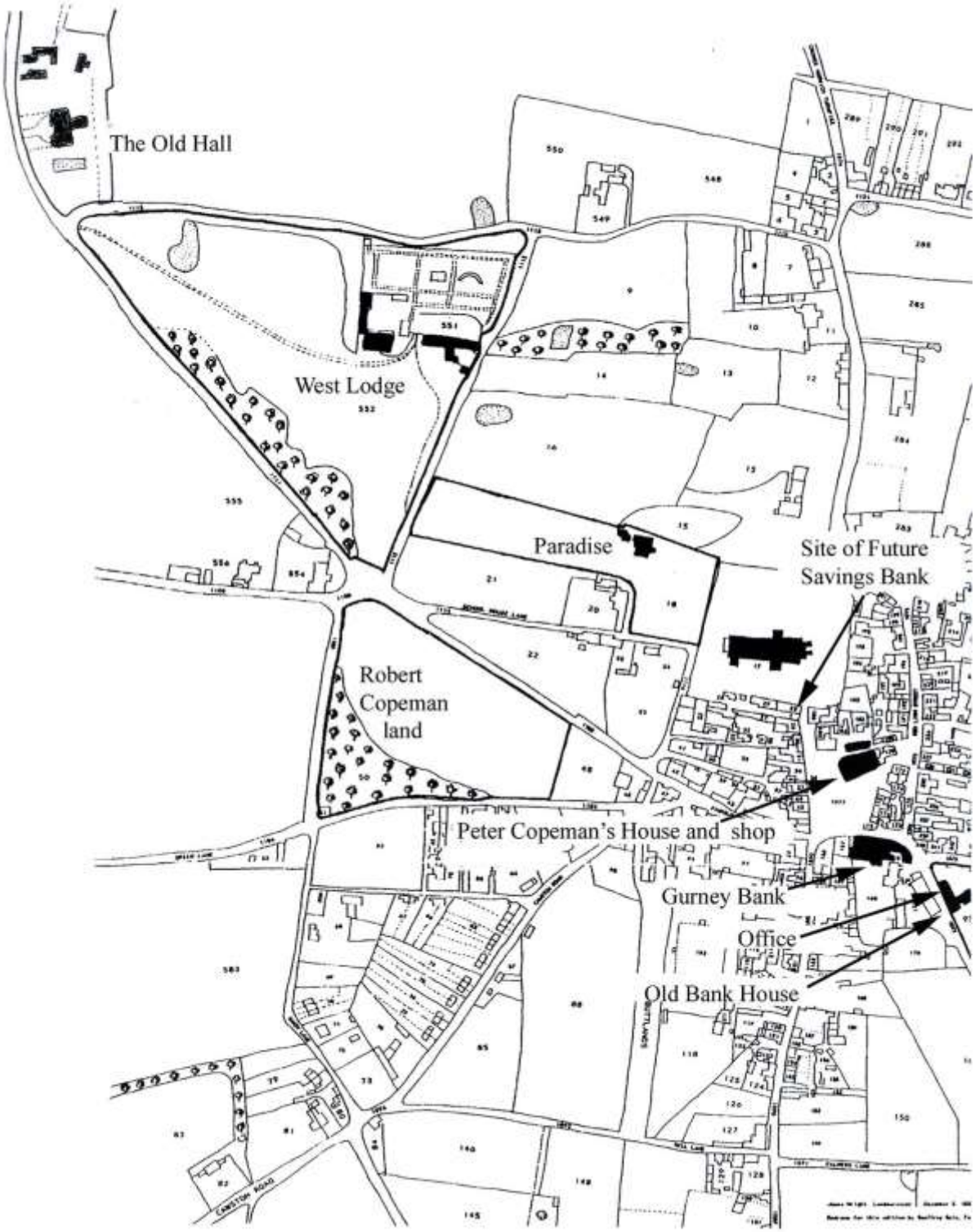
Robert the Banker's mother Katherine, née Turner, was an eminent lady in her own right. The International Genealogical Index (IGI) records the daughter of William and Mary Turner baptised in the very fashionable church of St James Westminster on 15 August 1748. Her mother was Mary Young, daughter of Rev. William Young (1689–1757).[3] Rev. William Young was well known at the time and was the model for Henry Fielding's comic character Parson Adams. He was descended from the ancient Devon family of the Heles of Hele and through Katherine Robert inherited much of Rev. William Young's estate.[3] She was also Lady of the Manor of Pulham.[3, 8]

When her husband Robert died in 1803 most of the inheritance passed to their only son Robert the Banker, but Katherine was provided with an annuity of £100 p.a. (about £3,000 in modern currency) and, in a codicil, left the manors of Briston Hall, Meloirs and Chosells[5] and may well have continued to live at the Old Hall, Aylsham[3].

Robert Copeman of Blickling (1740-1803) by Johan Zoffany R.A.

She acquired from John Peterson c. 1816 the Manor of Aylsham Wood, which was subject to an Enclosure Act of 1818.[9,10] Walter Rye[11] says that Katherine's influence obtained her son the lucrative office of Clerk of the Peace and during the 28 years of her widowhood it is easy to imagine her considerable influence on the monetary, professional and personal lives of her family.

Robert the Banker was her only son. He was Steward of the Manor of Aylsham Lancaster from 1794, a position inherited from his father, who had left court attendance to his deputy Thomas Smyth from at least 1789. When his father died in 1803 he inherited most of his possessions, including the considerable property mentioned above, apart from the legacies to Katherine and some entitlement to his uncles from the Breese connection.[5]



Copeman properties and bank premises shown on Wright's Map of Aylsham, 1839.

Old Bank House, painted in the middle of the nineteenth century by Rev. James Bulwer, courtesy of Norwich Castle Museum. Note bell tower on roof.

The copyhold in Aylsham acquired by his father in 1801 comprised 23 acres of prime arable land and a farmhouse in the eastern part of the parish towards Spratts Green that placed him among the top four ratepayers in the town.[12]

In 1800 Robert the Banker acquired the copyhold of what came to be known as the Old Bank House, No. 3 Norwich Road, the premises "lying triangularly between the common highway from the Market of Aylsham…and abut on the common highway from the Market of Aylsham aforesaid to Burrough".[13] It had also been known as Angel Close in reference to old inns that once existed there.

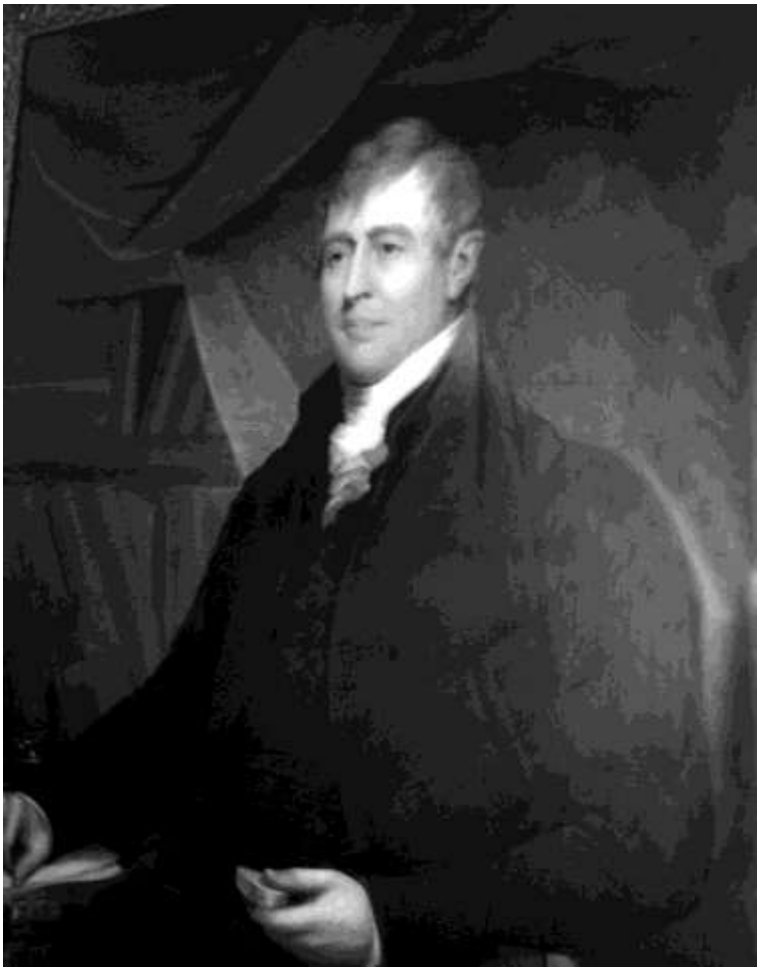
The fine house had been built in Queen Anne style in the 1720s and extended on the southern side with a Georgian front in about 1760.[14] In 1815 he acquired copyhold of four acres and some tenements north of Burgh Road running up to Sir Williams Close, some of which he sold on to James Gay in 1822.[13]

Also in 1815 he was married to his cousin Anna Byard b. 1787, a niece of his mother, at the fashionable church of St Andrews, Holborn.[3] She was the daughter and co-heir of George Byard of Holborn and Elizabeth Turner, Katherine Copeman's sister. Anna bore Robert eight children over the next ten years and lived on to 1837. They acquired West Lodge in 1818 from the estate of John Hogg, another solicitor who had died in 1815, including a triangle of land bounded by Blickling Road, Holman Road and Sandy Lane (see map above).[2, 13] West Lodge remained a home for some of the family into the first decade of the twentieth century.[1]

From the archives of Barclays Bank it would appear that the banking firm of Copeman and Company commenced business in 1809.[15] Certainly Robert, with his uncle Peter and cousin Edward Breese Copeman together arranged the sale of land at Kerdiston called Copelthorpe Close to Richard Jodrell in 1809[16] and in his will Peter refers to himself as a banker before they had a licence to issue bank notes in 1815. Furthermore James Harrod, the long-serving bank clerk, was appointed before 1811.

Peter was born in 1753 and was now 56, a draper with premises in the Market Place that he obtained from the Ivory family in 1784[13, 17]. In a painting by Humphry Repton in 1814 the prominent house and shop is shown on the north side of the Market Place, where the Town Hall now stands. He was often a juror at the Manor Court[13] and was a founder member of the Aylsham Association in 1786 to prosecute felons as the parish had "lately been much infested by a set of idle disorderly persons".[18] He was one of the nine men entrusted to evacuate the town in case of a French invasion in 1801.[19] At the end of his life, in his will, he refers to himself as a banker.[20]

He was married to Frances Withers Beeston b. 1758 from Great Witchingham and had four children, only Edward Breese b. 1780 and Frances b. 1784 surviving to adulthood.[3] In 1804 they acquired Paradise, the substantial house just west of St Michael's Church on School Lane



Peter Copeman (1753–1814) by James Northcote R.A.

[then known as School House Lane], with two acres of land, formerly the property of Richard Wickes.[13] Peter died in 1814, leaving his possessions to his son Edward Breese Copeman with the rent from the premises in the Market Place to be paid to his daughter Frances and a legacy for his wife.[20]

Edward Breese Copeman married Elizabeth Jones in 1806. Her father was Samuel Jones from Skeyton and her mother was Deborah Bulwer, sister of James Bulwer of Heydon Hall.[3] They took up residence in Coltishall, acquiring Coltishall House there, though Edward Breese maintained property in Aylsham for some time.[12] They had ten children between 1807 and 1824, seven surviving to adulthood.

His sister Frances married James Harrod at St Michael Coslany, the grand church at Colegate in Norwich, in September 1811 according to the International Genealogical Index. James was born in Loddon and in the 1851 census says he was 60 years old, which puts his marriage at the

surprisingly young age of 20. The family supposes that he met Frances after he had taken up his appointment as bank clerk and secretary to the family business, a responsible role he continued for the rest of his working life of some 40 years. Their first daughter Rosamond was born in 1812 but only lived for five years; her memorial is in St Michael's Church and illustrated above. After Peter died in 1814 they moved to Paradise, where they brought up two boys, Edward and Henry to adulthood. Peter's wife Frances continued to live in the house in the Market Place until the end of her life in 1837.[1, 13]

In 1817 there were only 17 banks in Norfolk, five of them owned by the Gurney family, almost all of them private banks.[21] There were few banks outside London before the middle of the eighteenth century when the Gurney family started business in Norwich. The business of banking to borrow money with a view to lending it out at a higher rate of interest was still regarded with suspicion. This was partly on account of the tendency of banks to fail, and partly a lingering anxiety of the biblical prohibition of usury.

It was not permitted to charge interest, but with the parable of the talents as precedent, it was permissible to charge for services. The service first provided by goldsmiths was extended by merchants and then gradually by private country banks underwritten by larger joint stock banks in London. There was precedent in Aylsham for other banking services by individuals. John Clover of Aylsham was among the earliest customers of Gurneys Bank when it opened in Norwich in 1775 and Thomas Clover was commissioned by the bank to recall guineas deficient in gold in 1776.[21]

By the nineteenth century the issue of promissory notes became an important part of the service to save on the cumbersome circulation of coin. In these early days a disproportionate number of bankers were members of the Society of Friends, who could be trusted with money, and in many cases with financial and family matters. As Bidwell (1900)[21] puts it in his history of Gurney's banks "their probity, reserve and caution, kindness of heart, and truthfulness made them trustworthy men, while their accumulated wealth would inspire confidence". The Gurney and Barclay families were Quakers, repeatedly intermarried and entrusted with directorships as their banks became the most important financial houses in the Eastern Counties during the nineteenth century.

Peter Copeman's attractive house and draper's shop in the Market Place, with shuttered windows, where the Town Hall now stands, painted by Humphry Repton in 1814. Aylsham Town Archives, courtesy of a private collection. Note buildings on site of later Savings Bank at entry to churchyard.

The Copeman family had no such nonconformist leanings and all their children were duly baptised (young Thomas at 5 days to catch the Christmas blessing)[22]. Their wealth, connections with aristocracy at Blickling and their manorial possessions would have inspired confidence.

After Peter died Robert set up the Aylsham Bank (or Copeman's Bank as it was often called) in partnership with Peter's son Edward Breese Copeman in 1815.[1] Business in what is now called the Old Bank House was conducted from a panelled room that became the dining room when converted back into a private residence.[14] It had a rope going through a bedroom to a bell in a small tower on the roof that could be rung in emergency. Robert also had a strong room built into his house at West Lodge.[2] According to Bidwell's annals of Gurney's Bank,[21] Robert was the man of business and Edward was the show partner who chatted with the customers. James Harrod was clerk to the Bank and secretary to various other financial and philanthropic endeavours.

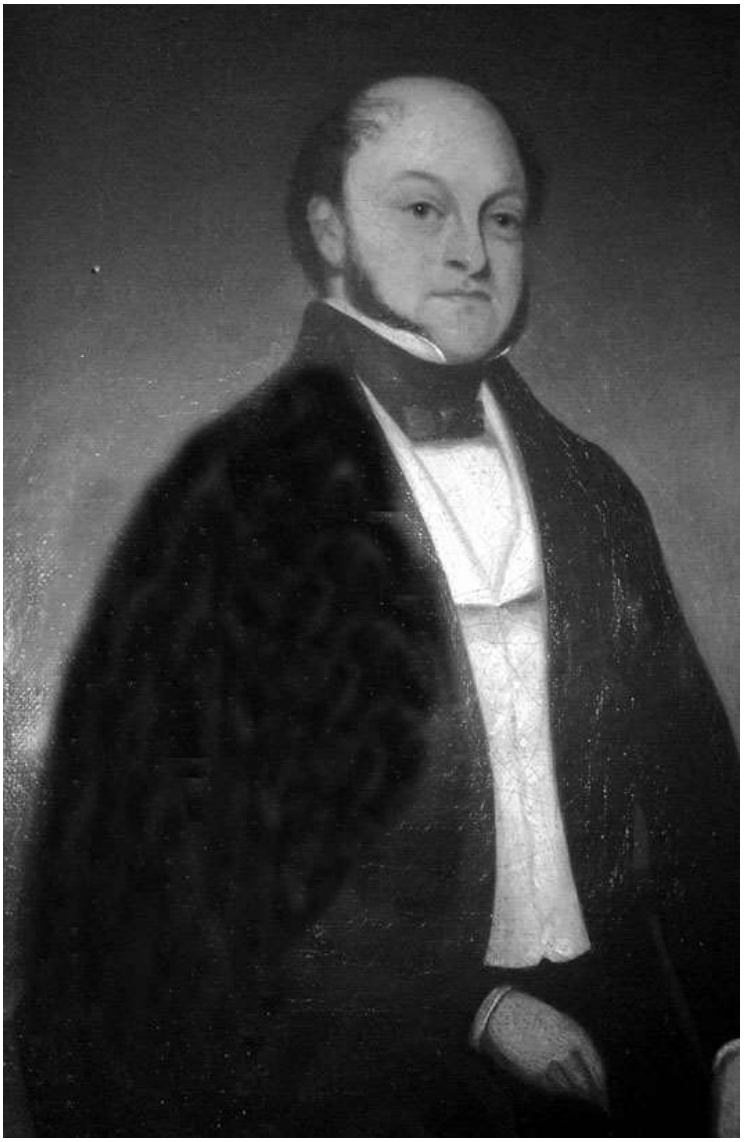
In 1818 Robert set up the Savings Bank (sometimes called the Saving Bank) in School House Lane, presumably run from James Harrod's house at Paradise.[1] The Savings Bank was open for one and later two

hours at midday on Monday for the "poorer orders of the people". It was designed to "receive small sums as Servants, Journeymen, Labourers, etc shall be able to save from their earnings" and "no Trustee, Manager, or Director of the Savings Bank, shall receive any profit whatever from it". Aylsham Bank had an agency for the East of England Bank, while James Harrod was also an agent for a succession of Norwich insurance companies that were now extending their services into country towns.

Edward Breese Copeman died in 1827 and his second son Robert b. 1811 joined the firm as a solicitor and director of the bank for a period from the 1830s (he would have been 21 in 1832) to about 1840, when he emigrated to Australia, becoming a customs officer in Sydney.[3, 23] This Robert, whose elder brother Edward was a doctor, set up the Aylsham Medical Club in 1838, designed so that working people could get free medical attention for a modest annual subscription, and subsidised by more wealthy honorary members who paid a higher subscription.[24] On the legal side Robert William Parmeter (1794–1880), son of Robert Parmeter (1764–1831) the miller, joined the firm in 1822 as a solicitor and became Deputy Steward of the Aylsham Manor.[25] From the early 1830s Robert William Parmeter usually stood in for Robert Copeman at the Manor Court.[13] In 1842 he took over the solicitors' practice of Copeman & Parmeter and became Justice of the Peace.

Robert the Banker was associated with a whole variety of other philanthropic activities. He was on the Board of Governors for the School,[26, 27] a Trustee of the Workhouse (though only a sporadic attendant of meetings),[27] and involved with the Cressey and Powell charities.[26] It is mentioned that he took on apprentices when times were hard[28] and provided allotments for labourers.[1] In 1821 he and Katherine were subscribers to the Rev. Henry Gauntlett's book "The Exposition of the Book of Revelation, 44 Discourses preached at Olney".[29] He had relinquished most of his responsibilities by 1842 and had pressed his two sons, George and Thomas, into continuing the business before he died of apoplexy at the end of 1845[30, 31.] The eldest son, another Robert b. 1817, had sadly died in his teens.

George was 27. He had gone up to Clare College, Cambridge, in 1841 and to the Inner Temple to train for the Bar in 1845.[3] He was later technically called to the Bar, but never practised as a barrister, and his time at the Inner Temple was more by way of rounding off his education.



Edward Breese Copeman (1780–1827).

In 1845 he bought Dunham Lodge, a substantial Georgian house in its own parkland of some 300 acres, its considerable estates and the lordship of the manor of Little Dunham. He continued to live at West Lodge for the next twelve years and let Dunham Lodge to a Mr Salway.

The younger boy, Thomas, now 20, had wanted to go into the church. As his obituary put it "his early ambition was to take Holy Orders, but with a ready obedience to his father's wishes he abandoned that project, and for a time practised as a solicitor and a banker in his native town".[30]

George and Thomas were directors of Copeman & Company until 1855 when Gurney and Company purchased the Aylsham Bank, which had a maximum note issue of £5,864 that was now added to the credit of the Norwich bank.[21, 32] At this time Francis Hay Gurney became a partner in

the Aylsham Bank for a year in order to retain the note circulation.[21] His early bill books at the Norwich bank had been adorned with "spirited sketches of horses leaping and hounds in full cry" and he maintained that much useful banking was best done in the hunting field. He became one of the foremost horsemen in Norfolk and after his stint in Aylsham devoted much of his time to the Norwich Rifle Corps and afterwards served many years with the Suffolk Yeomanry.

In 1859 No. 1 the Market Place became available for use as bank premises. William Repton b. 1783 was the third son of Humphry Repton. He became a solicitor and acquired the row of shops and houses from Bank Street to Hungate on the death of his father-in-law John Adey in 1809.[33, 34] William acquired more land down towards Palmers Lane in 1829 and his brother John Adey Repton designed the house called The Orchards for him in 1845.[13] From about that time he was in partnership with Robert William Scott, a large man fond of wearing tartan trousers and a keen yachtsman.[14]

Repton died in 1858 and Gurney's Bank took on the Market Place offices in 1859. Later Scott moved his business to the office behind the Old Bank House, and after Thomas had obtained the freehold of the house in 1867, Scott was able to buy the whole property in 1874. Scott is credited with improvements to the garden, and lived in the Old Bank House until he died in 1882.[1, 14]

In 1857 George Copeman married Elizabeth b. 1820, the elder daughter of Rev. Humphrey John Hare of Docking Hall and moved to Dunham Lodge about this time.[3] Although he was in holy orders, Humphry Hare was in fact squire of Docking, a JP and Deputy Lieutenant of Norfolk. The family has owned Docking Hall since the 1400s and were for a time Barons of Coleraine. Their connections extend to a number of major gentry families of Norfolk such as the Bulwers of Heydon and the Fountaines, as well as the Christians of Isle of Man and Cumberland. George and Elizabeth had four sons, who respectively entered the church, ran the Dunham estate (while serving as county councillor), the army and Australian farming, and one daughter. George died in 1883 and Dunham Lodge was sold shortly after his daughter died in 1919. George's elder sister, Anna b. 1816, married a barrister, Thomas Rawlinson and continued to live at West Lodge, with her unmarried sister Louisa, b. 1821, until the first decade of the twentieth century.

Gurney's Bank photographed by William Finch in the 1860s. Courtesy Aylsham Town Archive.

Thomas married Robina Hare b. 1825, Elizabeth Copeman's younger sister, in 1851. Robina died in 1853 and Thomas married Katherine Eve Jodrell in 1856 and was able now to live in the Old Bank House. Rev. Edward Montague Hare b. 1831, his previous brother in law, married his younger sister Lucy Copeman the same year and Katherine's brother, Rev. Charles Jodrell of Wood Dalling married Thomas's elder sister Catherine the next year. Katherine died in 1880 and Thomas then married Marianna Shuckburgh b. 1848, the fifth daughter of Rev. Robert Shuckburgh, Rector of Aldborough. About this time Thomas and his family moved to the Old Hall, Aylsham, where his grandparents had lived, and brought up five sons; the two younger ones, killed in the First World War, have memorials in St Michael's Church. Thomas immersed himself in theological studies and spent some time as a lay reader and as a friendly adviser.[30] When he died in 1900 he was buried with his first wife, Robina Hare, at Blickling.

James Harrod lost his wife Frances in 1837 and moved into the Old Bank House. The copyhold lease of the shop and house in the Market

Place, vacated by the death of his mother-in-law Frances Copeman in 1837, passed equally to Frances Harrod's two sons, Edward and Henry in 1839.[13, 17, 20] Henry, born in 1817, had left Aylsham in 1838 to become a solicitor in Norwich and was subsequently a notable antiquary.[35] James married his second wife, Ann Stuart, from Ipswich in October 1847, but she died in March 1850 and James took her sister, Sarah, as his third wife in the August of the same year.[36] His son, Henry, was much incensed and wrote on 11 August 1850 to the Rev. James Bulwer, the owner of the Old Manor House next door, pointing out that the Church of England's rules regarding kindred affinity specifically forbade marriage to a deceased wife's sister. The letter, franked 12 August 1850 at Aylsham, still survives among the papers left by James Bulwer[37] and the marriage, reported in the Ipswich Journal, went ahead anyway three days later in St Michael's Church, Aylsham,[36] with a special licence and taken by the Rev. Stephen Cooke, vicar of Oulton.[38] Coincidentally the Bulwer collection also contains a letter from Rev. Henry Collison, vicar of Litcham, kept as an autograph, to Bulwer saying "Harrod and his 'wife' passed two or three days with me last week….There appears to be every probability of their union being a most happy one".[39] The little difficulty was soon forgotten – Henry Harrod and James Bulwer, both antiquaries, continued to work together for many years.

James Harrod bought a half-share of the bark Jeanne d'Arc with his brother-in-law, Charles Stuart, a printer of Ipswich, probably after it had been refitted subsequent to grounding on the Corton Sands and auctioned to Preston of Yarmouth on 13 March 1851[40] (it was finally lost at sea in 1860[40]). By 1854 he had moved to White Hart Street, listed among the gentry, and in 1856 back to the family home at Paradise, where he died in January 1858 after a short but severe affliction.[36] He had carried much of the responsibility for managing the banks for nearly 40 years. His son Henry is listed as a solicitor in the Market Place and living at Paradise in 1858, but soon moved away again and died in 1871.[1, 35] Sarah moved to Burgh Road, where she is recorded until 1868.[1]

In 1896 twenty private banks, including Gurneys, were amalgamated with Barclays Bank, which serves the people of Aylsham to the present day in the same premises, despite considerable modification behind the facade.[21] The Savings Bank moved to Bank Street about 1850, George Bower took over as secretary from James Harrod by 1854 and by 1858

the new building in the Market Place at the entrance to the churchyard seems to have been built – about the same time as the Town Hall.[1] In 1845 it had deposits amounting to £16,500 – worth about £730,000 today – belonging to 540 individuals and 25 Friendly and Charitable Societies.[1] It finally closed in 1897 and the property was sold.

Over a period of eighty years the two private country banks founded by the Copemans had served well both rich and poor. In 1825 there was a banking crisis, certain banks failing in London. The Gurney's banks in Norfolk stood firm and it is said that the panic caused a run on Copeman's Bank of one man only, who demanded cash for some one pound notes.[21]

Acknowledgements

I am most grateful to Julian and Peter Copeman for much information from the family archives and to Nicholas Tyrell-Evans for his introduction to the family. My thanks are extended also to William Vaughan-Lewis for information from his researches into the family at Itteringham and his extensive knowledge of historical source materials, and to Geoffrey and Margaret Nobbs, who have given much time to teasing out details about the family in southern Norfolk and Suffolk and advising on the banking profession, of which Geoffrey was himself a member. I am also grateful to the Norfolk Record Office for access to documents, and to the Castle Museum, Norwich, and the Aylsham Town Archives for permission to reproduce pictures.

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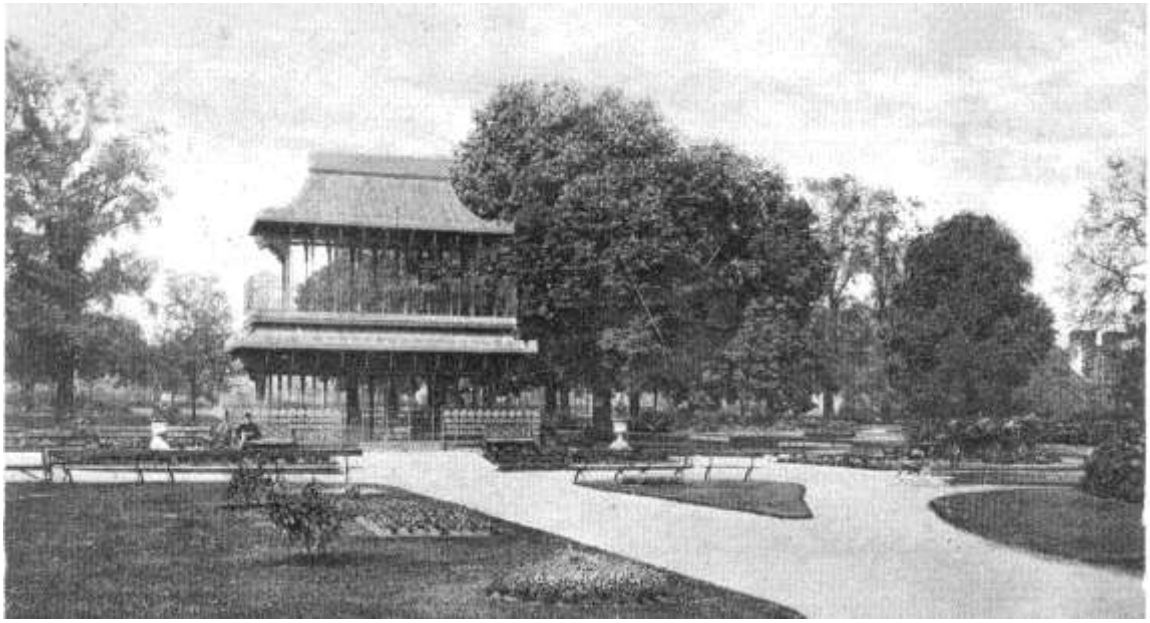
THOMAS JECKYLL

Lynda Wix

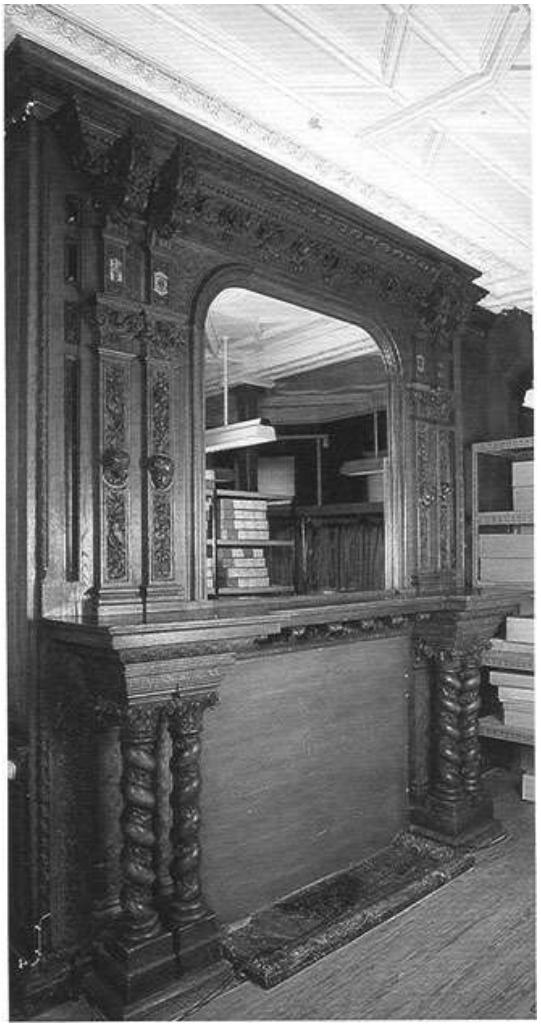


Pagoda in Japanese style, Thomas Jeckyll, 1876, from an old postcard.

Pugin, Godwin and Voysey are known names in the field of nineteenth century designers and architects. In this area we have heard of Skipper, but what of Thomas Jeckyll whose family came from Marsham?

The family moved to Wymondham; Thomas learnt architectural skills and began a practice in East Anglia designing cottages, farmhouses and restoring churches. For example, in 1854, he began work on Holy Trinity, West Runton, designing new wood benches and altar. In 1863, he carefully restored the stone work on St Mary the Virgin, Wiveton – though he planned bands of green and yellow glass not blue and yellow as fitted. Later he moved to London where he co-operated with Whistler in 1875 in the remodelling of 49 Princes Gate, particularly in the renowned Peacock room. But his contacts in Norfolk were still vital to continuing financial success.

He built up a close working relationship with Barnard, Bishop and Barnards of Norwich. This firm made wrought iron gates to Jeckyll's design, which won great acclaim at an International Exhibition in 1862. The gates were bought by public subscription by Norfolk people and presented to the Prince of Wales on his marriage in 1863. They now stand at the Dersingham Avenue entrance to the Sandringham estate.



Mantelpiece and panelling designed by Thomas Jeckyll for the Old Library, Carrow House, courtesy of Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service.

A Japanese style pagoda was made by the same firm to another Jeckyll design, this time for an exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876 to celebrate 100 years of American Independence in the most fashionable style of the day.

This pagoda was later re-erected in Chapelfield Gardens where it stood until 1949. In Carrow House Costume and Textile Study Centre there are some pieces of embroidery showing motifs of cranes, which were also shown with the pagoda in Philadelphia. After the pagoda was dismantled in 1949, these fabric pieces were refashioned into curtains for a house in Unthank Road, Norwich, until rescued for the museum service. Just to note that in Carrow House there is a wonderful wood fireplace designed by Jeckyll.

Interior of Holt Methodist church, Holt, designed by Thomas Jeckyll 1862–1863.

Perhaps the most eccentric building Jeckyll designed is the Methodist church in Holt, commissioned by William Cozens Hardy of Letheringsett and the Free Methodists in 1862–1863. This can be seen as downright ugly – grey and red brick, with a tower stuck on one side – only redeemed in the dark when trimmed with lights at Christmas. But closer investigation reveals an interior in the Gothic revival style with polychromatic bricks. A false ceiling has been installed to cut down on heating costs, but with permission you can go into the gallery to see what has been hidden. Attention has been given to door furniture. There are narrow cast-iron columns designed to give a clear sight line to the all important pulpit from where the sermon was given. The benches have wider seats than in an Anglican church – extra comfort for the longer sermons. A startling building.

Jeckyll became ill with bipolar disorder after the pagoda commission. He died in the Bethel hospital, Norwich, in 1881, somewhat forgotten.

Since the 1950s there has been a revival of interest in his work culminating in an exhibition in New York in 2003, in which were featured pieces from the pagoda and the embroidery with cranes. An accompanying book is *Thomas Jeckyll, architect and designer, 1837–1881,* by Susan Weber Soros and Catherine Arbuthnott, published by the Yale University Press for the Bard Graduate Center, New York.

SOCIETY NEWS

THE SHOE INDUSTRY IN NORWICH – a talk by Barbara Miller

Machine Room, Howlett & White, 1923. Courtesy Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service.

'Shoes, shoes, shoes – women never have enough!' These were Barbara Miller's opening words at the start of a fascinating talk on 26 November 2009, illustrated by slides, which took us through every age right up to the present day. With magical names such as Manolo Blahnik, Jimmy Choo and Louboutin creating the absolute 'must-have' shoes of today clearly the trend for ever-more innovative designs and construction continues.

Shoes, because they are so personal to the wearer, have been the item of apparel of most importance and significance and even appear in mythology and witchcraft. A wearer of a single shoe was a sign of bad luck and death, but a pair of shoes signified the opposite, hence the tradition of tying a pair of shoes to a wedding car. It is unlucky to place shoes on a table, which is probably because it is associated with the

tradition of placing boots on a coffin. When Ightham Mote, the 14th-15th century moated manor house in Kent, was being renovated eleven shoes were found walled up as an antidote to witchcraft.

Because feet were vital for survival early man sought ways to protect them. In cold climes the feet were wrapped in animal skin with grass or moss used as padding. The ancient 'Iceman' found frozen recently in the Alps wore skin shoes with the fur on the inside. Piercing holes in the leather to take thonging later ensured the footwear could be tied on.

In ancient Greece the sandal (a Greek word) was devised. High-born people and also the main characters in Greek dramas wore platform soles up to 6" high to confirm their status and to enable the audiences in the huge amphitheatres to see the actors better. The Romans created sandals with a thong between the toes, the forerunner of today's 'flip-flops'.

Further developments involved making a template by drawing around the foot to ensure a better fit and new processes for treating the leather were devised. A person's status could be determined by the quality of the leather in their footwear. In Norman times fine leather from Cordoba (Cordova) in Spain was called Cordwain and it is from this word we get Cordwainer for a leather worker. The Worshipful Company of Cordwainers has used this title since receiving its ordinances in 1272. The Guilds were being formed in Oxford and London in the 12th century. In 1573 a 7-year apprenticeship was introduced.

The Vikings introduced boots and thick woollen stockings, cross-gartered. The wool at that time was felted but later, with the advent of knitting pins brought back with the Crusaders, it was spun and knitted. Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122–1204), a very beautiful and spirited woman, married firstly to Louis VII with whom she went on the Second Crusade, influenced fashion when she became Queen Consort of Henry II, and Queen of England from 1154. In 1354, in the reign of Edward II, 3 barleycorns to the inch became a standard measure and sizing of shoes began. In the 14th century boots became longer with exaggeratedly pointed toes sometimes so long that a cord or chain was fastened to the point and tied around the knee to hold it up. In the 15th century the toes became so exaggeratedly spatulate that as a person walked the shoes made a quacking noise on the ground leading to them being called 'duck bills'. And so fashions and trends changed, each era trying to devise something in contrast to the previous one.

In Tudor times clothing became more elaborate, rich materials such as silks and velvets were much used. The breeches worn by the men led to the development of fine stockings held up with garters set off by fine leather shoes. Very rich clothing continued into Queen Elizabeth's reign and she always wore white kid shoes with heels and in pairs of left and right. Buckles also appeared at this time. They were made in Birmingham and became fashionable on the black leather shoes favoured by the Puritans.

Present-day ceremonial uniforms of the armed forces hark back to earlier times – the boots with extravagant cuffed tops worn by the Horse-Guards survive from the time of Cromwell's 'Model Army' in the Civil War. In the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge costumes adopted at their foundation survive to this day.

In Norwich there has been shoemaking for over seven hundred years. Master shoemakers owning their own businesses would supply footwear to the wealthy gentry and local landowners while the common people made their own. The influx of 'Strangers' – the Walloons and the Flemings fleeing religious persecution on the Continent – in the 14th century brought with them expertise in weaving woollens and worsted. This industry flourished and the fine linens and woollen fabrics of Norwich were renowned and exported to India, China, Europe and America until the Industrial Revolution in the early 19th century. Unable to compete with the steam power and mechanisation of areas of northern England the weaving industry declined and many people left the area. The expertise and dexterity and skill in design and colour of those remaining was ideally suited to the transfer of their skills to further developing shoemaking and so that industry flourished. There had been a tradition of weavers working in their own homes in 'garrets' and this tradition was well suited to adaptation to shoemaking. The Garrett Master would operate from the local inn, handing out the materials to be taken home and worked through the various stages. The elite of these workers would be the 'clickers' who were expert in cutting out the leather to make the best use of the skins. They even went about their work in suits! The names of many of the inns at that time show this connection – 'St Crispin' (patron saint of cordwainers), 'Goat & Kid', 'Golden Slipper' and 'Shoemakers Arms'.

Shoe fashions through the ages, adapted from W.L. Sparks, *The Story of Shoemaking in Norwich.*

Until the late 18th century shoes had been made to measure. It was a leather merchant called **James Smith** who realised that many people had feet of the same size and in 1792 he had the idea of making boots and shoes in various sizes for stock and he had a shop in Norwich market place for forty years. He may not have been the only person to think of making shoes to standard sizes, but he led the way to modern shoemaking in Norwich. This, the oldest shoe manufacturing business in Norwich, is indeed the oldest in England. The first factory was in the market place where the City Hall now stands. James Smith's grandson **Charles Winter** developed the business further. In about 1856 he was the first Norwich manufacturer to use sewing machines, imported from America. He was Mayor of Norwich in 1851–52. On his death the business passed to **James Southall & Co. Ltd**. who became renowned for their children's '**Start-Rite**' shoes. As the young princesses Elizabeth and Margaret were known to wear the Start-Rite brand the shoes became very popular. In 1920 a descendent of James Smith, **Jimmy Hanley** became managing director and in 1937 became chairman of the company.

The development of the factory system was a slow process. The 'garret' system of producing shoes had involved many processes and much to-ing and fro-ing between the Garrett Master and the workers specialising in each process. But, there was a reluctance to give up 'working from home' as often it involved the whole family and they were able to work at their own pace.

In 1799 **David Soman** arrived from France and founded the second oldest business. In 1846 his daughter married a **Haldenstein** who was taken into partnership and the business developed. The partnership was dissolved in 1853 but the business carried on very successfully as **Haldenstein & Sons** under various members of the Haldenstein family. There were branches in London, Kettering, Leicester and Wymondham. In 1933 the company merged with **Bally of Switzerland** to become **Bally & Haldenstein** and later the name Haldenstein was dropped. The company continued to produce high grade women's shoes.

In 1846 **James Howlett** invested in the leather currying business of **Robert Tillyard** in Elm Hill. The business moved to Princes Street and later to larger premises in Swan Lane and were known as **Tillyard & Howlett**. During this time they began shoe and boot making and moved

yet again to St George's Plain. In 1857 they were joined by James Howlett's son **John Godfrey Howlett** who was 'put on the road' to learn the trade. During his travels he met a young man called **George White** who joined the firm and worked his way up until in 1876 he became co-partner to John Godfrey Howlett. They went on to build splendid modern factories as **Howlett and White**. In the First World War they made vast quantities of army boots and shoes. Later the business traded as **The Norvic Shoe Company**, the name derived from the old name for Norwich. In 1920 a pension scheme was set up for the benefit of the workers and a scheme of 'outworkers' enabled women to work from home.

In 1886 **Henry Sexton** and his five sons set up the firm of **H. Sexton & Sons**. Henry and three of his sons had worked for Howlett & White but left after Henry had a disagreement over wages. They started by buying and selling leather but soon moved into shoe manufacture. They were extremely successful. They introduced new technology and eventually moved to St Edmund's Mill, which had been a large spinning mill on the river Wensum in Norwich. It was fitted with the most up-to-date equipment, including some patented by the Sextons, and employed 500 workers. It made all kinds of footwear but specialised in court shoes. The mill was destroyed by fire in 1913. A new firm, **Messrs Sexton, Son & Everard**, was founded by **Jesse**, a son of Henry Sexton, **Harry J. Sexton,** a grandson, and **Mr A. Everard**, who had been a pattern cutter with Howlett & White. Through hard work and expertise and determination to try new methods they succeeded. They introduced 'Louis' heeled shoes, previously only available on the Continent and with collaboration with **'Joyce of California'**, the popular platform shoes. They proved so successful that in 1921 larger premises were needed. Another innovation was the multi fitting shoes in different widths. This produced **'Styl-EEZ'** shoes. Despite suffering repeated severe bomb damage during World War II the factory was rebuilt. Before the war they employed 1,750 people and produced 25,000 to 30,000 pairs of shoes a week.

In 1891 **Henry Holmes** in partnership with **W.C. Edwards** founded **Messrs Edwards & Holmes.** They expanded rapidly moving to ever larger premises. In 1899 W.C. Edwards retired but Henry Holmes continued under the same trade name. Investment in 1899 in a lasting

machine enabled them to make 700 pairs of shoes a day. In 1912 the new factory on the River Wensum was badly damaged by flood. But the damage was made good and the firm prospered, exporting everything from infant shoes to men's dress shoes. Later they were bombed in World War II, moved and were bombed yet again.

Today, of the great Norwich shoe factories, only Start-Rite and Van-Dal remain. Freed of London make dance shoes and say they have been in Norwich for 40 years and D & M shoes make house shoes and are owned by two former workers at the Bowhill and Elliot factory. Bowhill and Elliot have a shoe shop in London Street and in a 'factory' under the shop create costly handmade slippers decorated with gold thread embroidery. This workshop can be visited during the Heritage weekend in September and samples of its work are on display in the shop. So some remnants of a great Norwich industry survive.

We are so grateful to Barbara Miller for opening our eyes to such an important part of Norwich's history. **Diana Polhill**

Further Reading:

Sparks, W.L. (1949). The Story of Shoemaking in Norwich. 119 pp. National Institution of the Boot and Shoe Industry.

"Modern styles" c. 1949 from W.L. Sparks, *The Story of Shoemaking in Norwich.*

History of Cromer – a talk by Alistair Murphy

Alistair Murphy of Cromer Museum came to speak on the History of Cromer on January 28th 2010. It was a presentation with a light touch, full of humour, but it also gave us interesting information with images.

One print of stumps in the beach could be interpreted that these were the remains of a medieval harbour. Other theories say the stumps showed two different structures, perhaps one being the first known of a series of jetties and piers.

In 1685 the church was seen without a chancel. Nearby was Hanover House, still surviving but without its Dutch gable.

The proximity of the deep waters of Weybourne Hope meant Cromer was on the invasion coast during the Napoleonic wars. Hence the image of the Cromer Volunteers being paraded on the Marrams, on the West Cliff, in 1798, with a view of the eighteenth century lighthouse in the distance.

Cromer developed as more than a fishing centre and trading port when the fashion for taking the waters arrived. We saw images of Randall's sea baths and the building of the Crescent on the east beach in 1830. A huge storm in 1826 when the Bath house was swept away awakened Cromer to the necessity of a protective promenade if its reputation as a spa resort was to be maintained.

As part of these improvements to the town, Rev. Thomas Gill repaired the church in 1862. Alastair thought it was significant that two churchwardens, Antony Ditchell and Benjamin Rust, were both merchants.

Coming into the age of photography, in the 1860's a view of Cromer showing fields virtually reaching to the church with no buildings between the church and Cliffe house was a revelation. It gave us an idea how compact Cromer was then before the railways came. This was at the time when Cromer had a trade of ships running aground on the beach at high tide to unload coal and other goods; when a horse drawn coach 'the Lobster' gave links to Norwich; when rich local families hired a house for the season, the Gurneys, the Buxtons, the Barclays and the Hoares, all families who would spread the word that Cromer was a delightful place to spend the summer

The building of the railway with a station at first only at Cromer High at the top of Suffield Park brought great change. The Bond Cabells of Cromer Hall sold off part of their estate to develop the West cliff hence the geometric grid of an area developed in a short space of time; the speed of the rail service from Liverpool Street to Cromer facilitated Clement Scott's Poppyland movement – poppies grow in land disturbed by for example the construction of a railway through a landscape; the building of Grand hotels – the Marlborough, Hotel de Paris, the Metropole – meant Cromer was the place to be, even for the Empress of Austria who stayed in Lower Tucker Street.

A photograph taken on August 8th 1888 gave a snapshot of Cromer east beach – the camera obscura, the small pleasure boats reached by wooden walkways, the bathing costumes, for hire, on a line, swingboats, stalls, Baldwin's beer tent and a cricket match. This was the same day a ship grounded on the Church Rock offshore, the remains of Shipdham.

Cromer may have become a fashionable holiday resort but shipping regularly was in distress in storms. A photograph of the lifeboat crew in 1902 in their cork life jackets and beside a rowing boat demonstrated how courageous these men were. Stories of the Davies family and Henry Blogg in the 1930's followed.

We were brought up to date by images of bomb damage in July 1942 and the ravages of the flood in 1953. One photograph showed what had been demolished in the Narrows to make way for a block of 1960's shops totally unsympathetic to the surrounding vernacular architecture. The Narrows would have created huge diffficulties to the increased traffic flow but it seems sad that another way could not have been developed to save these buildings.

Now Cromer has Morrisons supermarket, The Rocket House café, the End of the Pier show and a crab factory so still a place for trade, refreshment, entertainment and fishing. A most illuminating talk.

Lynda Wix

VISIT TO CARROW HOUSE, NORWICH

Twenty members of the Society had an excellent, informative visit on 11 March 2010 to the Costume and Textile Study Centre, Carrow House. Once the home of the Colman mustard family (1855–1922), Carrow House was acquired in 1997 by the Norfolk Museums & Archaeology Service (NMAS) and houses an important national collection of textiles and costumes. With 25,000 items it is, arguably, the third largest in the UK after the V & A and Bath Fashion Museum, Manchester, which opened this March, has a paltry 20,000 items.

Just for the record, Carrow House is not a museum with items on display. It is a store, study and conservation centre. Visits are accompanied, by appointment, limited to groups of twenty and last an hour and a half. Anyone or group is welcome to make such a visit. The collection was formerly housed at Strangers' Hall and some items are currently on display at the Castle Museum.

We were met by Ruth Bowers, Lisa Little, Lisa Bowley and our own Lynda Wix, a former conservator/curator at Carrow House and current member of the ALHS, who recently gave us a brilliant talk on this subject. Ruth ran us through the Fire, First Aid and cloakroom drill before her introduction to the history of the house and the collection it holds in 21 stores on four floors.

The collection includes*: male, female, infants and children's 18th, 19th and 20th century fashionable and everyday dress for day and evening; underwear, supporting garments and outerwear; religious dress including ecclesiastical vestments; sports-wear; occupational and work-wear; civic costumes; personal accessories; bags, fans, hair combs, parasols, walking sticks, gloves, muffs, stockings, hats, bonnets and jewellery; 700 pairs of footwear (Norwich made shoes at the Bridewell); flat and rolled textiles of all techniques including the largest collection of Norwich Shawls in the country; embroidery and samplers (524) – 17th to 20th century; lace and lace-making equipment and other craft and needlework tools. Many other textile techniques including patchwork, black work, quilting and appliqué; including bedcovers and domestic furnishings; objects relating to the care of clothes; a specialist reference library; a selection of fashion and women's magazines; craft and textile society publications; fashion plates; photographs dating from mid 19th century; knitting, crochet, and dressmaking patterns and pattern books; embroidery patterns; line drawings of dresses and shoes* (MNAS leaflet) … and a wooden leg.

Split into two groups, Lisa Little's group first went to the small Memorial Room, where an annual service is held to commemorate Colman workers who gave their lives in the wars, thence into the old library which is now a storeroom for 800 women's dresses. There are rails of dresses which cannot be boxed hanging in dustsheets. Garments stored in boxes are stacked high on shelves labelled with description, date and exquisite line drawing. A few boxes have red stickers as a *statement of significance*, and denote priority in the ghastly event of fire. It is a store, everything is hidden.

The phenomenal cataloguing was done over several years by a volunteer, the late Marjorie Budd, and the files of her work are in the process of being put on a website for reference and research. The line drawings are in many ways superior to photographs. The work is a treasure in its own right.

There seemed to be no two descriptions alike and they called to mind a forgotten world of gracious living for some, and dexterous skills and endless labour for others: *Black & white book muslin, evening: black alpaca, day: taffeta, chenille, corded silk, surah moiré, cotton piqué, pearl grey satin, grosgrain, damask, chiffon, crêpe de chine, serge,*

shantung, voile, velvet, repp ... terylene, 1957 ... this is a living collection mindful of what will be of interest in fifty or a hundred years time. Contributions are always welcome, with the possible exception of wedding dresses.

Unlike the County Record Office, Carrow House is obviously not a purpose built or state of the art store, however much trouble is taken to keep stuff as well as possible. New acquisitions are frozen for seven days at minus 30 degrees Centigrade to kill off moth, mites and mould. Care is taken to thaw things slowly as they are fragile. Pheromone pest traps are laid and disposed of weekly in the several stores.

Taking in the soon-to-be restored 1895 conservatory built by Boulton & Paul and the adjoining Arts and Crafts garden, now abandoned, we went to the Handling Collection. Crinolines, skirts, bum rolls, bustles, bowler, topper, shirts and shawl. Margaret Rowe and Ann Dyball sportingly dressed up and a record was made.

Lynda Wix had kindly brought out of store some items with local significance for us to enjoy. An unworn boy's grey flannel blazer that had been acquired from Greens, our own Red Lion Street outfitters, when it sadly closed. A Court hat from its tin box, that once belonged to a colonel Barclay of Hanworth Hall. An ornate red velvet *bearing cloth* for a child's christening, embroidered with gold thread and decorated with hand cut sequins. A patchwork swag from the Brinton bedhangings (1801–05) sewn by Anna Margaretta Brereton grieving for little five year old son. 1920s Grout's of Yarmouth manufactured crepe bandage in approx 25" bolts ready to cut up into 5" bandage. A little red cap from the Thomas Anguish Boys School for destitute orphans, still at Fishergate. A parasol with a carved ivory Egyptian handle to celebrate Norfolk's Nelson and his victory against the French fleet at Aboukir Bay in 1798, winning the Mediterranean, Emma and the hearts of his countrymen. The fascinating sampler sewn by the *mad* Lorena Bulwer of Beccles in the lunatic asylum, a 12' × 9" ranting text railing against her enemies, including a Lord Hastings. A gorgeous scarlet and black riding habit once belonging to Agnes, wife of Mad Wyndham of Felbrigg, with a little *flask* pocket in the apron. An ancient orphrey cope from 1480 later made into an altar cloth, haphazardly cutting Saint Paul in half.

This collection is a testament not just to their owners and times but rather to the industry and skill of the artisans. The stated purpose of the

Museum Service is to inspire, educate and bring enjoyment. Mission accomplished. Many thanks to Ann and Linda, the staff at Carrow House and ALHS.

Highly recommend visiting "www.museums.norfolk.gov.uk" especially for history of Norwich textiles and tour of locations associated with the industry. **Wendy Preis**

Visit to Marshland Churches

A tour of four Marshland churches between Wisbech and Kings Lynn, has been arranged for 8th July 2010.

Some of the finest churches in Norfolk are in the Marshland, once the rich sheep rearing area between Wisbech and Kings Lynn. We shall visit 4 churches, covering a wide period of architectural history. Walsoken has, when viewed from the outside, a surprising Norman interior, while the Early English West Walton's masons were right to be worried about the subsoil when they built the tower separately, since the church was flooded in historical times. The third will be the glorious Perpendicular Walpole St Peter 'Queen of the Marshlands' which is wonderfully harmonious in style and filled with light. Our last visit will be to one of the smaller churches, Wiggenhall St Germans, with its lively medieval bench ends. The tour will be lead by Roy Tricker, previously a Field Officer with the Churches Conservation Trust.

There will be a coach from the Market Place, Aylsham, leaving promptly at 9 am.

Cost of the day to include coach, guide and a small donation to each church will be about £20.00. Pub lunch to be bought individually.

Please book with Ann Dyball 01263 732637.