

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY



JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Volume 9

No. 7

CONTENTS

Editorial	242
Hogg by name by Maggie Vaughan-Lewis	243
Sea gateway or Sygate – a Watery Conundrum by Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis	250
Society News	255
Tom Bishop 1929–2012	255
A Journey in Time – a talk by Dave King – Jim Pannell	260
A SHARP Story – archaeology in a Norfolk Village – a talk by Gary Rossin – Ian McManus	263
Book Notices	265
Bring Him in Mad by Russell Croft	265
Breaking New Ground – Agriculture in Norfolk 1914–72 by Alec Douet	266
Notices	267

Front cover: West Lodge, courtesy of Mr and Mrs Hirst.

Back cover: The Octagon, Bridge House, created by Tom Bishop to mark the Millenium.

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:

Dr Roger Polhill, Parmeters, 12 Cromer Road, Aylsham NR11 6HE
roger@polhills.co.uk 01263 733424

Chairman: Dr Roger Polhill

Secretary: Mr Jim Pannell 01263 731087 jpannell487@btinternet.com

Aylsham Town Archivist: Mr Lloyd Mills archive@aylsham-tc.gov.uk

Website: aylsham-history.co.uk

The series of six evening lectures over the winter months has been particularly well attended and we are very grateful to our speakers and to members of the Committee for organising them and providing reports for the Journal. We look forward to the Annual Dinner at 'The Lawns' in Holt on the 25th April, for which we have made up a very good party.

Ann Dyball is organising a visit on 25th July to the dig at Sedgeford, following Gary Rossin's lecture in February, see insert. The Society has also arranged a walk from the Heritage Centre to the Market Place, pointing out features of historical interest, on the morning of Monday 28th May as part of the Aylsham Festival. Then in the Autumn we look forward to another set of ten weekly lectures, extending the historical series backwards to illustrated manuscripts, presented by the art historian Margaret Forrester. The details are included with the Notices on p. 267–268.

We are also planning with the Heritage Centre an evening of folk music led by the band Rig-A-Jig-Jig on Saturday 5th October as part of the Aylsham Slow Food Festival. The details for this will be in the August issue of the Journal and also on the website.

Sail and Storm – The Aylsham Navigation is selling well at £15, discounted to £14 for members, and has now covered the costs of printing. It has been short listed for the Railway and Canal Historical Society's Book of the Year award.

Hogg by name.....

by Maggie Vaughan-Lewis



West Lodge, Rawlinsons Lane, c. 1976. Courtesy AylshamTown Council Archive.

John Hogg was born in King's Lynn in December 1752, the youngest of four children of George Hogg, one of Lynn's most prosperous merchants. George's father, also George, had come from Paull near Hull in Yorkshire as a mariner turned merchant. John's father was founder of coal and iron companies, bought boats and was at least once accused of smuggling. John's grandfather, father and brother (also George) were all freemen of Lynn and at least one was mayor. When the old Custom House in Tuesday Market Place burnt down in 1768, George built himself a mansion there (now Barclays Bank). The same year he also spent £6,000 backing the losing candidate, Sir John Turner, in the election. So well-known was the place for their lavish entertainments, people would gather to watch through the windows. (A fatal practice for two women in January 1785, killed by a falling lamp dislodged by some boys swinging on a chain.) John's brother George and his wife Dorothy raised 13 children in the grand house on the west side of the Market Place where Dorothy lived on until 1828. Their eldest son, George, another freeman of Lynn, acquired the lease of Thornham manor by 1845, and resided occasionally at the hall.

But John was different. Sapwell says he was a lawyer although we have not found independent evidence of this. It seems likely that he was articulated to Philip Case, a prominent Lynn lawyer and friend of the family. Philip was also Lord Townshend's legal advisor and had been involved in the building of West Lodge in Aylsham. Perhaps he suggested Aylsham to John, now 21, as a good prospect. Certainly, Case's recommendation would open doors and John's wealth – £10,000 at his coming of age – would do the rest. He also inherited, in 1773, a house with warehouses in Chequer Street, King's Lynn.

John left Lynn in 1774 to join George Hunt Holley who, at Edmund Jewell's death in 1770, had succeeded to the attorney's Aylsham practice. Now a junior partner, Hogg bought the very same West Lodge, a fine house next to the Old Hall, where he lived on his own. He had two four-stalled stables, a double coach house and 30 acres of excellent land, of which the garden's shrubbery plantation and lawn contained about 12 acres. The tradition that it was Hogg living in such a grand house at the age of 22 that prompted Holley in 1787 to build, at great expense, Blickling Lodge (now Burebank) has now been disproved (ALHS Journal, Vol. 9 No. 3, 2011).

Keeping in with his betters

By 1792 Hogg also leased a house in London in a very fashionable part of the Grosvenor estate, presumably for his London legal activities. As a local magistrate he was unwilling to be dragged into an Aylsham town dispute over the poor rate (the payment of which was based on valuing each payer's property and which often caused un-neighbourly scenes). He felt obliged to justify his position to Horatio Walpole at Wolterton, his aristocratic and senior colleague on the bench:

Feb 7 1792 John Hogg at Upper Brook St

I was hon'd with yr Ldship letter and beg leave in answer to mention that I was under the disagreeable necessity of refusing payment to the last poor rate in order to show my determined opposition to the Illegal and otherwise unjustifiable conduct of the parish officers of Aylsham, it certainly would have been very improper for me as a Magistrate to have interested myself

in the last Assessment and to have carried the Rate to the Sessions in order to be quashed and I am very sure yr Ldship will not blame me for supporting my Office with propriety in my own parish
 I have the honour to be ...

Upsetting the locals

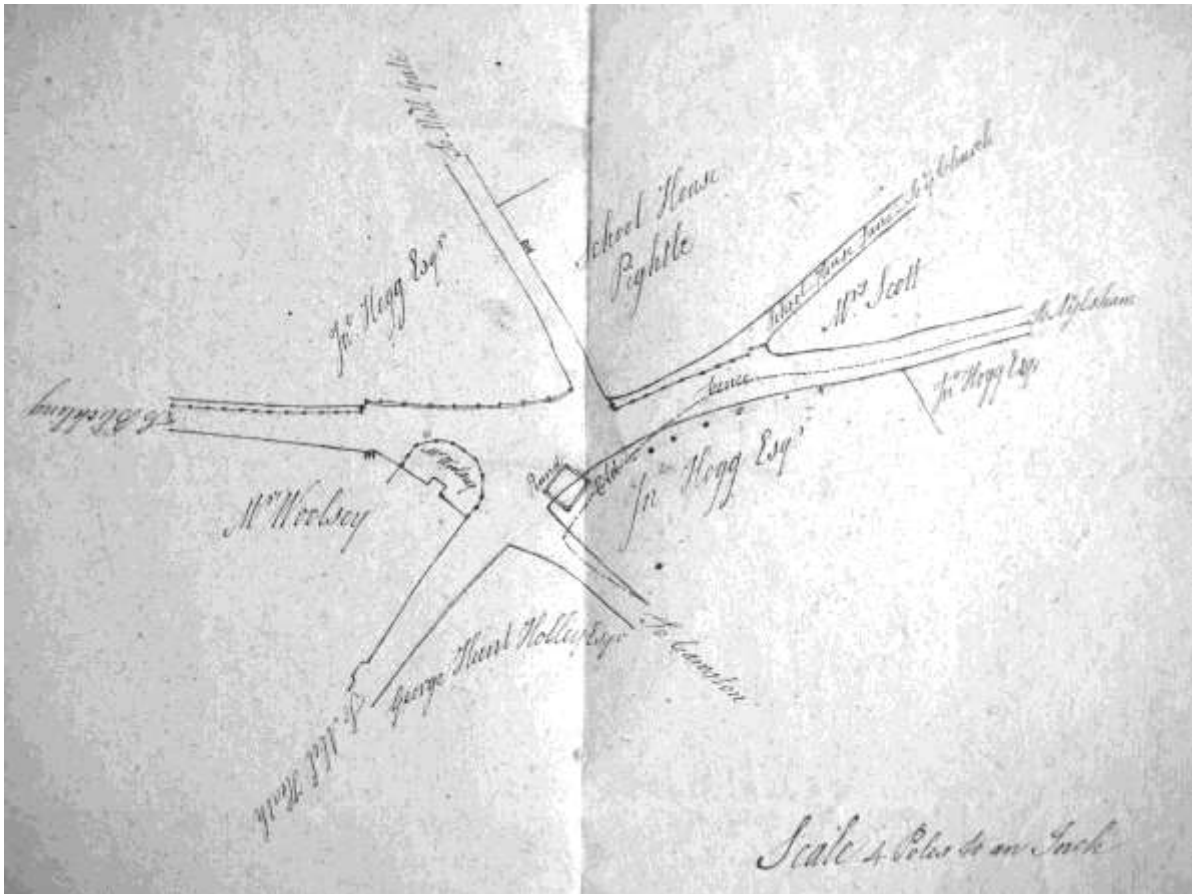


Fig. 1. 1772 Sketch of the crossroads near the school and pound (NRO, PD 602/117)

Hogg was also said to be ‘a particular friend to Lord Buckingham’ of Blickling and the same month he upset the townspeople further. The free Grammar School that stood to the side of the present school had ‘schoolhouse pightle’ as its land. But a document survives declaring that the pightle had been ‘made copyhold Feb 27 1792 ... by ... the low cunning of Robert Copeman ... and the weakness of the present master, under the deception of Patronage and Protection, to accommodate Jn Hogg esq’.

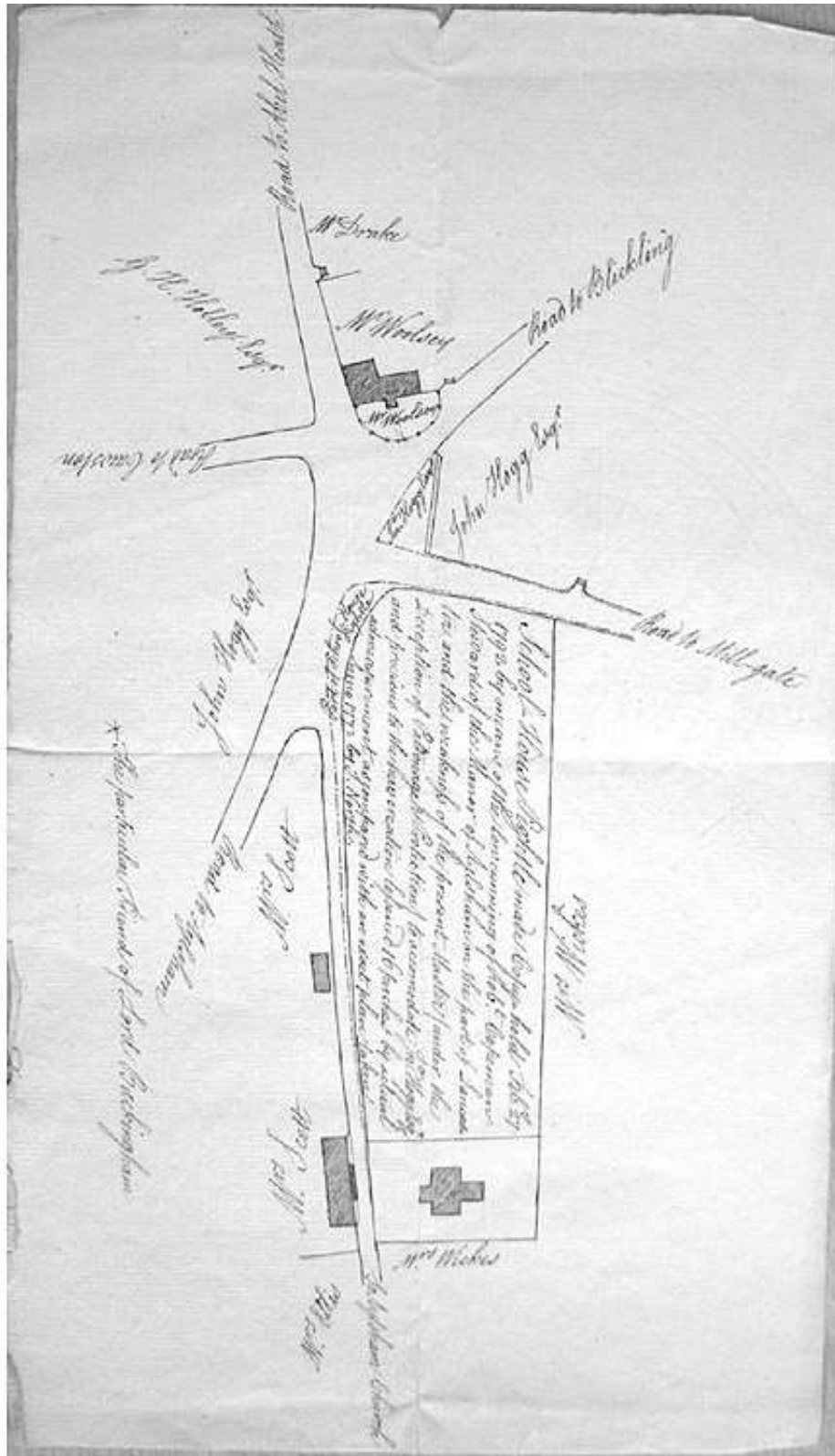


Fig. 2. Further annotations on the 1772 sketch (NRO, PD 602/117)

A slice of land on the corner – 16 perches – had been acquired by Hogg ‘as compared with an exact plan taken 1772 by John North’, the schoolmaster. Robert Copeman senior who was shortly to be his next-door neighbour at Old Hall, was the Earl of Buckinghamshire’s man and

steward of Aylsham manor. Peter Copeman had Paradise, the property on the other side of the school.

This minor property dispute followed on an earlier fracas. John's only appearance in local affairs was in connection with the school – which was of course on his doorstep. In December 1791 he was one of the new school trustees, heading up a list which included John Adey, John Holley and the two Robert Copemans, father and son. Immediately he caused an upset. Lord Buckingham had given North £15 towards the rebuilding of the school, a quarter of which North had kept for the expenses of the new trustees' admissions as tenants. North wrote to Clement Francis (another trustee and brother-in-law of Fanny Burney the diarist) that 'he finds himself very uncomfortable from Mr Hogg's unaccountable conduct'. Hogg had obviously refused to agree to North's actions in a meeting and had persuaded the other gentlemen to his view 'after they had separately given their consent'. North begged Francis to put the matter straight with Lord Buckingham as his reputation – and livelihood – was on the line. Hogg, in a very badly written letter to North dated 1st January 1792 (only 6 days after being made a trustee) made a backhanded apology – more concerned about 'Lord Buckenham' than North:

'I wish to have it understood that not the least disrespect was ever intended on my part towards Lord Buckenham respecting the trustees for the school. I considered his Lordship so perfectly disinterested in the Business, neither had I any wish to deprive you of the ten pounds a year which I understand is insinuated. I spoke the sentiments of my Heart and I did not approve of the Manner of Mr Copeman's conduct. I have not the least objection to any mode the Parishioners may adopt respecting the school only it never was not ever will be a plan of mine to sanction any measures I do not in my Heart approve, I am your friend J Hogg.'

Only a month later the sketch plans were showing how badly he was regarded. Certainly John did nothing to make himself popular in Aylsham; he seems to have lacked social graces. On one occasion he was forcibly removed from the Blackboys' ballroom during an Aylsham Assembly. He refused to take a turn with a particular lady whose partner

was the Reverend Leo Bennett. He said something very impertinent to her and the incensed cleric punched him on the nose. To avoid further trouble, John Repton took him by the collar and ejected him from the room. In a ‘ridiculous’ law suit, Hogg had Repton (Humphry’s elder brother) and Bennett up before Alexander Lord Loughborough, the Judge. Loughborough said that if that was the only complaint, Repton should be acquitted as he had only acted to keep the peace ‘for which the company must feel obliged to him’. For Mr Bennett, he told the jury to assess the damage to the nose (which had not ‘been materially damaged’) and the provocation. They awarded one farthing in damages to Hogg. The Lord Chancellor Thomas Erskine who was in court was greatly amused and said he would have advised Mr Bennett that ‘Hoggs never could be led by the nose but must be pushed forward by twisting the tail’. After this debacle John Hogg never again attended the Aylsham Assemblies.

Never marrying, when the 62-year old Hogg died on 11th October 1815 he left his lands (in Norfolk and Cambridgeshire) to be sold by four of his nephews for the benefit of all thirteen of George and Dorothy’s children. One of the four, Joseph, had kept close to his uncle in Aylsham and was the main executor. In his will, made three years earlier, John left his manservant Thomas Thompson a very generous home for his lifetime – ‘my small messuage or tenement with orchard or small piece of land thereto belonging in Aylsham’ – which Thomas already occupied standing on part of Hogg’s land in Pound Close. Not only was he also left £500 – a staggering gift for a servant – but John also added a yearly payment of £100. John must have been close to Thomas, his wife Mary and daughter Ann – perhaps they were the only locals to befriend him. John told the lucky man of his intentions and Thomas made his own will in 1813, bequeathing the expected £500 to Ann. The witnesses were neighbour Robert Copeman junior, the banker, and his clerk Edward R Copeman. Sadly Thompson died a few months before his master; one hopes the executors fulfilled Hogg’s intentions towards the £500. However, Joseph, having used West Lodge until its sale in 1818, then moved into the house that Thompson’s family had been occupying. Were the widow and daughter moved out? Again one hopes they were treated well. By his death in 1845, the unmarried Joseph was living

alone in the house (now called the Old Pump House). He at least did make provision for his housekeeper Sarah Lacey.

Back in 1815 West Lodge was soon the topic of interest. A letter written within a fortnight of John Hogg's death, by Mary Preston to a friend, jokingly called it the 'Hogg Sty' and said enquiries have been made on her behalf to the 'swine family of Lynn' asking for first refusal if it is to be sold. John's executors decided not to sell the house at first and placed an advertisement in *The Norfolk Chronicle* on 27th September 1817 to let the 'mansion house'. Was Mary's pun just that? She herself says the Lodge was a very fine house so it does seem the family were the subject of county banter.

Certainly earlier his father's name had suffered the same fate: in 1772 Laetitia Beauchamp Proctor, sister of the Hon Mrs Charles Yorke, widow of the second son of 1st Lord Hardwick, wrote of her visit to Lynn which she obviously hated; in the principal church 'a great man by name Hogg chose to extend his carcass in the Chancel ... and a fine Tomb Stone of 2 full length figures is obliged to give place to a trumpery one that is to be put over him ... [she also saw] a handsome sty in the Market Place, which the old Hog built and left to his Sow and Pigs ...'

Presumably a swipe at the upstart nouveau riche bringing home the bacon.

This article arises from William and Maggie's research into their next book in which West Lodge, The Old Pump House and other houses in Aylsham will feature.

Sources

NRO, PD 602/117 plans

NRO, BUL 16/12, 705x2

NRO, WGN 1/6/58 letter Oct 30th 1815

NRO, BL/BE /3/46 1772 letter

A History of Aylsham, John Sapwell, 1960

Humphry Repton's Memoirs, ed. Ann Gore and George Carter, 2005

The Norfolk Chronicle, 1817

NRO, NCC will Thomas Thompson 1815 and other Hogg wills

TNA, PROB 11 will John Hogg 1815 and other Hogg family wills

NRO parish registers St Margaret King's Lynn

King's Lynn, Paul Richard, 1997

Canterbury Cathedral Archives, CCA--U63/70333, 1811 Tithe survey

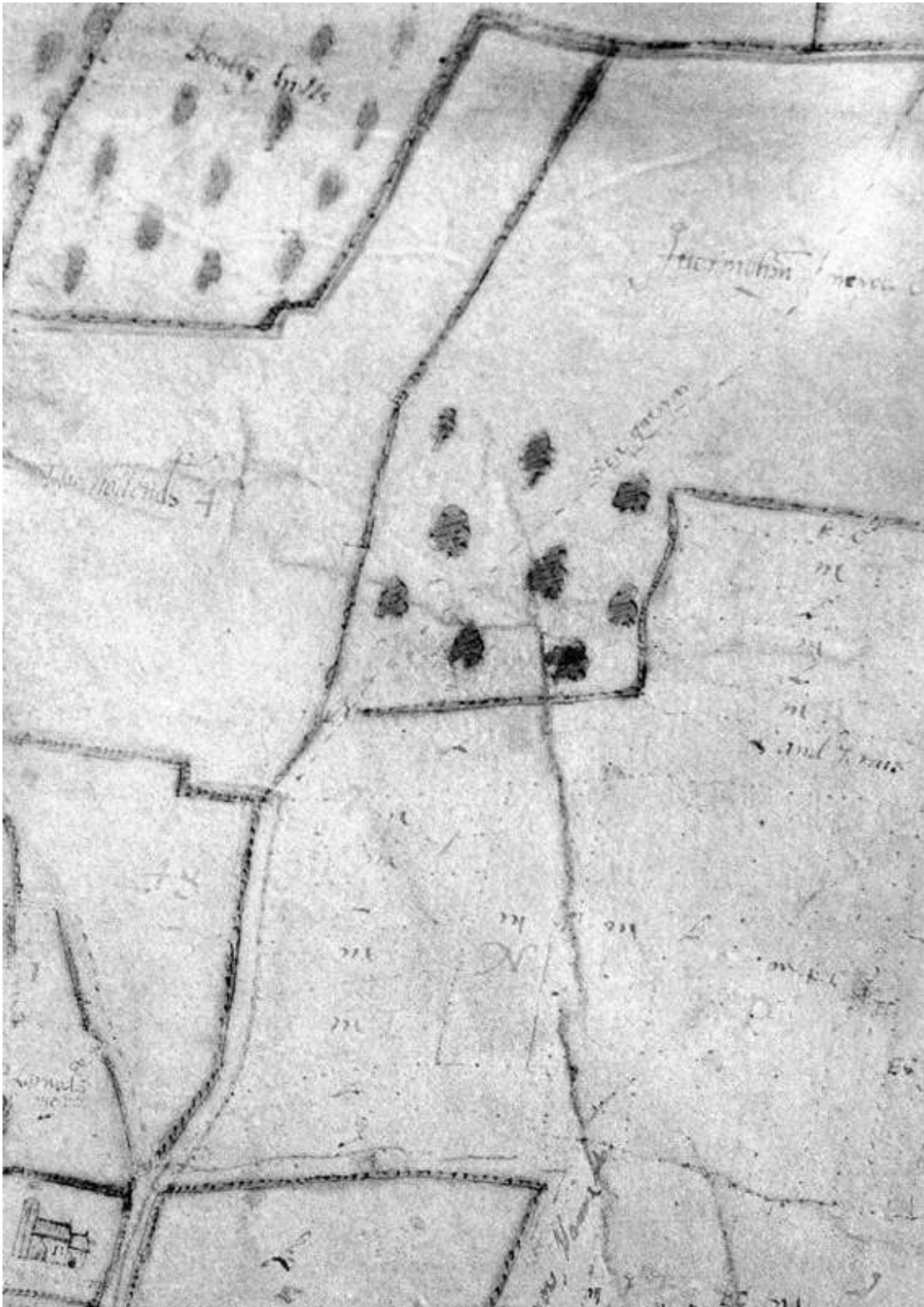
Sea gateway or Sygate – a Watery Conundrum

by Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis

Noticing the reference in *Sail And Storm: The Aylsham Navigation to Watery Lane* still being used in Dunkirk, we thought members might be interested to see our research note published in *Norfolk Archaeology* in 2010. This is reproduced here with the kind permission of the editors, with the addition of photographs not in the article as published. One of the examples of the archaic usage of sygate or sea gateway is in Drabblegate in Aylsham; the clue lies in the meaning of ‘drabble’, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* describes as: ‘to become wet and dirty by dabbling in, or trailing through, water or mire’ and ‘to make wet and dirty by contact with muddy water or mire’, from the Middle English *drabelen* and Low German *drabbeln*. But the first dirty and wet place we found was in Itteringham ...

The 16th-century estate map of Mannington was first described in *Norfolk Archaeology* by R.J.W. Purdy in 1901, but was unfortunately given as dated 1565. Subsequent writers have repeated this date, but recent work on the map has proved the later date of 1595.¹ While researching the field-names on the map, the writers became intrigued by the description of part of the road heading north out of Itteringham: ‘Sea gateway’. Superficially it was tempting to read this as the way (gat) towards the sea. However, at nine miles distance this seems unlikely and a closer look at the map and the landscape itself suggested a different solution.

The map shows this section of road with a dotted line indicating a ditch. Relatively few roads were marked in that way, unsurprisingly given the dry sandy soils of the locality. Today the road is elevated on a causeway where it crosses a wide dip in the fields.



Section of the 1595 Mannington Estate Map. Map courtesy of Lord and Lady Walpole, photographed by J. Neville.

From Google Earth satellite photography this area can be seen very clearly as a natural drainage route down the slope towards The Cut (a

beck running through the village, but at some distance from the road). The ditch is shown appropriately on the east or uphill side of the road. Although arable now, in 1595 the land either side of the road, just in this small dipped section, was wooded, indicating that the mid-slope area was not then easily workable. Given the importance of a substantial ditch to keep the road passable, especially in winter, the local name would be a variant on Sygate – a ditched way, or perhaps in later speech, a watery lane. The derivation would be from the Old English ‘sic’ (Old Norse ‘sik’) meaning a water course, runnel or gutter.² Other meanings for sic, sich(e) or sike include: a small rill especially one which runs dry in the summer; a marshy hollow containing one or more streams; boggy land; or a brook, ditch or drain.³ Sygate and Seagate are believed to be phonetic evolutions from ‘sic gat’.

There are two examples of Sygate locally – one no longer in use just outside Drabblegate in Aylsham and the other very much alive in Southgate, Cawston, which some residents, quite understandably since it is on the northern side of the parish, prefer to be called by its original name Sygate. It is interesting that the Mannington map was surveyed by George Sawyer, a Cawston man familiar with the term. The east–west lane through Sygate Cawston (now Birds Lane) runs through an old common grazing area at around the 40m contour level. Usually it would be unlikely to find a boggy area in such a location, but the western stretch of the northern side of this road is in fact heavily ditched for an extended run and wet in places even in a dry summer. This area acts as a natural sump draining a few metres of the higher ground all around, from which there is no natural run-away to the beck that emerges from the western side of Sygate hamlet.

Attempts in the 1930s and 1940s to persuade the Ordnance Survey to replace Southgate with Sygate on their maps failed, but research on the old name was made public and has survived.⁴ In particular, in 1947, the Norwich City Librarian researched the Cawston manorial rolls. He found this area named as Sygate in 1361, Sikgate in 1371, Sygate between 1425 and 1584 on most occasions but occasionally Segate, and then variously as Sygate, Sigate, Segate and Seagate from 1641 to 1751. It appeared as Sygate in two 1490 wills.⁵ Percy Millican’s suggested meaning ‘plough lane’, derived from Anglo-Saxon ‘Sulgheath’, has no

support elsewhere and it seems a stretch phonetically to get from the OE ‘sulh’ to the harder sic or sig sound H.L. Bradfer-Lawrence drew attention to references in 1356 as Sichgate and 1448 as Sygate, which he took to be the road leading to or running alongside a small stream or a small stream in marshy ground.⁶

The Aylsham example also fits the description of a ditched road. The lane from Drabblegate which runs northwards alongside River Bure water meadows and drainage ditches towards Erpingham was known as ‘Erpingham Sygate’ in 1444 at the time the parish bounds were documented.⁷ Indeed the area was known as Sygate and gave rise temporarily to a surname ‘de Sygate’ in the early 14th century.⁸ Others including Alan Davison have more recently commented on the usage.⁹

These findings give a solid base for believing that Itteringham’s Seagate evolved from Sygate. The same argument may then be applied to ‘Seagate Way’ in Little Barningham, just to the north of Mannington although here evidence for the earlier forms is lacking. Seagate Way was used extensively in schedules of field abuttals in two mid-17th-century deeds.¹⁰ Close scrutiny of the road, furlong and field names and their relative positions shows that Seagate Way was a north–south path intersecting the road from Edgefield to Little Barningham near the western end of Little Barningham parish, with just one furlong on its western side before the land rises up to Barningham Green Plantation. In 1595 the curving southern section of this lane defined the western boundary of Mannington parish and the estate. Although visible on the map, the lane is unfortunately not named. It crosses, and then runs alongside, the small beck that drains down into Mannington Mere Farm’s pond. This section has retained its damp connotations with the modern name of Watery Lane on the large scale Ordnance Survey map. It remains a right of way, passing diagonally across a modern arable field. North of the Edgefield road, at the boundary into Plumstead, it becomes Jericho Lane.

The question now arises: are these four examples reflecting a very local north Norfolk usage or are there more watery lanes that were once Sygate or Seagate ways to be found across the county?

Sources

¹ Wolterton archives 10/25; R.J.W. Purdy, 'Mannington Hall', *Norfolk Archaeology* 14 (1901), 321–8; A. Davison 'The Field Archaeology of the Mannington and Wolterton Estates', *Norfolk Archaeology* 32(2) (1995), 160–84; M. and W. Vaughan-Lewis 'Decoding the Sixteenth Century Mannington Estate Map', *The Annual* 17 (2008), 23–33; M. and W. Vaughan-Lewis 'Landscape and Field Names in Sixteenth Century Mannington, Itteringham and Wolterton', *The Annual* 18 (2009), 33–48; W. and M. Vaughan-Lewis, *See You in Court: The Potts Family of Mannington Norfolk 1584–1737* (2009).

² *The English Dialect Dictionary* (1904).

³ *The English Dialect Dictionary* (1904); R.E. Lewis, *Middle English Dictionary* (1988); K.I. Sandred, *The Place Names of Norfolk* (2002).

⁴ NRO, PD 193/124; MC 561/80, 775x5 – includes an *EDP* cutting by Percy Millican.

⁵ NRO, William Gelyons NCC and William Harward ANW.

⁶ H.L. Bradfer-Lawrence, 'Gaywood Drage, 1486–7', *Norfolk Archaeology* 24(2) (1932), 151.

⁷ R.H. Mason, *History of Norfolk* (1885), vol. 2, p. 97.

⁸ Blomefield on presentations to St Buttolph the Abbot in Fybridge gate; NRO MS 15729, 37C2.

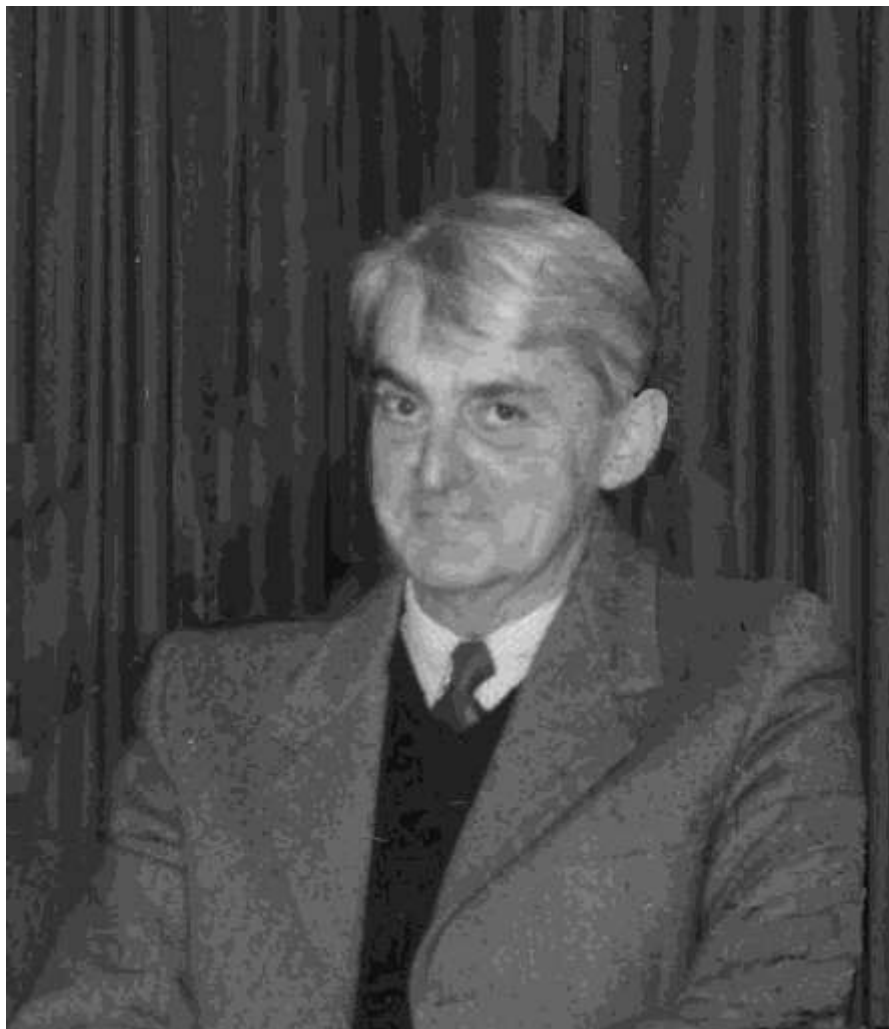
⁹ A. Davison, *Earthworks of Norfolk* (2003).

¹⁰ NRO, Phi 17, 576x9 dated February 1643/44 and WAL 10, 268x4 dated August 1655.

[I increased the line spacing a little for this article on the top copy for xeroxing so that it ended at the bottom of the page]

SOCIETY NEWS

TOM BISHOP



Tom Bishop was born on 3rd July 1929 in Yarmouth and grew up at Filby. He went to school at Old Buckenham Hall and Framlingham. He was an only child and from an early age it seems likely that his parents and teachers had to answer the question "why" rather more often than normal and he seems to have been a bit of a rebel as a youth during the war years. He left school with ambitions to become a doctor and studied at Kings College, London, but unfortunately the pressure of exams was too great and he did not last the course. As a stopgap he returned to his preparatory school, Old Buckenham Hall, and there he met and soon married Beth, who had taken a job as a matron to gain her independence from the Norfolk rectory in which she had grown up.

After they left Old Buckenham Hall, they began renovating and selling on properties around Norfolk, owned a chicken farm and in 1962 they bought the Anchor Inn in Millgate at auction. The under bidder wanted to breed rabbits in it.

The pub had closed the year before and the buildings and surrounds were in a parlous condition. But Tom had the vision to see their possibilities and so began the project that was to define the creation of Bridge House from these totally inauspicious beginnings to what we see now. In parallel, at the Maltings and latterly in the cottage opposite, he restored furniture and dealt in antiques. He made an extensive collection of curious, neglected and historic objects of all sorts with an eye to their possible value or reuse in any number of creative and unusual ways. By the end of his life his stores were filled to the extent that one could only just gingerly squeeze round the bays, distracted at every point by surprising things. He loved things not just as objects, but because they were made for a purpose and had a history. Sometimes he bought things to understand how they worked or to repair them, or because they might come in useful in a way he hadn't quite worked out. In his last sales at Keys he sold a box of well creeps, a coypu trap and a Victorian eel pick.

In 1974 he acquired from BOCM Silcock the warehouses at the edge of the old staithe. He used them for storage and sold them on to Alan Rowlands in 1990 for redevelopment as two houses. He also converted the eighteenth century Maltings into a row of five terrace houses in the 1980s. He built at right angles to them a further terrace of five new houses in keeping with the old building, and continued to keep an interest in the development and its denizens. The small cottage opposite Bridge House became the outlet for antiques and the smallest house in town stood just behind it. By now the garden was partitioned with high yew hedges, modelled to give surprise vistas, the old fish ponds were refashioned, the original smokery was recreated, and the courtyards repaved and ornamented. In the last decade he was able to purchase Cascade Meadow upstream between the bridges and the upper part of the island below the bridges.

Beth's nephew, Edward Sawbridge, recalls pointing the car down Millgate towards that perfectly shaped Dutch gable in its harmonious setting, parking it by that peculiar little cottage in the riverside orchard – stepping through the front door into the scene of a Dutch interior painting

with a blazing fire flanked by two people drinking – cares being washed away with warmth, wine and meandering conversation. He remembers walking in the garden with Tom as he showed off projects completed, and expanded on projects to come and being shown the folly he designed and decorated with Beth to mark the Millennium, which is shown on the back cover of this journal. He remembers taking his sons fishing in the lake, Tom taking them for a ride on his tractor and heading home into the storm of London life with a twinge of regret.

Tom was a founder member of the Aylsham Local History Society in 1984 and a member of the original committee. He was interested in the history of his house and offered the Society the loan of bundles of documents and deeds relating to properties in Millgate that he had acquired and wanted help to study. In the Autumn of 1991 a research group of 18 members was formed to meet fortnightly under the tutelage of Dr Chris Barringer, Director of Extra-Mural Studies at UEA, to explore the history of Millgate. This part of the town was selected because it seemed a suitably sized portion of the town, with a diversity of historical enterprises, and also because what came to be known as the 'Bishop bundles', with about 100 items in 15 lots, provided an excellent research source on which to start. The book, *Millgate, Aylsham*, edited by Tom Mollard, was published by the Society in 1993, with a second enlarged edition produced in 2006. Tom kept an interest in the work of the Society to the end of his life and in his last months helped provide information, pictures and tools from his shed to illustrate the book from our latest project, *Sail and Storm – The Aylsham Navigation*. He had even kept a doorpost from one of the old warehouses at the Staithe with graffiti made by wherryemen – and pondered their history.

Tom served the town as a Councillor for sixteen years from 1986 to 2002. From 1990 to 1994 he was Council Vice-Chairman and Chairman of the General Purposes Committee and from 1994 until his retirement he was Chairman of the Burial Board Committee. In that role he was passionate about the restoration of the oldest part of the cemetery on the Norwich Road on the left of the entrance. The old turning circle was uncovered and some planting replaced in accordance with the old plan. He was also a trustee of the Cressey Henry Page Charitable Trust that in the first instance dates back to the early seventeenth century, and provides annual donations to worthy causes. Tom also donated many

plants to the Lychgate Garden, which is maintained by volunteers and who relied on his good advice.

When Broadland District Council formed its Historic Buildings Trust Tom was invited to join. He remained with the Trust until the end of his life. His depth and breadth of knowledge was invaluable to the Council – but he was not an embracer of modern technology. He could not see why computers had to be replaced, and if there was one in the office, why was an additional one necessary. He was persuaded in the end, and he did get to the point where he had a mobile phone and his own computer.

Tom was generous with his time, always welcoming questions about the town, his garden and its history. He opened the gardens on numerous occasions for the Norfolk Churches Trust and also for the Cressey Henry Page Charitable Trust. He was a member of The Royal Forestry Society, the Norfolk Churches Trust, The Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings, the Norfolk Gardens Trust and with Nicholas Corbin a founder member of The Aylsham Society.

Tim Ardern recollects that when he came to Aylsham some fifteen years ago and was looking for advice to renovate Holman House he received generous help from neighbours and people in the town – and everywhere people said “You must meet Tom Bishop”. This was said so often that a picture built up in his mind – perhaps a rather large man maybe rather expensively dressed – somewhere between a banker and a lawyer. He finally met Tom, he thinks at a Monday auction on the sale ground – and he could not have got the picture more wrong. The intelligent shrewd glance and the total absence of anything remotely self-important could not have been more different. He came to look at the house and to talk over possibilities and when he realised Tim was genuine in wanting to learn and do his best he was invited to Bridge House. On his first visit Tim went through the comparatively modest front door on Millgate and entered as Edward Sawbridge has described a very special private and unique world. In his mind he can wander through every room of that house and every visit he made filled him with joy in the creation of Tom and Beth’s collaboration. There was nothing overtly valuable or expensive in the house – simply the juxtaposition of various objects and things acquired and loved over many years. To be invited in the Winter into the library to sit by the wonderful log fire or in the Spring to see the book case in the library swing back to reveal the

long room with the beautiful tall windows and the views of the magical garden – the aconites in early Spring and the snowdrops and then the rose garden in June and the Summer herbaceous planting.

Any visit always included a walk around the garden with Tom, Beth usually preferring to remain indoors. Tom would lead the way and occasionally steal a surreptitious glance to ensure one had noticed the gap in the hedging towards a statue or a new development. Tom once told him that he and Beth were “Blue domers”, i.e. they found God in nature and the sky. For him, as for many of his friends, Tom was a sort of alchemist who could create magic from the most mundane materials and all done with a twinkle and a quiet modest delight in what he had achieved. Who could forget the store of old railings, stone, marble and all sorts of paraphernalia that could be incorporated into so many and varied delights.

Tom had a sense of the richness of life, that found things to wonder at or be amused by, where others noticed nothing, whether it was debating the meaning of obscure words like exigible or behoof with a friend or buying something at a sale to find out what it was. He did nothing to excess, he knew his own strengths and weaknesses, he enjoyed conversation and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, he had a strong sense of civic duty, and he believed that friendship meant supporting others. He believed that he could shape the world he wanted to look at and saw the importance of trees, water and sky in shaping that vision. Not in a way that just happened but in a way that had to be planned with care. He was also at home in the modern world where he would have made a good doctor and did become a caring employer, active conservationist, trustee and councillor.

He was devoted to Beth and it would be impossible to overstate her contribution in helping to shape and inspire his projects. Few husbands have been so severely tested, as the storms of Beth's deteriorating health intensified and few husbands have come through so well. His love, his loyalty, his stoicism and his self-sacrifice were inspirational. They had no children, but Tom employed Colin Sutton for most of his adult life and developed a very special bond evident in all their creative projects and their time-consuming and skilled upkeep. Colin and his wife Louise provided constant support to the end of Tom's life. He died peacefully in his sleep on the 3rd December 2012.

A JOURNEY IN TIME – a talk by Dave King.



Aylsham Town Station. Courtesy Aylsham Town Council Archive.

About fifty members and visitors gathered on a bone-chilling evening to enjoy Dave's presentation on 24 January 2013. Dave is the curator at the William Marriott Museum at Holt, and has been a helping figure in the achievements of 'The Poppy Line', though he is quick and generous in his acknowledgement of the contributions of many people to its nationally recognised successes.

Our attention was immediately secured with some photos and materials, such as booking forms and tickets, relating to Aylsham North station, which was originally known as Aylsham Town. He was able to show a plan of the station in 1922. This station was on a line which ran east-west from Great Yarmouth to Leicester. It is perhaps sobering to consider how this journey might be made today, and whether east-west public transport has in any way improved.

Dave then spoke about William Marriott who he described as a Victorian entrepreneur and brilliant innovator for the Midland and Great Northern railway, and based at Melton Constable. Marriott was able to lead developments as he was trained as both a civil and a mechanical engineer. He patented forms of reinforced concrete and block-making machinery around 1922. Concrete structures are a feature of M&GN, and can still be seen along the disused lines.

The Eastern & Midlands line was bankrupt by 1893. This was unsurprising given the remote and rural nature of the line. However, it was taken over by the Midland and Great Northern Companies as a joint venture. The new owners sought to link the railway with new tourism opportunities, featuring the Norfolk Broads, the coastal resorts, and Sandringham. A fine example of this development was the Weybourne Springs Hotel built in 1900; a magnificent structure with many fine architectural features. The First World War ushered in the age of the motor car, and the hotel was soon advertising its facilities for the storage and maintenance of guests' vehicles. By the late 1930s the hotel was demolished. The foundation plateau can still be seen near to Weybourne station.

The railway provided employment for considerable numbers with jobs such as engine-drivers, clerks, porters, platelayers and ticket collectors. Dave showed a photograph of the twenty-three staff of Sheringham station taken in 1908. Some photos were taken at the time and rapidly turned into postcards, sold and posted. Sheringham station deteriorated dramatically during the relatively short period that it was in the hands of British rail. The improvement since that time is splendid, restoring it to the authentic and much-loved station that we know today.

The railway also provided an efficient means of moving goods and people connected with the large agricultural estates in the area, and Dave showed us receipts for materials ordered by an estate close to Holt.

A special feature of the line is the variety of historical and restored structures. Criss-cross fencing, lamps and signs, original lime mortar used in brick buildings, and creative use of iron seating supports are much in evidence. Some features have been brought to the line, such as the footbridge at Weybourne, and the loco and carriage sheds in Weybourne station yard. However, the highlights of the Poppy Line achievements are the rolling stock.



Sole survivor of Ivatt 4MT Class of loco, the mainstay of M&GN operations in the 1950s, on loan to the Poppy Line and photographed by Dave King in August 2011.

Examples include the beautiful restoration of a brake van, the complete restoration of a locomotive now in use at the Beamish Museum, a buffet car which took ten years to restore, a carriage for transporting racing pigeons, and a set of 3rd class carriages from 1904 which are costing half a million pounds to restore, and reckoned to be the most significant carriage restoration in the country. The stations, line and stock have featured in both TV programmes and films. One of the coaches was an original Wisbech and Upwell tramcar, used for the 'Titfield Thunderbolt' film and also as 'Henrietta' of Thomas the tank Engine fame.

There is much more to be seen at the Holt Museum, including an example of the coach bodies sold for £5 each to use as bungalows after the First World War, and a striking trophy awarded every year for 96 years to the railway team which proved the most proficient at First Aid. The M&GN closed in 1959, but the brilliant innovations of the railway era, and the evocative surroundings and stock are to be seen along the Poppy Line, thanks largely to the commitment of enthusiasts such as Dave.

We were warmed by the enthusiasm and interest of Dave's talk, and by chat and tea after which, as usual, was facilitated by Rosemarie Powell.

Jim Pannell

A SHARP Story – archaeology in a Norfolk Village – a talk by Gary Rossin



“Sorry, but you know, we have no babies in this village now” – that was the response we received when we tried to buy baby products in Sedgeford when on holiday there some forty years ago. That’s a while ago, but the impression has remained of a sleepy West Norfolk community, with a few farms, long-term locals drifting into retirement, cottages used as second homes....However, not so, as Gary Rossin explained to us in his authoritative and enthusiastic account of SHARP, the Sedgeford Historical and Archaeological Research Project, on the evening of 28th February.

An idea, a chance meeting in an Italian hotel between Dr Neil Faulkner and the owner of Sedgeford Hall Estate, Professor Bernard Campbell, and SHARP was born, excavations starting in 1996. From its inception SHARP was unusual in being operated on the lines of “democratic archaeology”, that is, open to all, non-hierarchical, and rooted in the local community, which gives whole-hearted support. To this end courses are held and volunteers welcomed during the six-week summer season when digging takes place. SHARP has a broad, non-specific objective to investigate and understand human settlement and land usage within the parish and finds have ranged from an Early Bronze Age crouch-burial through to remnants of a First World War aerodrome.



Late Neolithic/Early Bronze Age Crouch Burial recently found at Sedgeford – she had been deformed in life, but had been well nourished.

Gary's lecture was illustrated with very well presented photographs of some of the work that has been achieved at Sedgeford. He showed us, and explained, the complex finds in the Boneyard Field, the Chalk Pit Field North and the Sedgeford Aerodrome. The nowadays insignificant Heacham River probably played a major role in the establishment of the village and, along with the nearby Peddars Way and what might be an extension of Icknield Way, would account for objects from the outside world, such as Ipswich pottery, foreign coins and jewellery, whale bones and an extensive mussel factory. Human remains are numerous and indicate a tall and healthy population, some living into early fifties. There are also remains of mammals and fish which have provided food.

Much work remains to be done as the secrets of Sedgeford continue to be revealed. One wonders how many other Norfolk villages hold a similar history beneath their soil?

Gary directed us to SHARP's website, www.sharp.org.uk, for details and explanations of its work, its history, aims and objectives and how to get involved. SHARP welcomes visitors, either individual or as a group, during the summer dig period in July/August. They are not babies, so we might even take the grandchildren!

Ian McManus

BOOK NOTICES

BRING HIM IN MAD, by Russell Croft



William Frederick Windham, courtesy the National Trust.
(R.W. Ketton-Cremer, Felbrigg – The Story of a House, 1962)

Aylsham legend has Mad Windham, brilliant erratic whip, taking up gratuitously stray passengers along the way, careering up to the Black Boys, with gentlemanly courtesy to his passengers, then in the inn as a rough, jolly sort of loud-voiced, easy-drinking, country driver of the Norfolk "Express". This book is a fictionalised version of the Windham Lunacy Trial of 1861, which lasted for thirty-four days and caused a national sensation. The author centres his story on a transcript published in pamphlet form by W. Oliver of the Strand soon after. He aims to maintain as great a degree of historical accuracy as is possible within the framework of a novel. The solicitor narrator and his relationship to Windham is fictional and the ending is given a twist, so that the whole is a compelling read and extensive research gives a very detailed description of mid-Victorian life in London and Norfolk.

William Frederick Windham (1840–1866) was a solitary child of dysfunctional parents, befriended by the servants at Felbrigg, but

unhappy at school, including Eton, and falling out with successive tutors. He was noisy, boisterous and headstrong, not unlike his father who died when he was fourteen, his mother then leaving for Torquay. He grasped the basics of estate management, was a reasonable shot and had a natural command of horses. In his teens he developed a passion for trains and loved to act as porter, guard and driver, perfectly adopting the roles and happily tolerated by the railway employees he befriended. Unhappily he also took readily to drink and ladies of easy virtue and this was his undoing. At 21 he was ensnared in London by Bawdyhouse Bob and Agnes Willoughby, a notorious society courtesan, robbed and lured into marriage. His family, led by his uncle General Charles Windham, recently returned from India, sought to strip him of both his liberty and his inheritance by having him declared insane. They suborned numerous witnesses, but the inducements became evident in the trial and his mother, Felbrigg workers and neighbours made a good enough case that he was foolish but not mad. Bankrupt he was befriended for his last few years by the Norwich coach owner, Tom Bingham, until his liver failed at the age of 26. Now read the novel.

Bring Him In Mad by Russell Croft. 324 pp, paperback. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. ISBN 9781481025461. Available from Amazon: £7.65; Kindle price £1.93.

BREAKING NEW GROUND – Agriculture in Norfolk 1914 – 72, by **Alec Douet**

In 1914, agriculture in Norfolk was based upon long-held tradition, manual labour and horsepower. By 1972, on the eve of accession to the Common Agricultural Policy, the essentials of today's capital intensive, scientific farming were already in place.

Breaking New Ground is an account of how this was achieved, by radical developments in livestock and crop husbandry, by mechanisation, by new approaches to farm management and by great strides in agricultural education. For landowners, farmers, and for their farmworkers, these turbulent years were a time of unprecedented challenging years.

Breaking New Ground, 280pp, illustrated, is available from Coldbath Books, 1 White Hart Street, Aylsham, NR11 6HG. (coldbathbooks@gmail.com) at £25 plus £2.00 p&p. Profits from the sale of the book will be donated to the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association.

NOTICES

Visit to Sedgeford

Following the very well-attended lecture by Gary Rossin on the Sedgeford Project on 28th February we have been invited to visit the dig on Thursday 25th July. Please see insert to book a place.

Contact: Ms Ann Dyball 01263 732637 or ajdyball@tiscali.co.uk

Autumn Course

The Autumn Course of ten lectures from Tuesday 17 September will be on 'A Brief History of Illuminated Manuscripts' presented by Margaret Forrester, a specialist in art history.

The lectures will be in the Friends' Meeting House, Peggs Yard, from 2–3.15 pm. Places are limited to 40 and can be booked with Jim Pannell on 01263 731087 or e-mail jpannell487@btinternet.com.

Aylsham Festival

The Aylsham Festival is Thursday 23rd May to Tuesday 28th May.

"Paths and Patterns" is going to be an exploration of how these occur in every aspect of our lives, in both the physical and the abstract sense. The events will link the arts, music, sciences and literature into a really special mix.

The Aylsham Local History Society is providing a walk from the Heritage Centre at 11 am on Monday 27th May.

www.aylshamfestival.co.uk

Heritage Centre

The Heritage Centre is hosting a series of lectures in May, at 7 pm on Wednesday evenings. Tickets: £3.

1 May. The History of Wherries, by Mike Sparkes

8 May. East Anglian Air Ambulance, by Amy Greenwood

15 May. The Workhouse Experience: The History of Gressenhall Workhouse, by Jane Bramham-Jones

22 May. Farming in Bygone Days. North Norfolk Productions. (As part of the Aylsham Festival)

29 May. Graphology: An entertaining introduction to graphology – what does your handwriting say about you?

Booking essential. Contact Aylsham Heritage Centre or call in for a ticket. aylshamheritage@gmail.com. 07919 962814.

Norfolk Record Office

In the Long Gallery at The Archive Centre (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, 9 am – 5 pm; Tuesday, 9.30 am – 5 pm, Saturday, 9 am–noon)

Up to 1 May. *Norfolk's House of History: An exhibition to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the county's archive service.*

Summer. *The Story of Norfolk's Parish Registers.*

Lunch time talks at The Archive Centre

Tuesday 2 April. *Never too Old; Never too Young*, a talk by Victoria Draper

Tuesday 9 April. *Before the Record Office*, a talk by Michael Begley

www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk