

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



**JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER**

Volume 9

No. 10

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Front cover: Bridge House, formerly the Anchor Inn, Millgate, Aylsham.  
Photo.: Margaret Bird.

Back cover: Cottage in Petersons Lane, Aylsham, used as a lock-up in  
the mid-nineteenth century. Photo.: Derek Lyons.

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

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This is the last issue of Volume 9 of the Journal. If anyone would like an index and contents pages for this volume please let me know.

We have had a good response for the Social Event, dinner at the Black Boys Hotel on 10 April – nicely convenient this year. An Anniversary Party is planned for the 9<sup>th</sup> of June to mark the 30<sup>th</sup> year of the Society. An invitation to members and their partners is included with this issue.

The Aylsham Festival, *Going, Going, Gone*, is in the last week of May this year and will feature a history quiz and a walk, see notices on p. 360. A notice about the Heritage Open Days on 11–14 September is on the same page.

The Society is mounting an exhibition in St Michael's Church to mark the centenary of the start of World War I from 4–9 August as part of the national remembrance, see p. 347.

The season of winter lectures for this year starts in October.

Thursday 2 October AGM at 7.00 p.m., followed by 'Norfolk Deserted Settlements' by Ian Groves

Thursday 23 October still to be confirmed

Thursday 27 November '18th Century Suburban Villas' by Sarah Spooner

We plan an autumn course of ten lectures starting in September at the Friends Meeting House in Peggs Yard, Aylsham, but the arrangements are not quite finalised yet – please see notice board at the back of the Town Hall and our website at [www.aylsham-history.co.uk](http://www.aylsham-history.co.uk)

## **Rival brewers in north-east Norfolk in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century**

**Margaret Bird**

*The second part of a synopsis of the talk given by member Margaret Bird on 24 October 2013; Part 1 appeared in the previous journal.*

### **Part 2: Distribution and the scramble for property**

Small manufacturers isolated in the rural hinterland and with few tied houses struggled in the harsh trading conditions of the period. Those sited far from population centres such as Norwich, Great Yarmouth and King's Lynn and with no easy access to the coaling quays at the coastal or inland ports were placed in an uncompetitive position. Remote breweries such as Back's at Cawston, Ashmull's at Worstead, Brooke's at Guist and the far-flung concern at Fring closed between 1785 and 1805.

Bircham's at Reepham (illustrated) managed to buck the trend, and would have benefited from the extension of the navigable Bure in 1779 to Aylsham – nearer to the town than the previous head of navigation at Coltishall or the bustling inland port of Norwich. Both the Excise when reporting to London and the surveyor serving the manorial lords King's College, Cambridge observed that the trade of Coltishall had suffered at the hands of the new navigation: 'This was originally the head of the navigation; the new cut to Aylsham must have been injurious to this property' (John Josselyn junior to King's, 15 January 1805: King's College, COL/505).

Keels and wherries plied the waterways. In 1776 the Hardys' new-built wherry *William and Mary* carried a large cargo of Kentish hops on the return trip from her maiden voyage to Great Yarmouth; like many local merchants the Hardys lived right beside the river and the goods could be brought up wherry dykes alongside the malthouse and brewhouse. At Letheringsett the Hardys lived only four miles from the port of Blakeney and Cley, through which they shipped their malt, flour and porter coastwise to London, Newcastle and Liverpool. Water was a much valued highway, if a dangerous one: ships had to sail in convoy during the war years, and storms posed a constant danger. William Hardy junior's seagoing sloop *Nelly* foundered off Blakeney in 1804 during a severe storm, with all lives lost.



Reepham's Old Brewery House, home of Bircham's brewery.

Unlike inland ports such as Coltishall and Norwich this had few natural geographical advantages. The coal for the brewery copper had to be carted overland from the nearest waterway, which from October 1779 was at Aylsham.

Nonetheless Bircham's survived until 1878. It had early secured a new public house, the Anchor, facing the staithe at Aylsham and shown here on the front cover. By the second quarter of the 19th century it also had the Black Boys, Swan, White Hart and White Horse in the town.

*[photo Margaret Bird, 2011]*

The scramble for property, as the acquisition of retail outlets was characterised, is more usually associated with the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; the phrase has echoes of the Scramble for Africa. In fact tying houses to a brewery was well under way by the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Coltishall brewer Clement Ives referring to thirteen such outlets in his will of 1722. Two were at Aylsham: the Carpenters' Arms and the Cross Keys, this second house staying with the brewery until the first bankruptcy of his grandson Chapman Ives (illustrated opposite as Lot 13).

Coltishall, a village with an 1801 population of 601, had three breweries and eleven maltings in 1779. Thirteen years on, by which time Aylsham's moment had come, the numbers had been reduced to two breweries and seven maltings; a few years later there was only one brewer, Siday Hawes. In the 1770s the three Coltishall breweries all had managers: William Hardy for John Wells (at what is now Holly Lodge, south of the church), Davy Postle for John Browne (at the downstream end of the village, in what is today Anchor Street), and Robert Bond (serving Chapman Ives's mother Rose, at what is today Hazelwood House, facing Lower Common).

In the first part of this synopsis we saw that this was a period of transition; drinkers may have viewed it as a time of turmoil. Between 1787 and 1797 the Coltishall King's Head changed ownership and supply first from Browne's to Ives's and then to William Hardy's successor Siday Hawes, who was soon to set up at the Old House near the Upper Common. All were of Coltishall, but the beers from four sites and with different head brewers would have varied in taste. The White Horse in Millgate at Aylsham changed hands almost as rapidly. It had been acquired by Siday Hawes for the Coltishall owner John Wells by 1785, passed soon afterwards to ownership by John Day at his large brewery in Norwich, and by 1840 formed part of the Bircham empire.

Innkeepers changed too with bewildering frequency, although their high turnover was precipitated not by changes of owner but by the difficulty of trading when prices were rising, cash was in short supply, and when traders could be brought down purely by their creditors' indebtedness. Occasionally we come across bastions of stability, such as the two public houses near the river at Brampton: the Queen's Head (later Maid's Head) and the Cross Keys (Lot 21 in Ives's sale).

Lot 2. The King's Head, at Coltishall, and a small Cottage adjoining.

Lot 3. The White Horse, at Great Hautbois.

Lot 4. The Ship, at Tuttington, with an acre of Land, and double Cottage near thereto, &c.

Lot 5. The Vats, in St. Peter's Southgate, Norwich, with Granaries, Coal Binns, Cellars, Stables, &c.

Lot 6. A Dwelling-house, with four acres of Land and two Marshes, at Smallburgh.

Lot 7. The Swan, at Ingham.

Lot 8. The Blue Bell, at North Walsham, with two acres of Garden Ground.

Lot 9. The Hare and Hound, at Halvergate.

Lot 10. The White Swan, at Stalham.

Lot 11. The Wheel of Fortune, at Sutton, with two acres of Land.

Lot 12. The Bull, at Hickling, and a Cottage adjoining.

Lot 13. The Cross Keys, at Aylsham.

Lot 14. The King's Head, at Felmingham, and a Garden with small Pightle of Land, containing one acre.

Lot 15. The Crown, at Horsham St. Faith's, with 3R. of Land, and a Cottage adjoining.

Lot 16. The Bell, at Satehouse.

Lot 17. The Ferry House, at Horning, with 3A. 2R. arable Land, and 9A. of Marsh Land.

Lot 18. The White Swan, at Blofield.

Lot 19. The Fox and Hounds, at East Ruston, and a Cottage adjoining.

Lot 20. The Crown, at Buxton.

Lot 21. The Cross Keys, at Brampton, with 3R. of Land.

Lot 22. The King's Arms, at South Walsham.

For sale in 1796 from the Coltishall brewer Chapman Ives's first bankruptcy: part of his portfolio of outlets. The deeds, held privately, of the Crown at Horsham St Faith (Lot 15) show that his grandfather had secured the tie by 1719.

The public houses were bought by Chapman Ives's rivals such as William Bircham of Reepham, John Patteson of Norwich, Siday Hawes of Coltishall and William Hardy, who by then had moved to Letheringsett, near Holt.

[*Norwich Mercury*, 14 May 1796; *Norfolk Heritage Centre*]

William Hardy bought the first from the Norwich brewer James Beevor in 1779; he bought the second from Ives's bankruptcy of 1796. In both cases the long-serving innkeepers Meshack Ives and William Doughty stayed on.

Throughout the talk, which ranged rather more widely than space permits here, the emphasis was on flux and on uncertainty. It is hard at times for today's researchers to keep up with the pace of change then, although many of the sources are excellent in recording detail. The parish ratebooks, manor court books and land tax assessments note owner and occupier; deeds, wills and even marriage settlements can identify licensed properties held by the families concerned; and lastly the advertisements in the weekly Norwich newspapers are some of the most revealing sources, especially when the brewery plant and tied estate are listed. If we add Mary Hardy's 36-year daily diary to the mix we do indeed have a wealth of material on which to draw.

*Note:* For more details see the website [maryhardysdiary.co.uk](http://maryhardysdiary.co.uk)

**WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL 2014: 10.30 am**

**A talk on Mary Hardy and her diary at Aylsham Library, 7 Hungate Street**

Margaret Bird will give an illustrated talk

'Mary Hardy and her diary: Life in the Norfolk countryside in the 18th century'

Refreshments will be served, and there will be time for questions and discussion

There is a charge of £2 per person. It would help the library over numbers if you could book a few days in advance:

Library tel. no. 01263 732320

Details at [maryhardysdiary.co.uk/news-events](http://maryhardysdiary.co.uk/news-events)

## **The Deeds to a House**

### **Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis and Jim Pannell**

The deeds to a house or land demonstrate title to the property through a bundle of documents showing the chain of ownership. More recently, the system of land registry has introduced a centralised on-line system recording ownership, but the deeds to a house may still be of importance in the case where property has not yet been registered.

Deeds can also give us a very local and personal view into property transactions. Occasionally, deeds can reveal a matter of real historical interest reflecting events at national level. This has been the case with the deeds to 'The Cottage' on Petersons Lane, kindly loaned by Ellie and Paul Baker. In their case the deeds bundle starts in 1807 and having this early information has enabled even earlier ownership to be found quite quickly.

As with the vast majority of Aylsham properties, this site, before it became freehold, was what is generally known as 'copyhold'. The dominant manor in Aylsham was originally part of the Duchy of Lancaster and ownership changes to premises in their control were recorded in the manorial court books. Copies of these entries were written out for the owner, hence copyhold, and the early deeds held by the Bakers are the owner copies of the court book entries. The original court books survive in the Norfolk Record Office and can be used to track back ownership. NRO, NRS 16614-16626 and MS 20828-9 cover Aylsham Lancaster from 1610 to 1842.

This property can be identified in a 1622 survey of all the properties in the manor as the tenement (small cottage) and half-acre orchard held by Robert Thompson.<sup>1</sup> It was soon acquired by Thomas Knowles (Knolls) who built up a significant estate based on what we now know as The Grange. He bequeathed a number of minor properties to his daughter Rebecca who came into them in 1664, then aged 22, after the death of both her parents. She very swiftly sold these premises on to William Wilson, an Aylsham butcher and grazier. William and his son Thomas owned the site for 20 years and during this time the orchard, the land along Petersons Lane from The Cottage to Rawlinsons Lane, was separated from the cottage.





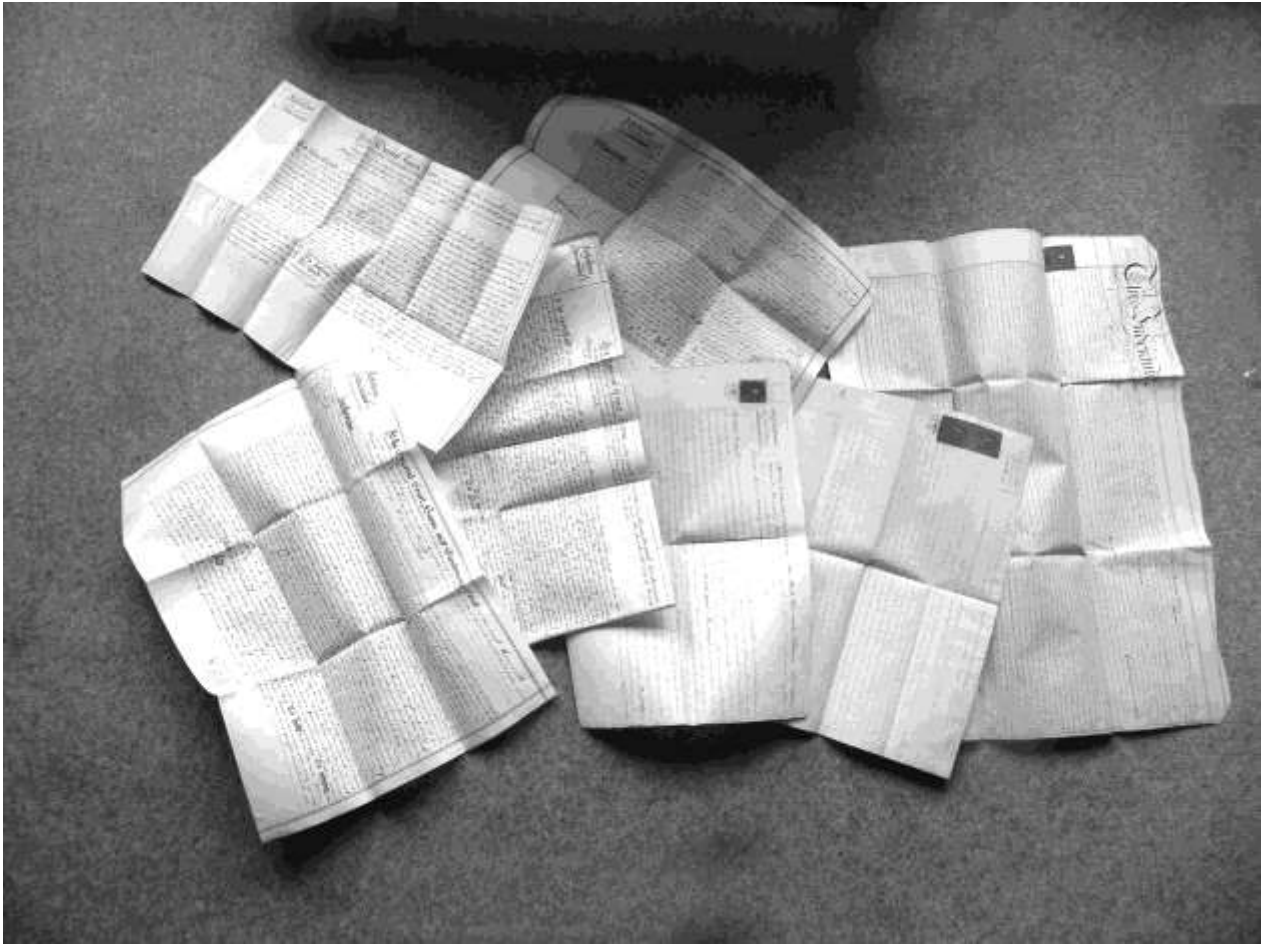
The chaise house on Petersons Lane converted to a lock-up house in 1846. The strong room was probably behind what is now the front door of the house.

The tenement was subsequently owned by two generations of the Mitchell family during which period it was split into two properties in 1722, with two sons having half each. One part was mortgaged to Francis Clarke, one of Aylsham's major tradesmen and a shopkeeper in The Market Place. In the late 1740s Aylsham worsted weaver John Amies acquired both parts and another house and yard in Aylsham. At his death in 1793 the house and yard passed to his only son John Amies, a carrier of Skeyton, at a court in May that year (NRO, NCC will John Amies 1793, Stills 7). The Petersons Lane tenement was left to Anne, wife of yeoman Thomas Webster and presumably the worsted weaver's daughter; the court book entry suggests she and Thomas were already living there and may have been for many years. The bequest was specifically to Anne and her heirs.

And so the Bakers' deeds, which give a good picture of the evolution of this small property, still comprising two dwellings in the early nineteenth century, occupied by Thomas and Anne Webster and John Spink (twice married and both wives being Webster girls, Parish Registers at NRO and on-line through *familysearch.org*). In August 1807, ratified in the court of April 1808, the Websters mortgaged their property for a loan of £24, paying interest of 5% (typical of the time). The loan came from John Warnes, initially a currier or leather-cutter who lived in the centre of Aylsham but who became a timber merchant and from huge profits from that trade (timber sales to the Royal Navy perhaps, given the date) managed to buy Bolwick Hall and its estate in early 1807. The Websters did not pay back their small loan before Anne's death aged 90 in 1811 and Thomas forfeited the property to John Warnes in May 1814 (Thomas died the following year aged 85). However, the story was not quite as brutal as it sounds.

Anne Webster's only surviving child, and thus heir, Charlotte, married James Secker of Aylsham in 1795 and their daughter Charlotte married Robert Sandell, a bookseller of City Road, St. Leonard Shoreditch. In 1837 John Warnes sold the premises to the Sandells for the nominal and rather strangely precise sum of £12 18s 10d; a very decent gesture ensuring the intent of the will of John Amies, whom Warnes would have known. Charlotte was not technically 'admitted' to the site until the court of April 1839 when a thorough description is given. This was now a piece of land measuring 25 perches (40 perches being a quarter of an acre) where the tenement previously owned by Thomas Webster and John Spink stood but which had 'lately' been converted to a chaise-house and stable, which was now used by James White. White, a yeoman of Aylsham, paid the Sandells £110 at that same court in 1839 to become owner. Presumably the old cottages had been in a pretty ruinous condition and were replaced by something more practical, and readily rentable, after the death of Thomas Webster.

White did not keep the premises for long and sold in October 1842 to William Bartram. Bartram by this time was a successful and energetic carpenter/builder and he and his son acquired various premises particularly in Millgate and parts of the town nearby (see 'Millgate'<sup>2</sup> and 'Aylsham Directories'<sup>3</sup> for further information); perhaps he wanted the site for stabling or maybe saw it as a possible development opportunity.



Some of the old deeds that tell the story of the Peterson Lane lock-up.

In the event, all changed in 1846 with a fundamentally new use for the property. To make sense of this occurrence, we need to understand what was happening at a national level with regard to law, order and local government.

There was increasing concern for the lawlessness apparent in the early years of the century. There were protests against the new Poor Law and agitation from reformers such as the Chartists. This aggravated the sense of unrest amongst the aristocracy following the loss of colonies in North America and the revolutions in Europe. The reaction began to take shape in London, and in 1829 Robert Peel's Metropolitan Police Bill was enacted. A properly organised and uniformed police force was created for London, and the various attempts at policing by parishes was at an end for the greater London area. A royal commission reported in 1839 that police forces should be established in all counties under the supervision of the magistrates. They were to follow the example of London. The 1839 County Police Act empowered Justices of The Peace

of any county to appoint constables. Three or more magistrates could require the sessions to vote on the matter; the Act did not require the action, only made it legal to do so. The first county to agree on the adoption of the Act was Wiltshire. In 1856, the terms of the 1839 Act became obligatory.

At a general quarter sessions of the peace for the county of Norfolk held in the Shirehouse, Norwich castle, on March 11<sup>th</sup> 1846, it was resolved that a lock-up house should be provided at Aylsham. The justices also planned for the appointment and payment of a constable. This was to be managed by a Committee of Justices within the hundred of South Erpingham. This Committee agreed with William Bartram for the absolute purchase of the property on Peterson's Lane for £200, and caused a plan of a lock-up house to be prepared which was approved by the Home Secretary. The Committee consisted of the following Justices of The Peace: William Earle Lytton Bulwer of Heydon, Thomas John Mott of Blickling, William Marsham of Hevingham, and the Reverend Edwin Telfer Yates of Aylsham.

The purchase was completed by Henry Framingham Day, Treasurer of the County, using money from public stock of the County. The property was 'all that messe or cote of ... William Bartram then lately converted out of a chaise house and stable ... with the outhouses, yard, garden, land and appurtenances'. It was to be used by the Committee as a lock-up house for 'the temporary confinement of persons taken into custody by any constable'. Perhaps the open internal structure of a chaise-house and stable were easily adapted to a prison and this may have influenced the decision to buy this site.

It appears that the property was sold by the Committee (by this time minus William Marsham who had died) in 1855 to William and Robert Bartram for £125. They sold the property, together with other properties, for £1000 in 1858 to William Collyer.

A more substantial police station was erected on the south-west corner of Blickling Road and Heydon Road, now known as Dorset House. The occupation of Dorset House by police officers can be tracked in the Directories<sup>3</sup> from 1855, which is the date of the sale of The Cottage by the Justices.

In his 'A History of Aylsham'<sup>4</sup>, John Sapwell describes the Dorset House police station as 'comprising houses for two officers and cells.'



Part of an Aylsham Lancaster Manor Court copyhold record of a transaction, the other copy held by the Manor and now in the Norfolk Record Office.

He says that ‘the original police station may have been in Petersons Lane once known as Station Cottage, but this was probably only a temporary one’. We now know where Station Cottage was, something of its history, and how it reflected the national development of public Law, Order and Local Government.

#### Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Ellie and Paul Baker for the loan of their house deeds and to Derek Lyons for the photographs.

#### References

- <sup>1</sup> Aylsham Local History Society (1988). *Aylsham in The Seventeenth Century*. 145 pp. Poppyland Publishing, Cromer.
- <sup>2</sup> Mollard, T. & Gale, G., eds (2006). *Millgate, Aylsham*. Second Edition. 111 p. Poppyland Publishing, Cromer
- <sup>3</sup> Gale, G. & Mollard, T., eds. (2004). *Aylsham Directories 1793–1937*. 372 pp. Aylsham Local History Society.
- <sup>4</sup> Sapwell, J. (1960). *A History of Aylsham*. 171 pp. Jarrold, Norwich.

## **Oliver Locker-Lampson CMG DSO 1880–1954**

**Derek Lyons**

Oliver Stillingfleet Locker-Lampson was a wealthy, right-wing conservative politician. He was extremely well connected. Guests at Newhaven Court, his Cromer home, included the King and Queen of Greece and Winston and Clementine Churchill. A teenaged Prince Philip was a house guest on at least one occasion. He was Member of Parliament for Ramsey Division from 1910, for Huntingdonshire from 1918 until 1922, then for Birmingham, Handsworth, between 1922 and 1945. During the early 1930s he befriended Albert Einstein when the famous physicist was forced to flee his native Germany, and found him temporary refuge (complete with armed guards) on Roughton Heath.

On the outbreak of war in August 1914 a wave of patriotism swept the nation. Thousands of young men (and some not so young) flocked to recruiting centres keen to fight for king and country. Norfolk people were not immune to this fervour, but few matched the flamboyant gesture made by Locker-Lampson. By using his influence at Westminster he was given permission to recruit and equip, at his own expense, an armoured-car squadron (No 15) of the Royal Naval Air Service, which he himself commanded. He was commissioned in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in December 1914 with the rank of Lieutenant Commander. After a period of training at Whale Island in Hampshire and in North Norfolk the squadron left to join the fight in France and Belgium.

By the end of 1915 the campaign on the western front was stalled in long term trench warfare, a kind of fighting for which armoured cars were quite unsuited (a fact which led to the development of the caterpillar-tracked tank). No 15 and two other squadrons were formed into the Armoured Car Expeditionary Force (ACEF) and redeployed, under Locker-Lampson's command, to fight alongside the Russians in the east. It didn't take long for politicians back in London to realise that they now had one of their own close to the centre of the Russian establishment. Consequently he soon found himself engaged in diplomatic missions instead of leading his men in honour and glory on the battlefield. When ACEF was withdrawn following the Bolshevik revolution they left Russia without their commanding officer.



Royal Navy Air Service Armoured-car Squadron No 15 in Aylsham Market Place in 1915, probably lined up in preparation for a rally to raise funds and morale. Photo courtesy Aylsham Council Town Archive.

After the war he resumed his political career, but his experiences in Russia had left their mark. It was said that an attempt was made to involve him in the 1916 assassination of Rasputin. And according to his own account, he had drawn up a plan for the rescue of Tsar Nicholas, following his abdication, which was frustrated only by the British Government's refusal to grant asylum to the Tsar. If these accounts are true it shows how close he came to the heart of the Russian establishment prior to the revolution. Certainly, from this time on he showed marked antipathy towards communism. He remained a member of the House throughout Hitler's war but his health was failing. He did not contest his seat in 1945. He died in London in October 1954.

Aylsham Local History Society is planning an exhibition in St Michael's Church, Aylsham, from Monday 4 August to the end of the week, to mark the beginning of World War I. It is hoped to show the effect of the war on the people of Aylsham, from the mobilisation in the Market Place on that day until the Peace celebrations there in 1919.

**John Pumphrey†**  
28 October 1921–9 January 2014



The Rev. John Albert Pumphrey will be forever in our minds mardling in Aylsham Market Place, propped on his bicycle in the attitude caught so well by Paul James on the front cover of *About Aylsham*, the book he gave to be published under the auspices of the Society. In the apt words of the Rev. Andrew Beane in the EDP obituary he was a humble man who loved Aylsham and its people, a godly man who loved the church.

He used to say he was conceived in Aylsham and born in Itteringham – on 28 October 1921 – where his father Jack Pumphrey, a painter and decorator, took up residence briefly with the parents of his wife Gladys. He was soon back in Aylsham where he lived all his life apart from the three years he was overseas in the Second World War. He was bright eyed and bushy tailed from boyhood, more with an eye to self-improvement than fun and games. His father rented a house at the top end of Yaxley Lane in 1928. The family had hard times as he was



approaching his teens through the Great Depression and winters severe enough to freeze over the lake at Woodgate for ice skating. He not only took advantage of Aylsham Boys' School to master his figures and put pen neatly to paper, but made full use of Sunday Schools. He used to say that children had a sharp eye for the treats offered by the competing chapels and churches. He started at the Gospel Hall, now Emmanuel Church Hall in Cawston Road, and much appreciated the teacher Richard Pooley, a solicitor's clerk, who later taught him the shorthand and touch typing that stood him in good stead for his career. He was soon lured to St Michael's church, where he was taught by the notable solicitor Tom Purdy and joined the choir.

He left school like everyone else at 14, but within the year he was a junior solicitor's clerk with David Walker at No 1 Norwich Road, the venerable old Copeman bank. In 1937 he was taking the minutes for the Aylsham Parish Council, for which Walker had just been appointed Parish Council Clerk, rang church bells, joined the Aylsham Players for the ambitious production of *Merrie England* in the Town Hall and started the arduous task of extending his education by correspondence. The Second World War interrupted his progress and he served with the Royal Signals in the 14<sup>th</sup> Army's 1943–1945 Burma campaign.

He returned to Walker's office in 1946 and began a lengthy course of study to gain the Law Society's preliminary examination (equivalent to a GCSE). This was essential to become articled and study law to a sufficient standard of the Society's intermediate examination to qualify as a Fellow of the Institute of Legal Executives (F. Inst. L. Ex.). He was persuaded not only to form a new team of bell ringers after the bells had been silent through the war years, but also to become the Tower Captain (Ringing Master). He continued the role for many years and organised the post-war refurbishment. He revived St Michael's church choir and went on to be its leader and conductor for 31 years.

He was also courting. He successfully bid for a cottage in Cawston Road, No 16, in 1948 and at Easter 1949 he and Margaret Addison were married in St Michael's church. In 1953 he bought a new house on Buxton Road, the property large enough to divide for his mother later on. They adopted Paul soon after and the house and garden were John's pride and joy. As long as he lived at No. 12 in later life the garden was immaculate, a source of constant joy, and his tiny study was well

ordered. He coped well moving into the digital world and made good use of his computer. He was Secretary to the Forresters' Friendly Society, he joined the Masonic Lodge and with his web of contacts helped many people on to the property ladder.

He assisted David Walker with the work of Clerk of the Parish Council until he retired in 1959. John then took over that role and was the Council Clerk for twelve years until 1971. Vicar Canon Jack Vyse took the parish in 1970 and it was about this time that John responded to a call to the ministry. He trained under Vyse and was ordained deacon in the Norwich Auxiliary Pastoral Ministry by the Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev. Maurice Wood in 1977. In 1978 he was admitted as a priest in Aylsham, the first ordination in the history of St Michael's. In 1986 John, at 65, retired from his legal career and in 1988, when Canon Vyse left office he had the responsibility of continuing the established pattern of services at St Michael's Church, as well as baptisms, weddings and funerals. After an interregnum of seven months the Rev. David Parkes was inducted as Vicar, but sadly became terminally ill and soon died. John again took charge until the induction of the Rev. Robert Branson in 1991.

Canon Vyse had been chaplain of St Michael's Hospital and when the appointment was offered to John, David Parkes fully agreed that he should accept, a role he continued for eleven and a half years. In the 1990s John was laid low with cancer, but pulled through. Many of us remember from this time how considerate he was in visiting the sick in Norwich, Cromer and Aylsham hospitals – and how many people he knew. On occasion he demurred from giving last communion because it was outside his official remit, but was prevailed upon because he was so loved. He was very pleased that in 2007 at the age of 86 he was given 'Permission to officiate' for another three years by The Rt Revd Graham James, Bishop of Norwich, a remit that was extended to the end of his life. For a number of years he was Captain to the British Legion.

He had a strong sense of the past and he wrote fifty articles for the Parish Magazine between 2002 and 2007. These were collected into a nice little book, *About Aylsham*, published by the Society in 2008. It remains a fitting memento of a remarkable Aylsham man, who gave so much to our community and will be much missed.

Pumphrey, J. (2008). *About Aylsham*. 112 pp. Aylsham Local History Society.

and the Clerk had been asked to negotiate with Pages with a view to an electric supply.

The Committee suggested that a revised scale of Fees should be submitted by the Clerk, but the Council decided to refer the matter back to the Committee for recommendation. The old and new scales to be circulated to members beforehand.

LIGHT  
It was decided to accept Mr. Stone's estimate for wiring Pages cellars, and to have the work done forthwith, and also to have the Caretaker's cellars wired for electric light. Col. Purdy's tenancy of the upper room at £4. per annum including gas, which had been brought up by the Committee was, on the proposition of Mr. Neave, seconded by Mr. Bond referred back to them for recommendation.

Allotments:

It was decided on the proposition of Mr. Park seconded by Mr. Beard that an allotment show should be held for 1938 and the matter was referred to the Committee to co-opt any persons whom they might think could help them.

General Business:

IN  
£20  
A letter was read from the Secretary of the Aylsham Recreation Ground asking for a grant. On the proposition of Mr. Neave seconded by Mr. Ewing it was decided to grant £20 per annum to the ground. Mr. Bond and Mr. Rest spoke in support. The matter of the proposed leasing of part of the John Doame garden to the Aylsham Cinema Co. was then considered

Minutes from the Aylsham Parish Council, 1937, written up by John Pumphrey at the age of 16. Courtesy Aylsham Town Council Archives.

## Society News

### The Boleyns of Blickling – a talk by Elizabeth Griffiths



There were several strands explored in this talk by Dr Elizabeth Griffiths to a packed hall on 28<sup>th</sup> November. Has the present Blickling Hall any features original to the 1450s build? Where was Anne Boleyn born? Were the Boleyns based at Hever Castle or Blickling? What part did a ‘good marriage’ have in the success of gentry families? Why was the Boleyn family airbrushed so effectively from the history of Blickling? Why did this family rise so spectacularly and fall so suddenly? Was the Norfolk view of the Boleyns in accord with the view nationally after 1536 when Anne was executed?

Sir Geoffrey Boleyn was from an important Norfolk gentry family but at first he was not personally wealthy. In due course he became Member of Parliament for the City of London in 1449. He built a brick house at Blickling in the 1450s on the site of a house built in the 1390s. Brick as a building material was fashionable at this time reaching its apogee in the 1520s. The prototype for this style was Caister Castle owned by Sir John Fastolf who had sold Blickling to Geoffrey Boleyn. Fastolf’s time in

France during the Hundred Years war had inspired him to build Caister, in turn this style affected Blickling. Not many of these brick houses survive as they were originally constructed. Many like Blickling have been absorbed into later houses. Blickling now has elements of the Hobarts' build in 1616 in the South and East wing but retains, as evidence of their tenure, the Boleyn west wing and ground plan and a nod to the Boleyns in the Hobart inclusion of the Bull motif in his architecture.

Written sources support the Boleyn Build.

- Sir John Leland in his itinerary at the time of the Boleyns' ascendancy has a reference in his work on Hertfordshire to a Boleyn brick building in Norfolk.
- Maurice Howard, the architectural historian in his book 'Early Tudor Houses' refers to the Boleyn Build at Blickling.
- Tom Williamson writes of notes made by family members in the 1760s which speak of George Boleyn, a great grandson of Geoffrey, living in a house 'which stands'.
- There was mention of niches in the great hall with statues of Anne Boleyn and her daughter Elizabeth I with the tag 'Anne was born here'.
- Ketton Cremer in 'Norfolk Assembly' wrote of the Boleyn connection with Blickling in the 1840s .
- The same connection was celebrated in J Grigor's Eastern Arboretum with particular reference to the landscape.
- Locally children have been scared by the haunting of Blickling on May 19<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of Anne's death.

In spite of all this, Elizabeth spoke of the tradition that Anne Boleyn was born at Hever Castle in Kent and that the family's link with Blickling was short lived. An able, determined and ambitious family, it was believed, would want to be nearer the royal court and their business interests. Until recently the National Trust, who now own Blickling, had airbrushed the Boleyn Family from the history of Blickling.

Bloomfield's History of Norfolk in the 1730's makes no reference to Geoffrey Boleyn building at Blickling, but building accounts show that work on the East and South wings was based on work started by probably Sir Edward Clere, one of the heirs to the Boleyn estates. Eric Ives stresses Blickling's link with Anne Boleyn, who knew the Norfolk-

born Mathew Parker, later Archbishop of Canterbury. Reviews of Anne's date of birth put it in 1500 and so at Blickling. Hever Castle was indeed a useful base but Blickling remained the ancestral home.

The Boleyn Family was noted at Salle in the thirteenth century. Sir Geoffrey Boleyn, as we have seen, made his way in London starting as a hatter and becoming a member of the Mercer's Company. Marrying late, by which time he had status, secured him a 'good marriage'. Margaret Paston in her letters had some apposite remarks on the rise of Geoffrey Boleyn. However, it was Geoffrey's wife Anne who was left with the task of finding suitable marriage partners for a large family.

William Boleyn married the heiress to the Ormond and Wiltshire estates. It was their son Thomas who married Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the Duke of Norfolk. Thomas, with his linguistic skills, became a diplomat useful to the royal court. Impressing Margaret of Savoy he was able to send his daughter Anne Boleyn to her court, a finishing school for polish and fashion.

Anne, with her chic style and teasing of Henry VIII, played for the highest stakes. Not for her the role of her sister as the discarded royal mistress. Sadly she could not provide the legitimate male heir. Her and her brother George's embrace of religious reform created factions at court opposed to the extremes of the new religion. Her family had benefited from her marriage to the king but Anne's execution caused its downfall. Never popular, her death was met with a muted response. Later in England she was portrayed as a temptress or at best an embarrassment. In France Donizetti wrote operas with Anne given the part of a romantic heroine.

The old Norfolk families were resentful of the treatment of the Boleyns. Their star had risen and had fallen in a short space but Thomas Boleyn had been sheriff of Norfolk and still one of the local gentry. Elizabeth stressed that it was the status the Boleyns had gained that saved Blickling Hall. Anne's daughter became Elizabeth I, a wonderful scion of the Boleyn family.

Altogether a fascinating look at the origins of a local family, now creating interest and conspiracy theories on the worldwide web.

**Lynda Wix**

Image of Anne Boleyn courtesy of Elizabeth Griffiths, from *Norfolk Archaeology* 45 (2009).

## **The Real Edith Cavell 1865–1915 – a talk by Barbara Miller**



In an entertaining and informative talk on the evening of 23 January 2014 Barbara Miller enlightened her fascinated audience with the facts of Edith Cavell's life, work and death. In introduction, it was acknowledged that while many people have heard of Edith Cavell, all they know is that she was born in Norfolk, became a nurse, and that she was executed by a firing squad.

Edith was born in Swardeston, Norfolk. She looked like her mother, Louisa Sophia, having brown hair and grey eyes. Her father was the Vicar. There was no vicarage so she lived with her parents, her younger sisters, Florence and Lillian, and her brother, Jack, in the large and gloomy Cavell House. There was no money for a governess. The children were taught by their parents then sent to schools that would give a rebate for children of the clergy. Edith found life in Swardeston dull, though she showed no signs of rebellion. 'I would love to have you with us' she wrote to her cousin Eddy Cavell, 'but not on a Sunday. It's too dreadful, Sunday School, church services, family devotions morning and evening.' All through her life Edith seemed to have no sense of fun. Few people remembered seeing her smile though she would occasionally burst into sudden and almost frenetic laughter.

At age 14 years Edith was sent to Clevedon, then on to Kensington and finally to Laurel Court, where her facility for languages was developed.

The Headmistress, Margaret Gibson, became a strong influence and remained so for much of Edith's life.

Leaving school aged 18 years, it was necessary to find work. Office work was done by men and nursing was still struggling for respectability. She therefore became a governess. This was a lonely life because a governess was not part of the servant hierarchy. She worked in Essex, also in Norfolk for the Gurney and Barclay families at Keswick and Colney Hall. During this time she went to Bavaria, on holiday, and was very impressed with a local cottage hospital to which she sent a gift when she returned to England. Because she spoke good French she was recommended, by Laurel Court, to a family of four children of a wealthy family in Brussels. She stayed with this family for five years. She wrote to her cousin, Eddy, 'Being a governess is only temporary but some day, somehow, I am going to do something useful. I don't know what it will be. I only know that it will be something for people. They are, most of them, so helpless, so hurt, so unhappy.'

In 1895 her father was taken seriously ill and she hurried home to look after him. He recovered completely but Edith now knew that nursing was to be her life's work. She started at Tooting Fever Hospital where she nursed patients with diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles and bronchial pneumonia. There was no antidote to any of these, or their complications.

From Tooting she moved to the London Hospital in Whitechapel where there was a distinguished staff but poor Governors. However, in 1896 Viscount Knutsford became the Chairman of the Governors and together with the 24 year old Matron, Eva Luckes, they turned the hospital around, including providing nursing training and accommodation. There had been very restricted accommodation for nurses. The night and day shifts shared not only rooms, but beds. The poverty of the local area fostered diseases such as typhoid and tuberculosis, which meant that Edith gained considerable experience in infectious diseases. She was sent to Maidstone to help deal with a typhoid outbreak where she was awarded a medal (the only one she ever won) for being the best in charge, demonstrated by a high level of cleanliness and a high survival rate. However, her general report was poor. 'Edith Cavell has plenty of capability when she chooses to exert herself but she is not much in earnest and not at all punctual (she had been reported late on duty 46 times) and not a nurse that can be altogether depended on.' Miss Luckes



wrote 'Edith Cavell is not a success as a Staff Nurse...(she) was not methodical or observant and she over-estimated her own powers.'

Edith went on to do some private nursing but disliked it and in 1901 she moved to St Pancras Infirmary where she stayed for two years. This hospital only had one doctor and two assistants. There was no training school for nurses. There were 500 beds filled with patients in pain, dying, obstreperous, in labour, incontinent or disturbed. She was one of two night superintendents – which meant that on the other superintendent's night off, she was in sole charge.

Her next post was as Assistant Matron at Shoreditch Infirmary where she was in charge of nurse training and housekeeping. She was well-respected by the staff but had no close friends. The Matron, Miss Inglis, wrote 'I knew Miss Cavell almost as well after our first meeting as I did at the end of the two years when she left Shoreditch. I liked her. I admired her unswerving sense of duty. But I never felt close to her...(she had) a grave dignity that filled her associates with deep admiration.'

Edith had worked for ten years without a break. After a short holiday she did a stint in Manchester, organising District Nurses. However, in 1907, she was invited to become the first Directress of the new *École d'Infirmières Diplômées* in Brussels. The doctor in charge was Dr Antoine Depage, the husband of a friend of one of the children to whom Edith had been governess. Edith wrote from Manchester in 1907 to Miss Luckes 'My dear Matron, I am writing to tell you that I have just accepted a permanent appointment in Brussels. I had a letter some time ago asking me if I would consent to become the Matron of the first training school of nurses out there, which is to be opened in October. Up to the present they have had only nuns to nurse the sick, and they are often ignorant and the lay nurses always dirty...Looking forward, I hope that in time both private and district nursing may spring from this beginning as the need for both is, I believe, greatly felt, and people are no longer willing to put up with the old class of nurse.'

It was a large, ambitious, programme: training nurses for hospitals, schools, kindergarten, etc. It was difficult to recruit Belgian girls because nursing was not considered appropriate for a respectable girl. Most of the nurses were Dutch, English or German. But a member of the Royal Family broke an arm and was nursed by one of Edith's nurses and that helped to turn the tide. The new hospital had 250 beds, medical and

surgical, out-patients, isolation and maternity. A medical school was soon established.

Edith had a reputation for being very strict, but fair. She insisted on cleanliness and good time-keeping. Her first staff nurse wrote 'I saw Miss Cavell most often at meals and I was always impressed with the fact that she never appeared to know what she was eating. She was like that in many of the everyday things of life. Her mind was always too full of problems. I often thought, as I saw her eating in that disinterested manner as if she had no enjoyment of her food, that perhaps this accounted for the monotonous meals that we always got. Nevertheless, we staff nurses never failed to marvel at her patience with the Belgian probationers to whom nursing was so novel.'

Personally, Edith was intensely religious and people said that if she had been a Catholic, she would have been a nun. She only had religious and medical books. *Imitatio Christi* was her favourite book.

In August 1914 war was declared. Edith was on holiday in England but returned to Belgium to send the English, German and Dutch nurses home. Very quickly Brussels was overrun and her hospital became a Red Cross hospital taking in wounded of all nationalities, including British. Holland was a neutral country so the aim was for British soldiers to get to Holland.

The Belgian resistance movement was soon organised. Edith was concerned that the triumph of Prussianism would mean the end of Christianity. This belief influenced her actions. When someone suggested prudence as being the best way to survive the occupation she said 'In times like these when terror makes might seem right there is a higher duty of prudence.'

Up to thirty five British soldiers at any time were sheltered in the attics and cellars. Although food was short and German control tightened, the students appeared not to know what was happening.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1915 Philip Baucq, the architect of the resistance movement, was arrested. Edith was arrested on 5<sup>th</sup> August. When she was interrogated on 8<sup>th</sup> August she was told the names of thirty four others who, the Germans said, had confessed to being in the resistance. Edith had been brought up to tell the truth so she confirmed the names.

Placed in solitary confinement in a small room with one tiny window, a folding bed, a chair, a small cupboard and a washbasin, she had only her

prayer book, the *Imitatio*, and some embroidery to occupy herself. She remained there until her trial began on 7<sup>th</sup> October. Incriminating evidence had been provided unwittingly by Philip Baucq. He had given a lot of information to a 'plant', posing as a member of the resistance, who had been put in his cell.

The full trial took two days although Edith's trial only lasted ten minutes. Thirty five people were on trial but only the Belgian aristocracy were allowed to speak with their defence lawyers. In England, Edith's brother-in-law tried to communicate with the Foreign Office, but to no avail. No-one thought the Germans would put a woman to death.

On Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October 1915 the prisoners were taken to the central hall in the prison to hear their sentences. Edith was one of five to be executed. Stirling Gahan, the English chaplain visited that night. He recalled that Edith said 'I am thankful to have had these ten weeks quiet to get ready. Life has been so full that I have had no rest and no quiet. Now I have had them and have been kindly treated here. I expected my sentence and believe it was just. I have no fear or shrinking. I have seen death so often that it is not fearful or strange to me and this I would say, standing as I do in view of God and eternity, I realise that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness against anyone.'

Taken out of prison at 6 am on a rainy morning she found 250 soldiers lined up. She was tied to a post, blindfolded and shot. She was buried nearby, a simple wooden cross marking her grave.

The Kaiser was furious. Posters in England showing her in nurse's uniform, prone on the ground, resulted in an increase in recruitment and influenced America's entry into the war. A cushion, taken to England as part of her personal effects, was found to contain her diary.

After the war, her body was exhumed and brought to Norwich Cathedral for reburial. George V and Queen Mary wanted her buried in Westminster Abbey but her sisters insisted that she should return to Norfolk. Crowds lined the route. In the Cathedral she had a cortege of nurses and rescued soldiers. She received honours from Belgium and France but the only English medal she ever received was the one she was given for treating typhoid.

It is her lasting legacy that her name remains synonymous with female courage and bravery.

**Sheila Merriman**

# NOTICES

## Aylsham Festival

The theme for the 2014 Aylsham Festival is 'Going, Going, Gone'. The Festival will be in May. The Aylsham Local History Society aims to whet your appetite for the Festival with a history-based competition. All you have to do is to identify some Aylsham pubs that have 'gone'. The prize is a print of the Peter Holman map of Aylsham.

To enter the competition, take a look at the April edition of 'Just Aylsham'. There should be photographs of ten properties in Aylsham. Each of these used to be a pub. You will need to work out where each building is, and what the name of the pub was. The 'how to enter' details will be in 'Just Aylsham'.

It's your choice as to how you find the answers. Walking around Aylsham could help you find where the properties are. And a visit to the Heritage Centre might help you discover what the pub names were.

Jim Pannell will be leading a walk for about an hour from the Heritage Centre at 1.30 pm on Sunday 25 May to look at the sites of numerous old pubs and inns of the town.

## Heritage Open Days

Heritage Open Days are free events. Places that aren't normally open to the public will open their doors or, if they are usually open, will either be free of charge or will put on a special event. The 2014 dates are Thursday 11 September to Sunday 14 September.

This year the Aylsham Local History Society is co-ordinating Open Day events in Aylsham and is seeking more properties to add to the portfolio. If you have an interesting property and are willing to participate, contact Sheila on 01263 734408.

Because it's a national event, all the necessary insurance, ticketing, advertising, etc. is covered. There is no cost to the property owner. Property owners can choose how much, or how little, they are open and to how many people. For general information on Heritage Open Days look at [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk)

## World War I Exhibition

Aylsham Local History Society is planning an exhibition in St Michael's Church, Aylsham, from Monday 4 August to the end of the week, see note on p. 347.