

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Volume 10

No 2

CONTENTS

Editorial	34
A short walk in Aylsham from the Bure Valley Railway to Penfold Street via Hungate by Sheila Merriman	35
Nefarious doings – with disastrous consequences by Geoffrey Nobbs	46
A Celebration in memory of Chris Barringer who died in June 2013 by Geoff Gale	49
Book News: Two Book Reviews – William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis's new studies of Aylsham by Margaret Bird	50
Society News	57
Visit to Columbine Hall and the churches of Thornton Parva and Earl Stonham – Peter Roulstone	57
Deserted Villages – a talk by Ian Groves - Lynda Wix	63
The Aylsham Navigation Context: Fuel, Farming and the Environment – a talk by Tom Williamson – Roger Polhill	65
Annual General Meeting – Lynda Wix	68
List of Members	71
Account for the Year ended 31 August 2014	72

Front cover: Entrance to Aylsham from Holt, by James Bulwer,
courtesy Norwich Castle Museum.

Back cover: Retable in St Mary Thornham Parva and interior of St
Mary the Virgin, Earl Stonham. Photos: Peter Roulstone

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 jpannell@btinternet.com 01263 731087

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

Website: alhs.weebly.com

It is a pleasure to congratulate William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis on the publication of their two new scholarly books on the history of Aylsham, properly reviewed by Margaret Bird in this issue. Sheila Merriman also takes us along Hungate in a pedestrian way that is good reading. Geoffrey and Margaret Nobbs still keep an interest in Aylsham despite their move to Bristol, contributing articles, ideas and responding to queries about their memories of the town.

As Peter Roulstone reports we had a most successful trip to Suffolk in June, followed by another very interesting outing to the churches at Ranworth and Hemblington in September, both ably arranged by Ann Dyball.

The Society was asked by Baptists Together to do a survey of the burial ground in White Hart Street before the land is sold. Jim Pannell is heading a research group that has already made a list of the memorials in the chapel and grounds and is continuing with a plan to research the history of the Baptists in Aylsham and produce a booklet.

We are into the winter season of monthly lectures, reports on the first two included here. The further lectures at 7.30 pm in the Friendship Hall are:

Thursday 27 November 2014. *'The Working Horse in Norfolk'* by Stephen Pope.

Thursday 22 January 2015. *'Tidal Lands in the Blakeney Area'* by John Peake.

26 February 2015. *'The Paston Family'* by Rob Knee.

26 March 2015. *'Primitive Methodism in North Norfolk'* by David Yarham.

In case of adverse weather, members are asked to telephone a committee member after 11 am on the day of the lecture to see whether the lecture will proceed.

The evening social event will be at Banningham Crown on 16 April. Book with Jim Pannell.

Please check the record of your subscription this year on page 71.

A short walk in Aylsham, from the Bure Valley Railway to Penfold Street via Hungate

Sheila Merriman

Bure Valley Railway

As we're starting at the Bure Valley Railway, let's begin with some information about it. This was the first railway to reach Aylsham. It opened on the 1st January 1880. It was an extension of the line from Wroxham and ultimately went to Reepham then on to make a junction with the Wymondham to Wells line at Broom Green.

The aim was to carry agricultural produce, notably grain and livestock, however, traffic along the line was always sparse. The First World War saw the railways come under Government control and the principal traffic flows were agricultural produce, passengers and timber for pit props and trenching. After the war the railway became part of the LNER. Closure was considered but the RAF base opened in Coltishall in 1937 and this provided traffic for the railway. Petrol rationing during the second World War led to increased traffic on the railways. The end of petrol rationing and the increase in competition from road traffic led to the closure of the passenger service in 1952 though freight trains continued to run. After 1974 the only traffic was concrete beams from a factory in Lenwade. But the factory closed in 1982 and in 1984/5 the track was lifted.

Norfolk County Council had a policy of converting closed railway lines into long distance footpaths. They delegated the task to Broadland District Council. At the time, there were several railway enthusiasts on the Council so, with finance from the Railway Company and officer time from the Council, Bure Valley Railway opened in 1990 as a subsidiary of Pleasurewood Hills theme park in Great Yarmouth – who went into receivership just after the railway opened. The railway was bought from the Receiver by the Managing Director of the Ffestiniog Railway in North Wales. He ran it for two years and sold it to Robert Baker who had recently sold his dog food business. He ran it for two years and sold it to a small consortium of railway enthusiasts. Five turbulent years, with many disagreements, followed until 2000 when a new enthusiast stepped forward and took control. Ownership is now vested in a small group of railway enthusiasts who operate the line on a not-for-profit basis with any surplus being reinvested. The railway carries around 120,000 visitors a year – more than it ever carried as a standard branch line.

The reason that this is a narrow gauge railway is that it allows the original trackbed to be used for the dual purpose of railway and footpath. It's a 15" gauge so is the smallest of the narrow gauge railways. The two other principal railways of this size are the Ravenglass and Eskdale railway in Cumbria and

the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch Railway in Kent though there are many, shorter, narrow gauge railways. There are regular exchanges of locomotives between the railways. Last year a Bure Valley engine spent the entire year in Cumbria. I think it's a lovely concept that a train can have a sabbatical year in the Lake District.

Walk up Station Road, stopping on the pavement at the junction with Norwich Road. Look left to the pillbox.

Pillboxes

Railways were of strategic national importance during the Second World War and the Aylsham line was no exception serving, as it did, many local RAF bases. The pillboxes were constructed to ensure that no sabotage was undertaken on the railway, or that if there was any damage it could be reported quickly and remedied. Two pillboxes survive in Aylsham. You can see the one over there next to the Marriott's Way footpath (which used to be the railway line to Reepham) and the other one is along the bank of the railway station (visible from Buxton Road). The pillboxes used to guard the railway bridge.

Cross the road via the pedestrian refuge to the gate to the left of the Tesco entrance. Go through the gate to the footpath that is Marriott's Way

Marriott's Way

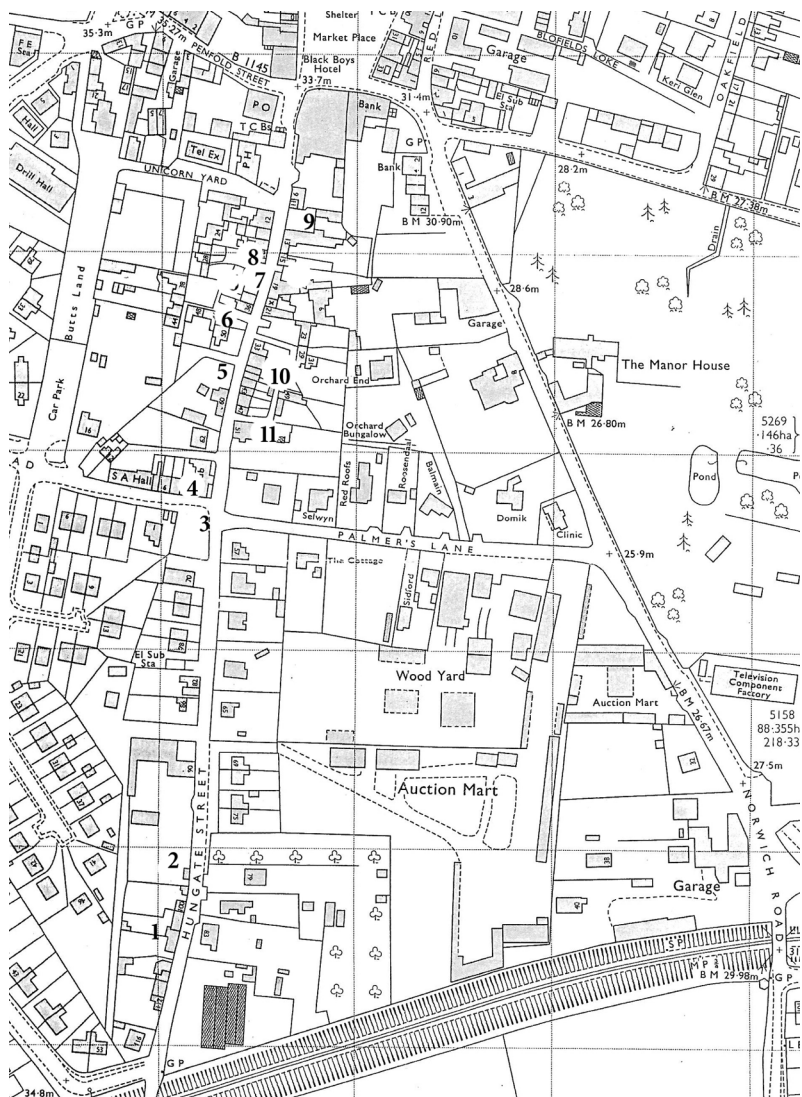
If you've wondered why this path is called Marriott's Way, it's named for William Marriott who was Chief Engineer and Manager of the Midland and Great Northern Railway (MG&N) for 41 years. The MG&N was a very rural network affectionately known as the 'Muddle and Go Nowhere' line. If you look at Marriott's Way on a map, you'll see it wanders off to Reepham and Themelthorpe before almost doubling back on itself to head south for Norwich. If you want to come back another day you could walk or cycle along Marriott's Way for 26 miles all the way to Norwich. But on this walk, you only go to the next exit, by the bridge.

Go along Marriott's Way and immediately after passing under the bridge, go up the ramp on the right and stop at the top of the ramp.

Hungate (south to north)

Hungate used to be the main road between Norwich and Aylsham. The Norwich road that we use these days developed as the main road after the late 18th century with the freeing up of land held by the Repton and Bulwer families and the turnpiking of the 'new' Norwich road.

This is where Aylsham used to end. So this was known as Hungate End. South of the junction of Yaxley's Lane and Hungate End was open land known



Hungate Street from mid-20 century OS map. 1 Trafalgar Yard, formerly Hungate Farm; 2 Nos 82–84; 3 car park, formerly Swan Inn; 4 Ex-Servicemen's Club, formerly Collegiate House; 5 Hungate Surgery; 6 formerly Peck's messuage; 7 formerly Chosells; 8 Unicorn; 9 Norfolk House; 10 Nos 33–35, including Half Moon Inn and Percy's Cottage; 11 Gothic House.

Adapted from 1927 Ordnance Survey Map.

as Market Field. There were no houses there until at least the 1880s. And that part of the road wasn't known as Hungate but as Spa Lane or Back Lane. Yaxley's Lane joined Hungate a little further south than currently. The sharp bend was installed to accommodate the railway.

The name Hungate Street is a bit odd. The word 'gate' derives from the Old Norse 'gat' which means road or street. So Hungate Street shouldn't have the 'street' but just be called 'Hungate'. The 'Hun' part is usually from the Old Norse 'hundr' meaning dog or hound. Where you find 'Hungates' in other large places – such as York – it makes sense that it's a 'dog street' as it might be where a king or bishop kept hounds, or it could be where there were butchers and the waste meat attracted packs of dogs. But it doesn't make sense in a smaller town or village. So, perhaps 'Hun' derives from the Old Norse usage meaning a foul or dirty place? Which means our Hungate means 'dirty street'. Interestingly, there are records from the early 17th century referring to the 'ladies of the night' in Hungate.

But let's start to look at some buildings. In a road that's probably called 'dirty street' it's reasonable to expect that this won't be the place to find grand houses. Often, where there's a single property it may have been divided into tenements for multiple occupation. And who owned the buildings? Before the establishment of the Duchy of Lancaster, Aylsham had been split into four manors, with what became known as Aylsham Lancaster (later controlled by the Duchy) being by far the largest. The others were: Vicarage; Sexton's (later Wood) and Bolwick Hall. Most of the land around Hungate was owned by Aylsham Lancaster and Vicarage. Most property wasn't freehold, but held by the lords of the manors to convey by inheritance, sale or mortgage with the transaction recorded in the relevant manor court and a fee paid to the lord. The Vicarage properties are mostly at this end of Hungate.

The properties are from different centuries. Let's go and look to see if it's possible to tell which are the oldest. Looking at bricks might give some clues.

Turn left up Hungate and stop opposite the old Hungate farm site - now a row of modern terraced houses known as Trafalgar Yard. Standing on the pavement, look across the road to the wall immediately to the right of the modern houses.

The reason for stopping here is because there's an interesting variety of how bricks are laid. Can you see three completely different patterns? The one on the left is called stretcher bond because you only see the long side (the stretcher) of the brick. I'll mention that bond again, further along Hungate. On the far right is header bond which is usually used for curved walls. In the middle is English bond. English bond is the oldest brick bond. Very fashionable

in the 16th century. Very, very, strong. It's still used today in things like embankments and bridges. Brick itself was fashionable in the 16th century – all you have to do is think of Hampton Court – a palace – built in 1514 – of brick.

The Romans brought brick-making to England. There were hundreds of Roman brick kilns around Brampton – the river was a sea-going port and water was the main transport system. You can't see the brick kilns, they've all been ploughed over, but they are visible on aerial photographs. After the Romans left England, the art of brick making gradually declined over the next 500 years and was then forgotten. Until the import of Flemish bricks revived the interest and manufacture started again in England. Especially in East Anglia. In 1547 50% of all the brick buildings in England were in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. It's not really surprising as there's no stone to build with, here – and Norfolk was a wealthy county so, of course, people here would want what was in fashion. Remember, London was the most important city in England, Norwich the second most important. Trade went eastwards, not west, to America. Columbus landed in America in 1492. It was a while before trade built up enough to shift the balance to the west of England.

Before leaving this part of Hungate, take a look at something that, these days, seems very insignificant. There is a small piece of original brick wall that could be 15th or 16th century. Look over the stretcher bond wall to the white painted wall. It's a fragment of a tiny tenement that used to be in the Vicarage manor.

Continue walking towards the Market Place to number 86, 84 and 82 Hungate. This is a row of white painted cottages on your left.

All the houses are painted white. They weren't built at the same time - look at the roof line and the offset of the front wall. Which one was built first? If you look at the bricks on 82 there's a diagonal line, skintling, on the brick and on 84 it's horizontal and on 86 it's not there at all.

The mark, the skintling, happens when bricks are made. The clay and sand mix is poured into a mould where it 'sets'. It's turned out of the mould and stacked and left to dry for a couple of weeks before it's fired. The skintling happens when the unfired bricks are stacked. The moist clay mix is 'squeezed' by the other bricks in the stack. The line of the skintling shows how the bricks were stacked. Skintlings probably date back to the 15th century when the stacking of bricks left diagonal marks. Horizontal skintlings usually date from about 1770 when the method of stacking was changed. Of course, bricks are often recycled, so the age of the brick doesn't always reflect the age of the building. But it can indicate that a building is unlikely to have been built

before a certain date.

With these three houses, the one with the diagonal skintling (number 82) was probably built first, then number 84 (horizontal skintling) then number 86 (no skintling). But the paper records suggest it was 84 that was first. And if you look at it, 84 is the one that stands forward, with 82 seemingly attached to it. So, who knows? The only thing that's definite is that number 86 is more recent than the other two.

Why don't bricks still have skintlings? In the 18th century bricks started to have 'frogs' or indentations in them and each brick weighed less so there was less pressure during stacking. Folk lore suggests that some frogs were trapped in the bricks during manufacture and it was noticed that these bricks, which had indentations where the frogs had been, needed less mortar to stick the bricks together. More probably it is an analogy to the cartilaginous frog in a horse's foot. In 1722 George I standardised the size of brick moulds and manufacturers had their own design of 'frog'. This means that if you look at an individual Georgian brick you can often identify the brickmaker by his frog – rather like a hallmark on gold or silver.

Now continue towards the Market Place, stopping at the car park at the junction of Mill Road and Hungate.

You are standing on the site of a pub that was demolished in 1969. It was The Swan. There have been buildings on this site since at least 1641. By 1837, when the land was owned by Robert Beasy, there were thirteen dwellings with yards to the west of the Swan. These were known as Beasy's Rookery and he let them to tenants, the poorest of the Aylsham residents, who brought up families in cramped conditions. The Rookery is long gone – it was where the bungalows now are in Swan Close. In 1839 one of the occupants (James Dadley) ran a beerhouse which became the Swan. It wasn't the first pub of that name. There was a White Swan in Millgate in the late 17th century. The Swan that stood here was the nearest public house to the Aylsham South Railway Station (now known as Bure Valley Railway) and was patronised by many railway employees in their off duty hours and was the venue for many meetings of the National Union of Railwaymen. It was described as a red brick building with a pantile roof, two storeys in height with attic rooms above. By the late 1800s there were two bars. One was a Smoke Room and the other a Public Bar. Both were furnished with wooden benches and separate tables. Beer was served from barrels that were brought up from an underground cellar. In a yard outside there was a skittle ground, outbuildings, a garden and a well with ropes, buckets and winding gear that supplied the inn with water. However, as you've

heard, Aylsham South closed to passenger traffic in 1952, which will have affected trade at the Swan.

Now look across Mill Road to what is now the Ex-Servicemen's Club. Its name is Collegiate House. It became known as this in the 1850's when it was used as a school. There's an excellent history of this site in William Vaughan-Lewis' book – but I'm just going to pick out some of the bits I like the best.

By 1856 George Agar had established a private school here with diocesan support and overseen by a committee headed by the vicar, Edmund Telfer Yates. The 1856 directory describes it as the Diocesan School and he was plain George Agar. By 1858 he described himself as LLD, implying a higher university degree and he was now Master of the Collegiate School. A letter survives in the papers of Reverend James Bulwer, the Manor House Aylsham and Hunworth Rectory, from August that same year which sheds light on Agar and his school. A gentleman in Kent, whose neighbour had been offered access to a place for his son, wrote to Bulwer to ask if the 'St. Michael's Collegiate School' was respectable; he thought a direct approach to Yates (the committee chairman) would be too delicate. Bulwer said that it was respectable but only after writing that 'Dr Agar is a popular master' of pupils who mostly came from some distance. 'Moral and religious teaching' were clearly not high on the agenda; Bulwer noted that 'the establishment is conducted on the plan of certain schools of which we read in modern novels'. Agar taught everything with just the assistance of a German who taught modern languages. 'When he first came to the school he was plain Mr Agar but very soon dubbed himself Doctor. ... When Mr Yates asked about it the answer was that the degree was conferred by a German university'. The school 'has succeeded through a system of puffing'.

Starling, in his entertaining memoirs of Aylsham, adds that Agar became obsessed with the design of a machine to replace the plough. The newspapers covered the story in depth in 1863 and 1864; Agar was bankrupted by this failed obsession, left Aylsham and failed to appear at meetings of creditors. His school effects were sold to pay part of the debts from the 'digger' and a fire at Collegiate School was noted although later he seems to have been cleared of any allegation of deliberate arson.

The later history of the site has not been researched but in due course the rear part, no doubt once the schoolrooms, became the Salvation Army Barracks and the whole site is still shared by the SA and the British Legion. And, because I've been mentioning brick – just take a good look at the length of the wall and you'll see the changes in the brick – and bricked up features such as the archway.

Take care as you cross the road and go into Hungate. There are no pavements.

It's not pedestrianised, so be careful. But before you head for the relative safety of a car park, stop and take a brief look at the front of Collegiate House. Can you spot the join? Can you see that the right hand bay is an addition? Look at the windows. They're not quite in line, are they?

And a bit more about bricks. I promise this is the last mention. Look at the bricks on the surgery and the house on its left (between the surgery and Collegiate House). Which one do you like the best? The one on the left is probably a cavity wall – two skins with a gap in between. Cavity walls gained widespread use from the 1920s. And from then on most houses were built with stretcher bond – which I think is monotonous and boring.

The next stop is at the doctor's surgery – you can get off the road by using their car park.

If you look behind the patients' car park, you'll see another car park (a public one). This is the Buttlands. It's a long, narrow strip running parallel to Hungate. It's where archery used to be practised. In the 1600s it was a very popular, competitive, sport. Probably as popular as football is today. It wasn't training for war because firearms and cannon had been developed and, quite frankly, a bow and arrow wasn't much of a defence against a cannon! Archers stood and shot at small targets, large targets, even moving targets. It was very skilful and relatively cheap. Well, cheaper than other popular sports such as jousting or horse-racing mainly because no horse was needed!

But back to the houses along the road. Where you're standing, was part of Peck's messuage – a messuage is a dwelling house with outbuildings and land assigned to its use. I'll mention more about Peck's when we're a little further along the road. As you can see, all those buildings have long gone and the very useful doctor's surgery is here instead.

Across the road is the Gothic House, built in 1886. Again, there's a detailed history of the area in William Vaughan-Lewis's book. It's a complex history because the land was part Aylsham Manor, part Vicarage. And it was a large site with several small dwellings and a road.

Looking to the left is number 35, Percy's Cottage. This half timbered cottage belonged to the manor of Aylsham Lancaster. It's listed as tithe number 155 in the 1622 survey made for Sir Henry Hobart in his assessment of manors to acquire.

This part of the street was full of houses. By 1622 there wasn't much farmland along here. You have to remember, it was the main road. Imagine the hustle and bustle as the horses, coaches and pedestrians made their way along the narrow street. The houses would have been half timbered – like Percy's Cottage

– and would probably have been jettied – that’s the overhang at first floor. You can get a closer look at Percy’s Cottage as you make your way to number 36. The old studwork may be part of the original Hobbes mansion.

Stop by white gable on left

This is Peck’s message. This is a complex, large site. It was all once the property of the Peck family who were active in the first half of the 16th century. By the 1640s it was owned by a family called Heylock and in 1665 the property was split between the heirs of two Heylock daughters. The court book descriptions of the two parts of the Heylock legacy make it clear that the unusual strong diagonal boundary line dividing tithe 118 from 125-6 was ‘Chapman’s Lane’, still in use in the 17th century and particularly important for access to the 119-121 properties. It is clear that this was a long-standing short-cut from the Cawston Road to the Market Place. Chapman might have been for a surname but could equally stem from the old word for a minor, often itinerant, trader. It is not known when this route was stopped up and absorbed into the premises on either side.

A very attractive feature is the Dutch, or Flemish, gable. The Dutch gable was a notable feature of the Renaissance architecture which spread to northern Europe from the Low Countries, arriving in Britain during the latter part of the 16th century. This one was built approximately between 1680 and 1730. It’s part of Peck’s message – but not the site of the main house.

Now move on a little bit to the area on the left between number 32 and number 18.

Opposite you is what used to be the Half Moon Inn. By the early 17th century this site already featured tenements in multiple ownership which were consolidated into one site by James Gogle. James Gogle held various other properties at different times and seems to have been a senior tradesman, possibly an innkeeper, but his exact occupation has not been found. I have described the house as Half Moon Inn. In fact, it probably never was an inn – an inn provides accommodation for travellers (food, stables, rooms, etc). In 1695 the court book records that a chap called Pescod had it and in that court book, and in all earlier court book entries, the Half Moon name is not used. However, it might have been a beerhouse for a short while. The poor rate payments support the view that this property had already ceased to trade as a beerhouse certainly by the late 1720s but probably earlier. The evidence for this is that in 1713 the tenant paid the tiny cottage-level poor rate of 2d, much less than the usual 6d or 1s for a pub. For those of you who don’t remember

pre-decimal currency, 6d (six pence) is the equivalent of 2½p and 1s (one shilling) is now 5p.

By 1768 Ursula Greenwood, a widow, was the owner and it was listed at that time as a dwelling house, brewhouse and bakehouse. Over the years it changed hands a few times and in 1879, the Half Moon bakery – note, bakery, not beerhouse or inn – was purchased by a miller, Henry Gardener Hart who then sold the lease to Robert Manthorpe of Cawston. At this time the premises were occupied by Thomas Howe, a baker and corn chandler, who remained there until 1892. In 1889 Robert Manthorpe sold the Half Moon bakery to Morgan's Brewery. This brewery company supported the bakery and used it as an outlet for their bottled beers; it was leased to John Postle in 1900. It continued as a Postle family business until 1959 when it closed.

Most of the area you're standing in used to be in Chosell's messuage but was split up into lots of smaller parcels of land. By the mid 19th century the main owners Charles Rice Wade (a builder) and John Horstead were cramming as many buildings as possible on to the site. For example, a barn was converted into five or six small tenements.

Continue to walk towards the Market Place to stop at The Unicorn, but take a look on your left as you go – the half timbered house at no 16 is probably part of Chosell's house.

Now take a look at the Unicorn. It's hard to believe, but one of Aylsham's oldest buildings is concealed within this building. It's recorded that it was bought in 1586 by Alice Haund. In the 1622 survey it was the property of Simon Levrinton. He bought the main 10 bay inn site and its yards, buildings and three roods (three quarters of an acre) of land with a barn on it in 1605 and added a further three bay range in 1618. The description suggests the site already included the land that was later the bowling green; might this large site already have been an inn? Remember, this was the main road. All the traffic would pass here, on its way into the Market Place. An ideal place for an inn. In the 1600s it was a small timber-framed rectangular building on two floors with small windows and a thatched roof. Obviously, it has expanded over the years and, as well as new extensions, it incorporates cottages which were close to the inn on the left hand side. It's a pub that has kept up with the times. It used to have a bowling green – now the site for two houses. In 1914 a large marquee was set up on the bowling green and was used as the first cinema in Aylsham. The programme consisted of a film, a serial and Pathé Gazette News. The Unicorn was the first pub in Aylsham to install a juke box, a one arm bandit and a pin ball machine. If you go into the pub, you can get a

good pint and a meal – but don't expect to see much of its history, it's mainly hidden in the walls of this Grade II listed building.

I said this was the ideal place for an inn. Well, the Unicorn wasn't the only place you could get a drink. Believe it or not, the Kebab House on the other side of the road used to be an inn. In the 17th century it was The Red Lion. It's named as such in the 1653 and 1685 court books. Yes, this was the original Red Lion – before it moved to its site on Red Lion Street. And what's more, the Gaol used to be around here, too. It's listed as being in the area in 1611. But there's no obvious trace of it remaining.

I've sort of saved the best to last. The grandest of the houses along Hungate is Norfolk House. This listed as grade II 18th century. However, photos in the Town Archives show that when renovation work was undertaken and the brickwork was visible, there was evidence of 'Tudor' diaper pattern. Diaper is the diamond pattern of blue bricks. The blue bricks are the ones that were at the outer edge of the kiln and subjected to the greatest heat. The heat causes the silica to melt, resulting in a glazed effect. I've just realised that I promised not to mention bricks again – and I have. However, I did refrain from mentioning the skintling on the bricks of the Unicorn...

Back to Norfolk House. Certainly by the 18th century it was a high status house. In 1764 it was bought by John Repton (father of Humphry the landscape designer) and was briefly home to attorney John Adey who later married Repton's daughter Dorothy.

This is where this walk ends. If you want to find some more self-guided walks, pick up a free copy of 'Heritage Trails' from the Heritage Centre, in St. Michael's Churchyard.

Bibliography

- Aylsham Local History Society (1988). *Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century*. Poppyland Publishing.
- Aylsham Local History Society (1995). *A Backwards Glance*. Crowes of Norwich.
- Gale, E. (2001). *Aylsham Inns and Public Houses – a history*. Aylsham Local History Society.
- Pevsner, N. (1997). *The Buildings of England. Norfolk 1: Norwich and Northeast*. Yale University Press
- Sapwell, J. (1960). *A History of Aylsham*. The Rigby Printing Company, Norwich.
- Vaughan-Lewis W. & M. (2014). *Aylsham: A Nest of Lawyers*. Itteringham History.
- Vaughan-Lewis W. & M. (2014). *Aylsham: Hungate 1622-1840, a Norfolk Streetscape*. Itteringham History

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following for additional information: Jayne Andrew (Heritage Centre); Andrew Barnes (Bure Valley Railway); Jim Pannell (Aylsham Local History Society); William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis (historians)

Nefarious doings – with disastrous consequences
Geoffrey Nobbs

Norfolk News 4th July 1846



George Bircham, aged 54; William Bircham, aged 21; John Bircham, aged 26; Benjamin Mayes, aged 52; John Mayes, aged 19; and William Neave, aged 27; stood charged with having stolen from a wherry in the Bure, on the 13th of March last, at Horstead, Norfolk, about two gallons of Sherry Wine, value 20s, the property of James Spanton of Aylsham: charged also with having stolen at the same time and place about ten pounds weight of Sugar, value 4s, & four pounds of raisins, value 2s, the property of Robert Hubbard, grocer, of

Aylsham.

Mr. Evans and Mr. Palmer appeared for the prosecution; and Mr. Carlos Cooper and Mr. Druery for the defence.

It appeared that John Bircham, who was master of a wherry, called the *Prince of Wales*, the property of Messrs. Colman and Soames, of Aylsham, had received on board, at Yarmouth, on the 12th of March last, two hogsheads of wine, marked 42 and 45, consigned to Mr. Spanton; and one hogshead of sugar, and several cases of raisins, addressed to Mr. Hubbard.

Bircham having proceeded as far as Horstead Beck lay to on the 13th, along with three other wherries, the masters and men of whom he invited to a sip. They all got into the hold, and, by means of a reed or quill, drank from the bung-hole, at the same time a quantity was taken out and put in a jug. The sugar hogshead was also defrauded of some of its contents; and likewise one of the cases of raisins. Wenn, one of the persons engaged in this nefarious proceeding, drank so much of the wine, that he became ill, and died the next day. This circumstance led to a suspicion of the dishonesty of Bircham; and, as the hogshead of wine, marked 45, when drawn off, contained but fifty-four gallons instead of fifty-six, the number returned by the excise officer, and as Mr. Hubbard's assistant found that his hogshead of sugar weighed only 15 cwt. 3 qrs. instead of 15 cwt. 3 qrs. and 9 lbs.; and, as one of the boxes of raisins bore marks of having been opened, Mr. Spanton and Mr. Hubbard had the house of John Bircham searched, when there was found a quantity of raisins and some sugar, which corresponded with those lately received by the *Prince of Wales*.

Mr Spanton deposed to having received the two hogsheads of wine, on the 16th of March, that marked 45 being deficient two gallons of the returned quantity. He was at home when the wine was received, and he had it immediately drawn off in his presence, so that none of his servants could have got to it.

James Roche, landing waiter at Yarmouth, identified the Custom House document, which declared the quantity in each hogshead. He did not take the bungs out, nor put them in again, it was none of his business, that was the cooper's. (This gentleman seemed quite indignant at being asked by Mr. Cooper if he had not put the bungs in again, which induced the learned Counsel to observe that excise officers were like the Hindoos, of different castes, and it was beneath the dignity of one to lay his finger to the work that belonged to another sphere.)

William Diver Swann, warehouseman to the Norfolk Steam Company, received the sugar and raisins in good condition externally, from the *Ailsa Craig*, and shipped them on board Bircham's wherry uninjured.

William Page, assistant to Mr. Hubbard, grocer, Aylsham, deposed to the deficiency in the sugar and raisins, and identified the parcels produced by policeman Eades, taken by him from Bircham's residence. The sugar was in "pieces" and the raisins were "undressed", besides in Aylsham none of the same sort (Elmer) were at the time to be found.

Edward Wenn, a boy 12 years old, son to the person mentioned above, deposed to the fact of the six prisoners, with William Hammond, George Hammond, the deceased Wenn, and witness, having drank from the hogshead, by means of a reed, at Horstead Beck, on Friday, 13th of March last. He took out some sugar from the hogshead with his hand, the tin on the top being raised up. Neave also got up some sugar with the bowl of a pipe. When witness went into the cabin he saw a jug of wine there, of which his father, William Neave, and John Bircham drank. His father died the next day. William and George Hammond corroborated the facts spoken to by the above witness.

Mr. Druery and Mr. Cooper addressed the jury, the former for the Birchams, and the latter for the Mayes. Neave was undefended. The following persons then came forward to speak as to the good character of the prisoners. Mr. William Wenn, merchant, Smallborough, for the Mayes and Neave; he would entrust the elder Mayes with thousands. They were all known to him as trustworthy persons.

By Mr. Evans – The Mayes were on board the *Venus*, Neave was in the *Lively*, and both wherries were to pass East Ruston on the day in question.

Mr. Thomas Harris, farmer, Attleborough, bore a high and unqualified testimony to the industry and honesty of the Mayes, (especially the elder, whom he had known for forty years) and also Neave.

Mr. Robert Buffin, farmer, Holding, spoke in high terms of Neave, whom he had known for ten years.

Mr. John Clark, corn merchant, Ludham, appeared for the Mayes, Neave, and the two elder Birchams.

Mr. John Spinks spoke to the character of John Bircham.

The jury having heard the Chairman's observations on the evidence and addresses of Counsel, consulted for a few seconds, and then returned a verdict of guilty against all the prisoners. The sentence of John Bircham, to whom the property was entrusted, (he being master of the wherry) and without whose sanction the robbery could not have been committed, and in whose home portions of the goods were found, was four months' imprisonment and hard labour, the three last days being solitary confinement. The other five were sentenced each to six weeks' imprisonment and hard labour, the three last days solitary confinement.

A Celebration in memory of Chris Barringer who died in June 2013

Geoff Gale

Chris Barringer was the quietly encouraging voice behind so many local history societies in Norfolk. The Aylsham Society was not the only history group to have benefited from his advice in the early days of its formation, during that same period he had been a voice of encouragement to many other emerging societies.

When Cambridge University's extramural studies moved to UEA he became increasingly active locally both lecturing and teaching usually in connection with Wensum Lodge. His other great interest was with the preservation of nearby Dragon Hall. Eventually he became president of the Norfolk and Norwich Heritage Trust, Norwich Archaeological Society and in due course the president of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society. He wrote a number of books about Norfolk and encouraged local societies to publish their own local research. "Why indeed should all this local knowledge be lost".

It was not therefore unexpected that Norfolk Archaeological & Research Group (NARG) should have mounted such a celebration to his memory, to his achievements and work. This Barringer remembrance was held at the Thomas Paine Centre at the UEA in May. The appropriately named building comfortably accommodated the two hundred people who were able to attend, and NARG made a note of the many others unable to be there.

It had been hoped to launch the last book Chris had written *Norfolk : A History* during this gathering. Unfortunately a hiccup in the printer's schedule had caused the publication to be delayed. However, this unfortunate delay ensures there will be an eager readership awaiting its publication.

The second part of this Barringer Celebration was an illustrated lecture by Chris's nephew Tim Barringer, a Professor at Yale University, who talked on the 'Life and Landscape of the Norfolk Broads'. The lecture drew an interesting comparison between the rural music of Vaughan Williams, and the labouring poor who are used in so many of Emerson's photographs of the Broads. They were then contrasted with the real poverty of the rural poor as depicted by so many local painters. Emerson's photographs are frequently romantic in their depictions of the lives of the rural worker. The reed cutters and labourers so photographically posed according to the conventions of the time were quite untrue, their squalid living and working conditions were frequently revealed when compared with the paintings of the workers and the inevitable poverty of their lives. All of these tragedies compare with the romantic imagery of the rural worker, surrounded with the cry of a 'Lark Ascending'.

BOOK NEWS

Two handsome and scholarly new titles by ALHS members William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis:

(right) A study of the wide net works of Aylsham lawyers, their families and clients, and
(below) A portrait of one historic street in the town: Hungate

Both books are reviewed in this journal. They are a must for anyone interested in the history of the Aylsham area in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries

Aylsham: A Nest of Norfolk Lawyers



William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis

Aylsham: Hungate 1622-1840, A Norfolk Streetscape



William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis

Purchasing details

ALHS members can order by e-mail direct from the authors (vaughan-lewis@tiscali.co.uk) at the special price of £20 for both titles (with personal collection at meetings or from their home at Itteringham) or £24 if posted. Cheques are payable to William Vaughan-Lewis.

This offer is a saving of £15 off the local bookshop prices

TWO BOOK REVIEWS

William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis's new studies of Aylsham, published in September 2014, are reviewed by Margaret Bird:

Aylsham: A Nest of Norfolk Lawyers (Itteringham History, 2014); ISBN 978-0-9561795-3-1, A4 format paperback, printed by Barnwell Print, Aylsham, xvii pages and 322 pages, colour and b/w illustrations, family trees, glossary, bibliography and two indexes

We are lucky to have William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis. 'We' encompasses not only everyone in this society and in the Aylsham area, but all those with an interest in the area's history. These days, as we know from correspondents researching the past who send queries to the society, it is a worldwide community of scholars and enthusiasts. This book will prove absorbing for them all – and will answer many of their questions.

William and Maggie carefully point out this is *not* a history of the town. But their choice of topic is so all-embracing that it enables much of Aylsham's history in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, the principal period covered, to be reconstructed. The work of lawyers – attorneys-at-law and solicitors principally, rather than barristers – permeated most branches of the town's life. These men of business (they are all men), as they are presented in the opening chapter covering the years from 1400, stretched their tentacles not only into representing their clients in legal matters, but into property development and money lending. They were bankers, personal advisers, manorial stewards, parish officers, justices of the peace and much more. Connectivity is the theme of this study: the connections of the lawyers themselves, in their family ties and their clients; and the connections which the authors' researches have unearthed and which will enrich the work of others in the field.

The lawyers' client base extended far beyond Aylsham. Also their family networks widened as they secured new patronage and property through marriage and even godparental bonds. Very many of the great houses of Aylsham were built by lawyers, and these men shaped the town both physically and intellectually. They gave it leadership. In this Aylsham differed from many other comparable centres, where merchants, manufacturers and shopkeepers were to the fore. The authors point out that Aylsham had a larger number of prominent lawyers per head of population than can be found in most of the county's towns. The reasons are not always clear, but the presence of great estates, such as Gunton, Felbrigg, Blickling, Wolterton and Mannington,

would have enabled a handful of legal advisers to earn a living at any one time.

The town's location at the heart of north-east Norfolk helped; also, from 1797, its straddling of a turnpike road. Even before the turnpike, travellers would have bated their horses and themselves at the town-centre inns. And so the 'nest of lawyers' swelled. Where the cloth trade had predominated in the past at Aylsham it was now the turn of the money men. Aylsham's 'nest', the chief haunt of the lawyers, lay to the north-west of the town along the Blickling road, being centred on The Knoll, West Lodge and the Old Hall. In fact the ancient market place adjoined the Old Hall to the south until it migrated to its present location south-east of the church. A map helpfully accompanies this part of the tale.

In 2010 a former editor of this journal, Tom Mollard, lamented in his review of one of the authors' earlier studies, on *Itteringham*, that 'no comparable work exists for our own part of the county' (*ALHS journal*, vol. 8, no. 10, Dec. 2010, p. 314; it was this review which introduced me to William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis's books). Now they have surpassed even Tom Mollard's high expectations. Breadth, depth, rigour: all are to the fore. The text could be tough going were it not for the copious illustrations, very many of them in colour, which punctuate the prose and provide the necessary visual impact. For these men were builders. In order to present the history of the houses with whose facades we are so familiar the authors had the fun of interviewing a great number of householders and of pottering with their camera into gardens and outhouses. Their zest for their task shines through their work, and gives vitality to what in other hands could become a dry, antiquarian-style narrative.

There is a perhaps surprising undercurrent of raciness in their tale, and when I called to collect my copies of the two books Maggie and William drew attention to the gossipy side of Aylsham life two and three centuries ago. If the sober wigs and swagger coats of their principal men encourage us to think in terms of clipped speech, formal manners and restrained lifestyles we would be wrong. Some were hot-blooded, impetuous souls, quick to fall out with family and perpetuate their rancour in their wills and testaments. This book points in places to chaotic lives running out of control.

Some of the impressive houses were built for the lawyers' mistresses and the offspring they had in their 'second' families. One prominent lawyer, George Hunt Holley, built Blickling Lodge probably to accommodate his growing family by his mistress Mary Dunham; West Lodge had been built twenty years earlier for Viscount Townshend's mistress Elizabeth Walker. In 1815, when he was 31 years old, William Repton (son of Humphry and the town's leading lawyer for decades) had an illegitimate daughter Helen – never acknowledged publicly – at whose baptism at Great Yarmouth he was entered as a sailor (!).

It is Helen's husband, the attorney William Henry Scott, later Repton's partner, who is commemorated alongside William Repton on Humphry Repton's great monument against the south-east corner of Aylsham Church. As far as I know, the Vaughan-Lewises are the first to make this family connection.

The names featured, of persons and places, will be familiar to many of us researching Aylsham's past. They now suddenly spring off the page, in the flesh, in unexpected ways. To clinch these identifications William and Maggie journeyed across the county, the present Marquess Townshend giving them access to the Raynham papers. The private archives at Holkham and Wolterton yielded further nuggets.

As well as providing a great number of fresh insights the authors dispel some long-standing myths. Their forensic approach to the evidence gives credibility; their terrier-like persistence enables them to surmount the many obstacles which have caused earlier researchers to be deceived. The biggest myth is that Aylsham Lancaster, by far the largest manor and occupying the town centre, had a manor house. The house which goes by that name on the Norwich road is more properly called Great Edmonds.

A sadness running through the book is the precarious hold on life of even the well-to-do professional class. Hopes and ambitions soared, only to be dashed as death claimed young lives. Reliance on family and client networks gave some reassurance as business foundations toppled under pressure of debt and premature death: securing the succession could prove a challenge even for couples with children. A strong narrative element enlivens the tale, people and places being granted equal weight.

It is the way the authors monitor the capillary action of the networks across Norfolk and beyond that make their text so valuable. Their findings answer some queries in my own work on the diary of the brewer's wife Mary Hardy. These range from a Chancery case concerning a young relative of the Holt attorney Edmund Jewell, by name Dolly Chicheley of Great Yarmouth, to the Calvinistic Methodist preacher and part-time legal adviser, scrivener, school-master and money lender Thomas Mendham of Briston. The excise service dominated eighteenth-century manufacturers' lives, and the twin heads of the county's Excise, the Collector of Norwich John Repton senior, covering the eastern half, and Cooke Watson for the western half both make appearances.

The authors helpfully alert their readers to traps for the unwary. An interesting one is the prevalence of gravelkind as a local manorial custom, whereby the sons inherited equally; in the absence of sons the daughters inherited equally. Researchers may expect to find male primogeniture in force, but this was not the case. In central Norfolk, where I have been researching the manor court books, another form of inheritance was

customary. This was a mixture of partible inheritance, whereby all the sons and daughters got a share of the family wealth, and male ultimogeniture, where the main estate or asset (such as the family shop or maltings) went to the youngest son. The *Nest of Lawyers* explains gravelkind and a host of other terms, and means we can approach the sources with more confidence for our own work; I particularly appreciated this educative element.

The Vaughan-Lewises wield an authoritative hand when it comes to the sources. Maggie's former post as County Archivist of Surrey means that the mediaeval and sixteenth-century hand and the use of Latin, with bewildering contractions, hold no terrors for her. For the first time the court books of all four of Aylsham's manors, now all held in the Norfolk Record Office, have been studied in depth and the myriad of copyhold transactions woven into the fabric of this story. The National Archives at Kew, together with maps there and in the Aylsham town archives, supplement the manorial sources. Interviews and topographical explorations complete the picture: there is no substitute for tramping the ground. To appreciate the sources fully the reader needs to consult the comments accompanying the citations, arranged as endnotes to individual chapters. These endnotes are of great value and should not be overlooked. Personally I should have wished for even more amplification of some of the citations, where page number, folio number or date of entry are sometimes omitted; the references to websites at times lack precision too, as with the Clergy of the Church of England database.

Such a long text requires a good index, and the authors give us two. The first relates to the houses, institutions and streets of Aylsham; the second to all the rest, covering people and also places other than Aylsham. Individual lawyers (such as John Adey) are thus classed under the second index, whereas their houses (such as Norfolk House) are likely to be in the first. There are 35 A4 columns of index in total.

The indexes are not the only tool which makes this book easy to navigate. The 22 chapters provide clear divisions built around chronology and topography, and the side headings are extremely useful. The illustrations always relate directly to the accompanying text. The cover illustration of an Aylsham panorama of the 1830s or 1840s, viewed from the Manor fields, is a rarely seen watercolour and is explained and interpreted in detail in the book. Finally Barnwell Print have done a first-class job. The supple, coated art paper produces image reproduction of the finest quality, a feature all too rare in many scholarly works these days when even Yale University Press are content to use flimsy paper and to foist inky or insipid artwork on their readers. This book will not fade or turn yellow with the years.

As readers of this journal will know, the authors take their history either at

a canter or at the gallop. Only occasionally do they draw in the reins to look across the landscape and give us their reflections. I would have liked to see more such breathing spaces in the spirited narrative as their command of the subject is immense and they write with authority, but they concentrate their focus on the careers, families, properties and client base of the lawyers. Readers wishing to learn of the casework, which in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries exposed these overworked men to a variety of contemporary developments (notably enclosures, turnpikes and the navigation), will find these subjects touched on only tangentially. The ecclesiastical, retail, commercial and manufacturing life of the town plays little part in the authors' tale, although the lawyers played a major role in servicing all these aspects.

One of the many strengths of this study is that it provides numerous anchor points in Aylsham's past. The scholarship on which the research is based is as solid as any can be, the authors rightly pointing out that cautionary adverbs such as 'probably' and 'possibly' have to be employed where speculation (invariably declared as such) takes over from evidence-based statements of fact. On closing its pages I found myself writing up screeds of notes which shed light on my own research. Others may well do the same. Even if not, this book remains a must-buy for all those interested in the forces shaping the Aylsham we know today.

Aylsham: Hungate 1622–1840, A Norfolk Streetscape (Itteringham History, 2014);

ISBN 978-0-9561795-4-8, A4 format paperback, printed by Barnwell Print, Aylsham, 56 pages, colour illustrations throughout, no index

This is an unusual and cleverly executed book. It deserves to become a model for any study of an urban street. By plotting Hungate's history house by house and by comparing the look of each property over the centuries with what is seen today the authors William and Maggie Vaughan-Lewis throw light on the past and interpret the present. As though engaged in an archaeological dig they uncover layer upon layer of concealed evidence. The interweaving of the deeds, as revealed in the manor court books for Aylsham Lancaster and Aylsham Vicarage from the sixteenth century to the early twentieth, with high-quality maps and with photographs taken by the authors in 2014 produces a seamless blending of documentary evidence with the standing remains. The book is visually satisfying as a result, and it is a pleasure to turn the pages.

Colour illustrations are cut into the text beside beautifully clear snippets,

property by property, from the tithe map of 1839–40 and the map of 1910 for what became known as Lloyd George's 'Second Domesday'. Where the sources permit, the authors have woven the story of each house over the centuries into narratives of the householders' lives. Hungate, as one of the principal thoroughfares, attracted commercial enterprises, and the study gives invaluable insight into the 'lost' premises whose role in the town's life seems to have been forgotten. One alehouse, the Red Lion, operated in Hungate until 1702 or later, before another of that name emerged in Red Lion Street; by contrast the White Swan in Millgate predated the Swan in Hungate. Thus Elizabeth Gale's work on Aylsham's inns and public houses is expanded and some gaps plugged.

As with their other studies, the authors unravel a number of mysteries and alert us to traps. House names and road names changed surprisingly rapidly. The chronicling of these changes will help prevent howlers in years to come. We need this book to understand the history of *two* gaols in Aylsham: the Old Gaol in Hungate, and the later Bridewell at the junction of the Burgh and Norwich roads. The story of St Michael's Collegiate School, in a handsome Georgian building with a projecting semi-circular Doric porch (the street not having much claim to fine architecture), is told with verve. The Revd James Bulwer considered it in 1858 an inferior establishment, which 'has succeeded through a system of puffing'. It would not be the first.

All history is detective work, but unravelling the complexities of this street has brought out the Holmesian powers of the authors even more powerfully than usual. As with most urban settings, and especially in the case of Norwich, the street was peppered with squalid courts and tenements, the masses huddled in rookeries in a way hard to appreciate today. Over the centuries parts of the street away from the market place had a bad reputation, being a place of night-walkers as early as 1605. Where once were unhealthy privies and dark corners are now open forecourts and hard standing for cars.

As with the book on lawyers, this is an easy work to navigate. The layout is clearly explained, and very helpfully the numbers appearing on the tithe map and tithe apportionment are placed against the current street numbers and against the page numbers. This intricate grid enables an individual house to be located easily in the absence of an index. The print and image reproduction quality are superb, and both books will make attractive presents.

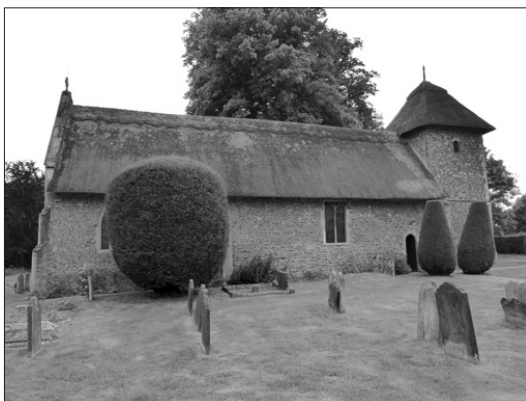
A note on prices

The special price for ALHS members of £20 for both titles, in person from the authors, is extremely reasonable given the length and quality of these studies. For details see the caption to the book covers at the start of these two reviews.

SOCIETY NEWS

Visit to Columbine Hall and the churches of Thornham Parva and Earl Stonham

Thursday 19th June 2014 saw 26 members and guests return to Suffolk to visit the contrasting churches of Thornham Parva and Earl Stonham, followed by the curiosity that is Columbine Hall – all that remains of a mediaeval moated manor house.



St Mary, Thornham Parva, guided by Martin Kay, churchwarden

This small church sits in a pleasant tree-lined graveyard which features the tombs of the great 20th century architect, Sir Basil Spence and his wife. They lived nearby. Unusually, not only is the church roof thatched in Norfolk reed, but so is the small tower. With traces of earlier (?) Saxon flint work, the main structure is primarily Norman (1066-1200). The tower was rebuilt in the 1480s at a cost of £50.00.

We admired the fine Norman south door before entering the church by the plain and very much smaller north door. First impressions were of the fine acoustics in this simple church, its intimate atmosphere and the gorgeous bowed gallery from the 18th century. Only one Norman window remains, the others having been inserted later in Decorated (1300-1350) and Perpendicular (1350-1500) periods. A 14th century decorated font, perhaps of Norwich origins, and an early 15th century oak screen, rather over restored, complete the traditional church features. However, the reasons that we and so many others searched out St Mary's Church, were to see the retable and the very fine wall paintings, again both from the 14th century.



The retable (1335-1336) is only part of a much larger altarpiece, probably originating from the Priory in Thetford. The rest can be seen in the Musée de Cluny in Paris. The retable was rescued, maybe only because of its beauty, after the Reformation destroyed the Priory. Unrecognized as important, it was taken to the local big house, Thornham Hall, home of the Hennikers in 1778. It was “rediscovered” in a barn in the 1920s and donated to the church by the then Lord Henniker. Much exhibited, this superb work was fully restored in the early 2000s and stands proud behind the altar in its alarmed and climate monitored glass enclosure.

The retable dates from the height of the Decorated period in the decades before the Black Death. The figures are notably “alive” and “lively” and it was pointed out that their style had parallels with those seen in recent Society lectures on “The Illuminated Manuscripts” and “The Howard Tombs”. The panels in glowing original paint and re-gilded backgrounds, show the figures of: St. Dominic (Thetford was a Dominican Priory); St. Catherine; St. John the Baptist; a rood group of the Blessed Virgin, Christ and St. John; St. Peter; St. Edmund (of much local fame); St. Margaret and St. Peter the Martyr (another Dominican).

The fascinating wall paintings date from the early 1300s. On the south wall is the story of the early years of Christ and the north wall tells of the martyrdom of St. Edmund. The scenes on both walls are much affected by “fenestration”, where later windows were added in the 15th century remodelling of the church. At this stage they may have already been whitewashed over, either to hide Catholic subjects or simple Puritanism. However St. Joseph can still be seen beside the original 12th century Norman window.

The cycle of paintings on the life of St. Edmund is quite rare. At the time, St. Edmund was very much the “English” saint - before the rise of St. George (following the Crusades ?). Reading east to west, we could easily see St. Edmund attempting to flee the Danes – riding forth from a castle on horseback;



the monks replacing his decapitated head; through to the image of the bullock cart crossing a bridge, artfully formed by the head of the north door, when much later, the now sanctified and canonised St. Edmund escaped the Vikings.

St. Mary the Virgin, Earl Stonham, guided by John Jones, Parish Treasurer



A few miles south, we came to a much grander cruciform church, again of flint construction and with 12th century origins – it certainly featured in the Domesday Survey. Only a small lancet window in the chancel indicates these origins after the major remodelling in the 14th century. The tower was added with the earlier west window being incorporated in it. This is now readily visible after the re-hanging of the bells on a new frame in 2004 and the creation of an open Ringing Chamber at first floor level. The fine west door remains, though unused today.



Most of what we see now results from the 1470's when the roof was raised. Thus on entering the church first impressions are of spaciousness and light before being surprised by the magnificent single hammer beam roof – said to be the finest in East Anglia, and certainly of national importance. This form of roof allowed greater spans to be built with shorter timbers. False pendant hammer beams terminating in pineapples alternate with the structural ones which rise from richly carved wall posts.

Whilst the saints and apostles on the ends were defaced in the Civil War, many figures remain in their niches and very many wonderful roof carvings have survived. Angels, cherubim and such cameos as fox with a goose in its mouth, a dog and a farmyard duck, together with endless crosses and crowns, would have been a source of meditation for the medieval worshipper.

The pulpit is Jacobean, reflecting the post Reformation change of emphasis from the (catholic) symbolism of the eucharist, to the Protestant use of the spoken word, leading to many chancels being unused. At this time all religious inscription were removed - bar one to be seen on one of the original pews.

Most of today's pews date from the 1873 restoration of the church. The main exceptions are some of the choir stalls which are original and all bear fine poppy head bench ends. The early ones show an easier style of carving than their Victorian replacements. Again samples of wall paintings survive. Above the nave arch is a "doom painting" showing souls being measured in the Last Judgement, then being sent south to Hell or north to Heaven. St. George and the Dragon appear in the south transept and a framed reproduction of a nativity in the north transept.

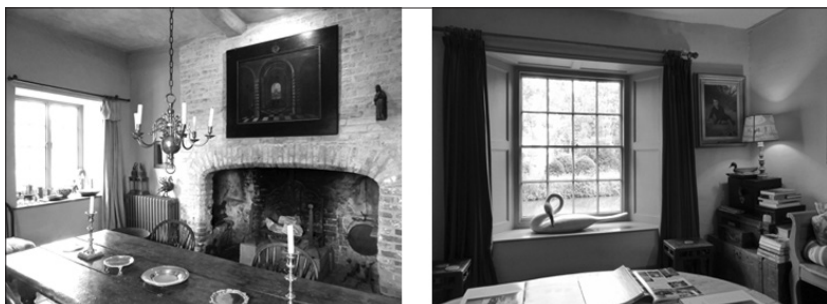


From here we retired to the Church Hall for a pleasant lunch provided by the ladies of Earl Stonham.

Columbine Hall guided by Hew Stevenson and his wife Leslie Geddes-Brown



The afternoon visit was to the nearby Columbine Hall, named after the Norman feudal overlords, the de Columbers who lived in Somerset. In the 13th and 14th centuries, the under-tenants were the Hotofts, who built this house around 1390. Since the 1840's, the property was let to farmers, including one called Harry Potter resident at the time of its use for training land-girls in WW II. The current owners bought the house and 29 acres of manorial lands in 1993, restoring it with the considerable help of Melvyn Smith – who by all accounts is a 5ft 4in “pocket rocket” from Lancashire who did all the detailed design and building work!



All that remains of the original manor is the timber framed and jettied upper storey of the gatehouse range. This rises vertically out of the trapezoidal moat. From the courtyard where we could see the timber framed construction and some 17th century pargetting. We entered the oldest part of the house through the original gateway arch, which presumably lead to a timber bridge over the moat. We visited the kitchen which was set out like that of an early farmhouse; the dining room where an open fireplace had been reconstructed; the “Moat Room” with its 18th century style panelling and a fine view over the moat; and a drawing room in an 1840’s extension.

Upstairs, the bedrooms remain apparently medieval with steeply sloping oak and elm floorboards, exposed timber frames and four-poster beds. Set off by the almost universal Farrow & Ball palette, we saw a fantastical collection ranging from fine art to bric-a-brac, including a life-size wooden Chinese water deer in the library.

Inside the moat, beside the house, were attractive formal gardens, with a variety of wild gardens and orchards allowing a pleasant walk beyond the water. These, with the walled vegetable garden, are the work of Kate Elliott who has received serious plaudits for her work.

In summary, Columbine Hall reflects the larger than life personalities of the owners and their eclectic interests.

Once again the visit organiser, Ann Dyball, had produced another interesting day out and all meticulously planned. For her inspirational choices on our behalf and her organisational skill, we thank her.

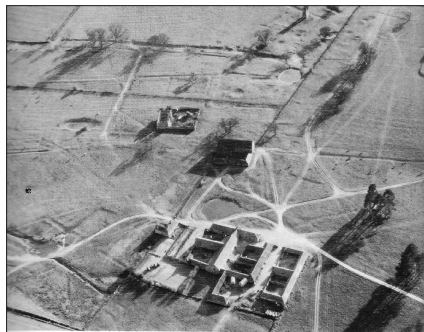
Sources:

www.suffolkchurches.co.uk

www.columbinehall.co.uk

Peter Roulstone

Deserted villages – a talk by Ian Groves



Godwick, deserted by the 1600s.

The AGM on 2 October 2014 was followed by a talk by Ian Groves, who is now in his third year of a part time Ph D at UEA, supervised by Professor Tom Williamson, exploring aspects of deserted, shrunken and shifted settlements in Norfolk between 1300 and 1850.

In 1977 it had been estimated that there were over 3000 deserted villages in England which included 200 in Norfolk. Research sources were the Domesday Book, the Nomina Villarum of 1316, Lay subsidy records of the C14 and C15, the 1428 Tax Exemption List, the 1670's Hearth tax and the Compton Census of 1676. Volumes have been written about Wharram Percy in East Yorkshire.

Since then there has been and is research on deserted villages in Norfolk concentrating not on how many but why. The criteria as to which site should be on the list were so variable.

The term deserted village is misleading, as many settlements were actually shrunken, shifted or drowned as opposed to deserted. Places such as Hockham and Rougham are much reduced, shrunken, from their previous level of habitation. Shifted villages are New Houghton where new houses were built outside Houghton Park and the old village now inside the park boundary was demolished. New Holkham was similarly built outside the park where the original village is under a landscaped lake. Occasionally some villages are lost when a new reservoir is built. Coastal erosion can take others. These are the drowned villages. In Norfolk Wintertonness, Little Waxham and Snitterley off Blakeney have gone. Happisburgh is going.

So different examples of change and loss, but is there some underlying reason for deserted villages? The loss of only one village, Little Ringstead, that can be ascribed to the Black Death makes us want to find out other causes.

It has been commonly said that a solitary church must mean that was the

site of a deserted village. Now research shows that there was a mid-saxon drift, a common edge drift as the population gradually moved. In Fritton the church is some distance from the later settlements around the common. If young people in waves could not make a viable living on the original site, they moved and the village in turn shrank and then shifted.

Climate change affected viability. The medieval warm period then the late ice age affected harvests. Famine, cattle disease, wet summers made some land, especially marginal land, economically unviable. Greyston, a village whose population had grown in the C12, was deserted in the C15 as pressure on the land could not support the population.

Engrossment was a feature of the C16 where a landowner gradually bought up land freehold and copyhold from tenants. Arable farming was becoming more popular and favoured the concentration of land in fewer hands. This occurred at Raynham. In a small village this developing change of land ownership could mean the end of the village as a separate entity.

At other times and places sheep farming was where the profit was. Flockmasters around Fakenham in the late C15 worked out they could accrue more income from wool than from peasants. This affected the villages of Thorpland, Testerton, Pudding Norton, Alethorpe and Pensthorpe – less labour was needed.

Emparking, the landscaped park of the C18, could occur on sites where desertion had long been completed but sometimes, as at Wolterton, a small community round the church was removed.

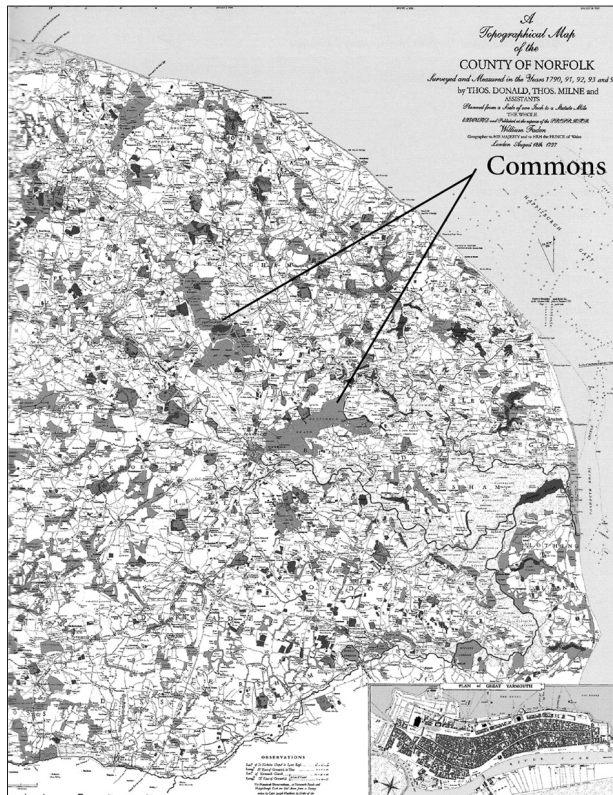
Desertion is not just a medieval phenomenon. Iron Age sites with Ring ditches and Round houses show evidence of previous settlement. A Romano-British villa at Brancaster continues the story. In 1942, in the cause of national security, several villages were evacuated on the Stanton battle ground 'for the duration' that still endures.

The china clay industry in Cornwall has encroached on the landscape; in Pennsylvania U.S.A. a village has had to be abandoned because of underground burning; in the former USSR the explosion of nuclear plant at Chernobyl has poisoned the land for years, only a few remain. So the process goes on.

It is now possible to use other resources for research. Aerial photography shows hollow lanes, housing platforms and mill mounds. You can superimpose a series of dated maps one on another to show habitation over a span of time. A device can penetrate woodland to reveal ancient features. Low level radio directed drones can show features at close hand without physically walking the landscape. So ended a very comprehensive and fascinating survey of the subject.

Lynda Wix

The Aylsham Navigation Context – Fuel, Farming and the Environment: a talk by Tom Williamson



Faden's map of 1797, showing extensive commons, most of which disappeared within 15 years. From Williamson & Macnair, *William Faden and Norfolk's 18th Century Landscape* (2010), courtesy authors and Oxbow Books, Oxford.

The talk on the 23rd of October in the more spacious venue of the Jubilee Centre was a rather special occasion. The Bure Navigation Conservation Trust joined us for a thoroughly rousing evening during which Professor Tom Williamson discoursed widely and entertainingly over the many facets that transformed life in Norfolk in the century from 1750. The principal theme of his exposition was that the revolutions in agriculture, industry, transport and

landscape were interlinked in a way that is complicated. Studies of single issues tend to be oversimplifications and miss the point.

The population had been increasing steadily for several centuries, but from 1750 to 1850 it grew exponentially. Mouths needed to be fed. In 1760 an agricultural worker was producing enough food for one more person, by 1860 enough for three people. This was made possible through the familiar aspects of the agricultural revolution, with fields formerly laid fallow being used for new root crops, notably turnips, and pastures upgraded with clover and new grasses. This fed more stock, that in turn produced more dung to increase yields of grain. By 1700 at least three-quarters of the old communal open fields had gone, and enclosure, whether by Parliamentary Act or local agreements, was transforming the landscape. The old sheep walks with Norfolk Horns grazing the commons and heaths by day and penned on fields by night was abandoned in favour of new breeds, such as the Southdown, that thrived on the root crops and improved pastures. Cereal production, especially of barley, was enhanced by the new practice of marling, the old pits for extracting chalk still apparent in many fields to this day. The heavier soils were drained by cuts filled with brushwood and covered over again with soil. The fens had been drained, and like the broadland fields, drained by windmills, their number increased dramatically as the fields dried and shrank below the cuts.

Agricultural improvements occurred everywhere, but the present-day divide, with a concentration of arable farming in the eastern counties and stock farming in the west country was becoming more evident. The southern part of Norfolk on heavier soils with smaller fields did, however, continue to have more mixed farming. The extensive commonland shown on Faden's map of 1797 was mostly gone in the next fifteen years impelled by the demand for food, the increasing prices and the anxiety about self-sufficiency engendered by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Heaths, wood pastures and extensive areas of grassland formerly used for stock were put under the plough, fields were enlarged with hedges grubbed out, and the whole landscape generally tidied up.

This did not occur in isolation. It was driven to a great extent by improvements in transport and the industrial revolution that was fuelled by coal, principally from the northeast of England, but also from the west midlands and Cumbria. In our own study of the Aylsham Navigation we have seen how the minor extension of a waterway from Coltishall to Aylsham in the 1770s transformed the fortunes of the town, bringing up coal and taking down grain, timber and in due course manufactured products, including fertilisers and leather. Such developments were widespread. Maps of England that plot the navigable waterways and canals show the network spreading right across

the country in the century from 1750. This was by far the cheapest and most convenient way to distribute coal and goods, but the road system was also improving with the introduction of turnpikes. The Norwich to Cromer turnpike came through Aylsham in 1794–1811 and the Norwich to North Walsham turnpike that opened in 1797 ran through Coltishall. Both were quite late in the countrywide development. The industrial revolution, based on the ready availability of coal as a cheap source of energy, caused change and upheaval everywhere. The myriad of watermills to drain the fens and broadlands were replaced with fewer, more effective steam engines. All along the Bure, as elsewhere in the early C19, steam was increasingly used for the mills and industrial purposes. The major textile industry in Norfolk lost out to manufacturing in the midlands, but the workforce was absorbed in part at least by more intensive farming.

At the domestic level the practice of gathering fuel had to shift in tandem. The Broads had long been a major source of peat for fuel that continued well into the nineteenth century. Heaths had been much valued to a greater extent than has often been appreciated. Heather was not just cut, but the whole rootstock excavated to give very intense heat when burned, not only for hearths, but widely used in brick kilns. The dark colouration commonly seen in hard bricks of this period is attributed to this procedure. Gorse and broom were also valued and increasingly lost as the “wastes” (a prerogative term natural to writers from the landed classes) were taken into arable land.

Hedgerows remained important sources of fuel despite the general tidying up of farmland and their significant removal, especially from the lighter soils in the northern part of the county. In southern Norfolk the older system of relatively small fields largely survived and tenants continued to plant a mixture of species, including ash, elm and hazel, and they continued to pollard oaks, the poles from which (not the timber) they were allowed to keep. The idea that the age of a hedge can be measured by the diversity of species it contains, a concept fashionable a few decades ago, is spurious. Hedges have always been planted and removed according to fashion, richly endowed ones often planted within the last couple of centuries. When coal really did become predominant farmers planted just hawthorn, which served very well as a windbreak and stock fence, but useless as a fuel. The point came when 200 metres of hedge was considered roughly equivalent to a ton of coal, hedgers were paid 4d per rod for “firing” and finally cottages for farm labourers were fitted with grates suitable only for burning coal. The countryside continued to change for a complex of interlocking reasons that makes landscape restoration an interesting challenge.

Roger Polhill

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Thursday 2nd October 2014

Apologies: John Cragg, Ruth Hall, Mr and Mrs Holmes, Jean McChesney, Sue McManus, Sheila Merriman, Joan Roulstone

Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting on October 3rd 2013 were agreed.

Matters arising.

Daphne Davy had raised the question of offering honorary life membership of the Society. The committee had discussed appropriate criteria. It was agreed that in view of their long service Derek Lyons and Gillian Fletcher should be made honorary life members. Geoff Ducker, a founder member, will receive a free copy of the Journal.

Secretary's Report

The Secretary welcomed everyone and hoped members had collected their membership cards which, in addition to providing the list of lectures for the coming winter, also act as receipt for payment of the subscription. Committee and officers on the card are those currently serving and not necessarily the ones about to be elected.

The year 2013–2014 has again been a good year for the Society, though sadly we have lost two long-standing and popular members in Molly Long and Wendy Preis.

The winter lectures were really well attended with three successive lectures attracting audiences of more than 60. An interesting series of speakers has been arranged for this winter that is detailed on the membership cards, and begins tonight. It should be noted that the next meeting on 23rd October is to be held in The Jubilee Centre.

The Society's Autumn course was 'Illuminated Manuscripts' presented by Margaret Forrester and much appreciated.

The annual dinner was held at The Black Boys here in Aylsham, preceded by a brief introduction by Geoff Gale. The excellent food and service was very much enjoyed.

The Society has appreciated good relations with the Heritage Centre, the Town Archives and The Festival organisers. Thanks to the Town Council and Honorary Archivist for enabling the continued research facility in the Town Hall, now on Wednesday afternoons.

The experience and commitment of individual committee members has

been brought together by our chairman, Roger Polhill. Lynda Wix has done excellent research work on WW1 on display in the Heritage Centre, and Geoff Sadler has established a most useful and attractive website and a member database. The Society Journal which Roger produces seems to get better with each edition. I have brought the latest volume 9 for 2014 together with the first volume 1 published in 1988. The progress is remarkable.

Finally, Roger and Diana hosted 60+ of us to mark the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Society. What a lovely event on their lawn in the sunshine! The little band of nine enthusiasts who initiated a steering committee which led to the formation of the Society was: Ron Peabody, Geoffrey Ducker, Mary Rust, Olive Walker, Canon Jack Vyse, Nick Crick, Nick Corbin, Jane Nolan and Tom Mollard. In June 1984 an inaugural meeting was held in the Parish Room. The constitution was seconded by Mrs G. Barwick, and she is here tonight. A committee was elected, the subscription was agreed at £2, and, with the guidance of Chris Barringer, a research group was born. If those characters are looking at the Society today, I think they might be pleased with what they found.

Treasurers Report

Membership subscriptions were still coming in. There were three times the number of visitors to lectures last year. The visits largely covered their costs, Lecture fees had stayed low. There had been good sales of *Sail and Storm*. Fewer attended the Autumn course. In view of the surplus of only £162 it is proposed to review subscription fees for 2015-16

Report on Newsletter and Publications

We have issued three parts of the Journal in the last year. Now, at the beginning of the 31st year of the Society we are on the first part of Volume 10. Tryco, the small firm that has photocopied the journal for many years, closed last August. We found that Catton Print, who has produced most of our recent books, was able to print the journal for only a little more expense. The print is now sharper and the illustrations, particularly of old photos and images of historical documents, are a lot clearer.

I am grateful to Margaret Bird and Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis for their erudite historical research and for the contributions from several members of our Committee, especially Lynda Wix's extensive work on World War I. Daphne Davy, Derek Lyons and Lloyd Mills have continued to give their help and Fiona and Tim Scott did a nice report on our memorable visit to Saffron Walden.

We sold 58 more copies of *Sail and Storm*, 20 of *About Aylsham* and another

21 books at the Heritage Centre, where Jayne Andrews and her team have been a great help as always. Our thanks to Diana Polhill for doing the invoices and keeping a record.

Report on Visits

Fifteen members had attended a most interesting visit to the Archive office; 25, the maximum number, visited the textile Conservation studio at Oulton; 31 went on the longer trip to Columbine Hall and St. Mary's Thornham Parva, Earl Stonham churches; 22 enjoyed seeing the rood screens at Ranworth and Hemblington followed by tea.

Report on Membership

There were 117 members, a slight increase on previous years.

Members were urged to use the new website which would raise it higher up the rankings.

Election of Officer and Committee Members

No nominations had been received. Existing officers and members are willing to stand for re-election except Gillian Fletcher who wishes to stand down. The chairman asked Members to agree that the Committee could co-opt a member to fill the vacancy. All present agreed.

The officers were elected as follows:

Chairman: Roger Polhill, proposed by Ruth Harrison, seconded by Sue Jay

Vice Chairman: Geoff Sadler, the proposer and seconder not recorded, but proposed subsequently by Roger Polhill and Jim Pannell.

Secretary: Jim Pannell, proposed by Gill Fletcher, seconded by Geoff Gale

Treasurer: Ian McManus, proposed by Mary Elsey, seconded by Margaret Rowe

The Committee Members (Ann Dyball, Sheila Merriman, Vic Morgan, Rosie Powell and Lynda Wix) were proposed by Roger Polhill and seconded by Jim Pannell and agreed by the members.

Gillian Fletcher who has retired from the committee was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Any Other Business

William Vaughan Lewis explained there was still the launch-offer price on the two books he and Maggie had written on Aylsham Lawyers and Hungate.

Lynda Wix

LIST OF MEMBERS – OCTOBER 2014

Below is the list of current paid-up members. After this issue of the Journal, the circulation of future issues will be based on this. IF YOUR NAME DOES NOT APPEAR ON THIS LIST YOU COULD MISS OUT ON FUTURE ISSUES OF THE JOURNAL. You will receive them by paying a subscription to the Treasurer, Mr Ian McManus, Little Nunthorpe, Aylsham NR11 6QT (individuals £9; couples £15). Apologies to any members who might have recently renewed their subscription and still missed inclusion on the list which was compiled at the end of October.

Baker, Mr & Mrs P	Gee, Mrs B	Peabody, Ms J
Barber, Mrs S	Grellier, Ms D	Polhill, Dr & Mrs R
Barwick, Mrs G	Hall, Mrs R	Powell, Mr & Mrs I
Bayes, Mrs R	Harbord, Mr R	Pritchard, Mr & Mrs E
Bell, Ms Sara	Harrison, Mrs R	Roulstone, Mr & Mrs P
Bird, Mrs M	Hawke, Mr & Mrs D A	Rowe, Mrs M
Botwright, Ms E	Hills, Ms V	Runham, Mr G
Bowman, Miss H	Holman, Mrs E	Rust, Mr & Mrs B
Brooker, Dr & Mrs K	Home, Mr J	Sadler, Mr & Mrs G
Calvert, Ms R	Humphreys, Mrs C	Shaw, Mr & Mrs A
Case, Dr D E	Jay, Ms S	Sheringham, Mrs J
Casimir, Mr & Mrs S	Jeavons, Mr S	Simpson, Mr A
Corbin, Mrs H	Johnston, Mr G	Slaughter, Mr I
Cox, Mrs F	Layt, Ms A	Spencer, Mr & Mrs N
Cragg, Mr J	Lock, Mrs A	Steward, Mrs L
Crouch, Mr R	Lyons, Mr D	Thomas, Mrs C
Davy, Mr & Mrs R	Macartney, Ms J	Ulph, Mr C
Douët, Mr & Mrs A	Margarson, Mr & Mrs G	Vaughan-Lewis, Mr &
Driscoll, Mrs C	Mawbey, Mr & Mrs W E	Mrs W
Ducker, Mr G	McChesney, Mrs J	Wade, Mrs C
Duncan, Mrs B	McManus, Mr & Mrs I	Warren, Mrs R
Dyball, Miss A J	Merriman, Mrs S	Wessely, Mrs J
Ellis, Ms J	Mollard, Mr & Mrs T	Wintle, Mrs S
Elsey, Mr & Mrs B	Morgan, Dr V	Wix, Mr & Mrs M
Fletcher, Mrs G	Nobbs, Mr G	Worsencroft, Mr D
Gale, Mr G	Pannell, Mr J	Worth, Mr & Mrs J

ACCOUNTS ON THIS PAGE PLEASE - LANDSCAPE