AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Volume 10 No 6

CONTENTS

Editorial 166
Property, Death and Taxes: a New Look at Early Modern Sources for Aylsham by Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis 167
The Belfry Book of St Michael's and All Angels Chuch, Aylsham by Jim Pannell 173
Nissen Huts at Blickling Hall by Lynda Wix 175
The Agincourt Campaign and Norfolk by John Alban 177
Shakespeare and Medieval East Anglian Drama, a talk by Dr Rebecca Pinner – Lynda Wix 183
Tour of the Van Dal Shoe Factory by Caroline Driscoll 186
Notices 188

Front cover: A page of the Aylsham Lancaster manor roll covering 1509–1546 (NRS 1434) in its final housing after restoration. Courtesy of the Norfolk Record Office.
Back cover: Same before restoration. Courtesy of the Norfolk Record Office.

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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We are approaching the end of our very successful season of lectures and outings around Medieval and Tudor themes. Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to the events and made reports for the Journal. We look forward to the third part of our Shakespeare trilogy on 24 March, when Dr Vic Morgan will be talking about *Performance on the Stage and in Society.*

Jim Pannell says we already have a good number of bookings for the annual dinner, this time conveniently at the Buckinghamshire Arms, and he can still take a few more places if you book within the next few days – see details under Notices on p. 188.

Caroline Driscoll has arranged for a tour of Brinton Hall on 26 May, the information for booking also on the last page of this issue. The tour of the Van Dal shoe factory in February was a great success and we do appreciate Caroline and Sue Sharpe taking on this consuming part of our organisation. Caroline has also kindly taken on the sale of the Society's publications, which is a considerable relief to Diana Polhill and a welcome part of our downsizing.

Let's hope we have a good summer and look forward to meeting up again in the Autumn. Do book up for the Autumn Course – *A History of the World through 100 Paintings* – which starts on 21 September, see notice on p. 188 and our website (alhs.weebly.com).

There is an excellent new exhibition in the Heritage Centre – *Voices of Aylsham* – see p. 188. There is also an exhibition of Roman finds from Woodgate and please keep an eye out for more events on the Heritage Centre website.

As a postscript we note that one of our members, Professor Tim Bliss, has just been awarded the Brain Prize, seen as the Nobel of neuroscience, by the Grete Lundbeck European Brain Research Foundation for his work on the foundation of memory.

Property, Death and Taxes: a New Look at Early Modern Sources for Aylsham

by **Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis**

When the Chairman asked for an update on the conservation project of the Henry VIII court roll at the Norfolk Record Office, it seemed like a good opportunity to take a look at other sources covering the period 1450 to 1730 – and how much the internet and digital imaging have revolutionised research. This is the first of three articles which will appear over the next few issues.

Members of the Society at the Norfolk Record Office in October 2013 (wrongly attributed in ALHS J. 10: 24 (2014)).

No 1 Property: manorial court rolls

Aylsham is fortunate that the majority of the parish was held by copyhold of three manors, rather than freehold which is the more common form of land tenure. Finding the early history of a freehold property relies on finding the original deeds, many of which are in private hands, in a solicitor's basement or have been lost since the introduction of the Land Registry. (If you're lucky

some may have found their way to the Record Office.) But for Aylsham all this information, up to about 1860, is in one place – the manor court rolls and books. The details of how manorial copyhold worked and a list of the manorial document references, identified in the catalogue for the Norfolk Record Office, are given in our 2014 book *Aylsham: A Nest of Norfolk Lawyers*. In the later 19th century, the copyholds were turned into freeholds and normal deeds would be drawn up from then on. (See Jim Pannell's article on the cottage lockup in Peterson's Lane, in Vol 9 No 10 April 2014, for a good use of the combined types of copyhold and freehold deeds.)

Aylsham Lancaster Manor

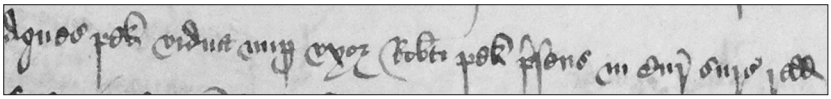
The largest of Aylsham's manors was in crown hands, in the Duchy of Lancaster. At first run directly by the Duchy, the manor was 'farmed' or leased out from the early 17th century onwards, to the Hobarts of Blickling. For this aspect, see Dr Elizabeth Griffith's article in Vol 7 No 10 Apr 2006 (first published in Feb 1988) and further details published in *Nest of Norfolk Lawyers,* pp 6–12. This long period of ownership resulted in the excellent survival of the court rolls although of course storage conditions over hundreds of years led to damp, mould and rodent damage to some items.

Members will remember the fascinating visit to the Norfolk Record Office in October 2013 to see the conservation work being undertaken on the Aylsham Lancaster manor court roll covering 1509–1546, almost all of the reign of Henry VIII, (NRS 13434). The result of the eighteen-month project, which was partly funded by an appeal by the Society, was three-fold. The parchment conservation expertise developed by their team has become world-famous in using new techniques; the roll, which for years had been too damaged to be opened, is now flattened and cleaned; and for Aylsham researchers, the resultant digitised images of the 129 membranes are stunningly readable. The Aylsham Town Archive has a set of the images which may be seen by arrangement with the archivist on their computer. The ability to enlarge up to each word allows easy access for all including those of us with older eyes! And of course tricky sections can be printed for further study. This is down to the superb digital equipment and skill used by the record office staff. The handwriting is very clear and the Latin is not as heavily contracted as in some earlier rolls. Many properties are recognisable from the descriptions which are still being used in the 17th century court books.

With this roll becoming accessible and the late Elizabethan roll (also too damaged to be produced or 'UFP' in archive jargon) being available on microfilm at the NRO, it is now possible to research ownership of nearly all of Aylsham's properties from the 1460s to the 1920s.

A page of the Aylsham Lancaster manor roll covering 1509–1546 (NRS 1434) in its final housing after restoration. Courtesy of the Norfolk Record Office.

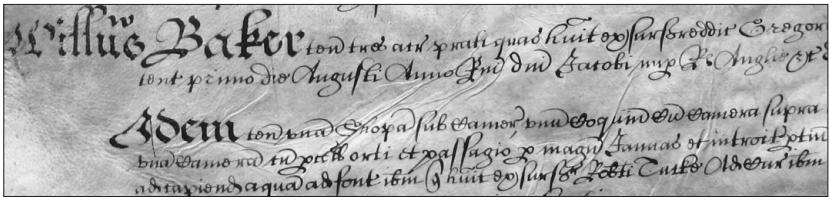
However, there are some caveats. As always it is important to have a complete sequence of ownership transfers to be sure that the property you have spotted does link up to later owners. In the first half of the 16th century there was still widespread use in Aylsham of trustees (or feoffees) to hold property to facilitate its passage to the appropriate heir or other designated person. As a result, many properties appear to be owned by three or more people at the same time. Generally the first name in the list is the beneficial owner and many entries make this clear by showing that the other two were given a guarantee or indemnification to 'save them harmless' from any issues arising over the ownership. This was not a mere token: often actions are recorded in the manorial and London equity courts where some relation is trying to get hold of property to which he was not entitled, usually using a legal loophole. These, although tortuous, can be brilliant sources of extra information as we found researching the Old Hall (*Nest of Norfolk Lawyers* pp 33–40).



Example of handwriting from the Henry VIII roll (NRO). 'Agnes Pek, widow of Robert Pek, present in court surrenders'

There are various other sources which give helpful snapshots of all Lancaster manor copyhold owners or 'tenants' along the way. Many members will be familiar with the 1622 survey of which a very useful transcript was published by the Society some years ago – *Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century*, ALHS, 1988. Inevitably research moves on and working through the court rolls in such detail made us realise that this work contained quite a number of transcription errors, some relating to surnames and many relating to property descriptions and dates of acquisition. (Unfortunately, the list of tenants' names has recently been republished in a book on Aylsham's putative early history, repeating the errors.) Working from the original in the National Archives at Kew (TNA, E 315/360), we have produced a hand-annotated version of the survey correcting as many of the errors as possible; this is lodged in the Town Archive for easy access by all. We were also able to correct the date of this item to 1622 rather than 1624 as previously suggested.

Less well-known is the 17th century custumal for Aylsham Lancaster in the Norfolk Record Office (NRS 11068, 25E3). We have dated this item to 1637 and have made digital images for research use which we will be happy to make available on request. This lists Lancaster tenants with a brief description of their premises and the date of admission to them but not the full rental information shown in the 1622 survey. It is neatly written and the Latin is largely un-contracted and easy to follow. It is a helpful item, showing a fair number of changes over the 15 years and making it easier to navigate the indexes to the court books (which took over from rolls) that start in 1611.

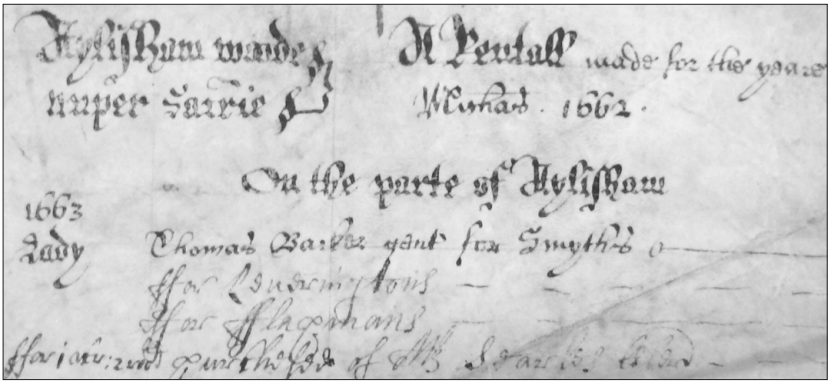


1637 custumal: William Baker had one shop under a chamber, one kitchen with chamber above and ... passage through the great doors ('Januas' - as in January, month of Janus god of entrances). (author)

Again there are caveats: for no obvious reason some tenants are not included (for example the Jegon/Cornwallis family and their property at Spa Farm, the Doughty/Crofts family at Old Hall and the properties outside Aylsham shown in the 1622 survey). The summary property descriptions do not match exactly the wording used in the court books or that in the 1622 survey. As in 1622, the ownership of the sub-manor of Bolwick Manor is noted but there are scant details of the Aylsham premises that formed the core of this manor. (Separate Bolwick manor court books survive from the early 17th century and NRO document references can be found in *Nest of Norfolk Lawyers*.)

Aylsham Sexton's or Wood Manor

As with Lancaster manor, the run of court books from the early 17th century can be used to trace property ownership in Aylsham, particularly but not exclusively, to the north of the river. Less well-known to members will be the 1662 list of tenants of this manor, which we found in the depositions of an Exchequer court case involving the operation of the toft system in this manor. (TNA, E 178/6362). Again we have made digital images for research purposes and we will be writing about the tofts in our next book.



Sexton's 1662 rental: Thomas Barker gent purchased 1 acre 2 rods from Mr Searles the elder (author)

The handwriting, this time in English, is reasonably clear but only covers property holders and their manorial rents. Of some help is that many entries also show the surname of the previous copyholder. This manor also had a large number of tenancies outside Aylsham and these are included, usually showing the village where the premises were. Again, this is a useful adjunct to the court books of this manor, which are somewhat less well-kept and indexed than the Lancaster ones in the late 17th century.

Aylsham Vicarage Manor

For this manor the court books also only survive from the mid-17th century and the first book is not indexed, making research somewhat slower. The vicar's small manor, with its properties spread widely around the parish, helped to augment his income. For more details see *Nest of Norfolk Lawyers*, pp viii, xiv. Unfortunately, no other early modern items from this manor survive; the earliest lists of tenants appear in rentals from the 1770s to early 1780s, held at the Record Office. (NRS 19219-21, 33F2).

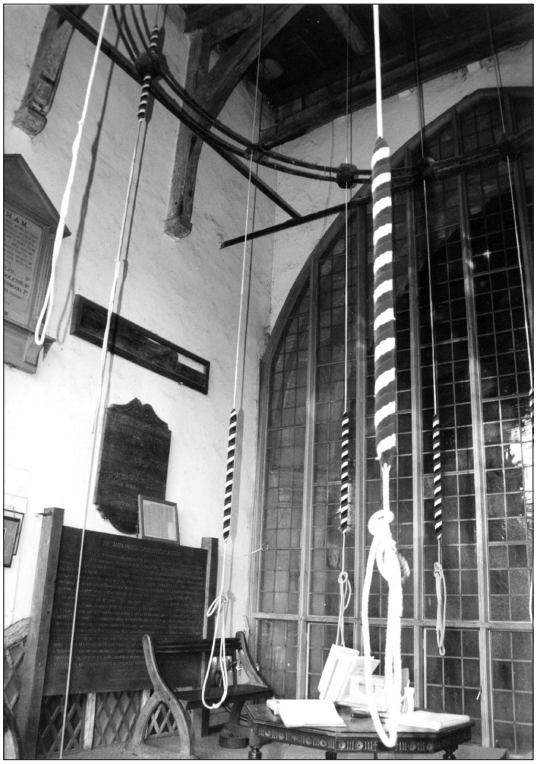
Cross-checking with non-manorial sources

Of course researching properties at this period needs access to a wider spectrum of sources; working from one source only leads to missed information and a misinterpretation of what one sees. One example occurs in the Journal (Vol 1 No 10 Feb 1988). Jane Nolan discussed a very interesting little piece of paper dated 19 March 1680, of which she reproduced the original and gave a transcription (NRO, MS 11634, 35A1). It was a receipt for £430 paid by Henry Marsham for an Aylsham property bought from two men named Isaak and Peter; here Jane commented on their unusual surname. Having only this one paper to go on, she transcribed the name as Umk; although an unlikely name, as Isaak was a merchant it was not unreasonable to think they were foreign. Also she must have decided the letters in the middle of the word could not include an 'i' as the writer dotted these elsewhere in the receipt. However, the property was described as copyhold land: had Jane had easy access to the court book for the 1680s, the name would have become clearer. It is in fact Vinke, a German name. This shows how 17th century hands can be more difficult than formal earlier ones. Here the letter looking like a U was a V, the final 'e' was almost part of the 'k' and the writer had not dotted the 'i'! Not only that but the property is traceable as nos 107–112 on the west side of Hungate. (See *Hungate: A Norfolk Streetscape*, 2014.) The Vinkes had held the mortgage for many years; when the borrower defaulted, they immediately sold it to Marsham in March 1681 – not 1680. The old Julian calendar year ran straight through to the 25 March so anything dated January 1 to March 24 must be rendered as the next year to make sense to our modern thinking. (Charles 1st was executed in January so the year at the time (old style) was given as 1648 although 1649 (new style) had actually begun.)

Other sources, such as rate books and tax lists, will be covered in the last of the series. In the second article we will look at wills which can tell us so much more about the people who appear in the manorial documents.

The Belfry Book of St Michael's and All Angels Church, Aylsham

by **Jim Pannell**



The Ringing Chamber and St Michael's and All Angels. Courtsey Aylsham Town Archive.

The bells and ringing long pre-date the first entry in the Belfry book; there were five bells already by 1529. The first entry is dated April 28th 1890. The book contains a record of the ringers and the methods rung, and those details are still recorded today. Unfortunately, the record only lasts until 1893, with little information until 1978 when the affairs of the Belfry were more thoroughly noted, particularly at annual general meetings, and this is continued to the present day. So the Belfry Book provides snapshots.

Ringing is commonly carried out by members of the same family, and Aylsham is no exception. On 4th May 1890 there were three ringers with the surname Moy, two Stackwoods, two Neales, and two Roughts. Census data shows that the occupations of the ringers included miller, bricklayer, cycle mechanic, carpenter, blacksmith's striker, postman, gardener, groom and bootmaker. Ringers at that time seem to have come from the town's tradesmen rather than land-owners or professionals who might perhaps have been church officials.

As today, bells welcomed people to Sunday worship and marked special occasions. Weekly practices were held to improve the standard of ringing. Quarter peals, half peals and full peals were rung on special and religious occasions, such as Whit Sunday, the monarch's birthday, and Christmas. On May 24th 1890 the bells rang out for the birthday of Queen Victoria.

On October 1st of the same year, the bells rang for the opening of the new parish room – now known to us as the Aylsham Heritage Centre. Today, full peals are rung only once or twice a year by visiting bands, and are a delight to hear. A full peal takes about 3 hours to ring, with constant changes to the sequence of the bells (called methods), and can only be registered if there are no significant errors. Methods include Oxford Treble Bob, Grandsire Triples, Double Norwich Court Bob Major, and Stedman Caters. It takes discipline!

On more sombre occasions, the bells have been tolled. For instance, the tenor bell was tolled for the death of The Duke of Clarence on January 14th 1892. On such occasions the bell clappers are muffled or half-muffled which dulls the sound. This is still carried out on Armistice Sunday. On January 21st 1936, the bells were rung half muffled 'in memoriam of our beloved King George V who passed away on this day.' Occasionally the bells sounded emergency. On April 4th 1892, there was ringing for a fire at Colby House of Lord Suffield, and on May 8th that year for a fire at Corpusty.

A full peal of Grandsire Caters with 5057 changes was rung in 1980 for the 600th anniversary of the building of the church. In recent years the bells have sounded for the switch-on of the Christmas lights, for the feast day of St Michael, and for Trafalgar Day, as well as tolling on the centenary day of each World War I victim from Aylsham.

A detailed account of the Aylsham bells can be found in Sapwell's *A History of Aylsham* chapter 4, and a copy is kept in the Town Hall archive.

The ringers at Aylsham belong to the St Michael's Guild of Ringers. This means that Aylsham has a fine peal of bells and welcomes ringers from other parishes in the area such as Holt and Buxton. The atmosphere is relaxed, but there is a determination to see that the bells continue to be rung, to improve the standard, and to welcome anyone interested in the art of ringing.

Nissen Huts at Blickling Hall

by **Lynda Wix**

Nissen hut at Blickling with from left to right Maureen Pegg, Janet Gould, Dorothy Hook, Donna Dennis and Barry Quadling. Courtesy Aylsham Town Archive.

There are people living in Aylsham whose birth certificate states that they were born at Blickling Hall. How so ? – during the Second World War the Hall was requisitioned by officers from RAF Oulton. The ratings were housed in Nissen huts in the grounds. There were groups of huts – some near the lake, some behind the school and some in front of the Orangery, locally known as Greenhouse Park.

At the end of the war the RAF left and squatters moved in. Men and women were demobbed from war service and came home and many married. No new housing had been built during the war. Empty free Nissen huts were welcome, if basic, accommodation. Young married couples soon had children hence the address on the birth certificates.

One couple was Stanley Dale, the hairdresser, and his wife – she had served food to the officers at Blickling Hall whilst Stanley served in the navy on the Arctic Convoy. On his return from service, they married and settled in the old NAAFI hut opposite Blickling Church until a Nissen hut in the hall grounds became available.

Aerial photo of Blickling, 1946 , showing Nissen huts. Courtesy NCCouncil.

In 1948 the Council took over the huts, charging a rent of 8s a week. The huts were divided into one large bedroom, one smaller bedroom, a living room with a tortoise stove and a kitchen. The roof was a double skin of corrugated iron which Stanley remembers was a home to rats between the layers. The room dividers were made of tin which you could paint. The floor was concrete. You bathed in a tin bath in the living room in front of the stove. Unlike many cottages at the time there was electricity, running water and a flush toilet. You had a washing line outside and some had a small vegetable patch.

Each hut had a number so the postman could identify the right address. A horse and cart which carried a milk churn came from nearby Flashpit Farm. The milkman had a variety of measures to ladle out what milk you wanted. Roys of Wroxham had a travelling grocery van or you walked into Aylsham to buy groceries.

Eventually in the 1950's new council houses were built in Hungate Street and Norwich Road and the Nissen huts emptied. One elderly couple had been part of the Blickling community – the grandparents of Jean Craske. Between leaving the employ of the Purdy family and the old people's bungalows being built on Mill Road and Cawston Road Jean's grandparents lived in a Nissen hut at Blickling. Jean remembers going to stay with them for a week. Stanley remembers shaving her grandfather when he was bedridden with rheumatism.

So everyone was rehomed. No longer was a baby born who could claim Blickling Hall as its birthplace.

Sources - conversations with Shelley Hudson, Jean and Russell Craske and Stanley Dale.

The Agincourt Campaign and Norfolk

by **John Alban**

Brass of Thomas, Lord Camoys and his wife, Elizabeth, at Trotton, West Sussex. From a rubbing by F.R. Fairbank, MD, FSA, 1892 (NRO, LEST/OD 14).

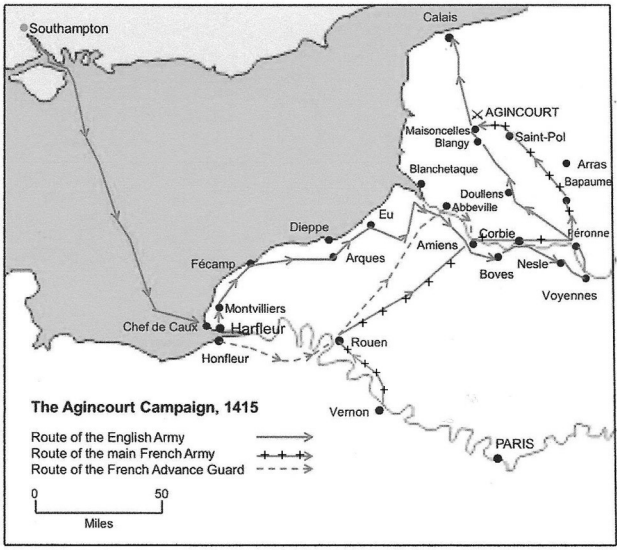
Notes from the lecture given at Erpingham Church on 22 October 2015.
This year marks the 600th anniversary of the Battle of Agincourt, which has long been lauded as an iconic victory. The popularity of Shakespeare's play, *Henry V*, has helped to perpetuate this and it is perhaps from this play that most people have derived their understanding of the campaign and the battle. It is not surprising that Agincourt has possibly been subjected to more scholarly analysis than any other medieval battle in which the English were involved. Dr Alban's talk was in two parts: firstly, he looked generally at the background to the campaign and then, secondly, considered how it affected and involved people from Norfolk.

Henry V came to the throne in 1413, having lived through the insecure reign of his father, the Lancastrian usurper, Henry Bolingbroke, who had wrested the throne from Richard II in 1399. During his father's reign, Henry had, in his teens, seen extensive military service, against the threats from Owain Glyndŵr and other opponents to his father's throne. He gained experience of a set battle (at Shrewsbury, in 1403, where he was wounded by an arrow) and of siege warfare (at the disastrous siege of Aberystwyth in 1407), as well as coming into contact with some of the country's leading soldiers of the day. This experience may have had an influence on him as a later military leader.

On his father's death in 1413, Henry assumed control of the realm and, by 1414, started to turn his attention to foreign affairs, particularly to the relationship with France, firstly, in respect of English demands for reinstatement of the boundaries of Aquitaine, as agreed by the Treaty of Brétigny, 1360, and, secondly, in regard to his claim to the title of King of France through his great-grandfather, Edward III. Henry initially called a Great Council in the spring of 1414 to discuss going to war with France, but the lords insisted that he should negotiate further and moderate his claims. The subsequent negotiations ultimately proved fruitless, but lasted almost right up to the point when Henry's army was ready to embark in August 1415.

At the Westminster parliament held in November and December 1414, the Commons agreed to a double lay subsidy to support a campaign in France. The early months of 1415 saw massive preparations (which had started quietly in 1414) and these intensified between April and August. Supplies, victuals and arms were needed on a grand scale for the army, and a fleet of some 1,500 ships was amassed, many of which were impressed English merchant vessels, although the bulk were foreign ships hired from Holland and Zeeland, at the huge cost of £5,050 – nearly £3 million in today's money. Recruitment began in earnest in April, the army being raised by the indenture system, whereby the king entered into contracts with captains for the provision of specified quantities and types of soldiers. To fulfil their agreements, the captains, in their turn, raised their retinues through sub-contracts with other soldiers. Troops' pay rates ranged from 6d. a day for a mounted archer to 6s. 4d. a day for a duke. The excellent survival of records relating to the Agincourt campaign in The National Archives shows that there were around 260 separate indented companies, of varying sizes, which made up a force estimated at between 11,200 and 12,000, with a 3:1 ratio of archers to men-at-arms, which, through the losses sustained at Harfleur, became 4:1.

The main indentures, for a year's service, were sealed on or around 29 April 1415, with the retinues mustering around Southampton in June–July. On 11 August 1415, Henry sailed from Southampton, landing on the *Chef-de-Caux* at the mouth of the Seine on the 13th. His forces then embarked on a prolonged siege of Harfleur, which fell on 22 September. Conditions during the siege were notoriously insanitary and many died from dysentery or 'the bloody flux', or were invalided home. Losses were around 1,500 and a further 1,200 men under the Earl of Dorset were left behind to garrison the town. On 8 October, Henry left Harfleur with around 8,500 men, making for Calais. On the afternoon of 24 October, his way was blocked by a French army near the villages of Azincourt and Tramecourt, and the battle was fought the next day. Following the English victory, Henry's army arrived at Calais on 29 October.



In which ways did the campaign specifically impinge on Norfolk? An issue which affected everyone was the question of defence. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, no English king ever embarked upon an overseas campaign without first putting the defences of the realm in order. Thus, in February 1415, even before the invasion army had been brought together, Henry had taken the first measures to guard the realm in his absence by calling a Council to consider the defence of England. The outcome was a series of measures designed to safeguard England both on land and sea during the king's absence. East Anglia was to be protected by the provision of two barges and one balinger, and, in October, specific measures to keep the sea for the protection of fishermen and the king's lieges were put in place, with the commissioning of men from Norfolk and Suffolk ports to undertake this duty. In July, the sheriff of Norfolk was ordered to proclaim that all who used to keep watch for the safety of the country and protection of lieges there were bound to do so.

Who were these people 'who used to keep watch for the safety of the country and protection of lieges there' and by what means were they 'bound to do so'? The answer is to be found in the general obligation under the Statute of Winchester of 1285 for all able-bodied men between the ages of sixteen and sixty to serve in defence of their homeland. All men within this age bracket were to be sworn to arms (*jurati ad arma*) and were to provide themselves with weapons in relation to the value of their property. Commanded by commissioners of array and local constables, they were obliged to reside for

defence within the Maritime Land or *terra maritima*, a zone which extended usually either six or twelve leagues inland from the coast, and were to ensure that watches were kept at traditional watch sites along the coast, all of which were equipped with beacons to give warning of impending attack.

Considerable numbers of Norfolk men also served in Henry's army and left to fight in France. It has been estimated that, in the fifteenth century, there were some 350–400 gentry families in Norfolk and it was these who traditionally provided the *milites strenui* and esquires for military service. There are very good nominal records for the campaign in The National Archives, class E 101, and these can be conveniently consulted *via* the 'Soldier in Later Medieval England' database [http://www.medievalsoldier.org/]. From these records, other scholars have estimated that at least 41 Norfolk gentry were at Agincourt, including eight identified knights and seven esquires who were knighted on the campaign, while it has been suggested that at least ten members of the Norfolk gentry brought retinues with them. However, Dr Alban suggested that, if one included local nobility, unidentified Norfolk gentry and the lower orders in society, the figures for Norfolk would be higher than 41.

He gave a list of some Norfolk captains and the size of their retinues, then discussed in more detail the campaign experiences of selected individuals, beginning with Richard de Courtenay, Bishop of Norwich and treasurer of the royal household, who died of dysentery at the siege of Harfleur. Courtenay was an extremely important figure in the royal administration and, as keeper of the king's jewels, he advanced royal jewels to the captains in the campaign, as pledges in part payment of their retinues' wages. So close was he to Henry, that the king arranged for him to be buried in the royal chapel at Westminster Abbey,

Several prominent Norfolk soldiers were mentioned, including Thomas, Lord Camoys, from Gressenhall, who served with 32 men-at-arms and 68 archers, and who commanded the rearguard, or left wing, of the English army at Agincourt. Another captain was Sir Simon de Felbrigg, who served with 11 men-at-arms and 36 archers. Several published works have wrongly suggested that, although he had indented to provide a retinue, Felbrigg did not actually participate in the campaign, but this assumption has been based on the fact that no letters of protection for Felbrigg have come to light. However, many other soldiers who were definitely at Agincourt did not take out such letters and, moreover, Felbrigg's jewels account was settled in 1425, which would not have been the case if he had not served. John Fastolf, an esquire at the time of the campaign, provided ten men-at-arms and 37 archers, a large retinue for one of his rank, which suggests that he had already begun to establish the

military reputation for which he later became famous. Despite what some modern commentators have claimed, Fastolf did not fight at Agincourt, but was invalided back to England from Harfleur. The brothers, Sir William and Sir John Phelip, the nephews of Sir Thomas Erpingham, also brought substantial retinues with them. Sir William fought at Agincourt and later forged a distinguished career, both in the wars in France and in Lancastrian royal service, being ennobled as Lord Bardolf during the reign of Henry VI. His younger brother, Sir John, had initially had the much more illustrious career, both military and political, but died at the siege of Harfleur.

Their uncle, Sir Thomas Erpingham, the seneschal of the king's household, played a major role in the campaign, bringing with him a retinue of 20 men-at-arms and 60 archers. Erpingham, whose long and distinguished career began with his service in Aquitaine under the Black Prince in 1368 and continued through a lifelong connection with the House of Lancaster when he joined John of Gaunt's service in 1380, needs no introduction in Norfolk and certainly not in Erpingham. Indeed, he is even more widely known, through Shakespeare's play, as 'a good old commander and a most kind gentleman'. He is traditionally regarded as having been in command of the archers at Agincourt, but Dr Alban's interpretation of the famous description of Erpingham at the battle, by the chronicler Enguerrand de Monstrelet, suggested that his role was more prominent than that: Erpingham did not simply take charge of the archers, but he positioned all the troops and gave the command for the whole army to advance. We do not know for certain whether Monstrelet's report was accurate, but it has been remarked that someone of Erpingham's age (around 58 at the time of the battle) and experience would be well suited to this role, in a similar way as Thomas, Lord Camoys, who was even older than him, was called upon to command the rearguard and to be a steadying influence on it.

Extensive records relating to Erpingham's part in the campaign survive in The National Archives. The names in his retinue reflect his connections, through family, retainers and his social circle. As a consequence, we know where many of his men came from. Two of his men-at-arms, Richard Gegge, esquire, of Saham Tony, and William Baumbergh, esquire, were later to be executors to his will in July 1428. John Starlyng, esquire, of Briston, had also had personal links with him back home, while two other esquires, Thomas Geney, of Wood Dalling, and John Calthorp, of Burnham Thorpe, had been involved in transactions with him over several years. Geney and Calthorp were knighted on landing at *Chef-de-Caux*, but were invalided home after Harfleur and died after returning to England. Reynold Bresingham, a man-at-arms, was the kinsman of William Bresingham, who had been Erpingham's

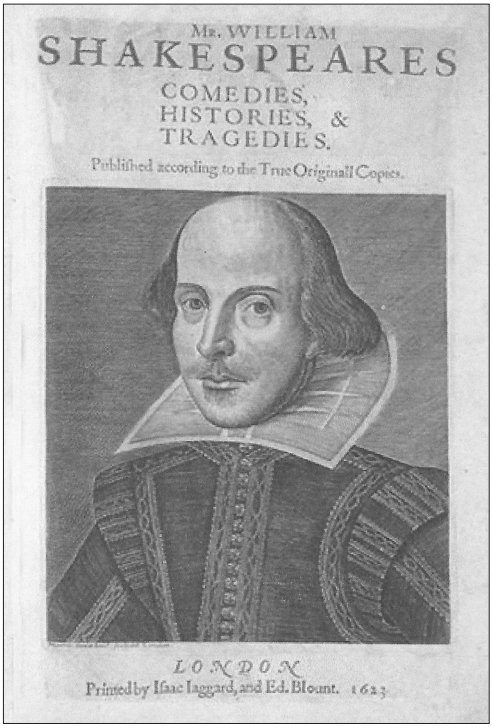
marshal at Dover castle. Man-at-arms, John Aungers of Wicklewood, another person whom we know had had previous personal contacts with Erpingham, died at Calais. Of his knights, only two – Sir Hamon Le Strange of Heacham and Sir William Goldingham, from Chigwell, Essex – fought at Agincourt.

With regard to his archers, two of them, Henry Prom and Robert Beccles, died at Harfleur, another, John de Boterie, who appears to have been one of Erpingham's household servants, was invalided home during the siege. Archer, Richard Chapman died on the march between Harfleur and Agincourt and Stephen Geryng was killed in the battle, the only one of Erpingham's retinue to die there. Another of his archers who survived, John Leveryche of Sustead, had been involved as a feoffee in an Erpingham deed of 1383.

Included in his retinue were the brothers Hamon and Leonard Le Strange, two of the younger sons of Sir John Le Strange of Hunstanton. Erpingham's muster rolls show that both started out as esquires, but by the end of the campaign, Hamon had been knighted. We know that they were both among the soldiers who 'came by Harfleur to the battle of Agincourt and thence to Calais and to England'. What is of particular interest is that on 10 June 1415, one month before he mustered with Sir Thomas Erpingham on Southampton Heath, Hamon Le Strange made his last will or *ultima voluntas*. A recent study has suggested that comparatively few soldiers during the Hundred Years' War took the sensible step of making a will before setting off on campaign. The fact that Hamon Le Strange did so would thus seem to make him a fairly unusual testator, although Sir John Phelip, Michael de la Pole, Earl of Suffolk, and several other East Anglian knights also made wills in June and July of that year, as did Sir Edmund de Thorpe of Ashwellthorpe, in June 1417, before he embarked on Henry V's invasion of Normandy in July of that year. Hamon and Leonard Le Strange both returned from the Agincourt campaign, but, while Leonard indented to serve again, in June 1417, with Sir Edmund de Thorpe, Hamon was dead by 1419.

Agincourt was seen as a great victory and one of the earliest celebrations of it is the *Agincourt Song* or *Agincourt Carol*, written within a year or so of the battle. There are two fifteenth-century manuscript versions of this song, one, in the Bodleian Library, dating from the second quarter of the century, and the earliest known version of it, which is in the 'Trinity Carol Roll', in Trinity College Library, Cambridge. From the styles of its tidy Anglicana script and musical annotation, the Trinity version can be dated to the second or third decades of the century. It was certainly written no later than the 1420s and probably soon after 1415. The Trinity version provides yet another possible link between the Agincourt campaign and Norfolk: analysis of the dialect used in it implies that the scribe was from south Norfolk.

Shakespeare and Medieval East Anglian Drama, a talk by Dr Rebecca Pinner



Rebecca began her lecture with a quote from Ben Jonson stating that Shakespeare's work was 'not of an age, but for all time' – that it is timeless. When we hear of adaptations of his plays in every language, plays customised for varying cultures and modern dress productions, we can agree this is so. The themes of comedy, tragedy and history apply universally.

But we must not forget that Shakespeare was the product of his time. He wrote with a particular space in mind. Theatres in the sixteenth century had no proscenium arch with curtains, no scenery, no lighting. The audience was not seated in a darkened auditorium suspending their disbelief. Playhouses such as The Swan and Globe had a thrust stage bringing the drama into the heart of the audience. The plays were acted in daylight. Many of the audience, the groundlings, stood throughout.There was a tiring room where the actors

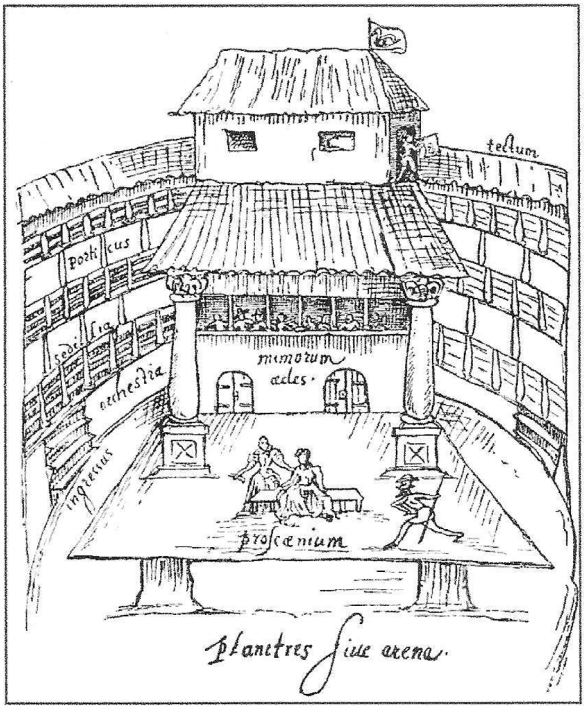
could be glimpsed changing into costume in towers at the back of the stage. Any props were small, carried on and off by the actors. There was a reliance not on stage effects but on the spoken word to drive the action forward.

Apart from this physical environment, Shakespeare was writing at the time of the Reformation but would have knowledge of the processions, dramas and local customs of the unreformed church. His work was influenced by this style. The increasing use of English in the church was echoed in Shakespeare's expansion of the English language. This was the time too of the Tudor myth when the dynasty begun by Henry VII, having 'stolen' the throne, felt edgy about their right to be monarchs. There was a succession of claimants to the throne. Elizabeth I had no heir of her body, giving rise to nervousness about the succession. Hence the plays based on recent History. Shakespeare as a shareholder in the playhouse and civil servant in the Lord Chamberlain's and Kings' Men companies had a vested interest in writing plays acceptable at the Royal court that boosted Tudor claims to the succession and did not directly question the religious settlement.

So in his play Richard III it was politically expedient to deride the man whom Henry defeated in battle. At the time Richard had been well regarded, but Queen Margaret in the play claims he was a monster: 'thou slander of thy heavy mother's womb'. Recent excavations of his body have authenticated his scoliosis that gave him a curved back but his appearance did not cause any contemporary comment. Richard was fit to fight for the crown in battle. His physical appearance was exaggerated by Shakespeare and given a darker symbolism associated with a monstrous birth.

Medieval drama took the form of mystery plays such as the cycle performed in York. Pageant wagons, one for each section of the cycle from the creation to revelation, were pulled through the city, enacted and then moved on to act the same section in another part of the city. This drama using all male actors took place in daylight in the open air relying on the actors' linguistic skills to deliver the text. Taking place in the city streets it was a communal experience. We can see the parallels between the mystery plays and the playhouse of Shakespeare's time.

Another format was the morality play with allegorical Virtues and Vice. Such a play believed to have been written in East Anglia was *Mankynde* which illustrated the struggle between good and evil from the medieval Christian perspective. One of the characters was Titivillus, a tempter who had dramatic energy throughout the play. A tempter is featured in a wall painting in Eaton church affecting the behaviour of women gossiping during mass and so opposing God's will. Titivillus is described as 'the collector of unconsidered syllables' - that is gossiping.



Shakespeare cherry picked the tradition of mystery plays and the characters of morality plays. He drew on this knowledge when writing a play such as Richard III. In his opening soliloquy addressing the audience directly he chooses Villainy and Vice: 'I am determined to prove a villain'. He revels in his duplicity, blaming his physical deformity. The Vice 'Iniquity' is employed in the murder of the two princes in the Tower.

So Shakespeare copies the medieval tradition of using allegories such as Vice, but his genius twists it. Richmond, later Henry VIII, in the conclusion to the play gives a speech which replicates Mercy in *Mankynde*: 'proclaim a pardon to the soldiers fled'. Richard is no more the tormentor, a Villain, but is tormented on the eve of battle by the ghosts of all those he has killed. This incantation by ghosts has an equivalent in *Mankynde*. He loses confidence – 'I shall despair. There is no creature loveth me and if I die no soul shall pity me' – and is killed in battle.

Rebecca gave this lecture with humour and scholarship. A great start to our Shakespeare trilogy.

Lynda Wix

Tour of the Van Dal Shoe Factory

On Tuesday 16th February 2016 about 20 members and guests met up in the Van Dal factory shop, Dibden Road, Norwich for a tour of the shoe factory.

Historical background (taken from *The Story of the Norwich Boot and Shoe Trade* by Frances & Michael Holmes published by Norwich Heritage Projects 2013)

In 1936 Adelman Goodman (a refugee from Belarus), who had links with the footwear industry going back nearly 60 years, bought the Florida Shoe Factory (Florida) then on Salhouse Road, Norwich. Florida had been set up by a German refugee to make ladies shoes. Adelman's grandson, Simon, is still involved with the Company.

Originally Florida sold un-branded shoes, but in 1946 Van-Dal Shoes (now without a hyphen) was set up to market the Florida range. In the 1950s a design change intended to create narrow fitting shoes (Norfolk Narrows) brought in, through a design error, wide fitting shoes (Norfolk Broads) which the Company now markets. The move to the Dibden Road site was made in the late 1950s.

In 2001 Florida established an operation in India working on a partnership basis to designs and specifications from Norwich and, in 2005, operations were also established in China. In 2012 between 12% and 15% of output came from Dibden Road, one of the last remaining traditional shoe factories in Norwich.

Introductory talk with film

The first part of our tour was given by Avis and started with a five minute promotional DVD showing various stages of the shoe making process. It showed clearly the personal involvement of the operators with the machine and the deft handywork of the latter which we were later able to see on our factory tour.

Avis then talked us through the various materials used in the production of shoes and showed us physical examples. First were the various leathers: mostly cow skin, cut thickly and sliced into 3 layers. These are then shaved, washed, dipped and dyed, then stretched and dried. The first layer is used for the shoe uppers, the second for suede and the third for the shoe linings and socks.

Avis handed round samples of "moc croc" (paint sprayed with patterned imprint), snake skin (imprinted and made shiny), lizard (buff-like suede) and kid skin (this one from goat not cow). The skins have to go abroad to be dyed

nowadays as there are no tanneries left in the UK. Lastly Avis showed us a cheetah patterned shoe and explained that it was cow skin with hair left on.

We were shown a last (since the 1960s made of plastic not wood). Avis demonstrated the hinge mechanism by means of which the shoe could be taken off when finished. We also saw the shoe lining, inner sole and shank. The shank is used in high heeled models to keep the foot up and can show up on security clearance, hence the requirement to remove shoes. Heels are made of plastic and covered in leather. Soles are not made of leather but resin or the best rubber (which does not crack or create holes through the wear of driving).

By the end of this talk we were all much better informed and being able to see and handle the various components made the process more memorable.

Factory tour

The group was divided into two for this tour. Our guide was Graham, a service manager with 35 years' experience. He told us that there were conflicting stories about the origin of the Van Dal name. The most likely is that this was the name of a Dutch ship when it registered at Tilbury. The present site has around 80 employees of whom 20 work in the factory. The Company has gone from wholesale to retail through e.g. concession shops and nowadays its website that has grown 111% in the last 6 years. Recent developments include the making of river-dance shoes for the US market and the VIONIC orthopaedic inner sole to correct posture. The typical client is in the 50 plus age range.

Graham then led us into the factory. All operatives are now salaried not piece workers and can do each job so they can have the advantage of variety in their day. We saw the cutting machine first. Cutters are made of steel and operators need good eyesight to spot the grain and colouring of the skins and look for flaws e.g. mosquito bite holes. We went on to see the uppers fixed on to the lasts and then removed, the stitching and closing area, the insertion of the linings and shoe stiffeners and the fixing of the soles. The final stage is the seat and side lasting in which tiny nails are fired to fix all together and the shoe can then be steamed to fit. Finally we saw the river-dance shoe area.

Having thanked our guides for their entertaining and informative tour the group met up again in the factory shop where we were offered a 10% discount.

I, for one, came away thinking that I should now treat my shoes with greater respect.

Caroline Driscoll

NOTICES

Visit to Brinton Hall

A visit to Brinton Hall has been arranged for Thursday 26th May starting at 11.30 am, lasting 2.5–3 hours with lunch of a starter and a pudding for £20.

The 16th century house has a fine oak staircase reputed to have orginated from Merton place, Horatio Nelson's last residence. The tour is on the ground floor only and continues into gardens that include woodland and walled garden with a hot greenhouse. There are displays of textiles, documents and archaeological finds.

See poster on Town Hall and alhs website (alhs.weebly.com) for more detail. To book, or if you have any queries, contact Caroline, 01263 731808 or caldriscoll8ct@gmail.com. If you leave a message please leave a name and contact telephone number.

Autumn Course.

The course for Autumn 2016 will be *A History of the World in 100 Paintings.* Paintings make windows on to the world. Different times and places reveal themselves through Art; the way the painting is made and the people it is made for give us fascinating insights into our pasts.

The course tutor will be Fiona Fitzgerald. There will be 8 sessions starting on September 21st in Pegg's Yard. Please note that the start time is 2.30 unlike previous courses. The fee is £35 for the 8 sessions, payable at session 2.

To book a place, please contact Jim Pannell 01263 731087 or by email at jpannell487@btinternet.com

Voices of Aylsham

The new exhibition at the Heritage Centre is based on oral history recordings, each section with a listening station to hear extracts and see quotations from the recordings with associated photographs. See: www.aylshamheritage.com

Annual Dinner

This will be at the Buckinghamshire Arms on Thursday 14th April at 7.00 for 7.15. Booking forms, available from Jim (01263 731087) or downloaded from the Society website (alhs.weebly.com), need to be in by 26th March.

Aylsham: Hungate

Aylsham: Hungate 1622–1840, A Norfolk Streetscape by William & Maggie Vaughan-Lewis (2014) proved popular and soon sold out. It has now been reprinted and is available from Barnwells and the Heritage Centre.