

# AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



## JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

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Front cover: Donthorn Court, formerly Aylsham Union Workhouse

Back cover: Visit to Brinton Hall. Photo courtesy of Victor Morgan.

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### **ALHS Finances** by Ian McManus, Treasurer

The Society's journal devotes itself largely to matters of local historical interest, whether research or the recording of lectures and visits, or information about forthcoming events. However, the Society needs to be viable financially in order to function, so I am using a little space in this issue to look back over the last year and preview the balance sheet which I shall present at the AGM on 6<sup>th</sup> October.

Income is mainly from your subscriptions, this year just under £1,000, supplemented by visitor payments, refreshments and donations. This income covers lecture fees, hall hire and publication of the journal. The Autumn Course this year made a profit for the Society of about £150. Outings are costed to pay for themselves. Publications are gradually paid for by sales; this year we published the Baptist Chapel book, which was quickly in profit due to a contribution of £560 from the Baptist Union during our last financial year.

Subscriptions for the 2016/2017 season are due on or before the AGM, see insert. The cost will remain at £9, or £15 for two people at the same address sharing a journal. Your support and participation in our programme will ensure that Aylsham Local History Society continues to flourish.

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Many thanks to Vic Morgan for a redoubtable account of Shakesperian life and theatre to complete the winter lecture series in March, to Jim Pannell for organising the very successful social evening at the Buckinghamshire Arms introduced with a fine spiel by Sheila Merriman, and to Caroline Driscoll and Sue Sharpe for the summer outing to Brinton Hall, on which they give a report in this issue.

Please see notices on page 216 and follow events on the website.

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

by Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis

*The second in the series*

## No 2 Death: wills and inventories

In the last article we looked at the use of manor court rolls for property history in Aylsham. By using other sources more can be discovered about the families named in the rolls. Because the manor allowed tenants to bequeath their copyhold lands to whomever they wished, it was necessary for a will to be shown in court at the death of the holder. If no will was made, the custom of gavelkind took precedence: the property would be split between all the sons (or all the daughters).

Throughout the period therefore people made a court surrender of their copyhold premises 'to the use of their will' as soon as they were admitted to property. This meant that their intent was flagged up in the court rolls well in advance of their death. So it was very common for Aylsham residents to draw up a will to ensure their wishes were met. Of course by the 16<sup>th</sup> century it was quite normal everywhere for married men, widows and younger men who were travelling to make a will. Indeed some men made a new one every time they journeyed anywhere, just in case. However Aylsham does seem to have a very high number surviving among the diocesan records in the Norfolk Record Office in the three main local church courts in which they could be proved (Archdeaconry of Norwich, Archdeaconry of Norfolk and the Consistory Court). There are over 300 wills in the 16<sup>th</sup> century alone.

Those with greater estates and land in more than one county usually used the higher level church probate courts such as the Prerogative Court of Canterbury. These are held by the National Archives at Kew (PROB 11) but now, for £3.45 a will, those proved before 1857 can be downloaded from their website quickly and easily at home. Alternatively they can be found on the [ancestry.co.uk](http://ancestry.co.uk) site (NRO and libraries have a subscription enabling free access). There are some 20 Aylsham wills in the PCC for the period 1500–1700.

Most are in English and the will register handwriting is generally very legible, even for the early wills. Some of the original wills survive but the microfilms used in the NRO are mostly registered copies, painstakingly copied out by the clerks. They often formalised spellings (the name in the

catalogue often differs markedly from the spelling in the will) and of course there are no original signatures. Including letters of administration (in Latin) and wills, there are some 500 items covering Aylsham for the whole period. Sometimes wills did not get registered for probate but were still used in the manor court so the extracts given, in English, in the rolls are the only copies surviving.

After death, the will was read out at a manor court and the provisions regarding real estate carried out. Different extracts may be copied in over a year or so as individuals came to claim their part of the estate. This means that wills can be a hugely useful source for identifying who left which property to whom, their executors and how people were related to each other by marriage. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the executors were often, but not always, the same as the property feoffees (trustees) which we mentioned in the last article. Having the full will can help sort out those multiple parties' names and understand the entries better. By adding the phrase 'my feoffees shall surrender or deliver estate when required', testators helped widows in particular to ensure property was not retained by the wrong people - although Chancery cases abound where feoffees did not step down!

Family links are by far the most useful nuggets in wills; a new surname in the court rolls often comes through a daughter's marriage or a widow's remarriage, often very hard to discover before parish registers were introduced or where, as in Aylsham, the earliest register has not survived.

Probate inventories – those required to be made after death – have not survived well in Norfolk but are both rewarding and infuriating where they do exist.

## **The Society's published wills and inventories**

Of course many members will be very familiar with these wills and some transcripts were made in the local history classes of 1989–90. A list of those printed or extracted in the Journals is at the end of the section. For those who do not have back issues, the archive in the Town Hall holds a good set.

But here let's look in detail at the will of Simon Skottowe – an excellent transcription by Geoffrey and Margaret Nobbs that was made to help David Scotter with his family research (Vol 7 No 12 Dec 2006). Simon made his will in 1530 and it was proved in 1535; a typical example of a pre-reformation will, it began with extensive charitable bequests to assist the souls of Simon and his family. Within a few years, after the Church of England separated from Rome, this long piece would be replaced with a shorter, more Protestant statement and a payment to the local church.

Margaret and Geoffrey have helpfully kept the original spellings and sentence structures which are essential to recognise for ease of reading what are often long, unpunctuated pages. ‘To my doughters children iche of them iii s iiii d’ and ‘all the landes thereto longing’ are two typical phrases. Without punctuation care must be taken in reading ‘I wolle and gif to Margaret my wif the place called Oodgate & the lands thereto belonging to her and her heirs’. The ‘thereto belonging’ is a legal catchall to describe the property and the ‘to [hold to] her and her heirs’ describes how she will own the bequest (as fee simple so she can leave it to her heirs).

Geoffrey suggested that the place was Woodgate and might have been a substantial house. Had he been able to spend a couple of hours on the computer, as now possible, searching the Henry VIII court roll and reading the TNA wills he could have confirmed both that the name Oodgate was Woodgate and that the family status was as he noted. But the court rolls show that there were several houses at Woodgate and this one was actually Sankence Lodge (as we know it today) not Woodgate House. The estate had about 115 acres.

But much more is revealed – his will stated Simon wanted to be buried in Aylsham churchyard ‘by the children of Margaret my wif’, without naming them. From the court rolls it turns out that Margaret Skottowe was previously Margaret Orwell which explains Simon’s third executor Thomas Orwell. He was Margaret’s only surviving son by her first husband Thomas Orwell senior, a notable Aylsham townsman. It was Thomas senior who had bought this Sankence property and he left it to Margaret at his sudden death in 1517; when she married Simon in 1522, she transferred the property to him as her husband. That is why in his will Simon leaves it to her and her heirs – ie Thomas Orwell junior. If it had belonged to Simon, Margaret would have been left the house only for her lifetime after which it would have reverted to the Scottowe family.

Another confusion arises over the practise of having brasses in churches as remembrances rather than grave markers. Geoffrey helpfully added the inscription from the church at Swanton Abbot (where the Skottowe family had property) ‘Pray for the soul of Margaret the late wife of Simon Skottowe’. This must have been paid for by his Scottowe sons John and William or their sons; John had inherited Simon’s house in Swanton which, in his will, Simon had said that he lived in – despite describing himself as of Aylsham! The sons would naturally put the Scottowe surname on the brass as being the most important to them but in fact Margaret had married for a third time and when she died her name was Kynges! (Another instance of this practice is the brass in Itteringham church to ‘Margaret Lumnour’ of Mannington which is next to one for her husband William. Margaret actually died Margaret Paston,

having married a minor Paston after William's death. Again her Lumnour son would have paid for this and had no reason to use the Paston surname.)

A wealthy merchant of Wiveton, John Kynges died in 1543 and again Margaret held her grip on her Sankence property which he 'left' to her in his will. She lived on to 1559 – she would have been a young bride at her first wedding around 1505.

Her son Thomas Orwell (she apparently had no children by Skottowe or Kynges) died only three years after John Kynges. His will includes another helpful watchpoint: his stepfather is called 'my father in law'. We know it meant John as the full phrase is 'my father in law and mother' but used alone it might be confusing, especially as he was married. Margaret's Aylsham estate was left to her grandsons Thomas and John Orwell. (The full story of Sankence and the Orwell family will be covered in our next book.)

### **List of printed examples in the Journals:**

Vol 4 No 2 June 1994. Early 16<sup>th</sup> c brasses in Aylsham church. Described by J Roger Greenwood.

A useful list which include extracts from wills giving directions for burials and gifts to church:

Priest John Boller 1506 wanted to be buried 'by my fadir and modir ... I wull yt my executors shall bye or do to be bought 30 marbill stonnys after the lenght and brede of the stonnys yt my fadirs grave ys covered wt. and yr wt to cover my grave & as ferre cumpas abought as the said stonys may extend.'

[I will that my executors shall buy or do to be bought 30 marble stones similar to the length and breadth of the stones that my father's grave is covered with and therewith to cover my grave & as far encompass around as the said stones may extend].

In good practice, yt should not be used as the y is not a y but a symbol for th (a thorn); better to type 'I wull [tha]t my executors' or just 'that'. Again 'therewith' or '[the]r w[i]t[h]' is more correct.

John Collett 1518 has a wish that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century hand at first glance is challenging: burial 'before the Trinitie aluter or ells next the Voyde Room next unto my Awncestrye ... I wyll that Rome be pathed with marble of my goods.' (before the Trinity altar or else beside the empty space (or vault) next to my ancestors. That space be paved with marble [paid for by] my goods.)

Vol 7 No 12 Dec 2006 Will of 1535 Simon Skottowe (see above).

Vol 2 No 9 March 1990 Will of 1620 Christopher Reve gent. Transcribed by the Local History class and printed in Jane Nolan's article on the Reve family.

A full transcript with original spelling and a wonderful source for reading the typical household goods of the period. The religious opening is a little longer than some but he was an attorney so not short on words. Watchpoint here: the will was dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1619 which because of the later calendar change is 1620 in our understanding (Jan to March was the end of the year). It was proved in July 1620. Among the sons mentioned is 'my sonne Wetherly' who was in fact his son-in-law. Caution is always needed when trying to work out the family trees.

Vol 3 No 3 Sept 1991 Will of 1663 James Allen beer brewer. Transcribed by David Walker.

A full transcript with useful opening phrases and showing how a wife benefited from the family property until her children were 23 or 24.

Vol 3 No 8 Dec 1992 Will of 1663 John Doughty clerk. Transcribed by Charles Farrow.

Copied from the original will, not the registered version. This is a splendid reminder that we have so far only talked about wills catalogued as testators 'of Aylsham'. We have often found vital clues to family linkage in wills of members living further afield. Here Charles was working on research in Wood Norton and found that John was a member of the Aylsham Doughtys. A cleric, he had no wife or children so his wider family are his heirs. His sister had married into the Empson family, grocers of Aylsham and their daughter Margaret married into the Holby clan, who were of Norwich and Aylsham. Sarah Berry, daughter of Peter Empson is also mentioned. Care must be taken with this will as he uses 'cousin' where we would say niece. But the best find of all was the following:

'I give towards the new building of the Free School House at Aylsham (so ruined it cannot be repaired) if it be new built and finished within two year after my decease £5'.

Doughty, being a clergyman, wrote his own will as he tells us 'every word

being written with mine own hand'. He would have written many for his village parishioners.

Vol 2 No 3 Sept 1988 Will of 1679 Robert Doughty. Transcribed by Gill Fletcher.

This was also copied from the original will. A good example of a transcript with modern spelling and punctuation. The Doughty family were a major influence in Aylsham in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see *Aylsham; A Nest of Norfolk Lawyers*) so it is surprising to see such a short will. The last sentence is unusual and rather touching: 'I pray God bless all my children, married or unmarried, having been very dutiful to me, and I pray God prosper them all.'

His reference to Aylsham Rectory as one of his properties is, of course, not to a house but the lease of the impropriated rectorial living and its very profitable right to collect the great tithes.

Vol 5 No 6 June 1998 1642 Inventory of John Taylor glover. Article by Annie Alston.

Annie worked through both the will and inventory of this Aylsham tradesman, who died relatively young and with little notice. In his will he is spelt Taylour (and of 'Alesham'). Her interpretations of the entries are well phrased using caution where necessary and adding excellent contextual information about leather-working to bring the documents to life. One problem with inventories is that they were only interested in the goods of the testator, not his house or where it was. Annie concluded that given his trade, his house and workshop with its lime pits, would have been near the river, probably around Millgate and his goods sold at market. But as noted, Taylor left 4 acres of land in his will and this appears in the Sextons manor court book. As it is in Sextons field, on the other side of the Bure from Millgate, his house may have been in the Drabblegate area.

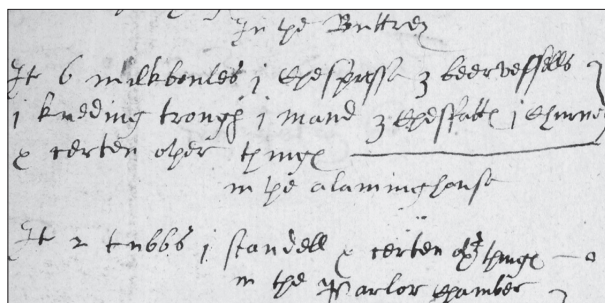
Inventories are notoriously difficult to use to re-draw the house in which the appraisers made their valuations. Were some rooms empty and therefore not mentioned? Did part of a building house a relative and so again was ignored. Only John's goods were to be covered so his wife's items might be all carefully stored in a room which would be excluded. These points might explain why Annie felt the house was an odd shape with expected features missing. Going back to the original often throws up little amendments: there was a 'fetherbed' in the parlour as Annie had expected to find but in the yard the calves pelles (Latin, pellis) are the undressed skins rather than the heads.



Vol 3 No 10 June 1993 1737 Inventory of John Croshold. Article, transcription and drawing by Jane Nolan.

Jane takes all these points forward in her discussion of an inventory, catalogued as 'of Aylsham' but with no mention of a place on the document. This is not a probate inventory but one drawn up for a legal case where Croshold's goods were taken by Sheriff's writ, presumably to pay a debt or a court fine. Jane worked out that Croshold was a Norwich draper, a freeman and Mayor in 1724. She noted that he held for a short time a property in Aylsham but the inventory description is of a fine town house with its counting house, probably in St Peter's Hungate where he died in 1741. The Aylsham court book clearly describes him as citizen of Norwich draper in 1715 when he provided a mortgage for Sarah the daughter of Nicholas Howes. Croshold never held this Aylsham property as the money was repaid in 1717. The watchpoint here is the phrase 'conditional surrender' in the court book and the subsequent entry for 'satisfaction' when the loan is repaid.

With modern access to Blomefield's county history online ([british-history.ac.uk](http://british-history.ac.uk)) Jane could have also found that the appraisers were the sheriff's top two serjeants at mace, not Aylsham men. She mentioned a bill from a Mr John Bennett who could be the link; he was an important lawyer (see *Nest of Lawyers*) in Aylsham and if acting for Croshold this paper could have been with other papers in Aylsham. The catalogue has now been altered, omitting the place-name. Regardless of the location of the house, her article with helpful glossary is a great start for anyone wishing to look at inventories.



Now your chance: in the photo of Taylor's inventory, there is a room name which neither Annie nor we deciphered. After the Buttrey, a new heading reads 'In the .....inghouse'. It only has two tubs and a wooden stand so what is it? Suggestions to the editor please!

## Aylsham Poor Law prior to the new Workhouse

by Lynda Wix



In 2016 we are familiar with the dilemma of how to support the unemployed, disabled and aged without alienating 'hard working families' whose taxation funds such support. Some see this as a financial burden on the able bodied employed, encouraging a benefits dependency by those who prefer not to work. This dilemma is known in Aylsham now and was known in all past times. The poor are always with us.

The Stiffkey letters<sup>1</sup> from 1583 record a Petition from the Townsmen of Aylsham about the 'great multitude' of poor people that have 'neede of the charyte of others'. The effects of enclosure, dissolution of the monasteries and rising prices contributed to men, women and children turning to begging and vagrancy, moving from place to place, there being no national benefits system, just small local charities and alms houses more geared up to the aged 'deserving poor'. The vagrants were a mix of those capable of work and seeking employment and of those too old, sick or unwilling to work. The solution was whipping, being ordered to return to their own parishes and placement in a House of Correction. In Aylsham, a Bridewell, a building for short term imprisonment was set up in 1543 where vagabonds and prostitutes could be corrected. The truncated building is on the corner of Burgh road. It was closed in 1825.

A national scheme aiming to provide work was enacted in 1598 and 1601 in the hope of bringing stability and order. Overseers of the Poor were appointed by Justices of the Peace in each parish to help those who had no 'daily trade of life to get their living by'. Every parish was responsible for its own poor. The overseers and churchwardens were instructed to keep 'a convenient stock of flax, hemp, wool, thread, iron and other stuff to set the poor on work'; to provide apprenticeships for children and sums of money 'for the necessary relief of the lame, impotent, old and blind'. The Houses of Correction for idlers helped to enforce the Acts. Poor rates were levied in each parish to pay for all this. After 1662, those from other parishes were not eligible to receive aid and were removed to their parish of original settlement. In Aylsham a partial local solution arose when Thomas Cressy made a will in 1612 leaving twelve tenements and land in Millgate. The income from rents was to be distributed to the poor at the discretion of the churchwardens.

The management of the poor evolved during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, trying to manage the cycles of depression, poor harvests, seasonal employment on the land and effects of wars. Adding to these factors, people were in deepest distress when there were many young children in a family who could not contribute earnings or who were too frail to do heavy manual labour. All this and still keep the ratepayers on board.

Sentiments to the poor could be compassionate. The frontispiece of the Rate book 1674–1720 lists several texts among which was 'In giving of this alms enquire not so much into the person as his necessity. God looke not soe much upon the merits of him that requires, as into the manor of him that relieves. If the man deserve not, thou hast given it to humanity.'<sup>2</sup>

However the wish not to support the poor from other parishes was firmly applied. Examination Settlements hearings were held to determine the right of a person to claim help from the Overseers of the Poor. Maria Spink in 1817 swore on oath before J.Ps that she was 'born of lawful parents in the said parish of Aylsham who were settled inhabitants'.<sup>3</sup> Removal orders were enforced. A Removal Order records Susan Ash being removed from Aylsham to Brampton in 1718<sup>4</sup>. Elisabeth Trouss was found begging in Shoreditch, London in 1750 and removed by stages to Aylsham.<sup>5</sup>

The paperwork was prodigious. Trying to register and remove people moving around looking for sustenance was like a never ending herding of cats.

During the wars against Napoleon men were away in the army or navy leaving their families to fund themselves. The poor applied to the overseers for a Militia order which granted relief. Ann Whilley's husband was on active service in 1801 and was given 3s 6d a week until he returned.<sup>6</sup> Once the war

ended the men returned swelling the ranks of those in no settled situation. The poverty continued during the agricultural depression after the wars, aggravated by the introduction of new machinery on farms precipitating the Swing riots.

The poor unemployed did not appreciate that after the wars, farmers suffered a loss of profits, making high wages impossible. The farmers/overseers did not appreciate that the poor were at the mercy of economic forces, not morally unwilling to work. The unemployed, who would initially need relief wherever they moved, were discouraged by the settlement system from leaving their parish to seek for work. At a time of increased population and changes in working, there was a surplus of labour.

This situation led to increasing demands for relief. A workhouse had been built by the parish in Aylsham in 1776, on some of the land bequeathed by Cressy, to serve the poor. The system was administered by local gentry and clergy in Vestry meetings called a workhouse committee.

So those who were in their own homes needing help to sustain their families, received 'outdoor relief'. The able bodied poor who could not afford rents but who needed a shelter in the form of a parish workhouse to help to re-establish themselves or who were just too old or sick to manage on their own, received 'indoor relief'. A gentleman James Neald who was travelling around all the country inspecting workhouses gave Aylsham a glowing report in 1805 for its humanity, generosity, good diet and housing. The *Cloathing Book*<sup>7</sup> records how often shoes, jackets, breeches and so on were provided. Under the old poor law there were at times payments for food, clothing, tools, furniture, rent, fuel and tobacco. Doctors' bills were paid. Women in the workhouse were hired to nurse, care for and wash the elderly and heavily pregnant. Relief got the unemployed through the winter.

But it was not all liberality and compassion. Today there is little censure on single mothers so it is chilling to see the *Aylsham Bastardy receipt Book 1825*<sup>8</sup> for children born out of wedlock needing care. The woman had to appear before a J.P 'to declare herself to be with child who is likely to be born in bastardy and to be chargeable to the parish of Aylsham'. Sometimes the father could be named and held to account. The *Receipt Book* records the payments made to the mother. Sadly there is sometimes written 'This child is dead', a comment on the mortality rate of the weak and undernourished.

A balloting system was introduced in 1822<sup>9</sup> whereby work and parish apprentices could be shared out fairly between those willing to take them on. A *Register of apprentices*<sup>10</sup> recorded names of persons to whom bound, his or her trade, term of apprenticeship, parties to the indenture and the magistrates assenting with their name. e.g. James Blunt aged 10 bound for 7 years to a

WHEREAS *Elizabeth Troupe* was  
apprehended in the *Said Parish of St Leonard Shoreditch*  
as a Rogue and Vagabond, (*videlicet*) *wandering and begging*  
*there*

and upon Examination of the said *Elizabeth Troupe*  
taken before *me* upon Oath (which  
Examination is hereunto annexed) it doth appear that *the place of*  
*last legal Settlement of the said Elizabeth*  
*Troupe is in the Parish of Alesham in the*

These are therefore to require you the said Constable or other Officer  
to Convey the said *Elizabeth Troupe*  
to the *Parish of Chestnut in Hertfordshire*, that being the first  
*Parish* in the next Precinct thro' which *she* ought to pass in the  
direct Way to the said *Parish of Alesham* to which  
*she is* to be sent and to deliver *her* to the Constable or  
other Officer of such *Parish* in such next Precinct, together with this  
Pass, and the Duplicate of the Examination of the said *Elizabeth Troupe*  
taking his Receipt for the same. And the said *Elizabeth Troupe*

to be there provided for according to Law. And you the said Church-  
Wardens, Chapel-Wardens, and Overseers of the Poor, are hereby required  
to receive the said Person and provide for *her* as aforesaid. Given under  
my Hand and Seal this *fourth* Day of *December*  
in the Year of our Lord 1750.  
*Wm*  
*Will Caflon*

chimney sweep. Other records describe what work was done and for how long, e.g. James Spink broke 20 bushels of stone in one day December 1825.<sup>11</sup> In 1782 Gilbert Unions, whereby parishes could join together to defray the cost of the poor law without an expensive Act of Parliament, were allowed. Buxton near Aylsham built a House of Industry, now demolished and just a small pile of stones in a wood, about half a mile from Buxton on the Coltishall road. It was built in the late eighteenth century with the aim to give skills to the poor so they could find work. In 1801 three nearby parishes joined with Buxton to form such a Gilbert Union. A local Act added nine more parishes in 1806. Similarly Oulton parish in 1792 had a House of Industry and this too



added more parishes. This meant there were three workhouses Buxton, Oulton and Aylsham existing close together.

The Poor Law Amendment Act 1834 was passed to reform on a national system the way poverty was managed. It is interesting to look at the debate in Parliament before this act was passed. Some could see trouble ahead. 'It was impossible to find in a workhouse the means of employing the poor profitably. There was the expense of building and maintaining workhouses with the attendant wages and costs of commissioners and assistant commissioners – the Bill proposes oppression and tyranny – it was an agency of force and compulsion – the welfare of the poor is not cared for as it used to be by their superiors – there will be broken links of the chain of social dependencies. Will the poor be more satisfied or more grateful or more moral for being forced into a workhouse in exchange for his cottage?'<sup>12</sup> Supporters of the bill said the 'current system deprived the poor of all initiative to exertion or virtue and brought idleness, extravagance and misery'. Ratepayers were jibbing at the constant calls on their resources. The Bill was passed.

Aylsham Poor Law Union was formed under this new Act in April 1836 with 47 men elected to be Poor Law guardians and embracing 43 parishes. Until 1837 Aylsham kept the Old Workhouse but this building was demolished in 1842 and Buxton and Oulton took up the strain. It was believed Aylsham workhouse was surplus to requirements and moreover the building was not now suited to the demands placed on it. The plan was to build a New Workhouse in Aylsham for all this enlarged Union. Unfortunately the delay in building a new workhouse coincided with continued times of unrest and distress among farm labourers.

Many agricultural labourers took advantage of poor law sponsored schemes to aid emigration to Yorkshire textile factories, sailing from Yarmouth to Hull, or travelling to Canada and Australia. The peak for emigration came in 1836–1837, but still in the Aylsham Workhouse Minutes<sup>13</sup> of 1848 we read 'The vestry raised £120 for Benjamin Grix wife and children to go to Australia, John Rudd's family and three young men and MaryAnn Rivett and Timothy Stone to Canada'. It was hoped surplus labour would be mopped up by such schemes. 22 'emigrating parishes' had a higher poor rate than 21 'non emigrating parishes'.

The New Poor Law of 1834 was harsher than the old system. There was to be central supervision of local administration with a mobile poor law inspectorate. There had been wide use of allowances for outdoor rather than indoor relief. The old poor law had been trying to help weaker people in society with a liberal regime and aiming in the houses of industry to get the able bodied back to work by making them do profitable work. By the mid 1820's all this had

been failing so paving the way for a New Poor Law. From 1831–1835 there was a reduction in relief paid. Now under the new Act, the Workhouse Test was find a job or enter the workhouse. In the House classification of paupers meant families were split up into different wards. A man and his wife were separated from each other and their children. E.N. Clowes wrote on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1834 to the Norwich Mercury ‘that all relief to the able bodied should be given in a workhouse in kind and for labour’, that is no monies being paid.

The local gentry and clergy at first were delighted with the effect of the New Poor Law. They sent an address to Lord John Russell in February 1837 recording that with ‘honest pleasure the guardians look forward to the speedy diminution of parochial burdens hitherto so oppressive to small proprietors who before the change in the poor law in spite of their industry and frugality were nigh being converted from payers to receivers of poor rates’<sup>14</sup>. They were even more pleased that at first the costs of relieving the poor fell. Farmers as occupiers of the land on which 80% of the poor rate was levied were principal payers of the poor rate. In spite of reductions in relief, expenditure on the poor law had increased from 1832–1834 making Norfolk one of the highest rated in the country.

There was great opposition and resentment against the new system. The Old Poor Law had been seen by the poor as a safety net as of right. This was a complete break with customary practice. This was the time of machine breaking on farms as new technology threatened agricultural labour even more. There were riots, incendiarism and cattle maiming. William Watts had maimed and shot 6 cows and horses at Buxton. He was transported for life. At his trial he said ‘it was impossible for a poor man to live by honest means and all this was to support the big gutted relieving officers and other folks connected with them and the unions’<sup>15</sup>. But the resentment of the poor continued and some workhouses were burned or threatened. In 1843 John Youngs from Whitwell was detained and questioned by the Master of Aylsham Union for wanting to burn down Buxton workhouse. He was made over to the justices of the peace.<sup>16</sup>

All these years of riot and threats affected the traditional paternalistic relationship between men of property and the men they employed or helped. It seemed that loyalty to their masters had vanished. After the initial establishment of the new system the gentry withdrew to social control of the poor with charitable help and model cottages on their estates.

So the sense of social responsibility towards the labouring poor by men of property was superceded by control of the administration of the New Poor Law by farmers. Many on the board of guardians were farmers who pursued aggressively their sectional economic interest. They turned from liberality to

supporting a system of corrective discipline in the workhouse. Wages on farms were subsidized by public poor rate relief. A farmer did not have to employ men all through the year if there was a surplus of men in the workhouse who could be called upon as labour for the harvest. Resentment grew when the same men, farmers, who were lowering farm wages and giving no work in the winter were often the same men as the Guardians monitoring relief.

Dr Kay an inspector of workhouses had spoken of 'a conspiracy among employers to reduce the wages of the industrious labourers' as they used the ballot system. R N Bacon the estate manager at Holkham wrote a prize essay on Agriculture in 1844 and concluded that farmers were keeping their profits on the price of wheat when wages hardly rose above the barest subsistence. He wrote of severance from 'the mutual respect and attachment' between the poor and their employers. Farmers were opposed to the establishment of allotments so a man might feed his family. Bacon could see allotments were a 'great inducement to industry and sobriety'.

In fact as the agricultural depression continued into the Hungry Forties it was agreed that outdoor relief to the labourers was cheaper than indoor relief in the workhouse.

So society was changing. The old ways were superseded by new forces. New lines were being drawn.

This is the context in which the New Aylsham Workhouse opened in 1849.

**Sources:** *Pauper Palaces*, Anne Digby; *Atlas of Rural Protest*, ed Charlesworth; *The Poor in Aylsham*, A.L.H.S.; *Encountering and Managing the Poor*, Robin Lees; *By a Flash and a Scare*, Archer. *Norfolk Allotments a plot so far* Norfolk Recorders, Norfolk Chronicle, Norwich Mercury.

- 1 Aylsham Town Archives Box 166 item 861
- 2 Aylsham Town Archives Box 166 item 860
- 3 Aylsham Town Archives Box 5 item 16
- 4 Aylsham Town Archives Index book Box 2
- 5 Aylsham Town Archives Box 5 item 17
- 6 Aylsham Town Archives Box 5
- 7 Aylsham Town Archives Box 58
- 8 Aylsham Town Archive Box 49
- 9 Aylsham Town Archive Minute Book 1822 Box 1
- 10 Aylsham Town Archives Box 5
- 11 Aylsham Town Archives Box 3 pauper labourers books
- 12 Norwich Mercury 17<sup>th</sup> May 1834
- 13 Norfolk Record Office C/GP1/8
- 14 Norfolk Record Office C/GP1 minutes 1836-37
- 15 Norfolk Chronicle 19<sup>th</sup> Oct 1839
- 16 Norfolk record office minute book C/GP1/ and Masters report book C/GP1



# Agincourt; Unravelling the Myth

by Matthew Champion

Article to complement the lecture given at the Jubilee Centre on 26 November 2015; see also John Alban's article on The Agincourt Campaign in Norfolk in ALHS Journal 10: 177–182 (2016).



Pictorial myth of Agincourt

On the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 1415 two armies found themselves drawn up for battle opposite each other in a muddy Flanders field. On the one side was the depleted, weary and tired English army of Henry V, desperate to reach the safety of Calais after a monumental trek across much of northern France. Facing them, and blocking their route to safety, was a larger and relatively fresh French force made up of much of the nobility of the realm. To the experienced eye, and there were many of those there that day, a great French victory was about to take place. However, by the time the sun set on that day the French would have thrown away the victory, their army would be in tatters, and the legend of the Battle of Agincourt would have been born in a mess of blood and mud.

And the story of the battle of Agincourt is one that has grown with every retelling of the tale, most particularly for the English, until it has developed a mythology all of its own. A story of the underdog overcoming fantastic odds to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. William Shakespeare's historical epic built upon foundations that, even by the early seventeenth century, bore no great resemblance to the reality. In recent centuries, and particularly since the birth of cinema, it has grown again; a story of massed arrow-storms against tens of thousands of mounted French knights, of 'the few' heroically standing their ground and, with God on their side, beating back the aggressors against all odds. It is indeed perhaps how the English like to see themselves viewed, and it is no coincidence that one of the most famous depictions of the battle, the film version of *Henry V* starring Sir Laurence Olivier, was conceived, planned and filmed during the dark days of the Second World War. The truth though is a little more prosaic.

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The English fleet had sailed from Southampton on the 11<sup>th</sup> of August, a relatively late date in the year to start a continental campaign, and had arrived at their intended target, the heavily fortified port town of Harfleur, two days later. Henry V intended to take the town from the French, and establish it as a base of operations from which to retake many of the lost English possessions in Normandy and the surrounding areas. However, the defences of Harfleur were formidable, the English army was soon racked with illness, and the siege engineers made slow progress. In the end, with no sign of the promised French relieving forces, the French garrison surrendered the town on September the 23<sup>rd</sup> – almost exactly six weeks after the arrival of the English army. Whilst Henry may have been pleased with the victory, the cost in men and materials had been severe. It is reported that his forces had suffered over two thousand fatalities from dysentery alone, with almost as many again sent home by ship as being no longer fit for duty. With the winter now drawing closer, and following weeks of bad weather, it was time for the English to withdraw, leaving a strong garrison in the newly captured town.

The most obvious course of action would have been for the king to withdraw the same way he had arrived – by ship straight back to Southampton. However, reputedly against all the advice of his own council of war, Henry chose to march the remnants of his army across northern France, aiming to set sail from the English held port of Calais. The move was one of almost purely political motivation, designed to demonstrate to the French that the English could go wherever they wanted, whenever they wished. It was an act of deliberate provocation intended to humiliate the French nobility; an act of bravado that very nearly went disastrously wrong.

The small English army, many still suffering from the debilitating effects of dysentery, set forth from Harfleur on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October for what should have been a relatively easy week-long march across French held territory. However, the French forces were already on the move, gathering strength as they concentrated their troops, and determined to contain the English incursion. On the 13<sup>th</sup> of October the English army aimed to cross the formidable obstacle of the river Somme, which would have put them within fifty miles of the safety of Calais, but a captured French prisoner indicated that the river crossing was being held by a strong force of the French army. Rather than try and battle across the river in the face of strong opposition, Henry made the decision to turn south, head up-river, and try and locate another river crossing that was undefended. With supplies now all but exhausted, and with French troops shadowing their every move, the situation began to look bleak. It was only six days later, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of October, and fifty miles further to the south, that the English finally manage to ford the river Somme at Voyennes in the face of only limited opposition. All but out of supplies, tired and weary, the English now turned their faces to the north once more and resumed their march on Calais. Spirits rose within the English ranks as they drew ever nearer to safety. However, such thoughts were ill founded, for the English were now on the same side of the Somme as the whole French army, and by the 23<sup>rd</sup> both armies were actually marching almost parallel to each other only a few miles apart. On the 24<sup>th</sup> both armies almost came to blows near the river crossing at Blangy, before the French finally drew off to establish new positions sitting directly across the Calais road, between the villages of Agincourt and Tramecourt. That night the English took up positions near the village of Maisoncelles. The bad weather continued throughout most of the night, and the English army, now faced with a far superior French force barring their way to safety, spent a dismal few hours waiting for the dawn; the dawn of a day that would undoubtedly see a battle take place that would, quite probably, result in their death or capture

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The two armies that faced each other the next morning were not quite as unequally matched as some of the traditional accounts would have us believe. Whilst some of the chroniclers put the size of the French army in the region of forty thousand men, with one far-fetched account estimating the French numbers as over one hundred thousand strong, modern historians believe the actual number to have been between ten and fifteen thousand. The English meanwhile, rather than being the bare five thousand men of popular retellings, appear to have had closer to nine or ten thousand men. However, whilst the number of troops on each side was not so widely disparate, with the French

having at best only an army half as large again as their English opponents, there was a very marked difference in their composition. The vast majority of the French army was made up of heavily armoured men-at-arms and knights, supported by only a few thousand crossbowmen at the most, and a smattering of archers. The English meanwhile could boast less than two thousand men-at-arms, with the figure most probably closer to fifteen hundred, whilst the rest of the army was almost entirely made up of lightly armed archers. Their overall numerical superiority, combined with their mass of heavily armoured troops, most certainly gave the French the advantage and stacked the odds of victory heavily in their favour – unless of course they did something foolish...

### **The French Plan of Battle**

Most unusually for a medieval battle, we know exactly what the intention of the French army was that morning, thanks to the survival of a unique document discovered hidden away until very recently in the British Library. This singular document is a copy of the French battle plan; a brief account of their order of battle and their intentions for at least the opening stages of the encounter. The plan was a simple one. The French assumed that the English army would draw up in what it considered to be the usual manner, with the heavily armoured men-at-arms in the centre, flanked by the lightly armed archers. In response the French would form their main battle in the centre, consisting of the heavily armoured men-at-arms and knights. A little to their front, divided in two and positioned slightly to each flank, would be their crossbowmen and archers, whilst further out on each flank, and set a little to the rear of the main line of battle, would be a large body of mounted knights. It was this cavalry that the French hoped would win the day. The plan appears to suggest that, whilst the English were concentrating their fire on the French centre and crossbowmen, the cavalry would sweep round either flank. Those on the left, supposedly numbering about a thousand men, would charge in on the only lightly protected right flank of the English archers. On the French right a smaller mounted force would sweep around the other flank to attack the unprotected English rear. Whilst the archers were being driven inwards and backwards the main body of French infantry would advance, and the centre of the English line would be exposed on three sides – leaving the French assured of a quick victory.

Unfortunately the French battle plan relied upon the English flanks being exposed – and on the morning of October 25<sup>th</sup> this wasn't the case. Whilst the French had blocked the Calais road, thereby choosing the general area of battle, Henry found the ground generally in his favour. His line had been drawn up across a relatively narrow front, perhaps as little as five or six

hundred metres, and each flank was protected by fairly thick woodland, into which some of the English archers appear to have been deployed. The woods stretched away obliquely towards the French position, leaving the English at the narrow end of a short funnel. Not only did this reduce the ability of the French being able to attack his flanks, but it also ensured that any French frontal attack would be funnelled into the English centre. Here, on a narrower front, the numerical advantage of the French would be largely lost, and they would also be subject to flanking fire from the archers to add to their troubles. However, before any sort of plan could be put into action required both sides to be ready to engage, and the French were certainly in no hurry to attack.

With both sides drawn up for battle since before dawn it appears that the French were not unduly worried about beginning the fighting. As far as they were concerned the outnumbered, sick and grubby English army wasn't going anywhere, at least not whilst they blocked the road to safety, and they also appear to have considered it likely that Henry would sue for peace. Why would Henry fight a battle against such odds, with little chance of victory, when he could come to terms? As the morning drew on, and little appeared likely to happen any time soon, the chronicles suggest that quite a few of the French, particularly the cavalry on the flanks, simply deserted their positions and went in search of food and warmth.

This French reluctance to attack left the English in a difficult position. The longer they had to wait the stronger the French army became, with new contingents arriving throughout the morning. At the same time, their own men had been in battle formation since before dawn and were cold, wet and hungry. The longer the French waited the worse the situation would be for the English army. Henry, therefore, resolved to make a daring first move.

### **Phase one**

At about eleven in the morning, after hours of inaction, things began to move with a sudden swiftness. Henry ordered the entire English line to advance upon the French position, and then to halt when the archers were within easy bowshot. This they did with apparent speed, catching the French unawares, and arrows were soon dropping amongst the lines of the French crossbowmen and the front ranks of the men-at-arms. Whilst the arrows could do little more than annoy the heavily armoured main battle, the crossbowmen had no such steel security, and were still too far away from the English to return any effective fire. Whilst the crossbow was deadly at close quarters it simply didn't have the range of the longbow. Although hardly damaged by the English advance and arrow fire the French were now forced into rapid action. They had lost the initiative and, if they were to regain it, they had to act fast.

## Phase two

With the English army now further advanced across the field, and slightly more thinly spread than they had been in their original position, the French fell back upon their original battle plan. First to advance would be the heavily armoured cavalry, sweeping around their own lines to drive in upon the exposed English archers upon the enemy flanks. However, the dramatic and supposedly overpowering attack went wrong almost before it began. Sensing that it was unlikely that anything would be happening at any time soon, many of the mounted knights had simply left the field to seek shelter in the relative comfort of the French camp. As a consequence, when the order for an immediate charge arrived, there were nothing like the thousand men available that had been anticipated. However, rather than wait for the missing to return to their assigned positions, the remaining cavalry proceeded without them.

Exactly what happened next remains confused, and few of the chronicles can agree even upon exactly how many took part in the charge. One chronicle puts the number of mounted knights as low as only 'three score', but the majority appear to agree that the numbers, whilst nowhere near the thousand plus knights that had been intended, were several hundred at the very least. However, lack of numbers wasn't the only problem for the attack. The ground over which they had to charge was heavy clay soil in even the best of weathers, but after days of rain and drizzle it was extremely heavily waterlogged. Each horse would have found it very heavy going indeed, and heavier still for those that came behind them, across wet clay already churned up by the passing of many hooves. Coupled with this would have been the effect of the arrows pouring in from their flanks as they neared the English lines. Whilst the arrows themselves couldn't penetrate the expensive plate armour of the knights at anything but the very closest range, the lightly armoured horses themselves were incredibly vulnerable. As a result it appears that the French charge began to naturally move away from their intended target on the flanks, which was causing them such hindrance, and bunch together towards the centre.

By the time the remains of the French cavalry charge reached the English lines its force was already largely spent. The attack wasn't pushed home, and in their defence, the French would have been mad to do so. A few hundred mounted knights against so many English men-at-arms would have been nothing but a gesture; and given that the French still thought the English bound to lose the day, a useless and wasteful gesture to boot. The attack failed, leaving dead horses across the field, and according to some, as few as four or five French fatalities, with a good number of prisoners now in English hands.

The remaining knights, some now on foot as a result of losing their horses to the English arrows, now streamed back across the field towards the French lines – where, instead of finding safety, they ran headlong into the main French battle line advancing towards them.

### **Phase three**

The main French advance had been intended to take advantage of the chaos caused by the devastating attacks of their cavalry upon the English flanks, and quickly drive home their advantage. The advance was to be made on foot, across the now heavily churned up fields, as the French had become well aware of the effect of massed volleys of arrows on large numbers of horses. Unfortunately, the advance of the men-at-arms was now met by the remains of the cavalry attack now heading away from the English lines as fast as they could. The two groups met, intermingled, and amidst the mud the chaos was all upon the side of the French. To add insult to injury, the English archers appear to have taken the opportunity to start dropping arrows amongst the advancing men in massive quantities.

Much has been said about the rate of fire of an English archer of the period, and not all of it entirely based upon fact. A good archer could, if he was pretty well prepared, shoot somewhere in the region of eight to ten shots per minute; the general idea to be able to get another arrow in the air before the previous one had found its target. However, that was only at long range, at which distance the arrows were far less effective. At close quarters the rate was usually slower, allowing for the time to take deliberate aim at a target, but an arrow shot every eight or nine seconds was commonplace. Indeed, the rate of fire of the English archers was never the problem. The real problem was ammunition, of which there was never enough. An archer going in to battle was usually supplied with a minimum of twenty four arrows, which roughly equates to about three minutes worth of ammunition. In those first three minutes of the battle of Agincourt the massed ranks of Henry's archers would have expended in excess of 180,000 arrows. If the archer was resupplied, and records indicate that this was rather a big 'if', then over a quarter of a million arrows could be shot within the first five to ten minutes of a major engagement. Given the state of the English army it is unlikely that such a quantity of ammunition was available, meaning that the English would be forced to harbour their resources.

By the time the main mass of French infantry reached the English line it had already slogged its way across three or four hundred metres of muddy clay, had been battered and trampled by their own retreating first wave, and harassed by thousands of English arrows. Bunched together by the woodland



on either side the French couldn't use their numbers to their advantage, and the mass of French troops pushing forwards soon became more of a hindrance than a help to those in the front line. The English men-at-arms had no such problems, and the engagement, though bloody and hard fought, was by no means favouring the French. Coupled with this the English archers on the flanks now took to the offensive. Laying aside their bows, the lightly armoured archers went at the French men-at-arms with a vengeance. Using their axes, knives, clubs and short swords they darted in amongst the enemy, hacking at the densely packed and largely impotent enemy, clubbing them to the ground – and then either taking them prisoner, or delivering a swift dagger thrust through a visor or exposed armour joint.

The French attack stalled, and then began to fall back. Men from the front tried to retreat, only to meet others still moving forward, and confusion reigned. Amongst them, light-footed and unarmoured, the English archers swarmed with blades and axes, and the withdrawal rapidly became a rout. Hundreds of French knights were taken prisoner, hundreds more died amidst the mud and slaughter, and the remainder attempted to flee back to their own lines. However, whilst this attack had failed the French were far from fully defeated, for another large-scale attack of fresh troops was already formed up and waiting to advance, and the English were still, in their own minds at least, far from confident of overall victory. What happened next is, even by the standards of the Agincourt chroniclers, somewhat confusing.

At about this time, threatened with a fresh assault from the French third wave, news reached Henry of an attack of the English baggage train and camp in his rear. Although traditionally the deed of local French knights intent on seeking plunder, the manner in which the attack concords with the original French battle plan leaves this open to serious doubts. Faced with the possibility of having to fight on two fronts the king ordered that the French prisoners, who he feared were so numerous that they could soon pose a threat within his own ranks, be put to death. Many of the men-at-arms, seeing a loss of lucrative ransoms, refused. The task was therefore given to the archers, who showed no such reluctance, and the majority of the French prisoners were butchered where they stood. However, the French third attack never really materialised. As the remnants of the second attack reached them, the third wave joined them in headlong retreat. Despite the odds, and against all expectation, the English held the field. Henry was victorious, but recognising the unlikelihood of his own victory, was quick to ascribe it to the workings of God. His own cause being just, had seen the unjust routed with the help of the Almighty. The legend had been born.



## Costuming in Shakespeare, a talk by Amanda Greenway

Amanda is the Wardrobing Mistress for The Maddermarket Theatre, which means she is responsible for the 30,000 costume items stored for the theatre and in finding or producing costumes for the monthly stage productions. It is very much a working theatre, not a museum, with a short space of time to turn costumes round.

When Nugent Monck set up the theatre in 1921, it was to perform only Shakespearean plays, it now has a much broader repertoire.

Today many people expect Shakespeare to be performed in Elizabethan costume, but when they were performed in Shakespeare's time the dress was 'modern day'. Nowadays it is up to the directors and designers to put their own spin on it. The many theatres of Shakespeare's day, including The Globe and The Rose were all in competition, there was no time to make sumptuous costumes or to be sticklers for historical accuracy. A toga, for instance, was much easier to create and perform in than Elizabethan costume.

Actors playing royalty needed special permission to wear suitable clothes because of the Sumptuary Laws ("Laws made for the purpose of restraining luxury or extravagance, particularly against inordinate expenditures in the matter of apparel, food, furniture, etc."). They didn't want to go to prison for playing their part too well clad, but the costume was a useful shorthand for what kind of person the character was.

The play was also a fashion show, most people could never get close to royalty so this was their only chance to see fashionable dress in the flesh. Amanda showed us a picture of Geoffrey Rush as Phillip Henslowe in *Shakespeare in Love* wearing the then fashionable colours of beige and orange. The young men of the company used lead makeup to whiten their faces when playing women, it often led to bad skin.

Costumes were handed down or donated. Henslowe's inventory included a longshanks suit, knave suits and 5 Turks' hoods.

Amanda brought with her examples of the Maddermarket's collection. The most striking of which was a cloak worn by Nugent Monck in the 1920s as the Duke in *As You Like It*. She had a picture of him wearing it in performance. The annual moth treatment had clearly been effective!

She mentioned as her iconic costume, Ellen Terry's outfit for the Scottish play (not in the Maddermarket collection!) that was crocheted from Bohemian yarn with gold threads and embellished with over 1000 beetle wings – the sequins of her day, and, we were relieved to hear, gathered as beetle cast offs, not taken from live beetles. It took over 1000 hours to create.

For her work, because of the shortage of time, she keeps things as simple as possible, but we could see the effectiveness this approach had with her costumes for Lady M and the three witches. The latter inspired by birds wings an emphasis requested by the director. Her budget used to be £200 per show. She now has an annual budget to spend more or less per performance overall.

The evening revealed the challenges of costume design and production in modern theatre and the creative way director, actors and designer can respond to these to produce their own response to a playwright's genius.

**Sue Sharpe**

## **Brinton Hall**

A house in lands with such a view made sense to Stone Age man (and woman) so it's perhaps no surprise that the Romans also built a villa in the grounds and the Saxons a boundary ditch. This ditch had been unwittingly filled in the 1990s when dredging the lake produced enough silt to even up the ground where it was. This luckily was seen as a protective rather than destructive action by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit.

The estate covers 50 acres and is a designated county wildlife site. The ha ha provides a wonderful illusion that the parkland, with its white horses, lake and forest, is all connected to the more ordered house garden. This estate includes a walled garden (1880) where the concentration is now on growing flowers for the floristry business of a daughter of the house. The bees in the orchard win prizes for their honey, with more than a little help from Esme Bagnall Oakeley.

Before the Dissolution the house belonged to the See of Norwich, afterwards it was given as a gift to William Butts, Chief Physician of Henry VIII. Subsequently it was in the hands of the Brereton family for many generations. When improvements were being made in the 1820s, at a time when Nelson's home at Merton Place was being dismantled, the staircase and possibly windows, door and Portland stone were acquired from there for Brinton Hall. Esme Bagnall Oakeley, who showed us round the inside of the house, pointed out the intricate patterning in the wood of the staircase. On display were Saxon and Roman artefacts recovered from the grounds and photographs of important Brereton textiles. In the hall hung a portrait of Anna Margareta Brereton of the famed bed hangings.

In the 1820s the Hall had acted as a County Bank through a Gurney/Brereton arrangement, but apparently ended up owing £52,776 to the Norwich Bank. The Breretons still managed to hold on to the house until 1862.

The grandfather of the present owner Jeremy Bagnall Oakeley, bought the Hall in the 1920s. At that time Brinton was thriving, with a pub, three farms, a



Photo courtesy Victor Morgan

market gardener, reading room, brewery, candlemaker, soap maker and a school with 140 pupils. Railway works at nearby Melton Constable (the Crewe of North Norfolk), provided employment and there was also local agricultural work.

Leaving the church a small arch can be seen on a neighbouring farm building which was revealed to be the support for stairs leading up to the first floor school room. The village sign by Henry Carter, now a fibreglass copy, is thought to have been inspired by a figure on one of the pew ends in the church.

Our tour included a visit to St Andrew's Church, begun in 1360, originally with a round tower, but a date of 1544 on the pew ends is presumed to be the date of the present church. Remnants of Saxon walls have been found during renovation work. The chancel is no longer there but evidence of a rood screen indicates that there had been one.

Worth mentioning is an educational wall painting dating from the 1660s of 'fruitful and profitable statements' to replace any statues that hitherto adorned the building, a Victorian stained glass window which unusually includes a nineteenth century slave, and a ship's bell from HMS *Brinton*, a mine hunter which was the last surviving wooden hulled vessel in the Navy, only decommissioned 10 years ago.

After a short recital on the organ given by Jeremy Bagnall Oakeley we enjoyed a delightful lunch and glass of home produced apple juice, the thirty three of us taking over four of the downstairs reception rooms.

**Sue Sharpe and Caroline Driscoll**

## NOTICES

### **AGM and Winter Lecture programme**

Thursday 6 October 2016 at 7 pm in the Friendship Hall. AGM at 7 pm followed by tea break and two short films about Aylsham made by Derek Lyons.

Thursday 27 October 2016 at 7 30 pm in the Friendship Hall. *Norwich Yards* by Frances Holmes.

Thursday 24 November 2016 at 7 30 pm in the Friendship Hall. *Discovering Norfolk's Human Ancestors* by Martin Warren.

Thursday 26 January 2017 at 7 30 pm in the Friendship Hall. *Lost Country Houses of Norfolk* by Sarah Spooner.

Thursday, 23 February 2017 at 7 30 pm in the Friendship Hall. *The Guildhall and The Saint George's Guild* by Barbara Miller.

Thursday 23 March 2017 at 7 30 pm in the Friendship Hall. *The Oxnead Treasure* by Victor Morgan.

### **Autumn Course**

*A History of The World Through One Hundred Paintings*. Fiona Fitzgerald will give a course of 8 sessions starting on 21 September in the Friends' Meeting House, Pegg's Yard. The start time is 2.30 pm unlike previous courses. The course fee is £35 for the 8 sessions, payable at session 2.

From the course, you will gain a sense of time and place as a lens for exploring Art. An introductory lecture will feature all 100 paintings and fit them into a time line of historical events, changing styles and some stories behind each piece.

To book a place, please contact Jim Pannell 01263 731087 or [jpannell487@btinternet.com](mailto:jpannell487@btinternet.com)

### **Heritage Open Days**

Guided walk at Dunkirk/Millgate to hear about the Navigation and evidence of housing and industry prior to the flood of 1912. Meet on the grass east of the Millgate bridges at 2.30 pm on Sunday 11 September and allow up to two hours without access to conveniences. Event not suitable for children under 12. Parking on Dunkirk or at Weavers Way car park.

There will also be a guided tour of St Michaels Church on Saturday 10 September at 10.30 am.

### **Aylsham Heritage Centre**

In addition to the current exhibition *Voices of Aylsham* there will be opportunity to see and handle some new Roman finds uncovered during the archaeological excavations at Woodgate Nursery (due to take place in August).