AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

JOURNAL AND NEWSLETTER

Volume 11 No. 8

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Front cover: London House, conspicuous white building on north side of the Market Place, depicted by Humphrey Repton, October 1814. Courtesy Aylsham Town Archive.
Back cover: 'Colours of Norfolk', stripe woven waistcoat by Aviva Leigh using natural dyes made from eighteenth century recipes. Also Callimanco stripes from an eighteenth century pattern book, courtesy of Norfolk Museum Services.

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 have two more winter talks as this issue goes to press: Daryl Long on *'The story of the women who worked at Narborough aerodrome in the First World War'* on 27 February and the ever popular Barbara Miller on *'The effect of the Norman Conquest on the city and county'* on 26 March.

The social event this year will be a dinner at the Cliftonville Hotel in Cromer on Wednesday 25 March.

Summer programme 2020

The cost of six activities as a package is £60 to members and £75 to non-members, with separate activities £20 to members, £25 to non-members. Separate talks will be £5 each for both members and non-members. There is a limit of 29 for coach trips. Please contact Sue if you have not already done so.
Tuesday 21 April, 12–4 pm. Bridewell Museum Tour.
Tuesday 28 April, 2 pm. A Talk on Blickling Books by John Gandy.
Tuesday 12 May, day trip to Wymondham, including Wymondham Abbey at 10.30 am and Wymondham Heritage Museum at 2 pm. Coach provided; costs to be arranged.
Tuesday 19 May, 2–4 pm. Viking Age in East Anglia by Dr Tim Pestell, Curator of Archaeology at Norwich Castle Museum.
Tuesday 2 June, day visit to Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum, Dereham. Coach provided.
Tuesday 9 June, 2 pm. A General History of Cromer by Alistair Murphy, Curator of Cromer Museum.

We have been most grateful to Caroline Driscoll for all the work she has done on the Committee arranging visits and marketing Society publications for the last five years, but she needs to pass on these commitments now. Hazel Jones has kindly agreed to help Sue Sharpe with the visits and Roger Crouch has volunteered to take on the book sales.

Before the Town Hall: London House and its neighbours
by Maggie Vaughan-Lewis

Aylsham's town hall stands to the north of the market place and is a vital centre used for cinema, indoor craft markets, public meetings as well as housing the town council offices and the town archive. To the visitor it looks like a Victorian addition to the market place, creating a modern infill. In fact this area was built up as far back as the 15th century, making it the earliest known infill into the market place space. Behind it is an old loke which has the public loos and estate agents at the western end. At the east end stand the low cottages, now the bakery and hairdressers, 13 and 13B Red Lion Street which were covered in a recent article on 15 Red Lion Street[1].

The early history of the site

The old description of the block of buildings now under the town hall shows it was always a mixture of houses, shops and gardens or yards. The house and shop at the western end, later called London House, was always referred to in the manorial court books as two messuages, one of which was the Tiled House with part of a well and garden in the front. This was used from at least 1457, suggesting the use of brick or tile was an early notable feature[2]. The phrase a 'domus cum wowt' (vault) was used in the 1457 entry which sometimes meant

Clover's house and bakery (Co-op site) is shown at the back of the loke, the white Copeman's shop (London House) in front, in this 1814 painting by Humphry Repton

a cellar but here could be just a building with a cellar-type brick vaulted roof. The word vault did not reappear but for continuity, the court used the description the Tiled House right up until the early 18th century although the building must have changed considerably over that time. Despite being a named building, the tiled house was held quite normally by tenants of the manor without any suggestion of status or civic use. The use, at first, of 'domus' (a building) rather than 'messuage' (a house) suggests a workshop or warehouse. The owner in 1457 was Alan Waryn, a 'pateynmaker'. Pattens were wooden under-shoes designed to be worn outdoors, raising the wearers and their shoes above the mud and grime of early streets. Although a humble sounding trade, the pattenmakers had a trade association in London by 1379, later being a full livery company.

Intriguingly in the 1650s John Brady, then owner and resident, called it the Candle House in his will although his wife was noted as being officially admitted to the 'tyle house' in 1656 after his death[3]. Perhaps it was a suitable building for handling flammable products. The property had been part of the grocery business run by Brady's brother-in-law Thomas Hallifax who went bankrupt in 1638. Mrs Brady later returned it to her nephew's family who let it out as a draper's shop in 1706. Later it was owned by John Smith of Hevingham gent who left it in 1781 to his aunt Hannah. Hannah was the wife of the well known builder-architect Thomas Ivory of Norwich who had recently died from an injury sustained while adding the final wing to the courtyard at Blickling Hall. Hannah died in 1784.

Tithe map nos 178–181 show the site before the town hall was built.

19th century

The house would have been enlarged over time and parts rebuilt. Sadly no detail survives of the building prior to its demolition which might have confirmed how much of the old 'tyled house' survived within London House.

At the time of the tithe apportionment in 1840 the block comprised four properties, notably 181 the shop at the western end. The bay window on the front partially obscures the plot number. This was the tiled house or London House owned by Henry and Edward Harrod and rented by Samuel Hatcher, grocer and draper. At this time, the adjoining house, buildings and yard (180) was unoccupied. The Harrods owned the whole block except plot 178 – Epher Silence's house on the eastern end had been used by John Davy as a beerhouse and lodging rooms[4]. The little plot 179 facing the market was divided into three small shops: John Rainforth made clogs and pattens (an interesting echo of the 15th century); Robert Thirtle was a shoemaker; and Zephaniah Smithson was a grocer and draper. The Harrods also owned the stables and yard in the loke behind the block (188), rented by Hatcher, and a little house and garden (189) which was tenanted by Ann Mann. The estate agents (187) was a house owned by Joseph Clover and lived in by Mary Blyth.

The Clovers owned the rest of the northern area with baker John Clover's house, bakehouse and yards at the site of the Co-op (182) and behind the loke (183–185).

James Harrod from Loddon had arrived in Aylsham to help in Copeman's bank. In 1811 James married Frances, the daughter of his boss Peter Copeman, and their children were baptised in Aylsham. They lived at Old Bank House, then Copeman's Bank. Frances and James Harrod's sons Edward and Henry were left the market place premises that Peter Copeman had bought from Hannah Ivory's estate. The Harrod sons came into their inheritance in April 1839, after the death of their mother, although neither lived in any part of it; Edward lived in Itteringham. Peter Copeman's house and draper's shop is the white rendered building in Repton's 1814 watercolour. The left hand side has an open shop door with multi-paned windows and timber uprights. The other half would probably have been used as the owner's house or let out. By 1839 the whole had been re-fronted in brick and the left-hand side extended out by the addition of a semi-circular front protected by iron posts and a rail [5]. A rare 1850s photograph survives showing this stage in the evolution of the site.

Before the town or corn hall was built. Note the bay window of London House which has been substantially re-fronted with a sloping front roof.

The Public Corn Hall and Town Hall was built in 1857, James Holley being chairman of the directors of the financing company which bought the site from the Harrods. The sum of £2100 was raised by £10 subscription shares. To create the space needed, the eastern half of the Copeman/Harrod building (the house), the little low shops at the front and what had been the old beer-house on the eastern end were demolished. All of these were in poor condition. At the time, the house was being used by music teacher Frederick James Turner as a school for ladies with an extra room over the shop of Charles Mack, grocer and draper. Mary Anne Sexton, a widow of Banningham, owned

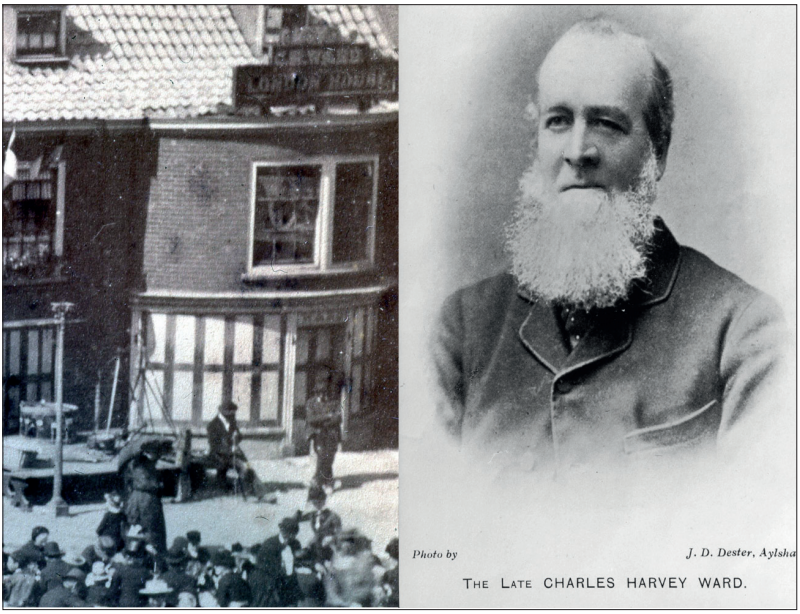
the old Silence house on the east end and sold it for £305. This was in two parts: one half had been used by Mary Ann Skidmore, a shopkeeper who held a day school there and later moved into Red Lion Street; the other was the first premises of Charles Rice Wade, the watchmaker who moved to the top of Hungate Street.

After the foundation stone was laid by the Marquis of Lothian, the guests were given a cold luncheon at William Repton's house, No 1 Market Place. By 1863 Mrs Anne Blunderfield was running a draper's shop in the remaining part of Copeman's site, then known as London House.

After the new building, only the west part of London House remained. 1875.

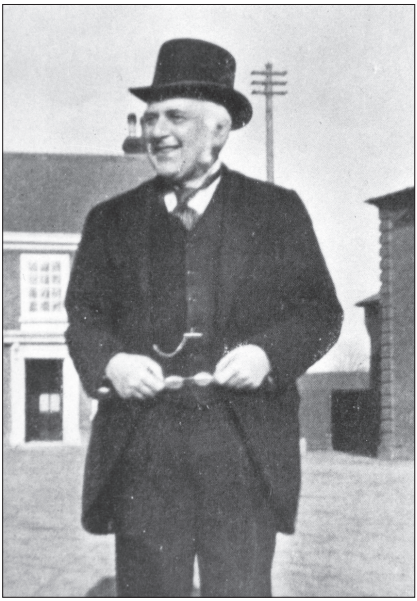
The corn business declined after the railways came and in July 1892 William Forster, Aylsham's leading solicitor, bought the Town Hall building from the failing company. A wealthy man, not only did he pay £900 for the Hall but he then purchased from Ward the rest of London House which stood at the west end. At the time of Charles Harvey Ward's purchase in 1890 the last part of London House had been made freehold and so does not appear again in the court book. The precise year of Forster's final purchase is not known. The last vestiges of the old 'Tiled House' were demolished so as to provide offices and a stage for the main hall (where the kitchen now stands).

Forster died in October 1906 and in September 1908 the Parish Council (now the Town Council) purchased the 'block of buildings known as the Town Hall' for £1,400. The repayment of the Public Works Loan was completed in 1938.



In 1890 it was bought for £500 from Harrod's heirs by Charles Harvey Ward grocer and draper, who had been renting the truncated shop for some years.

1910 Valuation map clearly showing the western extension.



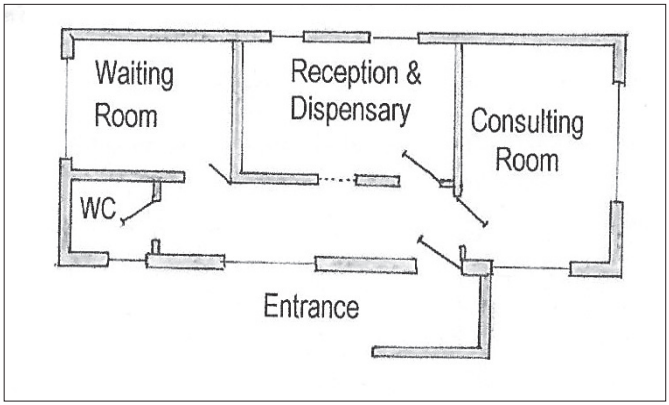
William Forster with the new extension visible on the right.

An improved new layout for the eastern end, which had been a caretaker's flat, was created in 1995. The little properties at the back of the Loke (tithe 188 and 189) were given to the council in 1933 and a public convenience erected at the rear. The house (187), 25 Market Place, was condemned and demolished in 1957 and the conveniences extended. These were replaced by the present buildings and the architects' practice in 2007.

[1] ALHS journal vol 11 (5): 125 (2019)
[2] An earlier court roll covering the last twelve years of Henry VI (1449–1461) was misleadingly catalogued and is now being researched. NRO, NRS 19561. My thanks to Elizabeth Rutledge and Susan Maddock for help with the interpretation of 'wowt'.
[3] There were several properties called candlehouse in the town at different periods including a workshop in White Hart Street and the present house in Red Lion Street.
[4] For Davys 'Hotel' see *A New History of Aylsham's Public Houses*, ALHS 2018.
[5] Dr Sapwell (*A History of Aylsham* 1960 p143) did not note the re-fronting of the older building and assumed it was 'comparatively new when demolished'.

Hungate Street Surgery 1973 to 2012 by Paul James

The Surgery 1973. Photo: Aylsham Town Archive.



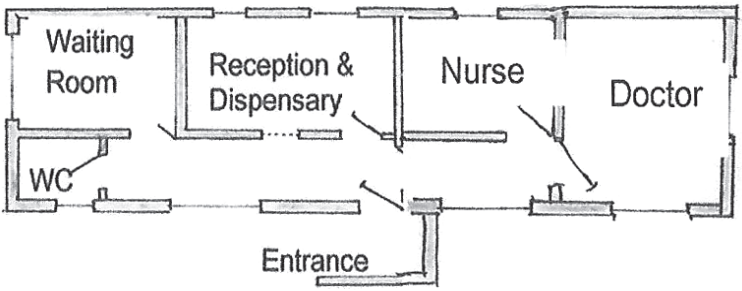
It was in 1973 that Dr Arthur Garrett of Reepham asked me to join him in partnership on the retirement of Dr John Sapwell from the Aylsham and Reepham practice.

For many years Dr Sapwell had run a single-handed practice from his home, The Grange in Cromer Road, following in the footsteps of his father. As was usual in those days he was on call 24 hours a day, having a half day off each Wednesday and alternate weekends from Saturday mid-day, with his partner Dr Garrett covering for him. For a while I worked from his premises, an overhead telephone wire to our house nearby enabling my wife to take calls for me out of surgery hours, which she did, day and night. There were of course no radios or mobile phones in those days and for many years messages had to be left with patients on the visiting list for the day. (There was one lady who if requested would leave a tea-towel on her hedge and if I passed by it meant I was to phone home to pick up another call!). There was no appointment system in those days, and patients just took their turn to be seen, first come, first served. The doctors belonged to the Norfolk Accident Rescue Service and a road traffic accident, or the home-delivery of a baby meant that the surgery was abandoned – some patients waited, others came back next day.

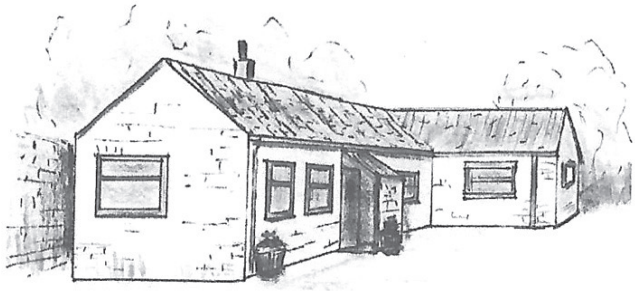
It was obviously necessary to move to more suitable premises as soon as possible, and an old building in Hungate Sreet became available. Previously it had been a chip-shop, on the site of the front part of the present surgery. It was owned by Geoffrey Ducker, who leased it to the practice and built on the subsequent extensions. The vicar informed me that his organist, who happened to live next door, would make an excellent receptionist and she certainly did, working with me for many years as receptionist/dispenser.

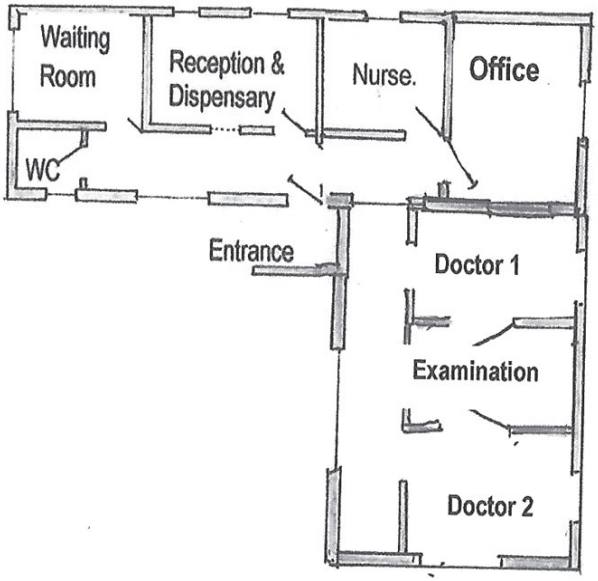
That first building, when converted, consisted of a single consulting room, a reception/dispensary room, a waiting room and toilet. The receptionist was there during surgery hours, and phone calls were put through to my wife at home at all other times.

The practice grew steadily and it soon became necessary to employ a nurse and so the building was extended to make a room for her. It was also used by the midwives for ante-natal clinics.

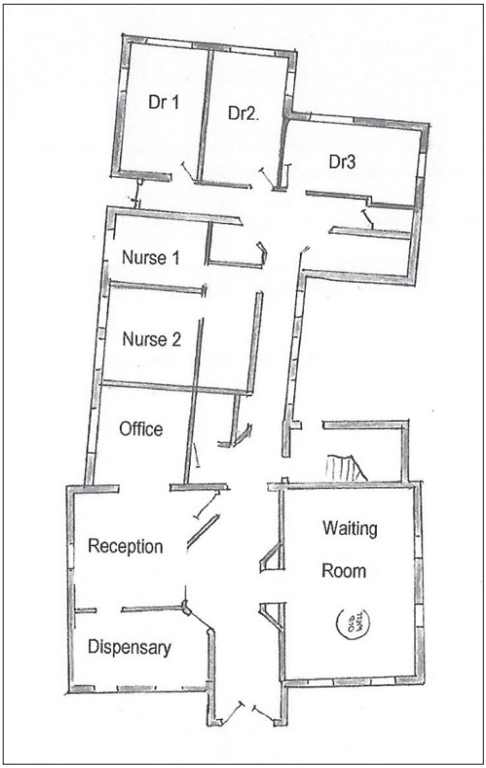


And then it became necessary to add another consulting room for a second doctor, extending the building at right-angles.





As the population of Aylsham increased it then became necessary to take on another partner and therefore three consulting rooms were required. The nurses' room too was not large enough and so another extension was built on the back of the building. This, being the only part of the building to be retained, now forms the rear of the present surgery which was opened in 1995.



The surgery as it is today.

The front exterior was designed to match the house next-door.

It seems a long time ago that the Hungate Surgery began, and memories of those early days are gradually fading, but I thought it was worth recording these notes and diagrams for those who do not know anything about the early years. I am sure they will realise that times have changed – there were no computers and no mobile phones then!

The pictures are all approximate and have been put together from different memories of my colleagues, and the dates are uncertain, so I make no claim to accuracy – the drawings and any errors are mine.

To all those who have worked with me over many years, as doctors, nurses, practice managers, receptionists and others, as loyal colleagues, my wife and good friends I will always be grateful.

My thanks also to Aylsham Town Archives for permission to use the black & white photo of the first surgery.

The Beck and Sandell families of Aylsham
by Maggie Vaughan-Lewis

The cottages in Meadow Close.

In the *New History of Aylsham Public Houses* there are many publicans listed, many just a name at a pub for a few years before apparently moving on. One such short entry was for James Beck who ran the Unicorn in Hungate Street between 1896 and 1901 (pp33–34). The brief entry does not suggest any lasting tie with the town but a chance conversation in Aylsham recently turns that on its head! His great-granddaughter Caroline lives in Norwich and was able to fill in the story.

James Beck was born in Colby in 1839 but moved south where he worked as a railway porter. He married Mary who was from White Colne, near Colchester in Essex, and they returned to Norfolk. By 1881 they were living at Dunkirk where James was an engine driver, probably at the steam mill there. (In the book it was wrongly suggested he worked on the railways.) They

had a large family with Alfred, George, Arnold, Arthur Beck and four daughters. By 1901 Mary had died and James was at the Unicorn. His daughter Martha Matilda (1878–1968) was also living there looking after him as well as her husband Richard Sandell (1873–1956) and two children. Sandell was an agricultural labourer and their eldest daughters were Evelyn, born 1899, and Elsie born in 1900.

One newspaper report that did not appear in the book featured out of hours drinking – a regular problem for the Aylsham policeman. On Sunday 26th August 1900, Police-constable Crane discovered the front door of the Stonemasons Arms shut, but not locked, at 11:30am. Inside he found the landlord, Mr. Henry Lancum, and James Beck of the Unicorn, each had a glass of beer before them. Beck claimed that he had come to borrow a bottle of whisky. There was some dispute as to if the beer had been given freely by Mr. Lancum or if Beck had paid for it. On Tuesday 4th September 1900, the Bench believed the beer had been paid for and fined each party 1s and 4s costs. Perhaps Beck's son-in-law was already keen on keeping the Sabbath – see below – so James nipped to another pub further away for an early drink. Lancum, a clogmaker, returned to Cambridge and took up farming.

After leaving the Unicorn, James Beck went to live with Richard and Martha Sandell at the Meadows off Cromer Road where they stayed throughout their lives. The Sandell family, now with four more children Edith, Edward, Eva and Ella, lived in a four-room house. At the age of 74 in 1911, James Beck was still working, as a labourer 'repairing the roadside' alongide his son-in-law. He died in 1916.

Richard Sandell always wore a bowler hat, and would sit in the morning by the gas stove, making cheese buns, or maybe cheese and vinegar, which he would then cook on the stove. The wash house was in the garden and he kept finches in cages outside; they also kept a pig. He continued working on the roads, possibly as a foreman, into his 70s. On a Sunday Richard wouldn't allow anyone in the house to cook, or read or sew and all the family would go to church at St Michael's three times during the day.

His wife Martha (always called Dolly), would get up at 5am on a Saturday to make bread, and cook the meat for a Sunday which they would have cold; the three eldest girls would have to help. Then Dolly would go into Aylsham and pay the weekly bills. In the 1950s one of her grandsons can remember staying and being sent to Dyballs butchers in Millgate, near the Stonemasons pub. They would be told to ask for 'a rolled shoulder with no pieces in it' and the butcher would know exactly who had sent them. She told her grandson's wife when she was newly married that the most important things in life were providing a roof, fire and food, in that order, and to never get in debt.

Wedding of Caroline's parents at St Michael's church in September 1971. Edith is in back row second from right, Elsie is in front row second from the left.

Martha's sister Rose lived first near the Old Pound, then moved down to the Meadows. Apparently her nieces thought she was a battle-axe and one of them (Ella) would refuse to serve her if she came into Pages. Rose married a farmer in Tuttington, but as she was his second wife, when he died his son inherited so Aunt Rose moved back to Aylsham and lived in one of the houses built on the old Bridewell site.

The Sandell girls grew up in Aylsham and Edith, Eva and Ella all worked at some time, when they were young, in Pages. Eva and Ella worked in the millinery department. The two oldest girls Evelyn and Elsie would go out during World War One when Canadian soldiers were based in the park at Blickling; they would get invited to dances there. Their father wasn't keen on them going but their mother would cover for them and pretend that they got home earlier than they did, so he didn't find out. Caroline thinks they were quite spirited; there is a story of Elsie going to the circus when it was visiting Aylsham and creeping in without paying. Evelyn moved to St. Johns Wood in London and Elsie worked in Cromer for Pages and lived on Market Street, with other girls who worked in the shop. She knew Henry Bloggs and would socialise with him, before she later moved to Tunbridge Wells as a seamstress.

Eva and Ella at the wedding in 1971

Eva went on to work in the Land Army during World War Two, at Knapp Hill on the Rothschild estate. There she met her husband and they moved to Dereham. Ella stayed in Norfolk and married into the D R Grey family of opticians, who still operate in Norwich today. Edith married a neighbour, Jack Pegg who had lived with his mother in the Meadows. During the depression in the early 1930's they moved to Toronto for a few years. He did well in Canada, working as a lumberjack and in furniture removal so when they returned to Aylsham they were able to buy a house in the Meadows at the east end just before the path leading to Millgate.

Edward, Caroline's grandfather, became Rates Officer for Aylsham and St Faiths Rural District Council. He married her grandmother Cicely Loveday in 1933 at Smallburgh where she was a teacher. As was usual, she stopped teaching on marriage but was able to start again once the second world war broke out. Cicely taught at St Michael's school in Aylsham where she was apparently a strict teacher but respected by pupils (two of whom were nephew and niece, Irene and Bernard Pegg). Edward and she lived in the right-hand side of a pair of semi-detached houses on Holman Road, then called Pound Road. Bernard Pegg is remembered by a bench outside the old Post Office provided by his employer, D J Newsom.

And so the family of James Beck remained firmly part of Aylsham life. Thanks to Caroline Cubitt and her family for the information and photographs.

Geoffrey Ellis Ducker† 1923–2019

Geoff – "a good ol' boy" and that is how most people thought of him – a generous and modest man but those who knew him well would have experienced an awkward streak on occasions! He was a generous man as all of you who knew him will testify, not in a showy way but always there with help and advice and his time.

Born in February 1923 in Commercial Road (now Bure Way) to Samuel, carpenter, wheelwright, master builder and undertaker and Kathleen, teacher from Eye in Suffolk, Geoff had an older brother Douglas who died as a prisoner of war in the far-east. Geoff attended St. Michael's School and then the Paston Grammar School, which he did not enjoy at all! The family building and undertaking business was based in White Hart Street at premises which are

still Ducker's Funeral Directors. Samuel died in 1948 and because Douglas had died during the war Geoff had to take over running the business. This was not supposed to happen as it was Douglas who showed all the interest in becoming a builder and Geoff's ambition was to become a poultry farmer! – and he had started down this road with some chickens on a field in Sir Williams Lane.

In 1939 Geoff had left school and was working in the business and with a gentleman named Herbert Farrow he was erecting the scaffold around St Michael's Church ready for the roof to be re-leaded – war broke out and Herbert was called-up for service and that meant Geoff, as a 15/16 year old, was left to complete the scaffolding on his own! – imagine that happening now!! But that was probably the start of his lifelong service to St. Michael's church.

National Service called him at 18 and he signed on with the RAF commissioned as Pilot Officer and ending up as Flying Officer. When war ended Geoff signed up for a further year. Geoff always admitted that "he had had a good war" having to go to America and Canada for his training and the last two years of service saw him based in Germany working on decommissioning German Airfields and being billeted in a mansion owned by the Class family (Farm machinery manufacturers) – it was very grand!

In 1947 he returned to Aylsham and because of his RAF training applied for a post working in the Ordnance Survey Office but his father died in 1948 leaving Geoff to take over the family business. Geoff was never keen on the Undertaking side of the business – he had a huge dislike of the phone ringing because so many times it was a distraught person wanting to arrange a funeral for a loved one and he hated that. He told me later that the 10 years after the war that he had the business was a real struggle for him and in 1958 he sold the business but continued to manage the Company for a further 6 years, greatly aided by Jimmy Thompson looking after the funerals.

After the war Geoff was heavily involved with the British Legion and the Ex-Servicemen's Club, based at that time on the first floor of the International Stores (now the Co-Op) in the Market Place. He became Secretary, for a time, at a time when the Club was struggling a bit – he put this down to the coming of TV. However, "one arm bandits", gaming machines arrived and saved the day and in the 1960's Geoff played a very prominent part in the Ex-Service Club purchasing Collegiate House, in Hungate Street, for £2,750.00 and indeed converting it into Club premises. He remained a very active and leading member of the Aylsham Branch of The Royal British Legion earning the Gold medal for services to the Legion. He was also honoured to be made President of the Ex Service Club.

At Erpingham Church.

His community work was exceptional, he remained very close to the Church and did a lot of volunteer work on behalf of the Church over the years. I well remember him spending a lot of time blocking -off various nooks and crannies on the Church to stop pigeons roosting and fouling. He also made and carved the Incumbents board which hangs in the Chancel – when he started, it took him about one hour to carve the name. The last line for Andrew Beane took him one hour per letter! – but remember he was 89 years old when Andrew was added! He also played a big part with the tripartite board which hangs in the Ringing Chamber – he had to carry the three pieces on his back up the spiral staircase and then assemble and hang the completed board on the wall.

He was involved in the Aylsham Show in its early years working with Ray Bond who was Chairman of the Ex Service Club and Secretary of the Aylsham Recreation Ground. The Show was started to raise money for the Rec. which was completely self-financed at that time. Geoff was Show Contractor for approximately 12 years and became a member of the Recreation Ground Committee and eventually Chairman for a number of years. During his tenure the two main football pitches were levelled off and a third pitch was created at the east end of the ground and he was primarily responsible for rebuilding the pavilion after the original timber building burned down in the 1950s. Geoff was also Chairman of Aylsham Wanderers Football Club for a number of years.

After leaving Duckers he joined Norwich City Council Engineer's Department in the buildings section for a few years then he moved to Norfolk County Council Estates Department for four years, taking responsibility for the Council's Small Holdings Farm buildings throughout the County. He then joined the National Trust as Eastern Region Building Manager and I believe this was his dream job and he very much enjoyed the 10 years or so he had at the Trust looking after Blickling and Felbrigg Halls and other such properties.

In 1973 he married Joy Bush (née Bond), whom he had known all his life. They travelled all over the U.K. and visited Europe and the Mediterranean and indeed enjoyed several visits to Joy's family in America. They enjoyed 25 years together as man and wife and celebrated that Jubilee in February 1998 before Joy died in the July. He was a very loving "Grand-Dad" to three grandchildren, Sarah, Louise and Thomas Bush and enjoyed the role to the full.

After Geoff retired from work, he continued with his Community service and then he returned to the tools of the building trade carrying out maintenance and alteration and improvement works on various properties in the Town.

He was a founder member of the Aylsham Local History Society in 1985 and in the early years used to conduct guided walks around the town, in the first year for members with David Walker, in 1988 with Jane Kennedy, Ron Peabody and Jane Nolan for the Wymondham Heritage Centre that culminated with a bus trip to the mill where Geoff held forth about what life would have been like in its heyday and on features of the building. In the same year he did a guided tour for the Staff Association of the Norfolk County Library.

His life ended in Halsey House, the British Legion Care Home in Cromer, which was where he always said he wanted to go if circumstances dictated.

His knowledge of Aylsham through his life was exceptional, his memory never deserting him. He was an Aylsham man and always had time for people. His support for his family and friends was exemplary. He was a good ol' boy.

Sir Thomas Browne 1605–1682 – a talk by Barbara Miller

On 24 October 2019 Barbara Miller delivered her talk on Sir Thomas Browne with her usual panache, erudition and humour.

Browne's life fell into two phases: from his birth (2 years after the death of Elizabeth I), Thomas was in London, Winchester, Ireland, Oxford, Montpelier, Padua, Leiden and Halifax; in the second phase from 1637 until his death in 1682 he was in Norwich, Norfolk and Suffolk.

He lived in eventful times: the gunpowder plot, a king beheaded, civil war, republican rule, restoration of the Monarchy, the plague, the great fire of London, the death of Charles II and the accession of his controversial brother, James II, before his death in October of that year. Thomas linked the defeat of the gunpowder plot with God's providence and the abiding philosophy and dilemma of his life was the link between religion, business, morality and everyday life.

Before Thomas' birth in Cheapside London, his parents lived in Chester. His father was descended from a successful family of silk merchants. Thomas was the only boy with four sisters. His father died when Thomas was only 9 years old, his mother married again, but her second husband was a fortune hunter and the money soon ran out. This gave Thomas an early lesson in the precariousness of life and a concern about debt which haunted his life.

Luckily, through connections of his Uncle Edward, he received a good education at Winchester and Pembroke College, Oxford, where he took his degree in 1629. Afterwards Thomas considered entering the Church, but decided that law or medicine offered a better living.

In pursuit of this, Thomas went first to Montpelier where he studied herbal remedies of apothecaries and learnt the importance of careful observation and what we would now call control trials. Then to Padua, the foremost centre for the study of anatomy, where he studied animals. Padua had extensive physic gardens (as did Montpelier) where Thomas was fascinated by the contrast between nature tamed (the garden) and the untamed wilderness. Finally to Leiden, part of the Spanish Netherlands, where he graduated in 1633. He returned to England proficient in French, Latin and Dutch.

With the encouragement of a man he had met in Montpelier, Thomas went to Halifax where he worked as a doctor for three years and wrote his best known work, *Religio Medici*, which has never been out of print and has been translated into 6 languages. In his practice he witnessed acute poverty and the dilemma of the deserving and undeserving poor.

Through the offices of Bishop Richard Corbett, Thomas came to Norwich in 1637 and lived at first in Tombland and after his marriage in 1641 to Dorothy Mileham, to a house on Haymarket (now Primark). Their marriage was a happy and fruitful one, having 12 children of whom two sons and four daughters survived and outlived him and there are descendants to this day. By all accounts, he was a happy, family man, as witnessed in the painting of Dorothy and Thomas by Joan Carlisle which hangs in the National Portrait Gallery. In Norwich Thomas had a busy medical practice treating Puritans, Royalists and masters and their servants alike and was aware of the different maladies affecting different classes of society. Thomas was a moderate Royalist while Norwich was a Puritan city, but this did not apparently affect his work. While in Norwich Thomas wrote *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, a philosophical work which he continued to work on all his life and which he considered his greatest. Its subject was countering false doctrines. Noted for his keen observation and analysis, Thomas studied the Norfolk countryside including The Broads where he identified the Iris and the swallow-tailed butterfly as being unique to the area.

Charles II paid a visit to Norwich in 1671 during which he knighted Thomas in St. Andrew's Hall. In Charles' entourage was John Evelyn who visited Thomas and his garden (formerly Littlewoods store). Thomas had rented a meadow in the Cathedral Close for his horses (now a carpark although it has a plaque commemorating his ownership).

Browne was a collector amassing a comprehensive library. He is said to have been second only to Shakespeare in neologisms, appearing No. 69 in the *OED* of first usages of a word. Examples are "ambidextrous" and "cryptography" (Source: Wikipaedia) He was interested in the theory of science rather than the practice. He had strong religious beliefs, but a tolerance of Roman Catholics and he read *The Koran*: all his life he tried to reconcile God's influence with the perceived imperfections of the natural kingdom.

Prompted by the discovery of some burial urns at Brampton he developed an interest in ancient burial rights which he analysed in *Urn Burial*. The commemorative statue on Haymarket shows him holding a potsherd. It can be said that Thomas had one foot in the medieval and the other in the modern: his powers of observation and the value he placed on it belong to the modern rather than trying to balance the humours as medieval physicians had done. Alchemy also fascinated him as did phrenology which was popular in the 1840's and one of the modern sculptures on Hay Hill is of a brain. In the Mancroft collection there is a facsimile of his skull which was removed when his grave was disturbed in 1840 for the burial of a 19th century vicar's wife. A parishioner acquired it who was a church warden and a chemist and, it was said that he intended to return it, but in the meantime the cavity had been filled in and it had to wait nearly a century to be reburied.

Sir Thomas died on his birthday in 1682 and his memorial tablet is on the south wall of the chancel in St. Peter Mancroft. Part of the inscription reads: "a man very pious, whole, learned and famed throughout the world". Dame Dorothy outlived her husband by 3 years and she has a memorial on the north wall with an inscription by their son Edward.

In sum, to quote Barbara: "a God fearing and happy man in his life and death".

In the question and answer session following her talk, I asked Barbara what was a way into his works which I have hitherto found very difficult, and she suggested I isolate myself and try reading them aloud. I have yet to do so, but I intend to try.

Caroline Driscoll

Colours of Norfolk – Textiles Inspired by the Rich Heritage of our County – a talk by Aviva Leigh

In the dark winter months members were treated to a talk about the rich glowing colours of Norfolk textiles.

Aviva outlined her textile journey through the world of fashion, research and teaching that led her to a detailed study of C18 allied trades and pattern books. Such was the quality of Norwich textiles (48 fine threads to the inch) that it was exported all over Europe. (Today, Norway and Sweden hold larger collections of antique Norwich cloth than we do ourselves.)

Dyeing was a well-respected profession, and experts fiercely guarded the notebooks that contained secret recipes and processes. Aviva decided to reconstruct some of the patterns and to do so she set about analysing the dyes in order to recreate them.

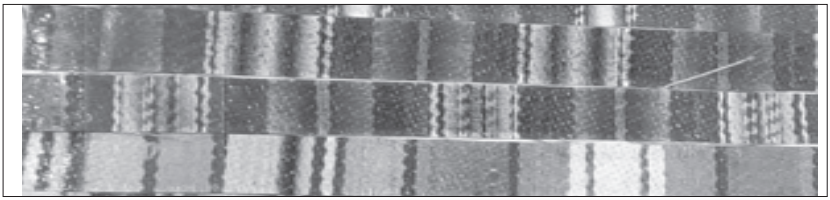
We learned that "acid" dyes, as opposed to "natural" dyes, can be more eco-friendly. Generally a dye needs a mordant (fixative) to help "bite" on to the yarn. Natural dyes rely on chemicals, whereas acid dyes can be fixed using vinegar.

And so began Aviva's research into the gorgeous world of colour – red from the cochineal bug (it takes 60,000 bugs to make one pound of dye!); weld and quercitron (the bark from Black Oak) to give yellow; woad for up to 13 shades of blue; purple from the gland of a snail; madder for red. Not all natural dyes fade, but a change in weather, an individual plant, and even the dyer's mood all affect the final colour.

On show was her C21 recreation of an C18 waistcoat. She had dyed the threads, weaved the cloth, handstitched the garment and lined it with woollen fabric. Incredibly fine worsted-spun yarn was needed but not available, and so Aviva worked with commercially-spun yarn from Yorkshire.

Aviva's skill and dedication were apparent throughout the hugely informative talk.

Maggie Brooker



Norfolk Museum Services – Callimanco stripes from C18 pattern book.

The Ups and Downs of Elm Hill – a talk by Dr Victor Morgan

Cunningham's map of Norwich 1559, with figurative elms at top of Elm Hill, courtesy of Norwich Heritage.

The Society is privileged to have a professional historian who can bring to light the past in such an exceptional way. The talk on the evening of 23 January attracted an audience of 90 – using every chair in the hall, unprecedented in my time. A flawless delivery from such a broad perspective was truly admirable – all those little tell-tale indicators left from the past that no one else would notice or understand. This followed the much appreciated walk along the street in November.

Vic divided his talk into five roughly chronological sections covering the period 1490 to 2018: 1, the street c. 1500; 2, the great rebuilding after the fire of 1507; 3, 'classicisation' in an Enlightment style in the last quarter of the seventeenth century; 4, on the skids from the late eighteenth century to the early twentieth century, and 5, the 'historicisation' from the late nineteenth century to now.

Almost all the street was destroyed by the great fire of June 1507. Of earlier times we know the Paston family owned Nos 22–24, now Strangers' Club, and were among wealthy local merchants who funded the major rebuilding of the churches in the 1400s. When John Paston died in London in 1466 he was brought to St Peter Hungate for an extremely lavish funeral on the way to

Bromholm Priory. No. 27, The Briton's Arms, also survived the fire and seems to have been a beguinage, housing women of abstinence and good works. A doorway on the first floor leads directly into the churchyard of St Peter Hungate, the great church of Blackfriars was conveniently nearby and Thomas Beckett's chapel at the top of the hill was a pilgrim destination second only to Canterbury. Further down the street undercrofts, often out of alignment with buildings above, are markers of former commercial activity. The lie of the street up the hill is indeed quite unusual in Norwich where most of the main streets follow contours of the land often connected by cross lanes.

Numbers mentioned in the text: 12–18, Cathedral monks, De Hagues; 20, Contemporary Art Gallery; 22–24, Strangers' Club, Paston family, Augustine Steward; 27, Briton's Arms; 41–47, Pettus House and family.

Cunningham's perspective view of 1559 shows how the fire of 1507 allowed the city's larger merchants and traders to consolidate smaller plots into large prestigious courtyard houses, seven on the north side and three on the south side. Behind them great warehouses stretched down to the river. Much of the grandeur is now lost but many of the entrances can be detected, often under buildings. Nos 12–18, now separate buildings, were an entire plot owned by the monks of the cathedral, the gateway to the inner court still evident. No. 18 was originally part of the building to the left of it, but detached by modifications made by the De Hagues in the eighteenth century. Similarly No. 20, the contemporary art gallery, was part of the Strangers' Club, Nos 22–24, now the most obvious great house, much modified but still containing fine internal timberwork.

Elm Hill accommodated some of the wealthiest and most influential families of Norwich, prominent as aldermen, guildsmen and mercers. Among them were eight mayors between the 1530s and 1670s, including Augustine Steward, mayor 1534, 1546 and 1556, in Nos 22–24, Strangers' Club; Thomas Pettus, mayor in 1590 and Sir John Pettus, mayor in 1608, in Nos 41–47, Pettus House. The houses were marked out by ceremonial posts known as 'alderman's posts' often remaining after the dignitaries had gone, that of the Pettus house until 1891 and now in the Bridewell. Merchant's marks were widely displayed while stained glass and memorials embellished the churches.

The grand appearance of the street was beginning to look rather old-fashioned by the last quarter of the seventeenth century and led to 'classicising'. Buildings were smartened up in fashionable Enlightenment style in three main ways, first by using plastered wood in squares to resemble stone and boxing in irremovable structures such as jettying, secondly by sash windows replacing former casement and oriel designs and thirdly by putting in elaborate classical doorways.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth century Elm Hill was on the skids from two distinct social processes. On the one hand the city's elite and expanding middle class were moving to the country or more fashionable areas such as Colegate, and later to new suburbs west of the city. On the other hand cheap housing was needed to cope with new industries and rapid population growth. Large properties and warehouses were split up for housing and small businesses, upper stories were added and courtyards filled in with lean-tos and hovels – in part just a slum.

Elm Hill was saved from wholesale demolition in 1926 by the casting vote of the chair of the Council. But the 'historicisation' of the street as a tourist attraction goes back further. Walter Rye is best known for the pseudo-Tudor remodelling of the Maid's Head in the nineteenth century and the trend is much evident on Elm Hill. Doris Jewson, a member of the arts and crafts movement, started hand-weaving rugs in 1911 and in 1935 opened the Elm Hill Craft Shop, one of the first in the country, and sponsored exhibitions. So the pleasing façade of the street today is not a type of West Country Tudor build, as depicted in a recent television programme. It is a complex outcome, partly due to the topography, but mainly to the volatile economic and social fortunes over five centuries that mirror much of the history of the city as a whole, many clues to which lie behind the frontages.

Roger Polhill

The Narborough Women – a talk by Daryl Long

Daryl Long gave us an excellent talk on 27 February: *The story of the women who worked at Narborough aerodrome in the First World War.* She has very kindly given us a summary to reproduce here.

Doping an aeroplane, courtesy Imperial War Museum.

Apart from Pulham Royal Naval Air Station, Narborough, near Kings Lynn, had the biggest aerodrome in the country in the First World War. Women were recruited into the Women's Royal Air Force to work at the base. They came from the local area as well as further afield.

Much of what we know about these women came originally from the work of the Narborough Airfield Research Group.

The Women's Royal Air Force was created on 1st April 1918, the same date as the creation of Royal Air Force, which was created due to the growing significance of aerial warfare. Around 30,000 women served in the WRAF between 1918 and 1920.

Women enrolled in the armed forces, they did not enlist. They had to be at least 18 and were required to pass a medical examination and provide a satisfactory reference. Women in the WRAF were nicknamed 'Penguins,' because, like the birds, they did not fly.

Under the general banner of "Free a man to fight" many women did not enrol until the latter months of the war. Ironically many also stayed serving long after the men came home. The logistics of getting so many men home was massive and recruitment of women actually increased after the Armistice.

Once enrolled, women were allocated to one of four categories: clerical, household, technical and general. There were very similar categories in the WRNS and the WAAC. The first few months of the WRAF were pretty disorganised. There was discontent over uniform, accommodation and training. Then Helen Gwynne-Vaughan, who ran the WAACs in France, was summoned home and appointed to run the WRAF from September 1918 and things improved.

Narborough began as a Royal Naval Air Station, then it was taken over by the Royal Flying Corps before becoming a Royal Air Force base in 1918. It was a major training station for both British and American airmen.

Many of the women came from Kings Lynn, commuting daily by train. A tender would collect them and if no tender was available at the end of the day they would walk back to the station together.

Most women were immobile, i.e. lived locally, but Narborough had its own group of mobile women coming from other parts of the UK. They would stay with local families until a women's hostel was built towards the end of the war.

When peace was declared RAF Marham 'bombed' Narborough with flour and so RAF Narborough responded by 'bombing' them with bags of soot! At any one time there had been over 100 women working at Narborough. Narborough finally closed in December 1919.

At the end of the war women in the services were given the same opportunity as the men to apply for free emigration. To our knowledge, none of our Narborough women applied, most married and lived locally after the war.

Here are stories of some of the women:

1. Florence Patterson from Kings Lynn became quite a celebrity at the end of her life for being the last living non-combatant veteran of the war living to the great age of 111. Three of her four brothers were killed in the war. Florence worked at Narborough and at Marham in the Officer's Mess. In an interview she talked of going on dates with the pilots and being given the opportunity to fly in a plane.

2. Daisy Coggles was from Pentney. Two of her four brothers, in the Norfolk Regiment, were killed in the war. Daisy worked as a stenographer at Narborough.
3. Alice Witt and Estella Haverson were both from Kings Lynn and were allocated technical jobs. Alice's job was to splice the wires for the aircraft but she was also batman to officer Rees. Estella's job was in the doping sheds and also packing parachutes. Dope was a toxic substance applied to the fabric of the planes.
4. Ethel Anderson was the daughter of a Kings Lynn fisherman. She enrolled just one month before the war ended. Ethel worked with Florence Patterson in the Officer's Mess and stayed at Narborough until May 1919.
5. Mac and Bubbles. We do not always know the real names of the women. Mac and Bubbles pop up in a lot of the photographs in the Narborough Airfield Research Group's collection and demonstrate the close friendships that must have developed within this tight knit group of women.
6. Grace Shipp and Nelly Shipp. These girls were cousins and known as Trixie and Peggy. Both were from Kings Lynn. We know very little about Peggy but Trixie had eight brothers and one, Gregory, was killed in action in 1915. Trixie and Peggy enrolled in Kings Lynn on the same day. They both worked as telephonists with just one number to remember – the number for the telephone exchange in Kings Lynn – 220. In an interview Trixie gave, she recalled how she and Peggy would go to the weekly dances at the base but were too scared to walk back to catch the train home. Instead they would stay with friends who lived at Narborough Common.
7. Maggie Hammond was a farmer's daughter from Clenchwarton. She worked alongside Trixie and Peggy as a telephonist. She stayed at Narborough until September 1919. Women continued to serve long after the Armistice. There were plans for women in the WRAF to go to France and Germany after the war to administer demobilisation in France and Germany. WRAFs with an exemplary record were asked to volunteer but no records have been found of any Narborough women serving abroad.
8. Marion Heathcote worked as a driver. We think she came from Trowse and moved to Downham just before the war, her father being a policeman. Drivers often came from wealthier backgrounds and so knew how to drive. Drivers were known to be quite difficult to discipline but not necessarily through any fault of their own. Part of the daily routine for all women included roll calls, drill and exercise. Drivers were often working off base and so would miss these aspects of military training and discipline.
9. Women were known as members but some became corporals and sergeants and some enrolled as officers. Gertrude Crome came from the

Kings Lynn area and was a dispatch rider. Nothing is known of Officer Rees who sits centre front of a Narborough photograph as no officer records have survived. No officers were recruited at first and when they were eventually enrolled they received no training.

10. Violet Doughty was from Downham. We know very little about her but she left an important legacy – her photograph album. It is this album which has been invaluable in the research of these women.

11. Five Norfolk women in the WRAF died in service and three were victims of the influenza pandemic of 1918–1919. One was Barbara Goodwin. Born Barbara Harvey into a well-known family of Norfolk innkeepers and horse traders, she returned to her family in Great Massingham when her husband went to war. She worked with her sister Mary in the aeroplane shops. She died in 1919. Her descendants still have the memorial plaque which was issued to families who had lost relatives in the war. Almost three and a half million were issued on behalf of men.

12. Stella and Ivy Easter. The Easter sisters were from Middleton and they worked in the doping sheds. The girls developed health problems as a result of working with the dope and and died within months of each other in 1921. They did not die while in service but their deaths do fall within the qualifying period for a war grave which was 4 August 1914 to 31 August 1921. Stella and Ivy were not commemorated anywhere; no marked grave, no war memorial. Stella, like Violet, also left an important legacy – her autograph book. Her book helped to identify other Narborough women and also speaks volumes about the friendships that were formed, not just between the women but with the men on the base too.

13. Evelyn Murrell came from Downham Market where her family ran the Coffee Pot Inn. She worked as a clerk at RAF Marham, the little sister to Narborough. Evelyn died from influenza and has a commonwealth war grave in Downham churchyard and her name was added to Downham's war memorial in 2015.

14. Love through family, friendship and marriage is evident in many of these stories. Women from the same family enrolled together and love could sometimes blossom on the base and take the women away from Norfolk forever. Mildred Jubey from Kings Lynn was at the base with her aunt Lizzie. Mildred met her future husband Edwin North at Narborough and moved to Surrey after the war. Grace Pratt and Violetta Elvin also found love on the base. Both were planning to marry pilots from the base but both pilots were killed while flying. Corporal Kate Jary met and married an American on the base and moved to the States.