AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

JOURNAL AND NEWSLETTER

Volume 11 No. 9

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Front cover: Mary Hardy aged 51, by Huquier [*Cousins Hardy Collection*].
Back cover: Mrs Frances Roualle opening the Aylsham Bypass 2 May 1980.

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 do hope you have all weathered the unprecedented lockdown for the Corvid 19 epidemic from the middle of March this year without too much difficulty. Many of you will have been in the vulnerable category and much missing your normal routine with friends and family. It was a great disappointment that we had to cancel the social evening at the Clifton Hotel on 25 March and the much-anticipated series of summer events so carefully organised by Sue Sharpe. Members have been reimbursed and it is hoped to run the course next year.

The Heritage Centre, in conjunction with the Parish Church and our Society, had planned to provide a small exhibition to commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May and we still hope to do that when feasible.

Sadly Margaret Bird had to cancel the book launch of the four volumes of *Mary Hardy and her World* at Norwich Cathedral on 17 April. We are grateful to Maggie Vaughan-Lewis for the review included in this issue of the Journal.

All being well we anticipate seeing you all at the AGM on Thursday 8 October, for which the Agenda and Minutes of the 2019 AGM accompany this issue of the Journal to bring with you. Note the time of the AGM.

The lecture programme for the next season has been arranged as follows:–
Thursday 8 October, AGM 7 pm at Friendship Hall, followed by tea break and talk Mary Rose by Matt Champion.
Thursday 22 October, talk at 7.30 pm, refreshments from 7 pm, Friendship Hall, Worstead Weavers by Margaret Brooker.
Thursday 26 November, Iron Age Norfolk by Dr John Davies.
Thursday 28 January 2021, Shardlake's Norwich – C.J. Sansom's Tombland and Kett's Rebellion by Paul Dixon.
Thursday 25 February, The Walsingham Study by Ian Hinton.
Thursday 25 March, Norwich Guildfest by Dr Victor Morgan.

The Orchards by **Roger Polhill & Maggie Vaughan-Lewis**

The Orchards c 1920, courtesy Aylsham Town Archive.

It was a well-kept secret that The Orchards in Norwich Road was built by William Repton, the principal solicitor in Aylsham and son of the renowned landscape designer Humphry Repton, in 1848 for his illegitimate daughter Eleanor, later Helen, Panton, who had married his partner William Henry Scott in 1840. Repton had bought two acres of a former nursery in 1828 and used it as an orchard, hence the name of the house.

It was designed by William's elder brother John Adey Repton in the neo-Tudor style. John Adey Repton was an associate of the famous architect Sir George Gilbert Scott, a noted gothic revivalist inspired by Augustus Pugin, who had designed the new House of Commons being built at this time. Sir George was William Scott's cousin. That family connection no doubt facilitated the business partnership and the convenient marriage of William Henry Scott, then about 22 and from a not very well-endowed clerical lineage, to Eleanor Panton, then about 25 and brought up by a couple living in Marsham.

William Repton commissioned Robert Bartram, the builder and carpenter in Millgate, to build the house for William Scott in 1848. William Frederick Starling in his *Memories of Aylsham* records that Scott required the men to work on the house in three eight-hour shifts, all the night through with big torches. In 1849 William Repton bought the land to the west running up to the back of the houses in Hungate Street. By 1851 the Scotts were living in Orchard

House, as it was then called, with five children between the age of ten and six months, two nurses, a cook, a housemaid and a foot boy. There was some anxiety in 1855 when William Repton noted in his diary that William Henry Scott had intimated that he was considering emigrating for the sake of the family, no doubt with the stigma of illegitimacy at that time in his mind. William Repton was now in his 70s and distressed at the thought of losing his family and further endowed the Scott family with a fixed income and support for other members of their family.

The Scotts did not leave and were the principal beneficiaries of William Repton's will when he died in 1858. They sold Orchard House in 1868 and moved across the road to the Old Bank House. Before William Henry Scott died in 1882 he arranged the elaborate family memorial by the south porch of Aylsham Parish Church.

The 1868 sale catalogue notes an entrance porch leading to a handsome oak staircase to a dining room 23 × 16′, two drawing rooms 17 × 16′ and 18 × 15′ on the first floor with a breakfast room, smoking room and gun room. The domestic offices included a butler's pantry, store room, glass closet, kitchens, wine and ale cellars, as well as a good provision of bathrooms, water closets and lavatories. The upper floors had 9 bedrooms, three drawing rooms and a linen room. There were 4 attic rooms for domestics. It was said to have 'extensive and charming Pleasure Grounds, tastefully disposed gardens, Glass, Orchid, Hothouses, Fountain, lawns, parterres, etc.'

The sale notice indicates that Frederick Astley was the tenant and a pencil annotation says that the property was bought by the Wright family, though there is no record of them living there. It was subsequently occupied by prominent members of society and Justices of the Peace. Charles Morse, a Justice of the Peace and brewer, was resident there from 1871 to 1877 and Starling noted that his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught came to lunch with him when an officer at the barracks in Norwich. Colonel Henry Richard Legge Newdigate is noted there in the Town Directories from 1883 to 1900. It was then taken up as a clinic by Dr Frederick Little, who had been in the Manor across the road from 1872. In 1901 he was there with his wife, ten children, two nurses, a cook and housemaid. On the back of the 1920 photo above advertising his clinic it states that he receives two or three resident patients with a medical, surgical or slight mental condition. The Little family was there until he died in 1927.

It was then bought by Captain James Sears noted for a distinguished career in World War I and remembered in the town for the Ian Sears Clinic he built at the bottom of the garden of Orchard House in memory of his young son. The Child Welfare Centre was designed with great care and furnished to a

Opening of the Sears Clinic 8 November 1935, courtesy Aylsham Town Archive.

high standard. When he presented the clinic to the County Council in 1935 he had already left to live in London where he took an active part in Labour Party politics. He had already gained some notoriety in May 1933 for causing a scene at the Cenotaph in Whitehall, where he snatched a wreath laid by Dr Rosenberg on behalf of Herr Hitler and drove off at speed. He was discharged at court under the Probation of Offenders Act, but charged 40s for the wreath.

When Captain Sears left Aylsham he sold Orchard House to the Aylsham and District local Labour Party, intended to be a hostel with games and reading rooms, public baths, billiards and a dance room with a parquet floor. It was designed to cater for commercial travellers, cyclists and hikers, but also for Summer Schools and conferences and to provide meeting rooms for local organisations. Jean and Russell Craske remember Mr Johnson was the caretaker when it was active for some years.

John Baden [J.B.] Postle was living in Gothic House and was able to purchase The Orchards and all the land up to the back of his house in Hungate Street for £2000. He converted it into 6–7 gracious flats with a generous garden. The property passed to his daughter Ann Barbara Postle when he died in 1963. She lived in Bury St Edmunds with a friend, but her brother John Postle kept an eye on the property, using the large garage built by Dr Little around 1910 and the Victorian greenhouses where the new extension was later built on the north side of the property. Two primary school teachers, Miss Bunn and Lilian Barwick (wife of the hairdresser and Town Councillor Freddy Barwick), are remembered as long-term residents.

Fire in June 2001, courtesy Aylsham Town Archive.

Around 1990 Broadland District Council became concerned about the conservation status of the historic building and it was listed in 1995. They advised Ann that she would need to find some £50,000 to bring it up to Grade II listed standard and she decided to put the house up for sale. It was in the hands of estate agents, Shipman's Property Services, in 1997 when Anthea Taigel was surveying Aylsham gardens. By 2001 it was reported as derelict with evidence of squatters and in June that year there was a fire that resulted in the Broadland Housing Association taking on the property in 2002. The old house was converted into 4–5 deluxe flats and the new build, designed in appropriate style, was built on the north side to provide revenue for its upkeep.

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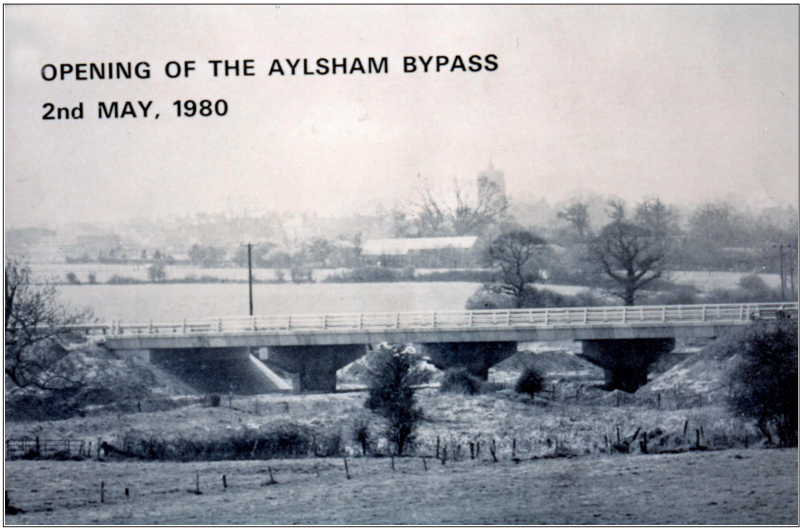
We are grateful to Margaret Bryant and Paula Strachan of the Broadland Housing Association for the original enquiry to the Archives on behalf of residents who thought the house might once have been an hotel.

The Aylsham Bypass by **Roger Polhill**



Brochure for opening the Aylsham Bypass and Mrs Roualle cutting the tape.

Photos of Red Lion Street in 1980, taken to show congestion. Courtesy Aylsham Town Archive.

It is forty years since the Aylsham bypass was officially opened. Some older members may remember the occasion when District Councillor Frances Roualle cut the ribbon. People who have resided in Aylsham since 1980 will have appreciated a reduction in congestion that had marred the centre of town before the bypass was opened, but may well not be aware of the importance of the new Banningham Road in engendering the development of the Dunkirk Industrial Estate.

The brochure – *The Bypass – Links with the Past* – includes the following description:

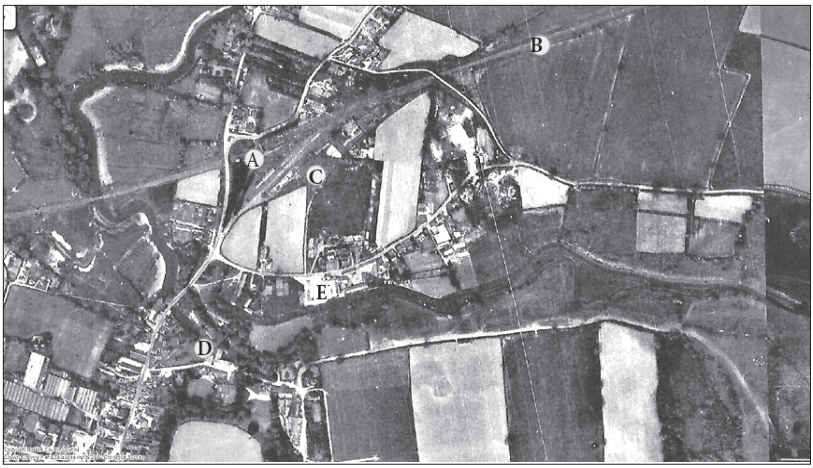
> Aylsham today is little altered from the 18th century town of redbrick houses clustered around the central market place. The narrow streets, adequate for the horse-drawn traffic of the day, have always had to pass the through traffic from Norwich to Cromer, but the original town planners would never have envisaged the volume of traffic their roads would carry in the 20th century. The continual passage of heavy goods vehicles and the seasonal crush of holiday traffic, have for a long time tried the patience of the inhabitants and shaken the foundations of their dwellings.
>
> The opening of the new 3.9 mile bypass today must therefore be an event to be greeted with some jubilation in Aylsham not least by those Parishioners who have so assiduously and effectively campaigned to bring it about.
>
> The new road commences at a roundabout one mile south of the town, swings to the east, crosses the River Bure and the line of the old M. & G.N. Railway, bypasses Ingworth and re-joins the A140 at High Noon Cross Roads some 3 miles north of the town.

In selecting foundation material for the new road, the Contractor decided to use crushed concrete. By arrangement with the National Trust 14 acres of concrete runway from the World War Two Airfield at Oulton were broken up, crushed and carted to the new road. Surplus topsoil from the bypass was carted back to Oulton to spread over the areas where the runways were removed thereby enabling the owners to restore the land back to its original use. One cannot but help think that Humphry Repton, the great 18th century landscape gardener, whose tomb lies in the Churchyard of Aylsham Parish Church, would have approved.

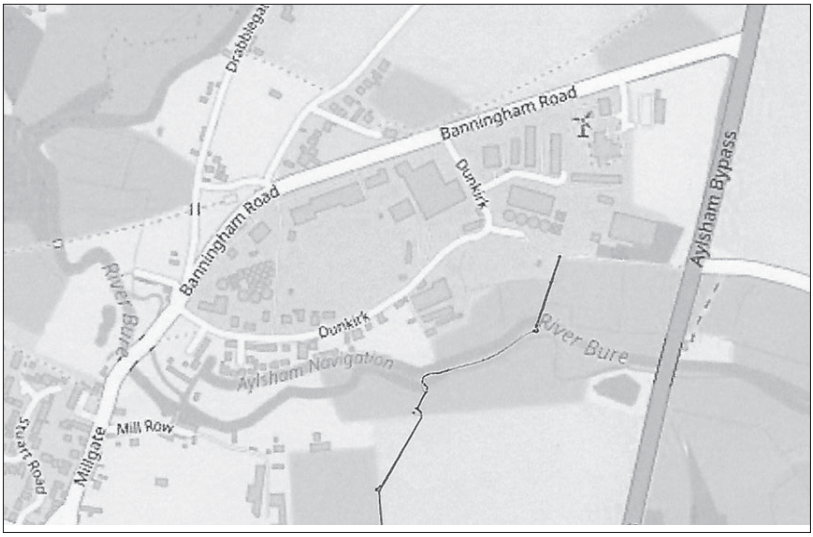
Repton might also have approved of the care taken by the designers to minimise the intrusion of the bypass into the pleasant countryside around the Bure Valley once known as "The Garden of Norfolk". Five miles of new hedgerow have been planted and much of the slopes landscaped with a variety of trees and shrubs. Every care has been taken to preserve existing mature trees.

Work on the bypass began in January 1979 when the occasion was marked by a sod-cutting ceremony kindly performed by Mrs. F. M. Roualle. It is with pleasure that we welcome her return to open the completed bypass today. Since completion was originally scheduled for September 1980 it is a tribute to the Staff of the County Surveyor and the Contractors that the project has been completed some five months ahead of programme.

It is generally recognised that Frances Roualle took a leading part in pressing for the new road, as evidenced also by the references to her above. It took ten years to realise. In the Aylsham Town Archive there is a copy of the 1970 *Aylsham draft policy map* that emanated from the Town and Country Planning Act, 1968. It starts with the following sentence. "Commercial activity does not seem to have expanded very much despite the increase in population." And a few sentences below it elaborates this further. "However, unless there is a substantial expansion, there is unlikely to be much commercial growth, and any new commercial development can be accommodated within the existing centres." It does recognise, however, that "several light industries have been established in Aylsham within recent years" and "with the prospect of further decline in agricultural employment, and a further increase in residential population, the continued growth of local employment would be an advantage, and an industrial site should be included in the plan." The main concern was the congestion. A survey in 1970 showed that of about 6,000 vehicles a day entering the town 60% of those on the A140 did not stop in Aylsham.



Aerial photograph of Dunkirk in 1946. A M. & G.N. Railway Station; B railway line now Banningham Road; C railway yards; D water mill; E roller mills.



Dunkirk today to show development since World War II and benefit of the new Banningham Road along the old railway line, courtesy of Norfolk District Council. The proposed footpath from the new Bure Meadows housing estate to Dunkirk with bridges across to the island between the old river and canal is also shown.

The "Summary of Problems and Planning Possibilities" starts on "Through Traffic" with the following.

> "Consideration will be given to the programming of the A.140 by-pass in the light of the traffic census, but because of the limited resources available for road improvements, a choice will need to be given to:–
> (a) the construction of an outer by-pass, with little or no improvement to roads in the town in the short-term; or,
> (b) the construction of an inner relief road and other improvements to roads in the town, without the provision of an outer by-pass, except in the long-term."

The plan recommended that "because of the timing and location of an outer by-pass are so uncertain, the Policy Map indicates an inner relief road east of the town centre which could be provided as an alternative, at an earlier date". It was argued that "the cost of an inner relief road should prove to be considerably less than the by-pass". Fortunately local pressure avoided this economy and plans went ahead for the bypass, work starting, as noted above, in January 1979.

The aerial photo of 1946 shows Dunkirk when the railway had been reduced to a goods service. It closed in 1959 and the railway yards became a depot for Norfolk County Council Highways Department. Towards the end of the 1960s much of this land was sold to Ivan Daniels, including most of that within the circuit of Dunkirk and Banningham Road except the south-west part occupied by Aylsham Growers and part of the mill premises that had been sold to British Oil and Seed Cake Mills (BOCM) in 1967. He also had the land in the triangle to the north along the old Banningham Road up to the lane that led down to the footbridge across the railway line to Dunkirk. His wife Carol says it was an anxious venture as they had three children under the age of two years and nine months. In time Ivan was able to develop the industrial units along the Banningham Road up to the S&M building supplies. He built houses for the family on the northern triangle and when BOCM closed he bought the land along the riverside for housing and a new home. The Town Council purchased the wooded triangle south of the old station between the railway bridge and Banningham Road for safe access to the Weaver's Way that extends west along the old railway line. It also acquired the Staithe, the area between the river and the start of Dunkirk as community land. Recent development extends on former Belt Estate land east of the circuit almost up to the bypass.

In forty years the bypass has relieved some traffic congesstion in town, also opened up land for much beneficial industrial use and within its arc large areas for residential estates, including the newly built Bure Meadows.

News from the Town Archive by Maggie Vaughan-Lewis

In September 2019, following Roger Polhill's exemplary two-year stint as honorary town archivist, the voluntary post was offered to Maggie Vaughan-Lewis, a retired archivist, known to members through her and William's local history publications. Fortunately Roger is happy to continue as a volunteer so easing the transition process. Their first task was to complete a stocktaking of both archives and equipment. The archive catalogue has now been updated with revised locations and anomalies in box numbering are being resolved.

During the summer Aylsham had become a partner in the Norfolk Record Office's community archives project. They were successful in their Lottery bid and a community archivist has now been appointed. We will be visited during 2020 as part of the rollout of the project although of course this will not happen until after the pandemic. One bonus will be the provision of £250 worth of archive materials so we will be able to upgrade some of our older storage wrappers with non-acidic folders. Roger and Maggie attended a useful day at the Record Office called 'Looking after Archives' as part of the project.

Photographs are scanned and added continuously by volunteer Peter Bull to a separate photograph archive which is backed up for safekeeping off-site by Jayne Andrews at the Heritage Centre. Peter has also this year created a scanned collection of items of interest from *Just Aylsham*, dating from 2008. Carole Matthews, our fourth volunteer, continues to create photographs of current events and research older shots through social media. We worked together as usual to prepare for the annual exhibition at the Heritage Centre.

Visitors on our open mornings (Wednesday 10-12) were up during the summer and led to opportunities to study the deeds of two properties in the town, in Church Terrace and White Hart Street. We were also able to help the owners of The Orchards with their site and the intriguing find of a grave foot-stone in a garden in Oakfield Road led to further digging in the records. Permission to use images from the collection was given to Dr Heather Falvey for her volume of Repton letters to be published by the Norfolk Record Society.

Deposits of material are regularly brought, including items from the late Geoffrey Ducker and a larger gift from Geoff Gale's heirs of his papers. Geoff was a volunteer in the archive for many years as well as chairman of the Society. Of course the archives have been closed since March 23 but enquiries are still answered where possible. If you have been sorting out your attics/cupboards during the lockdown and found anything you think may be of interest, please keep them for us. If you cannot (for example if you are moving) please email Maggie or Roger and we will organise a 'distanced' collection.

Ben Rust† 1920–2020

Ben at 89, with Jo, on left, and Mary-Jayne.

Ben Rust, Miller of Aylsham, died peacefully at home on 8th March 2020 aged 99.

Ben was born in December 1920, the son of Robert Rust who ran the family business in milling in Aylsham. Ben started his education at a tiny local school and then went on to board at Aldenham in Hertfordshire at a young age where he excelled at sport, especially hockey and badminton.

After school he followed in his father's footsteps and began working at the mill, learning his trade, from labouring, testing grain and then management. He attended various professional development courses and won an award at one of them.

When war broke out in 1939 Ben was not called up because milling was a protected occupation. However, wishing to do his duty, he signed up with the RAF. He was sent to Canada to train young men to fly spitfires and hurricanes. He often talked about the circuits and bumps as the young pilots tried landing for the first time, and enthralled us with tales of doing loop-the-loop. His affection for Canada and the beautiful outdoors lasted a lifetime.

After the war he returned to Aylsham and continued his milling career, living with his parents and two sisters opposite the mill.

He continued his love of sport and joined the Aylsham tennis club. He met Lynette Hirst, who was working for Colmans Mustard in Norwich, at a tennis club dance at Aylsham town hall and they were married six months later.

Lynette was a fabulous hostess, cook and homemaker and three daughters followed.

The mill on the River Bure was a large feature of family life; swimming in the mill pool, rowing and canoeing, climbing trees and picnics on the river banks. In his retirement, Ben enjoyed keeping bees on mill land, supplying family and friends with honey.

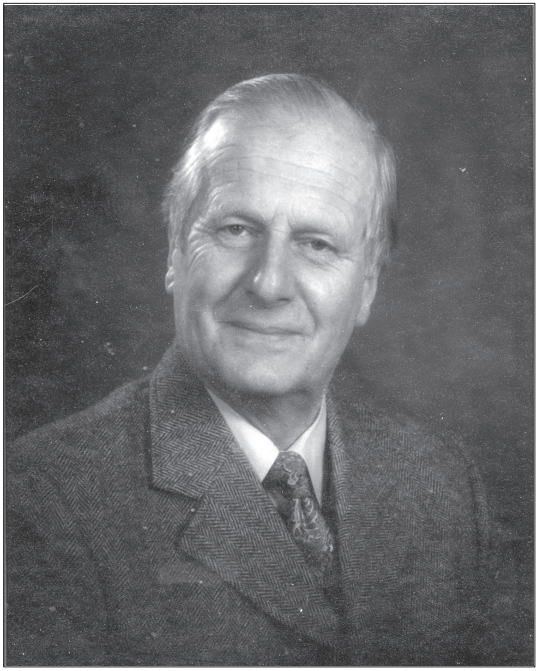
Ben's work meant he was closely involved with local farmers who sent their crops to the mill for drying and grinding at harvest time. The mill operated all night in July and August to cope with the incoming grain, and the machinery would often break down from overheating. So Ben would take a camp bed down to his office to be on call through the night to fix problems. His employees knew he would always be there to help, and if they were ever unwell, Ben would visit to ensure they had everything they needed. When Barclay Pallet was sold to Unilever in 1967, the mill converted to producing animal feed stuffs instead of flour. One of the new bosses commented that Aylsham mill was a "microcosm of good management, mainly because of the good relationship between Mr Rust and the workforce".

Ben had great affection for Aylsham. He devoted himself to helping the community in many ways, as an Aylsham High School Governor, speaker-finder for the Rotary Club, Chairman of the Parish Council, president of the Aylsham Show and a church warden. He visited pensioners, supported the Christmas lights committee and he helped to conserve many of Aylsham's beautiful trees. From the many condolence cards which have arrived at Ben's house, it is clear he was known in the community as a true gentleman.

But Ben was mostly a family man, full of laughter and fun, always there in the background when needed, always thoughtful and supportive and endlessly patient. He loved get-togethers with his family, friends and neighbours, Christmas games and Easter egg hunts, walks on the beach after Sunday lunch and early-morning outings with the dog and a daughter in the autumn to collect wild mushrooms and blackberries.

Ben enjoyed good health and sport, especially tennis and sailing, and played golf into his early nineties. He was a skilled carpenter and book binder, repairing many of the hymn books in Aylsham church. He had a splendid vegetable garden and in later years an allotment which produced wonderful raspberries.

He was a founder member of the Society and kept an interest in the Journal into the last months of his life. He contributed a number of articles on the mills and his meticulous rainfall records. We have reproduced his 1992 article on the mills in this issue and he kindly deposited photographs and papers he had accumulated in the Aylsham Town Archive.



Ben Rust, Chairman of the Aylsham Council 1973–1982.

His beloved wife Lynette died on March 7th 2017. Astonishingly Ben died almost three years later on March 8th, 2020, missing the same day by just five hours. We joked that he was late for his first date with Lynette and now late for his final date! We will miss his wonderful spirit dreadfully and so will the town and church of Aylsham.

Ben leaves three daughters, Joanna, Sara and Mary-Jayne and four grandchildren.

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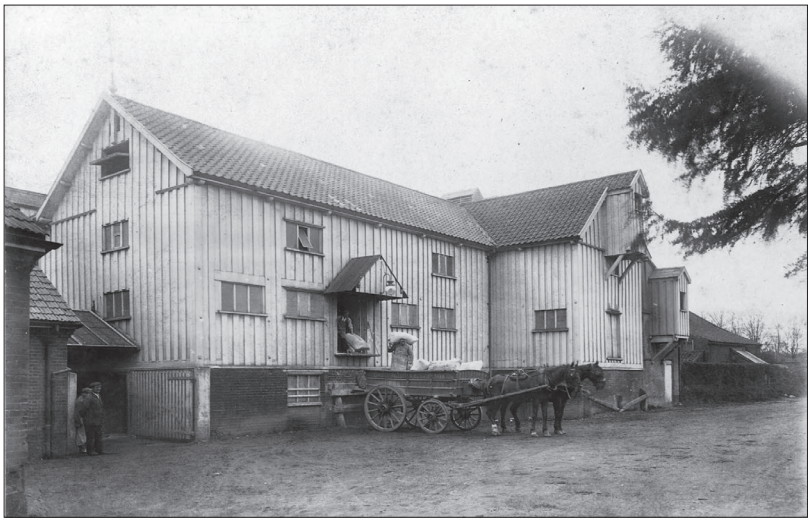
Aylsham Mills

by **Ben Rust†**



Dunkirk Roller Mills in 1907 when purchased by Barclay Pallett & Company. All photos courtesy of Aylsham Town Archive.

Mr W W Pallett was born at Lodge Farm, Stevenage, on August 28th 1855. He came to Norfolk when apprenticed to Press Brothers, Corn & Seed Merchants, of Spa Common, North Walsham. He eventually became a partner, and the name of the firm was changed to Press & Pallett.

On the death of Mr Edward Press in 1906, Mr Pallett became the sole proprietor. Re-organisation of the firm took place, and the Barclay family entered the business; the name being changed to Pallett Barclay & Co. At this time the company had its head office at North Walsham, with trading premises at North Walsham, Bacton Wood, Felmingham, Wayford Bridge, Cromer, Gunton and Cawston.

In 1907, when the Dunkirk Roller Mills at Aylsham came on the market, on the retirement of Mr Ben Cook, the company purchased them and formed a second company called Barclay Pallett & Company Ltd. Mr R L Rust, who had worked for Mr Pallett since 1900, was sent to Aylsham as manager. Following the death of Mr W W Pallett in 1913, the two companies were merged, and at the same time Wroxham Mills were purchased; the whole company being known as Barclay Pallett & Co Ltd.

The Dunkirk Roller Mill in 1910 when improved for flour milling. Note wherry in the cut from the canal.

Dunkirk Roller Mill

The mill is situated between the Tuttington Road and the canal at Aylsham. The mill dates back to 1856 when Frederick Copeman was the owner. Purchased in 1878 by Benjamin Cook, who already owned mills at Itteringham and Blickling, he improved them considerably. At the time of purchase, the mill contained four pairs of millstones. In 1886, Mr Cook installed a four sack/hour roller mill plant – the first in the district. Three years later, he built offices, seed granary and stabling alongside the road and enclosing the yard. Alongside the canal and forming the fourth side of the yard is the building known as the Bone Mill. This is still in situ and still known by this name.[1]

In 1878, a Mr Vince carried on trade in bone meal, meat meal and other associated products. Mr Cook acquired the land and buildings before building the new offices. In 1894 Mr Cook added wheat washing and drying machinery, and carried out other changes. The first exhibition of roller milling machinery (as opposed to the long established millstone) took place in the Royal Agricultural Hall in London in 1879. It was then that English millers started to convert to the new system of milling; so Mr Cook was in the forefront of modern milling techniques.

For nearly thirty years there was a good flour trade. In 1907 Mr Cook retired, and Barclay Pallett purchased the mills at auction. The auction took place on Saturday July 6th 1907 in Norwich by Messrs Irelands. Three lots were offered:

Group of workers 1910.

Lot 1. The steam Roller flour mills, together with wheat cleaning plant, offices, granary and stabling.
Lot 2. Double dwelling House (opposite)
Lot 3. Double dwelling House (opposite)

The company purchased Lot 1. Trading carried on without a break. Plans were made to improve the milling plant, but these were not carried out. An agreement was made with the Post Office to install a telephone at an annual rent of £7-10-0 to cover 480 calls. In 1910, Henry Simon Milling Engineers improved the flour milling plant. There is a group photograph of mill employees and engineers taken at this time.

An agreement was made in 1909 with the Aylsham Canal Company to pay an annual fee of £50 in lieu of all tolls on the canal. The company owned and used a number of wherries. In 1910, the 28th Annual Milling Convention was held at Cromer, the only time that this convention has ever been held in Norfolk, so this was therefore, an important occasion. The souvenir issue of "Milling" magazine contained write-ups of many mills in East Anglia, including Aylsham.

In 1912, catastrophe overtook the canal, river and mill. On 27th August six inches of rain fell in 24 hours causing serious flooding of the Bure valley. My father told me that he went home at 6 o'clock in the evening, and he was called back at 6.30pm. The water level had risen two feet in a half-hour, due to the

M & GN railway embankment collapsing and allowing a surge of water to flow downstream. Locks and brick-arched bridges were swept away, and mills and houses flooded. No damage was caused to the machinery, but many sacks of grain and flour were damaged.

The canal was not repaired. Some wherries were trapped at Aylsham, and were taken down the canal and river when water levels were high enough. At Buxton, they were taken out of the river, and manhandled across the road to reach safe water below the mill. With the coming of the railways to Aylsham in the middle of the 1880s, use of the canal had declined. The flood damage was not repaired, and navigation ceased on the upper reaches of the river Bure above Horstead mill after August 1912.

In June 1914, Aylsham Water Mill came on the market, and Barclay Pallett & Co purchased the mill at auction, so they now owned both Aylsham mills, using one for flour manufacture and the other for animal food manufacture. In August 1914, the Great War started, and the Ministry of Food took over responsibility of flour manufacture with the mill being run by the company for the Ministry. At the end of the war, the control of the flour mill was handed back to the company, with suitable compensation being given. With this money, the company re-modelled the wheat cleaning and drying plant, and also up-dated some of the roller mill plant. The work was carried out by E R & F Turner, Milling Engineers of Ipswich. When re-modelling the wheat-cleaning plant, the roof of the building was raised, the locum removed and the smaller of the two tall chimneys was demolished. All this took place in 1920, and a photograph shows the mill as it was before these alterations took place.

Aylsham Water Mill

Reputedly, there has been a mill here since the time of Domesday. During the 17th century, the mill seems to have been the subject to a number of law-suits, and as a consequence fell into a poor state of repair. It was purchased by the Parmeters, and re-built in its present form in 1798. The Parmeters built the malt house also, in 1777. During the latter part of the 19th century, the water mill belonged to the Bullock brothers – John and Stanley. On the death of Stanley in 1914, it came on the market and was sold by auction together with land, houses and cottages in Millgate. A copy of the sale catalogue gives the date of sale as June 16th 1914. The mill was bought by Barclay Pallett, and the two mills were managed by Mr R L Rust for the next 50 years.

From the plan of the lots for sale, it is interesting to note how well the purchase of this property complemented the Dunkirk Roller Mills. The company bought everything except:–

Lot 2. Millgate House

Dunkirk Roller Mill in 1920 immediately before the renovation. Note the steam lorry.

Lot 3. Bure House
Lot 4. Millgate Cottages
Lot 7. The Malthouse
Lot 8. Meadow
Lot 10. Shop, bakehouse, windmill and dwelling house.

Mr R L Rust subsequently purchased the Malthouse, for there is an agreement to let land adjacent to the Malthouse to the War Office for the purpose of erecting a bath-house for troops. The agreement was dated May 19th 1916. Mr Rust also purchased Millgate House at a later date. In 1918 he moved there, following Colonel T W Purdy who moved to Woodgate House.

During the Great War, the two mills and Wroxham mills, together with other trading sites were managed by the company and were profitable. These sites were:–
Bacton Wood Mill and granary
North Walsham station granary
Cromer Station granary
Felmingham Mill
Wroxham staithe granary
Cawston coal yard
Wayford Bridge granary

Employees serving in the forces were paid a part of their salary/wages. Employees working at the mills were paid a bonus. By 1922 there was a general down-turn in the economy, and employees were asked to accept a reduction in wages. Flour milling at Wroxham ceased, and Aylsham took over flour production and supplied Wroxham customers. Animal food production, and general trade continued to be profitable, and wherries continued to ply from Bacton Wood, Wroxham and Wayford Bridge.

The first steam lorry was purchased just prior to the Great War, and continued in use for many years. A second lorry was purchased after the war. Then petrol-driven lorries began to replace the horse and wagon, but horse-drawn coal carts continued in use until the end of the Second World War. Some names of drivers are Walter Johnson, Jack Wright, Tom Wright, Fred Grix, Reggie Gladman, G Suffling and G Eastoe.

The flour mill was powered by a large twin cylinder steam engine. This was used to drive the whole plant through a system of line shafts and flat leather belts. The engine was a 75HP twin cylinder Richard & Watts with a Galloway boiler.

Jack Matthews and George Eastoe were the engine minders, and a Mr Smith ruled the workforce of a dozen men. The office was worked by an elderly gentleman by the name of White. He lived in one of the mill houses across the road, and turned up early each morning in cloth cap and slippers.

Before the Great War flour was packed in 20 stone [280lb] sacks. These were delivered by horse and cart to local bakeries, and usually carried on a man's back up outside steps to the bakery loft. My father told me the story that when legislation was introduced to limit the weight of flour in a bag to 10 stone, the carters were very angry because it meant climbing the bakery steps twice as many times! Flour milling was never very flourishing, but trade continued with local bakeries and grocers' shops throughout the area, and to London. Flour to London went by rail, and subsequently by lorry. In the early 1930s, a small self-raising flour plant was introduced, and flour was packed in branded 3½ lb. [¼ stone] bags, and sent out in packs of a dozen.

In 1920, the wheat cleaning and drying plant was re-modelled by E. R. & F. Turner Ltd of Ipswich, who also re-modelled the flour-milling plant, and there is mention of the plant standing idle for six months when under Flour Milling Control, just after the Great War.

The introduction of motor transport came slowly during the 1920s. Up to the introduction of mechanical transport, all cereals came to the mill from the farm by horse and wagon. At harvest time there could be up to 30 wagons waiting to be unloaded. Corn was put into corn sacks and manhandled. At the mill they would either be unloaded and carried on a man's back, or

wheeled by sack trolley, and stacked. Corn was either threshed in the field at harvest time, or stacked and threshed from the stack at a later date. Corn sacks would be provided by the miller – each sack holding a volume of grain which was weighed on the farm:-

Wheat 1 sack = 1 coomb = 252lb.
Barley 1 sack = 1 coomb = 224lb.
Oats 1 sack = 1 coomb = 168lb.
(Coomb is a Norfolk/East Anglian word)

English wheat, providing it was dry enough, was stored in sacks until required, then mixed with Canadian/American wheats for making bread flour, or milled on its own for soft flour.

In 1929, the steam engine was replaced by a Ruston Hornsby (of Lincoln) twin cylinder diesel engine of 120 HP, with a rope drive. A new engine house was built. The steam engine was sold, but the boiler remained until it was removed to make way for a night-watchman's room during the Second World War. The tall chimney was removed in 1937. The period between the Wars was a difficult time, with little change, and the fortunes of the company fluctuated, but the company was always profitable.

There was no mains electricity in Aylsham until 1931, so both mills generated their own. At the flour mill there was no electricity until the engine started each morning, so candles were used. This was a dangerous practice in an old wooden building, and even more dangerous in a flour-mill. The water-mill used a system of accumulators which were recharged each day by a dynamo driven from the water-mill. In 1931, when mains electricity came, power was available for electric motors. It was not long before a small electrically powered hammer mill was installed in the water-mill. Ground cereals became available for the manufacture of balanced rations for livestock. Throughout the 1930s, this trade steadily increased, and two vertical mixers were installed in the water-mill.

Mill stones driven by water power continued in use for grinding farmers' corn. Some malting barley was stored in corn sacks on the granary floor. An average of five men were employed. One of these men, Mr Harper, was skilled in dressing mill stones. A tap, tap all day long meant that he was using a mill bill, and chipping grooves into the surface of the millstone. The backs of his hands were black, caused by small specks of stone embedding themselves in the skin of his hands. Naturally, it was always necessary to wear goggles to protect his eyes.

The flour mill continued production, although the flour trade was never good. The mill was in production for either 8 or 12 hours each day, and sometimes 16 hours. The sale of balanced rations increased. As these increased,

the sale of slab-cake decreased and eventually ceased altogether. Slab-cake was the residue from the extraction of oil, by pressure squeezing, from cotton seed, palm seed and linseed. The residues became a thick slab of about 1½ inches, 3′6" long and 15" wide. These were manhandled, stacked in tiers, and fed to cattle. Any farmer who used this feed needed a cake-breaker. Modern methods, including the use of a solvent for oil extraction, terminated the production of slab-cake. A trade developed in seed corn. Artificial fertilizer sales increased, and small seeds (clover and grass) sales continued. General business conditions were improving, as the fortunes of agriculture became more prosperous.

Second World War

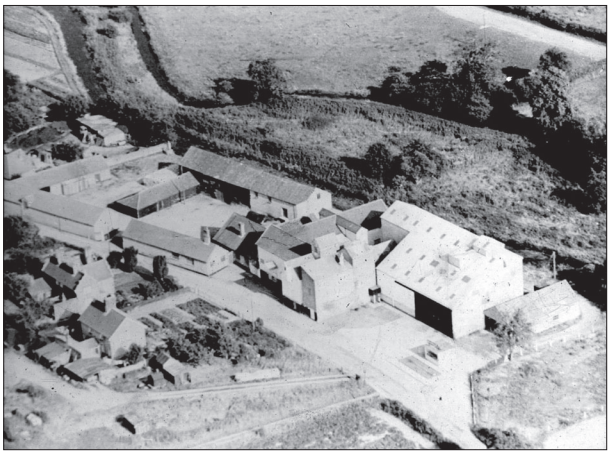
The start of the 1939–45 war brought in rationing of feeding stuffs, a limited supply of fertilizer, and control of flour milling by the Ministry of Food. Many employees were retained in reserved occupations or were too old to be called-up. Women were employed in the office. Many of the older employees served in volunteer services such as,

The Observer Corps
The Fire Service
The Home Guard
St. John's Ambulance
The Red Cross

The army built strong-points at strategic places!! A concrete bag pill-box was built against the north end of the water-mill, adjacent to the sluice-gate. This commanded views of the road bridge, and the shallow water at the bottom of the mill-pool. At this time, there was a small, single-plank footbridge across the river at the bottom of the mill pool, where there was a hard gravel bottom, and the water was shallow. The army decided, in the interests of security, that the footbridge should be destroyed. The County Council owned buildings adjacent to the staithe, which were hired by the company. At the start of the war, the County Council terminated the lease, and converted the buildings to decontamination sheds, for use in case of chemical warfare. At the flour mill, the old boiler house was converted to a night-watchman's room, and throughout the war a man was always on duty.

Post War

For the first 2–3 years after the war, little change took place. Then, with steadily increasing labour costs, changes were necessary. A second and larger grinder was installed in the water-mill. Farm chemicals began to appear, and the sale



Aerial view of Dunkirk mill in 1961 with new silo. Bone Mill runs aongside the canal.

New silo at Dunkirk Mill in 1961.

of fertilizers increased rapidly. Transport requirements increased, new lorries replaced old ones and the horse and cart disappeared.

Bulk handling of corn became essential to reduce labour requirements. Four 50 ton bins were installed at Aylsham flour mill, and a facility for tipping sacks from the lorry into a small intake conveyor. This necessitated filling in the cutting from the canal to inside the mill building – a facility which had not been used since 1912. A warehouse and boiler house were also demolished.

In 1953, a complete re-modelling of the water-mill took place. The installation of a pelletting press and meal plant involved bringing into use the disused bottom floor beneath the granary floor, known as the Wood Shed. A small boiler house was erected at the east end with a bulk molasses tank below floor level. New style paper bags were used, and a big advertising campaign steadily increased sales of feeding stuffs.

In 1959, a grain silo and dryer was built at Dunkirk on land adjacent to the flour mill. This necessitated demolishing a pair of cottages. A weighbridge was installed; the turnover to bulk-handling of grain was rapid, and the use of corn sacks speedily decreased. For the first few years, use of the dryer was heavy. With the introduction of the combine harvester it became more economic for the farmers to have their own drying facilities, and after a few years, most grain was dried on the farm.

In 1966, the company decided to build a new provender mill alongside the silo, on land which belonged to the company and which was used as allotments. The grain silo could therefore supply both the flour mill and the new provender mill with all their grain requirements in bulk. Building commenced early in 1966, and production commenced in 1967. Animal feed production ceased at the water-mill, Wroxham and North Walsham. In 1967 the company was sold to British Oil and Cake Mills; a subsidiary of Unilever. The new owners enlarged the plant and added bulk handling facilities. Production of BOCM foods commenced in 1969.

The flour mill ceased production and was closed. For a long time it was used by the Local Fire Service for training. In 1975 the building was demolished to make way for the present building; which is used for the manufacture of premixes.

The water-mill was sold in 1969 to Mr J Crampton, who converted part of it into holiday flats. The front section over the river houses a theatre organ. The water wheel and machinery has been renovated and is in working order.[2]

British Oil and Cake Mills and Silcock Feeds, both national manufacturers of animal feeds, were both subsidiaries of Unilever. They were merged into one company known as BOCM Silcock. The new company had a policy of closing the very large port mills, and building smaller, computerised mills throughout the country. Strategically placed, the aim was to be within 60 miles of any farm. One of these new mills was built at Bury St Edmunds, and it was not long before the company realised that Bury mill could supply Aylsham's customers. With the introduction of milk quotas, and the downturn in animal food requirements, the closure of Aylsham was inevitable.

Redundancy notices were issued to all employees in October 1984. Production of animal feeds ceased on January 1st 1985, but the notices of

The Dunkirk Mill in 1996 just before demolition. Photo by Geoff Gale.

redundancy were withdrawn. The plant was converted to the manufacture of fish food. Thus started a programme of specialisation at Aylsham Mill. Premix manufacture continued, and when fish food manufacture was transferred to a new mill in Scotland, other specialised foods were introduced at Aylsham.

Aylsham has become the special foods plant for BOCM Silcock. Much money has been spent on plant at Aylsham, and its future is assured. However, currently, Unilever are looking for a buyer for all their food mills and agricultural business.

The Notes to the Journal 4: 32 (1994) adds the following.
AYLSHAM MILLS – there was a tailpiece in the Eastern Daily Press to Ben Rust's excellent history of Aylsham Mills which was published in the Journal (Vol. 3 No. 6. June 1992). Production at BOCM's animal feed mill finishes at the end of January 1994 with the loss of 26 jobs. Production will be transferred to the company's mill at Wymondham. The Aylsham mills will become just another part of Aylsham's history.

Further changes since then include the following:
1 The Bone Mill. Despite efforts to preserve the old wooden building in recent years it did eventually succomb to a new development.
2 The Water Mill has had some vicissitudes but is now more settled. There has been some difficulty in finding a buyer for the apartment with the waterwheel and machinery. A pathway on the west side of the property has been kept as a public access to the river.

Dr Elizabeth Griffiths† 1948–2020

Many members will have known Dr Griffiths – Lizzie to all. She was one of the daughters of Jean Francois (Bicky) and Frances Roualle, the leading Norfolk County Councillor, who lived in Aylsham for many years at The Lodge, White Hart Street. Lizzie attended the Notre Dame School in Norwich. Some may remember her as a girl, working at the Buckinghamshire Arms. Others knew her as the wife of Peter Griffiths, MBE, a National Trust agent at Blickling in the late 1970s and later Regional Director from 2002. A far wider number knew her as a highly respected historian whose interests lay primarily in agriculture and the management of landed estates. She researched and wrote extensively on farming in 17th and 19th century Norfolk, particularly on the Hobart, Windham and Le Strange estates. Lizzie completed her PhD (UEA) on the management of Blickling and Felbrigg in 1987 and her talk to the Society on 13 August that year drew a record audience at the Friendship Club. The text of her talk, which covered the dispute between the Manor of Aylsham Lancaster and the Blickling estate in the 17th century, was printed in the first volume of the Journal and was later reproduced in Vol 7.10, Apr 2006, pp 271–279.

At this time, Lizzie also became interested in the Norwich freemen when she was asked to co-author, with Dr Hassell Smith, a history of the freemen and of the Town Close estate (*'Buxom to the Mayor'* 1987).

While Peter was working for the National Trust in the Southern Region in the late 1980s and 1990s, Lizzie taught history at a number of top schools in Surrey. The pupils who came to share in her enthusiastic love of history included the two sons of Margaret Bird, at Tiffin Boys school, Kingston upon Thames, and Nicky (now Baroness) Morgan, at Surbiton High. The latter later told Lizzie she wished she had taken her advice to read History, rather than Law, at Oxford. It was while she was teaching at Reigate 6th Form College, that Peter was made Regional Director for East Anglia in 2002. Delighted in being able to return to Blickling, Lizzie was also able to spend more time with her family before her father died in 2007.

Lizzie edited *William Windham's Green Book* 1673–1688 for the Norfolk Record Society (Vol 66, 2002). One of her lesser known but perhaps the most

original work was *Farming to Halves: The Hidden History of Sharefarming in England from Medieval to Modern Times*, 2009 which she co-wrote with Mark Overton. She herself had spent time sharefarming in New Zealand and was aware of how underreported the practice was in English agricultural history. Lizzie wrote of this in her memories of Joan Thirsk, the renowned agricultural historian: 'My first encounter with Joan was when she came to examine my PhD at the UEA in 1987. She was particularly interested in two things: my evidence of sharefarming in seventeenth century Norfolk and the fact that I had been a dairy farmer in New Zealand. She had a deep conviction that practical farmers, especially female ones, understood agriculture better than the theorists, so I had much to live up to.' (*Rural History Today*, Feb 2014).

Her work with Professor Jane Whittle led to *Consumption and Gender in the Early Seventeenth-Century Household: The World of Alice Le Strange,* 2012 and Lizzie became an honorary research fellow at the University of Exeter. Lady Alice Le Strange of Hunstanton in Norfolk kept a continuous series of household accounts from 1610–1654 and Jane and Lizzie used the Le Stranges' rich archive to reconstruct the material aspects of family life. Her meticulous transcriptions led to the edition of the farming records of Alice 1617–1656 as *Her Price is above Pearls*, Norfolk Record Society, Vol 79, 2015. In between there were various articles and monographs including 'Draining the Coastal Marshes in north-west Norfolk, 1624–1704' *Agricultural History Review*, 2015.

By now the couple had moved to Little Ellingham but were frequent visitors to Blickling, walking in the Park which Peter had lovingly restored during his time here. Lizzie was an advisor to the online database of the Freemen of the City of Norwich but was more deeply engaged in preparing her next book *Managing for Posterity: the Le Stranges at Hunstanton and their estates*, 1604–1724, due to be published in 2021 by the University of Hertfordshire Press.

Sadly, after a number of unexplained collapses and symptoms, an incurable brain tumour was diagnosed in January 2020. Despite no longer being able to read or write, Lizzie remained cheerful and was wonderfully cared for by Peter, her beloved husband. At the beginning of April, Lizzie was admitted to Priscilla Bacon Lodge where she died aged 71. The lockdown has meant that the service at Breckland Crematorium was restricted to family only but all her friends and colleagues will join in remembering her bubbling personality, endless energy, rather wicked sense of humour, and above all, her passion for the history of this part of north Norfolk.

BOOK REVIEW

Mary Hardy and her World 1773–1809 by Margaret Bird, Burnham Press 2020

1 A working family 818pp 388 b/w illustrations 29 figures 54 colour plates
2 Barley, beer and the working year 896pp 360 b/w illustrations 81 figures 42 colour plates
3 Spiritual and social forces 818pp 315 b/w illustrations 47 figures 38 colour plates
4 Under sail and under arms 800pp 391 b/w illustrations 31 figures 57 colour plates

Each hardback volume costs £37.50 plus £3.50 p&p or the set of four £130 plus £8.00

Reviewed by Maggie Vaughan-Lewis

When I reviewed Margaret's five-volume transcription of Mary Hardy's diaries for the Journal in 2013, I wrote that I was looking forward to the appearance of the commentary volumes which would place the Hardy family's lives in the context of 18th century north Norfolk.

I knew that what had begun as a single companion volume was already growing into four volumes, covering 39 aspects of the research Margaret had embraced in the decades of her work. The final volumes are a tour-de-force, each having at least 700 pages of in-depth analysis with detailed side notes and references. Any one of the four would be a proud achievement by any historian. The production of four, each complete in itself but showing the interconnectivity of all the themes, is not only unique but refreshingly at variance with the modern single-issue approach taken by many academics. If I struggled against using too many superlatives before, now there is no way out.

The sheer scale of her work is extraordinary. Where a standard history might take a few lines to discuss turnpike roads and coaching inns, Margaret's chapter on roads (in Vol 4) covers over 50 sides and is packed with examples of how the roads were used – the amount of beer hauled charted by days (555 miles in five weeks), the range of personal vehicles used by the family, the number of the main bridges in Norfolk in 1831. The side notes carry lovely illustrations and details of coach fares, speeds, accidents and weather

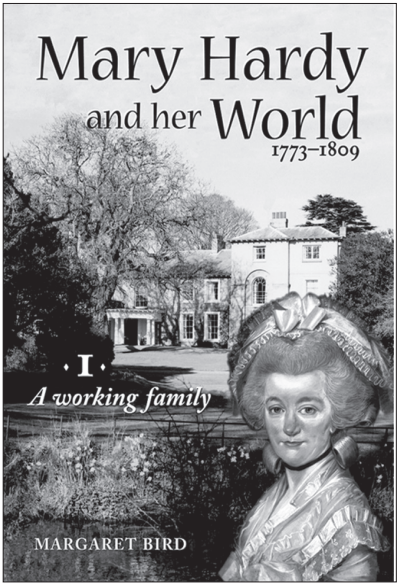
conditions. The main text also gives the legislative background to every aspect of transport. But alongside is a fascinating observation on the social changes taking place (when do you use your new carriage complete with coachman? how did women travel?). And local details alter our previous understanding: the Hardys rarely refreshed their horses at the Black Boys in Aylsham, as might be expected, preferring the Buckinghamshire Arms at Blickling.

This approach is repeated in every chapter – each a masterclass in writing. Each volume is written to be enjoyable standing alone and scholars from many areas of research will find new material of interest. (It was pleasing to see new information about William Strain the publican at the Kings Head in Red Lion Street.) But be warned! The 'quick check' for a reference will almost always lead the reader to turn the next page and the next. For despite the busy layout and the sheer quantity of detail, Margaret's style is very accessible and brings to life what might be otherwise unexciting passages. When the Wesleyan Methodist preacher Samuel Eastaugh spoke to a 'crowded congregation' at Letheringsett, Margaret reflects on how the visitors were packed into the small ground floor cottage room that Mrs Bullock, a servant of the Hardys, had registered as a 'meetinghouse' in 1808 (Vol 3). Even in February that must have been quite a close encounter.

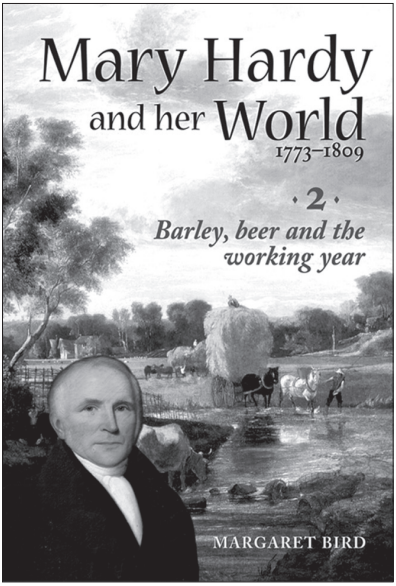
Another vivid moment is the rare trip home of one of the maids in 1807. Sarah's family lived in Tunstead about 19 miles away. After sitting on one of the beer wagons for 8 miles, she alighted in Itteringham and walked the remaining 11 miles in 'torrential rain'. One hopes her family were glad to see her, dripping and tired as she must have been. This note, in Vol 4 under 'outdoor recreations', is a good example of how – remarkably – there is no duplication across the volumes. Sarah is first mentioned in Vol 1 in the fascinating analysis of the Hardy's household staff turnover which runs to 50 sides, but without repeating this story. Margaret was able to dissect the diary entries, separating the underlying themes, to illustrate areas of social history in far greater depth than is usual. The Appendix 1c must be unique in being able to detail all the yearly hirings of maids (90 in all) in one household over 48 years – and then to add all their wages and reasons for departure. 'Raking with fellows' and its consequences led to several dismissals.

Volume 2 covers every part of the Hardy's business from farming (including enclosures), brewing and milling, buying tied pubs, supplying the beer and the competition. Their business strategy exemplified vertical integration – controlling every aspect of the industry themselves and closely managing all the processes. Hard work, long hours were wired into the Hardys and their workers; over twice as many hours were worked in a week compared to today.

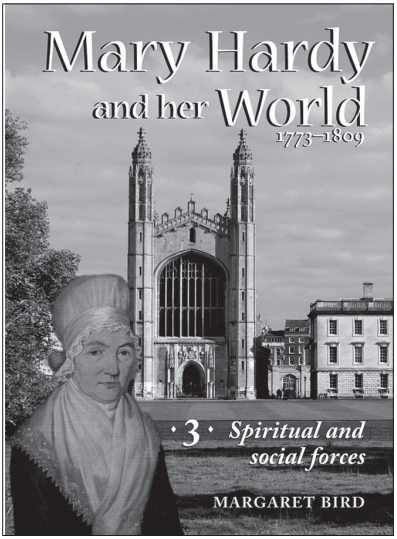
I have not touched on the French wars, the schooling of the children, the



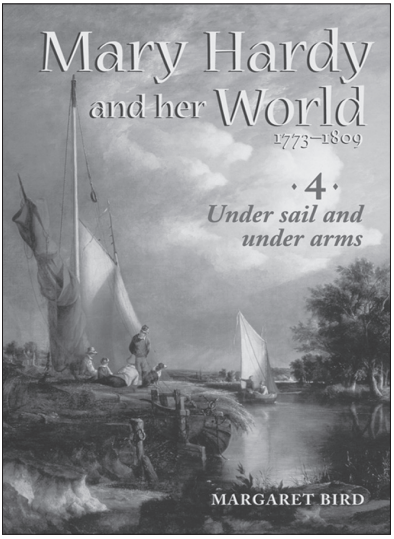
1 A working family



2 Barley, beer and the working year



3 Spiritual and social forces



4 Under sail and under arms

politics of the business classes – the bread riots of 1795 are placed in an excellent summary of who kept the peace (and how) in the late 18th century – or the problems of taxation and debt. Having researched a little into Excise records when we were writing about John Repton in Aylsham, I was delighted to be able to find so much about the service and the whole mercantile trade using the north coast in *The Sea*, Vol 4. William Hardy had been an Excise Officer for 12 years, leading the author to spend many hours at the National Archives. With her usual thoroughness, Margaret warns us of using contemporary statistics of imports of grain; the records kept by the officials were not as rigorous as might be expected. But the chapter (over 70 sides) brings the busy working shore to life, with shipwrecks, press gangs, the perils of transporting beer by sea and the longer-term effects of the weather on the ports themselves. I was delighted to find a visual explanation of a 'chaldron', a term for a measure of weight I have found in accounts but often in terms of haulage.

And what other author when discussing social issues arising from land-owners' diversions of old ways and lanes in various parts of north Norfolk – with full use of maps and photos – would quote a Kipling poem with perfect relevance and feeling (Vol 1 p655).

Of course for family historians, hungry for references in the decades before censuses began, there are hundreds of local names, all indexed in great detail. Many have a mini-biography, as in Vol 1: 'Dusgate, Francis (d1801 aged 77), Holt watchmaker; extracts teeth, 358'.

I often wonder what would have happened if these two towers of strength, Mary and Margaret, ever met? No doubt Mary would 'edit' Margaret's writing just as she corrected the diary entries made by her children on the odd occasion she was unwell; Margaret, always in search of accuracy, would love to have heard the details from Mary herself. Mary may have been bemused as to why they would want to read her diaries; she certainly would have admired Margaret's self-discipline and tenacity in completing her task, taking complete control of the work, from writing, designing and laying out the complex pages to the comprehensive subject indexing and marketing.

This really is a lifetime achievement. Margaret should be justly proud of giving us a unique experience of the past, through the world of Mary Hardy; we travel with, and are almost jostled by, the throng of characters in alehouses, ports, towns and breweries. The smell of malt lingers in the pages.

Given that the lockdown may still be having some effect when this review is printed, I recommend the ease of ordering each or all of the volumes through Amazon or direct from the website (www.burnham-press.co.uk). You will have hours of discovery and enjoyment.