

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Volume 12 No 8

August 2023

Cover:

*The wreck of His Majesty's Ship Gloucester off Yarmouth, 6 May 1682 by Monamy Swain, believed to be a copy of a picture by the van de Veldes.
Courtesy National Maritime Museum Greenwich*

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

JOURNAL AND NEWSLETTER



Volume 12

No. 8

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Preamble | 218 |
| Aylsham School Part 1: Free Grammar School 1530 – 1818, by Maggie Vaughan Lewis..... | 219 |
| https://aylshamhistory.org by Peter Jolly..... | 240 |
| Newhaven Court, by Helen Murray..... | 241 |
| The last voyage of His Majesty’s Ship the Gloucester 1682, by Jeremy Worth..... | 242 |
| Thomas Paine, a talk by Robert Knee, March 2023..... | 245 |
| The Aylsham and Brampton Aerial Investigation and Mapping project, a talk by Jack Powell..... | 248 |
| Elizabeth Jill Sheringham†..... | 250 |

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.

Editor: Jeremy Worth, 4 Woodgate Way, Aylsham NR11 6FJ

jeremy@worthfamily.co.uk 01263 733787

Chairman: Geoffrey Sadler geoffreybsadler@gmail.com

Secretary: Sue Sharpe ahssecretary@gmail.com 01263 733441

Website: aylshamhistory.org

What a fascinating talk it was by the Barnwell brothers in March as they told us about their ultimately successful search for the wreck of His Majesty's Ship Gloucester. Rather than give a pale summary of their talk I have instead drawn on recent research to give the circumstances which led up to the wreck and the loss of so many lives.

I am delighted we now have the first part of a history of the Free Grammar School by Maggie Vaughan Lewis. It is sobering to find that rates of pay for teachers being eroded by inflation is far from just a twenty first century problem. Maggie will complete the story in a future issue.

Nelson probably comes to mind first as a famous son of Norfolk, but Thomas Paine has a justified claim to be another of Norfolk's distinguished sons. His image appears twice this month. The back cover has a picture of his recently regilded statue in his home town of Thetford, which we visited on a Society trip in April. The other image shows a more soberly dressed Robert Knee as Thomas Paine as his talk took us through his eventful life and achievements.

The index to articles in the Journal is now available on the Society website. Peter Jolly explains how it can be used – and cautions not to think of printing it out in its entirety!

Our Autumn programme begins on October 26th with our AGM at 7pm followed by Dr Vic Morgan on *Blickling Hall: How to 'read' a Great House*. Then on the 23rd November Phyllida Scrivens will talk on *Escaping Hitler: A Jewish Boy's Quest for Freedom and his Future*, the story of Norwich legend Joe Stirling.

Aylsham School Part 1: Free Grammar School 1530 - 1818, by Maggie Vaughan-Lewis

This is the first of two articles tracing the history of the school buildings on the Blickling Road to the west of Aylsham, now the site of St Michael's C of E Nursery and Primary school. Part 1 covers the foundation of the Free Grammar School for boys through to its first rebuilding and conversion to a National school in the early 19th century. This is an opportunity to amend some earlier, often repeated, statements about the founding. Part 2 will detail the later history including the new building in 1848 which, much enlarged, is still standing.



Earliest photo of St Michael's c1870 Town Archive

The Free Grammar school began its life in the 16th century, on the eastern half of the present site. There is no trace of the original building.

Early Aylsham schooling

The town of Aylsham was held by the Duchy of Lancaster – basically by the Crown – and this allowed the townsmen a certain autonomy in their affairs. They were free from the Sheriff's summons, did not have to sit on

county juries and had their own coroner. The two elected Bailiffs who paid the rents and tolls to the Duchy were local business men and they kept tight control on how the town and its economy was run.

As part of this emphasis on trading, Aylsham had a long tradition of educating its sons. In 1469 Margaret Stannow wanted her three boys to be sent to 'skole' until they were 'of age to be put to crafts'. Richard was to be schooled as a priest until he was 24. John Thompson, a glover, dying in 1534 asked for son John to be 'found to skole' until 16. The wealthy mercer Robert Norgate willed in 1527 that three of his sons should go to school but specifically wanted Henry to attend a grammar school for a year. From at least 1497 there had been a 'skolehouse' in the town but the location and status is not known. This may have been the school where boys 'learne their grammar' that was recorded in the 1460s when one boy, Robert Barbour, of Aylsham fatally injured another, Robert Fayred, while 'japyng' and disporting in school. The 14 year old was imprisoned without bail and a petition was raised to have a higher court deal promptly with the matter. The 'skolehouse' name lasted in the court rolls (usually as 'once known as Le Skolehouse') after the new Free Grammar was set up.

Before and after the Reformation of the Church of England

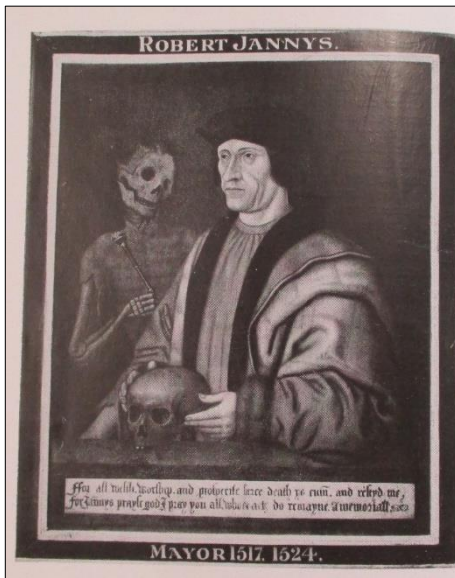
Until the mid-1530s it was usual practice to make provision in wills to make charitable and religious acts that would ease the path of the donor's soul through Purgatory. These were not necessarily to be long-lasting; in 1525 Edmund Clampe gave 3s 4d a year for a priest to sing for his soul and 'kepe a gramer scole' to continue as long as his goods were in the hands of his executors. Some of these were not schools as we would recognise but were additional income for priests for minor religious teaching. During the revival of the Catholic faith under Queen Mary between 1553-1558, one of Aylsham's wealthy men Henry Aleyns left a chapel (a small cell in a field in this case) for a priest to sing mass and to keep a school 'to teche grace' using primers. Henry, who was trained as a priest but had family money, must have been hoping the faith would be permanently re-established and the chantry chapels re-instated.

But the founding of permanent Free Grammar Schools for boys was becoming common practice by wealthy townsmen usually leaving land or money in their wills to be invested to produce an annual salary or stipend for a master. It was often requested that a number of local poor men's sons be included, free of charge, 'to learne them upp in vertue and good learning' ¹

The donor would not of course see the fruits of his charity and the arrangements often took some years to set up. The fixing of a sum to be provided often created problems in later centuries as inflation reduced the value of the legacy.

Robert Jannys

The Aylsham Free Grammar school was founded by Robert Jannys², a Norwich grocer who was sheriff in 1509 and mayor in 1517 and 1524. He appears in the tax records of 1525 as one of the wealthiest citizens and his widow Margaret Jannys owned three tenements in Alms Lane and lived in the house called The Two Rammes in St George Colegate³. She was left 1000 marks in money and plate after Robert died in 1530 and lived on until 1555.

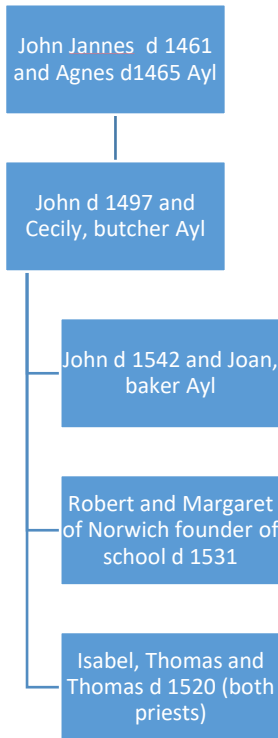


Robert Jannys

Why did Jannys choose to benefit Aylsham? Norwich already had its own grammar school dating from the 12th century and Robert had been born in Aylsham where his family still lived and traded⁴. Robert's grandfather John Jannys died in 1461 and his wife Agnes in 1465⁵. Robert's father, also John Jannys, who died in 1496/7, had joined Thomas Wymer in paying for the decorated rood screen in Aylsham church⁶.

Robert's father John was a butcher in Aylsham and lived in Churchgate (Cromer Road) with Cecily his wife and their 4 children, Isabella, Thomas, John jnr and Robert. When he

died in 1497, John left Robert his 'new Shoppys in the flesh stallys in the Market' giving him a good start in commerce. Robert's brother John - a wealthy baker and supervisor of Robert's will - remained in Aylsham where he married Joan and raised daughters. They owned at least two houses, one where they lived and another place called Ederyks which was at the Old



Market, near the Old Hall. In 1522 John was the third highest tax payer, after Thomas Wymer's widow, Margaret.⁷ Thomas Jannys became a priest and also lived in Aylsham where he died in 1520⁸.

We do not know the exact date of the founding of the school but it must have followed Robert's death at the end of 1530. His will, which was proved in February 1531, instructed his executors to purchase land worth 300 marks (£200) that could provide £10 a year. His executors purchased land in Stalham but a deed of 25 March 1534 shows the Corporation of Norwich agreed to take over the annual payment of the £10⁹.

The annual stipend was for priest to sing for Robert and his friends in Aylsham church, a standard pre-Reformation request. The will

continues:

and the said priest to keep a free grammar school in Aylsham to take no wages of no man nor of no scholler nor noon of his friends and nor of none other man nor skole hier [hire] of no scholler nor none of his friends nor of none other man but freely to give to the scollers their lerning and the master to exort his scollers to say de profundis for the souls of me and my friends once a day..... Priest to be nominated by my executors and after their death by the vicar, the bailiff and churchwardens and fowre of the most substantial inhabitants.

So determined was he that the priest should not make a profit from his position, either by accepting fees or by hiring out the school for his benefit, Robert added that if he did so he would have to pay it back at double the sum¹⁰. The 1534 deed confirmed the schoolmaster would be nominated by the executors until their deaths. There is a later reference to this deed 'being

invalid' and superseded by one dated 20 June 1553¹¹. These very specific dates suggest the school was not fully established for several years. Perhaps the shift away from chantry priests after the Reformation (finally abolished in 1545) delayed the organisation of the school, the more secular part of the request. The inclusion of the 'substantial inhabitants' in the nomination of the master underlines the role the townsmen were to play. The influential links with Norwich were also maintained.

The Site

The first court roll reference to the acquisition of the site in Blickling Road is in September 1542. This was two months before Robert's brother John died and, as he made his will in the August, John may have already been ill. Perhaps he needed to fulfil his obligations as supervisor and ensure the school became a reality. He purchased of John Betts, worsted weaver and wife Alice (late wife of Robert Dewe) the '1 acre and 1 rod of land with a messuage on it on the south of Paradise'. Its northern neighbour was the house and garden known as Paradise¹². The land acquired, which was copyhold land of the manor of Aylsham Lancaster, was in two parts: the school building was on the rood of land to the east; the 1 acre pightle of arable land to the west (the site of the present school) was let out for income. Jannys immediately sold the property to a group of townsmen as the first trustees. The first two named - John Wyeth and Robert Clare were his son-in-law and brother-in-law. The others were John Barker, John Norgate, John Tolwyn, all major Aylsham business men, and Thomas Knolles, lawyer. They had to repay Jannys £12 paid in instalments of 20s. There was a messuage or house already on the site so that was presumably used as the schoolroom until a new room was erected.

The new deed of June 1553 was a reaffirmation of the aims of the bequest and names the surviving executor Nicholas Sywatt, alderman of Norwich, and Catherine Rogers, the widow of another of Jannys's executors. Catherine has the right to nominate 'one earnest and able Person to be school master' in her lifetime. The document seems to be attempting to create ordinances by which the school is to be run though they have never been found. After Catherine's death, the Bailiff and churchwardens are to choose 3 names of persons 'sufficiently learned in Grammar' for the Mayor and Bishop of Norwich to select one to be appointed for life as long as they obey the new ordinances.

What is probably the first reference to the school building is in the will of Aylsham's rather notorious Catholic vicar John Bury¹³. At his death in 1558

(not mourned by many) he left 40s 'to the free school now erected if it goes forward'. If the formal establishment was only created by the 1553 deed, Bury might well have been cautious about a five-year old school enduring. Certainly two locals hoped to send boys there: Henry Dyn of Blickling in his will of December 1558 specifically sent William Wilkinson to the 'skole at Aylsham', offering an annual comb of wheat for the master. Robert Geyton also dying in 1558 wanted Robert Margrettson, the child he brought up as his son in Aylsham, to be at school for 2 years before going to a good merchant at Norwich for 7 more.

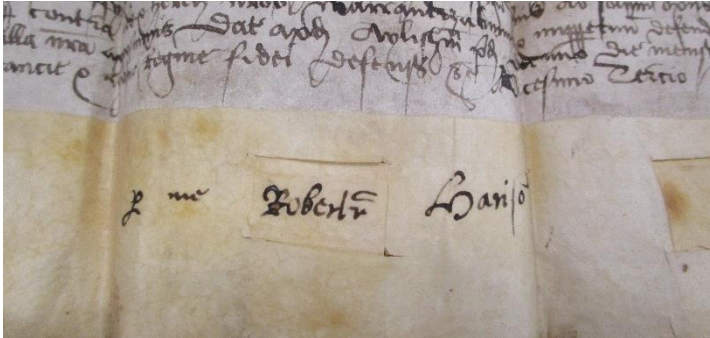
The quality of masters: a graduate profession

The close links with the bishopric at Norwich led to further advantages for Aylsham. Its long-standing access to colleges at Cambridge began with Aylsham's inclusion in a scholarship set up by Archbishop Parker in 1567¹⁴. He gave £200 to the Mayor and Corporation of Norwich to pay an annuity of £10 to Corpus Christi College Cambridge where he had been Master for many years. £8 of this was to set up three grammar school scholars. The boys would normally come from Norwich but if no suitable candidates were available, the Mayor could nominate boys from Wymondham or Aylsham. Each would have '12d a week for their commons, their chamberer, barber, larderer and other necessaries free'¹⁵. Sapwell suggested Parker, who was married, may have retired to Aylsham in 1553 as he is said to have lived secretly in the country in a friend's house during the Marian years. He certainly petitioned for Letters Patent in 1562 to favour Lancelot Thexton to be rector of Aylsham. Later, in 1590, John Jegon was master of Corpus Christi College and afterwards, as Bishop of Norwich, he came to live in Aylsham at an estate near Spa Farm¹⁶.

By December 1542 we find reference in the court rolls to William Harrison (Haryson) who had just died. He was described as 'pedagogue' and 'didasculi' of Aylsham, both words for teacher or schoolmaster. This would make William the first master of the school. However he seems to have had a son as there is another William Harrison, also named as schoolmaster a year later in December 1543 when he purchased The Bull in Red Lion Street from John Wyeth, one of the school trustees. The school deed made in June 1553 states that Catherine Rogers and the Bishop agreed 'William Haryson should continue as schoolmaster for life' as long as he performs the new ordinances. This would suggest William had been in post for some time; certainly we have 'William Harryson schoolmaster' witnessing a local will in March 1553.

By 1563 Thomas Lewgar, a young graduate from Christ's College Cambridge, was schoolmaster; he went on to be vicar of Wood Dalling (from 1580) where he also taught the local boys.¹⁷

Robert Harrison, the most famous of Aylsham's teachers, was the master in 1573.



Signature of Robert Harrison. Courtesy of NRO

Robert had just gained his MA at Corpus Christi College and he applied for the post in his home town in July 1573. He was supported by the mayor of Norwich Thomas Peck and alderman John Aldrich. Two masters of Norwich School, Henry Bird and Stephen Lambert, also recommended him to Bishop John Parkhurst. But this was a hotly contested affair. The mayor wrote a heartfelt letter to Parkhurst in July 1573 explaining that the vicar of Aylsham, Mr Thexton ('a godlye learned man') and many of the inhabitants wanted Harrison to fill the requirement of 'an honest learned man in the office of schoolmaster'¹⁸. However there were others in Aylsham who thought Harrison was too passionate in his reforming Protestant ideals. At his marriage the boy had 'given offence' by objecting to the Book of Common Prayer for which he had apologised¹⁹.

The Bishop replied that he had been lobbied by Harrison's stepfather, Mr Monyman, but also that he had been greatly pressured by others from the town not to admit him. A 'very young man', Robert was said to condemn the reading of 'profane authors to children'; the Bishop continued that he had been credibly informed Harrison had a frenzy, an incurable sickness which would be dangerous if he were to have 'rule over young ones'. However at the end of September the Bishop wrote to the town who had, without permission, allowed a Mr Johnson to be in the school in the meantime. Parkhurst

explained that three names were offered, one being Mr Johnson, supported by Sir Thomas Smithe. But Johnson had not turned up to be examined and did not show his 'abilitie and lerning'. He could not make a verse in Greek which was a 'necessary point' in a schoolmaster. The examiners had chosen Harrison who was appointed although he had to sign up to certain covenants. (See appendix 1²⁰.)

All did not go well. On the 26th October 1573 Robert was godfather to the son of John Allen of Aylsham and he asked Thomas Gladon, who was the minister, to change 'thou' into 'you' and not to use the sign of the cross during the baptism. The town bailiff, John Orwell, a man of considerable influence, informed the church authorities. The Bishop had to write to the Archbishop assuring him he would take action:

If Harrison of Aylesham shall not performe that which he hath subscribed unto, it shall well

appeare...how little favour he shall fynd with me. I heare somewhat afreshe of him, which being

proved., he shalbe sure to receive as he deservith.

At this sackable offence, Parkhurst had no choice and discharged Robert Harrison from his teaching post in January 1574. Robert went to work as Governor at St Giles Hospital and as a schoolmaster in Norwich where he became friends with Robert Browne. Harrison became a fervent supporter, preaching at the Brownist congregation in Norwich. Unlike other reformers Browne wanted a new quite separate form of Christianity outside the Established Church and free from state control. His sect were known as Separatists and both Harrison and Browne later fled to the Netherlands to avoid persecution. At the Aylsham school 'Mr Sutton', favoured by the Archbishop, replaced the divisive young man.

The next known master was Thomas Munday, a cleric who gained his BA at Corpus Christi College in 1584 and was licensed to teach grammar at Aylsham the same year. He was another of the Parker scholars having replaced the vicar's son, Robert Thexton, who gave up his place at college in the spring of 1582. Munday was an Aylsham man and owned a large house

called Hobbes on the east side of Hungate Street. Thomas left the school in 1585 and by 1591 he was vicar of Cromer.

1585 saw another contested election. The townsmen wanted Robert Sutton MA (who may have been in the post earlier) but the vicar, Bishop Edmund and the mayor Sir John Suckling chose William Dawson who duly became the master²¹. Aylsham does seem to be a significant post for many men: in 1596 Nicholas Easton MA, from Pembroke College, arrived having had his first post as schoolmaster at Kings Lynn 1593-1596. Nicholas and his wife Dorothy lived in Aylsham for 15 years. At least thirteen of the pupils he taught here went on to Gonville and Caius College Cambridge. One of the pupils, Charles Le Groos of Croswright, continued with him when he went on to teach at Wymondham for 3 years. Nicholas finished his career with a long stint at Ipswich Grammar School, 1616-1631.

Early 17th century and the Civil War

It would seem that at this period Aylsham continued the strong tradition of the school having lay Masters educating boys who then attended Gonville and Caius College. Re-founded in 1557, the college was at its peak in 1630 with 150 students. Between 1630 and 1635 ten boys were admitted to study there, all of whom had been taught by 'Mr Knowles' of Aylsham. Earlier admissions of his pupils include Edward Appleyard of Happisburgh 1614, Edward Peartree 1614 and Thomas Rolfe of Sheringham 1616. Knowles appears in the records as master from 1611 but his forename is never given. It is likely that he was Thomas Knowles (or Knolles), the son and grandson of two of Aylsham early lawyers and described, like them, as a gentleman. He was living in Aylsham from at least the 1620's and maybe as early as 1611, at what is now The Grange in Cromer Road, and briefly owned The Knoll, close to the school²². His pupils studied under him for between 2 and 8 years and came from a wide area. Thomas Anguish was born in Moulton, Francis Alman (London), Simon Lombe (Cawston), John Fisher (Croxtton) and Robert Doughty (Hanworth). Local boys included Edmund Allen, Nathaniel Thurston and William Dawson son of Ephraim Dawson, linen-draper of Aylsham. The owner of the old Wolterton Hall, Robert Houghton also sent his son Richard to Knowles.

Similarly the next master, Mr Clare is not referred to by his first name but the Clares had been a wealthy trading family in Aylsham²³. Being in post from 1632 to 1643, he headed the school during the first part of the civil war. The town was parliamentary and managed to steer a moderate path through

the troubles. John Curtis, master from 1644 to 1657, seems also to have kept an even course.

Later 17th century: a troubled time

After the restoration of the king in 1660, the post of master was more frequently filled by local clergymen. The most notable of these was Nathaniel Gill or Nethaniel as he always spelt his name²⁴. The son of a schoolmaster, this university educated classicist became the rector of Burgh in 1638 only to be ejected during the early 1640s for his outspoken Royalist support. Somehow he managed to keep hold of the registers and conducted marriages and baptisms until 1651 when he went to live in Bungay. He was rewarded for his loyalty to the king by being reinstated at Burgh in 1660 and adding the parish of Aylsham in 1663.

Gill started receiving the salary for teaching at the school the same year and continued to do so until his death in 1669. His teaching would have reflected his love of expressing himself in Latin as attested by the verses and entries in the Burgh registers. Whether he took all the lessons himself is unclear; in August 1666 - midway through Gill's tenure - the Aylsham churchwardens paid the bell-ringers 5 shillings to ring 'upon the election of Mr Ransome schoolmaster'. Richard Ransome was probably the Rector of Alby and Ingworth. Gill, who was 60 by this date, may have used Ransome's services at the school but this would not be an election as such. However after Gill's death the payments show 'Mr Ransum' was master from 1670-1676. Aylsham's vicar Robert Fawcett took over in 1677. A young cleric Arthur Gallant was elected on 18 October 1680 and served for a couple of years before becoming rector of Heydon.

But all was not well behind the scenes. The ongoing funding of the school was often difficult. Although the original £10 a year was paid regularly by the City Chamberlain, it was increasingly insufficient as a salary²⁵. A further annual payment of £10 had been gifted by Nicholas Norgate, alderman of Norwich, who was from an old established family of Aylsham. Norgate died in 1569 and left £160 to be invested for the maintenance of the Aylsham school and to augment the master's living²⁶. His executor Thomas Norgate had bought some land from which the £10 was to be raised. By 1650 the owner of the land was a Captain Osborn and he agreed with the town to discharge his obligation by handing over £200 to Major Robert Doughty, the owner of the mills in Aylsham on which the annuity would now rest. For the next 34 years the Major and then his son Captain Robert paid the £10

regularly. But then in 1683, the mills were bought by the financially corrupt Miles Baispoole. He was bankrupting himself building the Old Hall at Blickling and was in debt for thousands²⁷. Baispoole, sometime after July 1684 (apparently being strong-armed by Capt Doughty) paid £5 to the schoolmaster for ½ yrs salary ending Christmas 1683 with a promise to pay the remainder after the Assizes and to pay it in future. But after that, having got one of Doughty's deeds in his hands, he refused the payment of the annuity or the arrears. An Inquisition taken in Norwich before Sir Roger Potts found against Miles and a decree was made for the payment of arrears but Baispoole, who had trained as a lawyer, dragged the case out 'by dilatory proceedings to tire out the prosecutor'.

This dishonourable behaviour led to a greater loss for the school by causing a contemporary benefactor and former pupil to alter his will. James Scamler was a successful lawyer who married the daughter of Sir John Potts of Mannington Hall and in 1660 bought the old manor and hall at neighbouring Wolterton²⁸. His will of 1682 originally left a generous bequest to his 'old schole' at Aylsham of 20 shillings a year for the schoolmaster's stipend and he set up annual sums for both Corpus Christi College and Gonville and Caius College for three scholarships for boys who had been taught at Aylsham or at Wolterton²⁹. Scamler also left £100 invested for the maintenance of the Aylsham School 'where I was educated in good learning in testimony of my love & gratitude to it'.

The interest of 5% was to be paid to the master 'as encouragement to him to more care in the vertuous education of youths in piety and learning'. The provision was that 5 children each year, chosen by his heirs, were to be taught for free of whom at least 3 were to be sons of poor men living in Aylsham. The codicil to the will, written in 1687, gave the details of a new school to be built at Wolterton but this was to be at the expense of the legacy to Aylsham. He explained his change of heart: 'my bounty intended for my old schoole to be laid aside in respect of the unworthiness of the person who now enjoys the place & that the ancient stipend is by fraud detained & the negligence of the inhabitants who take no care to recover & defend the right'. However, he changed his mind again and reinstated the Aylsham gift, probably because the Wolterton plan depended on a £100 debt being repaid and he feared this would not happen. He died two years later and no school appeared to be built in Wolterton³⁰.

Whether or not Aylsham benefitted from Scamler's will, the next two schoolmasters, Michael Frere, the vicar of Roughton and Peter Lawes, another clergyman, with the help of the trustees, continued the legal battle for their arrears of the Norgate money.

18th century: stability and complacency

Peter Lawes stayed until 1701³¹. There appears to be a short hiatus in which local attorney Henry Rippingall - always an opportunist - claimed the stipend, 'as per the articles of agreement' although by what right is unclear. With the arrival of the vicar of Aylsham, Jonathan Wrench, as master in 1704 the school at last settled into a period of calm for the next 30 years. After Wrench, another clergyman, the Rector of Oxnead and Booton, George Ray, who lived in the house between the churchyard and Red Lion Street, performed as schoolmaster for nearly 40 years until he resigned in 1772. It would appear though that this stability led to a gradual stagnation of both teaching and the maintenance of the school. The fixed income, now negligible in real terms, would never attract a lay master or clergy without other means and there was no investment in the building for decades.

The other change was the influence of the trustees. Originally the wealthy townsmen saw the school as a benefit to their sons and in 1584 the likes of Robert Clare, a rich draper sat alongside attorney Stephen Drury and two of the influential Orwell family. By 1666 the revived trust comprised 25 men several of whom were lawyers and landowners such as Bishop Jigon's son Robert³². Over the 18th century, though, there were many other opportunities for educating their children with more private boys and dame schools being set up in the town. The old Free Grammar school must have increasingly become less attractive for the sons of gentlemen.

All change: reform and rebuilding

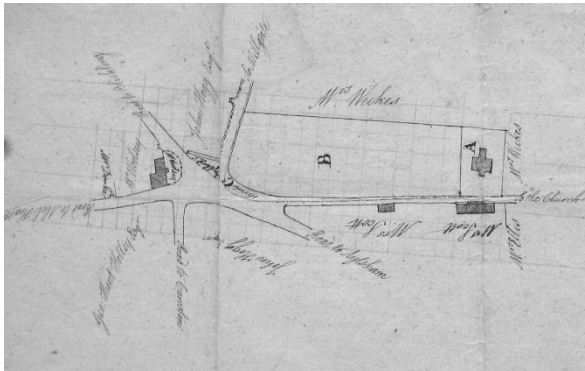
By 1789 all the elected trustees had died, the school was said to be in a ruinous state and the site had fallen back to the Lord of Aylsham Lancaster manor, the Earl of Buckinghamshire. On 26 December 1791 there was a meeting to discuss the renewal of the trustees and the rebuilding of the school. It was ordered that John Hogg esq, Clement Francis esq Rev William Taswell, Thomas Drake, John Adey, John Holley, R Copeman and R Copeman jnr should be admitted as tenants and trustees for the premises. This was a weighty line-up with the vicar of Aylsham and at least 4 of the town's solicitors³³.

John Hogg, who lived at West Lodge, was a difficult and argumentative man³⁴. Immediately he caused an upset. Lord Buckinghamshire had given James North, the schoolmaster, £15 towards the rebuilding of the school, a quarter of which North had kept for the expenses of the new trustees' admissions as copyhold tenants. North wrote to Clement Francis (another trustee and brother-in-law of Fanny Burney the diarist) that 'he finds himself very uncomfortable from Mr Hogg's unaccountable conduct'. Hogg had obviously refused to agree to North's actions in a meeting and had persuaded the other gentlemen to his view 'after they had separately given their consent'. North begged Francis to put the matter straight with Lord Buckinghamshire as his reputation - and livelihood - was on the line. Hogg, in a very badly written letter to North dated 1st January 1792 (only 6 days after being made a trustee), made a backhanded apology - more to 'Lord Buckenham' than North:

I wish to have it understood that not the least disrespect was ever intended on my part towards Lord Buckenham respecting the trustees for the school. I considered his Lordship so perfectly disinterested in the Business, neither had I any wish to deprive you of the ten pounds a year which I understand is insinuated. I spoke the sentiments of my Heart and I did not approve of the Manner of Mr Copeman's conduct. I have not the least objection to any mode the Parishioners may adopt respecting the school only it never was nor ever will be a plan of mine to sanction any measures I do not in my Heart approve, I am your friend J Hogg.

But plans made by North show that Hogg and Robert Copeman senior, the Earl of Buckinghamshire's man and steward of Aylsham manor were both behaving badly. Robert was shortly to be Hogg's next-door neighbour at Old Hall and they had spent the previous year arguing about the parish rates. In February 1792 the Lord of the manor regranted the school and land to the then schoolmaster James North. At the same time, a small piece of land - 16 perches - was taken from the corner of the schoolhouse pightle, the land adjoining the school and added to the highway 'for the purpose of making it more commodious and pleasant'.

A 1792 plan, below, courtesy NRO, shows alterations to the junction of Rawlinsons Lane and Blickling Road. Across the road, Mr Woolsey's old Hill's House is exactly the location of the later police houses. Next door Thomas Drake was at the new house, now known as Hill House. To the north



Mrs Wickes owned Paradise. Opposite the old school Mrs Scott lived at the Knoll, with Mrs Ellis to the east.

A = 'schoolhouse in ruins',

B= schoolhouse pigtle'. The plan is annotated that this

had been done by 'the low cunning of Robert Copeman and the weakness of the present master, under the deception of Patronage and Protection, to accommodate Jn Hogg esq'. The alteration was noted 'as compared with an exact plan taken 1772 by J North'. Quite why the move warranted such vitriol is unclear although the widening of the road would have been of benefit to Hogg giving better access to Rawlinson's Lane.

James North

The regrant of 27 February 1792 had given the school to James North for his lifetime as long as he continued master of the school. For the first time, no other trustees were co-tenants.

In October 1792 a meeting of subscribers for rebuilding a schoolroom for the use of the master of the Free School was held. They asked North, who was also a land surveyor, to obtain a plan and estimate for a schoolroom on the site where the old school room stood.

North was a very unusual man. The son of a bricklayer he was self taught and became an exceptional mathematician. He said he started life with 5 shillings and made a decent fortune, buying property in Lowestoft. But his business sense was not so acute and he had to take up teaching at Aylsham in the 1770s. He married Rosamond Cubitt in North Walsham by licence in 1769 and they baptised eight children in Aylsham, four of whom died³⁵. James taught at the grammar school from 1774, apparently without problems.

Exactly what happened next is not clear. It is said North followed the principles of Thomas Paine who had published his radical *Rights of Man* in 1791 and 1792. Taking up such revolutionary thinking lost North his patronage and his position. Paine fled to France and North appears to have

left abruptly at the end of 1793 when at the age of 60 he emigrated with his family to America³⁶. He died in Philadelphia in 1808³⁷.

Clement Overton and new building



A sketch has survived dated October 26 1822 and headed 'The Old Grammar School at Aylsham now destroyed'⁴⁰. Town Archive

When Clement Overton arrived in 1794 and took over as master, nothing had been done: a later letter states: 'when Mr Overton first took the school, the old house was in ruinous state, it was necessary to pull it down and the present house was rebuilt by him from the ground at the expense of several hundred pounds'³⁸. Another letter explains more about the contribution

Overton made especially in providing a house for the master to live in which

there had never been previously³⁹. In summary, the story was that when Mr Overton first took the school the old school was in a very dangerous state. Mr Adey the churchwarden ordered him to have it taken down. He was going to let John Horstead keep the materials for doing the job but Robert Copeman jnr (the steward) said they belonged to the Lord of the manor and must not be sold. Overton argued the manor should pay Horstead but his requests were refused. In the end his friend Mr Tompson lent him £10 to pay Horstead. There was then a subscription for building a new school but this only raised £20 so Overton paid at least £300 in instalments to tradesmen to complete the work and to build the dwelling house.

The 1822 drawing above was probably drawn by a member of the Repton family. The item was posted to Lady Elizabeth Repton, wife of Humphrey Repton's son, the architect, George Stanley. Elizabeth was the daughter of the 1st Earl of Eldon of Corfe Castle and this address also appears on the address panel along with Aylsham.

Sapwell took this to be the new school 'a small brick building with crow-stepped gables and a porch' but the plan used in the early 1792 debate over the pightle marks the old school (in the school yard) as 'in ruins' and shows the same shape of building. As the paper was kept by William Repton it may well be that the additions (some lines are drawn over original marks) were added later.

The plan shows most of the walls as new so it seems that the school was rebuilt in the footprint of the old with new windows added. Sapwell states that the annexe at the rear was added in 1814 which would match E on the sketch 'addition to the school room – more modern'. The inclusion of an 'iron stove' (D) and the area (C) 'For Young Ladies to learn writing' along with the infants – little ABCDarians- enclosure (B) all suggest a later date⁴¹.



*Lady Elizabeth
Repton by Eden
Upton Eddis*

The National School

Certainly by now the school was benefitting from the Norfolk and Norwich branch of the National Society which had started in 1812 a year after the national body for promoting the education of the poor was set up. In March 1813 an annual grant of £20 was agreed 'if wanted' for support of the school at Aylsham, on condition that the boy sent to organise the school be maintained there⁴². It was also agreed that Clement Overton the schoolmaster, aged 43, be admitted for instruction at the Central School in Norwich with the usual allowance. This was a way of encouraging older masters to engage with the Societies teaching principles. (The same year Christopher Critoph of the Erpingham School was sent to the Central School). In 1814 the Aylsham School had spent £126 on 'fitting up' and the Society allowed £40 towards the expense. This was a significant outlay and took some years to recoup.

As late as 1816, *The Norwich Chronicle* reported on a ball given in August at the Black Boys raising money for the school, noting a large attendance of 'the most respectable families of the town and neighbourhood'. The fund was to defray the cost which had been spent on adding a schoolroom for girls to

the building where 'poor children.of Aylsham and Blickling have received daily instruction' in the Madras system of education for the previous three years. The room was said to be able to accommodate 70 girls; perhaps this was the rear extension noted by Sapwell.

By the end of that year, Aylsham was deemed a suitable alternative to the central school for instructing Elizabeth Ward of Sheringham School, presumably also a teacher. By now the school was no longer known as the Free Grammar but the National School. Class lists taken on 27 June 1817 by Overton, for the society, show there were 4 boys and 3 girls classes with a total of 131 pupils apparently including 10 pupil teachers. Absentee levels on that day seem remarkably low, with only 10 boys and 9 girls missing⁴³.

Having revolutionised the old ruined grammar into a modern national school, Clement Overton resigned in August 1818. What happened to him?

He ran the Dog pub from September 1818 to September 1820 and he owned the old Hobbes property in Hungate Street until 1835 so may have continued to teach private pupils⁴⁴. By 1841, despite being 70, he was schoolmaster in Mattishall. He was buried in Aylsham in 1848 aged 77.

That year was to see the next generation of this school – a new building on the present site.

End of part 1

Appendix 1: Masters

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| 1542? William Harrison snr | 1553 Wm Harrison MA [probably from 1543] |
| 1560-1 Launcelot Thexton | 1561-2? Thomas Lewgar |
| 1573 Robert Harrison MA | 1574 -? Mr Sutton |
| 1583-4 Thomas Munday BA | 1585 Robert Sutton |
| 1586-1592 Wm Dawson | 1592-1596 Robert Pascall |
| 1596-1611 Nicholas Easton | 1611-1631 Mr [Thomas] Knowles |

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1632- 1643 Mr Clare | 1644-1657 Mr [John from 1651] Curtis |
| 1657-1663 Edmond Allen | 1663 William Searles 3mths |
| 1663-1669 Nathaniel Gill vicar | 1666, 1670-1676 Richard Ransome |
| 1677-1680 Robert Fawcett vicar | 1681-1682 Arthur Gallant |
| 1682-1688 Michael Frere | 1689-1701 Peter Lawes |
| 1701-1704 No master | Henry Rippingall (lawyer) received £20 |
| 1704-c1733 Jonathan Wrench vicar | c1733-1772 Rev George Ray |
| 1772 -1793 James North | 1794-1818 Clement Overton |

Appendix 2

Articles of agreement signed by Robert Harrison to be observed during the time he shall continue schoolmaster at Aylsham last day Sept 1573 at Ludham

The said Robert shall keep and execute the statutes of the school of Norwich (sic) in reading those authors there appointed, with the order and keeping of the hours.

He shall not be contentious neither to his pastor or neighbours, nor quarrelling in any manner of thing.

He shall use no evil or strange opinions, nor defend them in prophesyings, or if he shall, complaint be made to the bishop, to be reformed or removed

He shall use no unlawful games, neither vain or disordered companies, but he and his to live in order as godly laws require, being careful to bring up his scholars godly in knowledge and in fear of God.

He shall keep these covenants or else if complaint be made to the bishop by the vicar or other approved honest persons of the town, Harrison to be removed of the school if his offence shalbe thought to the bishop to deserve the same.

Thanks to Elizabeth Rutledge, Dr Anthony Smith, Adi Raschkewitz for their help and NRO for use of document images. Unattributed images are from the internet.

Notes

1. Robert Baxter of Aylsham left property to raise £20 pa to fund a 'free scole' in Little Walsingham in 1572
2. Variously spelt Jannes, Jannis, often transcribed wrongly as James
3. Chris King, p199 *Houses and Society in Norwich 1350-1660*, 2020
4. Unfortunately Blomefield in his *History of Norfolk* mistakenly assumed Robert was the son of a couple whose brass is in Aylsham church and others, including Sapwell, *History of Aylsham* 1960 not unreasonably, followed. Blomefield also confused the John and Agnes Jannys who appear on the brass with the John Jannys named as the benefactor of the decorated rood screen along with Thomas Wymer. He also read Wymer's wives as Joan and Agnes but they were Joan and Margaret.
5. The brass has John's death as 8 Mar 1460 which is 1461 in modern calendar. Agnes Jannys will dated 23 Apr proved 15 Sept 1465
6. The wills of Wymer 1507 and John Jannys 1496 make no mention of the rood except to leave a light. The rood screen appears to be made in two methods: Sapwell thought Wymer gave the painted vellum works and Jannys those painted directly on the wood panels.
7. TNA, E101/61/16; John Jannys's detailed will, proved in 1542, makes no mention of the rood screen - except for 20d for a rood light - nor of the school or his late brother. Some of his children in buried in the churchyard.
8. Will 1520 indexed as Thomas James.
9. His will also gave instruction to buy land to raise £8 a year to discharge the tolls at the gates in Norwich. The manor of Pakenham was said to have been leased and later purchased for these two legacies. NRO, NCR 25a/24/1108a,1109
10. Sapwell misread 'hier' for 'fier' but it is clearly the former.
11. NRO, PD 602/114 H Gidney solicitor notes 1903
12. see Vaughan-Lewis, *Aylsham: A Nest of Norfolk Lawyers*, 2014. This descriptor remains the same right through the court rolls.
13. Sometimes given as Berry. In Foxe's Book of Martyrs he is said to have made 200 Aylsham residents 'creep to the cross at Pentecost' and persecuted a glover to be burnt at the stake.
14. BM, Add Ch 26723
15. Sapwell later revised what he had published about the scholarships in 1960.
16. Jegon did not live at The Manor see *Nest of Lawyers*
17. The rolls of Pakenham Manor in Shropham show the £10 annual payment to the named schoolmaster at Aylsham. NRO, NCR 24c/17/4/1-91 1560-2; 1586-1687.

NRO, N/MC 17/1-119 1687-1806. These contradict names in Sapwell. Thanks to Tom Townsend for these sources.

18. Robert's father was called William, given as yeoman in his will of 1556. He owned 4 acres of lands in Blickling and Aylsham which he left to Alice his wife. William's will does not mention Robert but in 1581 Alice, then widow Monyman and her son Robert Harrison sold the same lands on and Robert is then described as 'scholmaster of Norwich'; *The Letterbook of John Parkhurst*, Norfolk Record Society XLIII, 1974-5

19. He asked the vicar Lancelot Thexton to alter parts of marriage ceremony, a serious offence. Thexton's dates as Perpetual Vicar appear variously as from 1558 or 1560 to 1581. Blomefield has 1574. He was witnessing Aylsham wills from 1556. He also was schoolmaster in 1560.

20. NRS XLIII, pp209-10

21. It is not clear whether Sutton was related to the earlier Mr Sutton. Blomefield read William Dawson as Danson.

22. For Knowles family and the Knoll see *Nest of Lawyers*

23. In 1636, Mr Thomas Kinges paid to 'Mr Clare the schoolmaster of Aylsham' his fee for teaching the grammar school there for a whole year ending lady day 1636. NRO, NCR24a/96. This membrane rightfully belongs in NCR24c/17/4 series but has been bound up with the main Great Hospital accounts.

24. Both Gill's father and brother had been High master of St Pauls School London. RW Ketton-Cremer, *A Norfolk Gallery*, 1948

25. See fn 17; *Health and Hygiene in early-modern Norwich*, NRS Vol LXXVII 2013, in 1570 it is noted under Shropham from which rent the £10 was raised. There was no payment recorded in 1549-50, as this was before the Hospital was the conduit.

26. TNA, Prob 11/51; two closes near Ingworth Bridge were intended for this purpose

27. For Baispoole's story see *Nest of Lawyers*; Robert Doughty of Aylsham (d 1679) was a JP like his better known cousin Robert of Hanworth (d 1676).

28. Vaughan-Lewis, *See You In Court, The Potts of Mannington* 2009

29. Corpus Christi College had £4 a year for 2 scholars, Gonville & Caius 40s for 1 scholar

30. The Charity Commissioners in 1833 report found no evidence of the Aylsham bequest surviving.

31. There is reference to Robert Banyer being Aylsham schoolmaster in 1686 and buried 1719. He may have been teaching at another school.

32. Robert Jegon appears to be the eldest son of Bishop Jegon although he was a minor at the death of his father in March 1618. TNA, IPM WARD

33. NRO, PD 602/114 parish file on the school including notes of William Repton.
34. See full story of Hogg in *Nest of Lawyers*
35. North refused to give his wife's maiden name at the baptism of the last child. This was only recorded from 1784 so it had not been an issue previously.
36. North was paid for 3mths ending Xmas 93
37. EDP quoting *Norwich & Norfolk Notes and Queries* 1900
38. NRO, PD602/114 a later master is to repay Overton a portion of the cost
39. NRO, MC382/179
40. Aylsham Town Archive Acc 1196
41. There is a building shown behind the school in the sketch which could be the master's house.
42. NRO, DN/DNS 137 Minute book
43. NRO, DN/DNS 276 Attendance returns
44. See Vaughan-Lewis, *Aylsham: Hungate: A Norfolk Streetscape*, 2014 for Hobbes house

In Part Two we will see Jonas Warden take over as master in 1818. Already well known in the town as the church organist, he had run a small prep school for boarders at his home The White House in Cromer Road.

PREPARATORY SCHOOL, AYLSHAM.

MR. WARDEN

RESPÉCTFULLY informs his Friends, that his
SCHOOL re-opens on Monday, the 23^d inst.
 Terms for Boarders, 16 guineas per annum—One
 Guinea entrance.
 A Quarter's notice previous to a Pupil's leaving
 the School.

14 Jan 1815 Norfolk Chronicle. British Library.

<https://aylshamhistory.org>

A little over 4 years ago, Roger Polhill kindly supplied digital copies of Journals from Volume 8 onwards and these became the start of a rudimentary archive on our website. It was always our intention to add the earlier journals but A5 page scanning on a small flatbed scanner proved too time consuming with poor results. This year we decided to bite the bullet and get the earlier Journals commercially scanned. Archive Vault at Rackheath delivered Volumes 1-7 on a tiny USB stick at the end of March.

An idea started to form. Wouldn't it be excellent if we could combine the indexes of all the volumes into one, listing every indexed item? Would that be possible? What if each item didn't just list the volume and page number but instead linked straight to the relevant page of the document?

We sought the expertise of Maggie Vaughan-Lewis. It was clear that how results are presented is key – there are those who like to see the index itself in alphabetical order, those who like to search all mentions of a subject and, of course, those who just like to browse, maybe preferring a photo or article subject matter as a trigger to reading something in more depth. It has taken us a while to figure out how to meet these needs, and many hours poring over 25,000 index entries scanned, compiled and listed on a huge Excel spreadsheet.

Our original intention was to link to every page mentioned in the original index, but our discussions suggested that maybe this wasn't as useful as it could be. Many references in the indexes are to listings in trade directories, particularly in the early years of the Journal. To aid researchers and reduce clicking on lots of links to pages of little interest, what was needed was some way of identifying why a particular person or place was mentioned. To achieve this, we have cross-referenced every index entry with the title of the article in which it appears, this gives the researcher the 'context' for each index entry, a huge improvement.

Our new ARCHIVE section on <https://aylshamhistory.org> is worth a visit. In addition to a Contents summary for each volume - which links straight to each article mentioned - we have added an Index Search and a complete A-Z listing. The latter is also available to download but whatever you do, don't try and print it. At a barely readable font size it is around 1,000 A4 pages long!

Peter Jolly, Web Admin

Newhaven Court, by Helen Murray



'It faces the sea on a windswept hill' - Newhaven Court, Cromer

On Wednesday 22nd February, Norwich historian and author, Helen Murray came to talk about her recently released book, *'Newhaven Court: Love, Tragedy, Heroism & Intrigue'* about the summer property of the colourful Locker-Lampson family. It is an entertaining and illuminating history of the grand house, built in 1884 by the charismatic American baronet Sir Curtis Lampson, but also the story of those many and varied characters who dwelled within. The elegant Victorian mansion with its ornate chimneys, turret and jumbled architecture, stood braced against the North Sea under the wide-open Norfolk skies for almost eighty years before its dramatic destruction by fire in 1963.

Newhaven Court was Helen's family home where poets rubbed shoulders with politicians and aristocracy, artists and authors. All came to dance, dine and relax but they also fell in love, sought refuge, conducted illicit affairs, recovered from illness and prepared for war. Poet Laureate Alfred Tennyson, heroic chain-smoking explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton, troubled Oscar Wilde, Winston Churchill, Princess Ileana of Romania, eminent Professor Albert Einstein and French brandy drinking tennis superstar, Suzanne Lenglen were just some of the fascinating guests who stayed at Newhaven Court.

The book follows the house and its colourful inhabitants through the decadent years of the late nineteenth century, the elegant Edwardian era, through the tragedy of the First World War, the roaring twenties, another terrible conflict and the uncertain post war era.

Hazel Jones

The last voyage of His Majesty's Ship the Gloucester 1682

On Thursday 9th March Julian and Lincoln Barnwell gave the town an enthralling account of how they found the wreck of the Gloucester, and a fascinating look at some of the artefacts which they have brought to the surface since its discovery in 2007.

There is still time to visit the exhibition about the wreck and to see a selection of objects, including the ship's bell which confirmed its identity, at Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery before it closes on the 10th September 2023.

The Gloucester was wrecked on one of the sandbanks off Great Yarmouth early in the morning on the 6th May 1682. Today, charts don't show exactly where the wreck is, quite rightly, to protect it. The trouble was, the navigators on the Gloucester didn't know exactly where they were on the 6th May either!



Julian (L) and Lincoln (R) with the ship's recovered bell, 2012 ©Norfolk Historic Shipwrecks Ltd

But while that was the immediate cause of the wrecking, a whole host of other reasons, some stretching back years, contributed to the disaster, and made it worse than it might have been. For those who would like to know more, an article by Professor Claire Jowitt [Last Voyage of the Gloucester \(1682\): The Politics of a Royal Shipwreck*](#) | [The English Historical Review](#) | [Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#) describes how it came about and its aftermath.

Charles II's brother James, Duke of York had been Lord High Admiral, but his avowed Catholicism led him to fall foul of the law. His marriage to a Catholic princess, Mary of Modena, did not help. Eventually, with anti-Catholic feeling running high, James had to leave England in 1679

first for the Netherlands and then Scotland, where he remained until early 1682. At that point Charles deemed it safe for James to return.

By May 1682 Mary of Modena was heavily pregnant, and James did not wish to risk the loss of a future son and king on a long and uncomfortable journey from Edinburgh to London.

Instead, he determined to sail to Scotland and fetch her. So far, so sensible. He could have travelled on one of the royal yachts, or taken all four for added safety. If he had it is unlikely the flotilla would have gone aground on the sandbanks near Great Yarmouth. But James wanted to demonstrate his return to favour by travelling in a Royal Navy man of war, and with a substantial entourage for the state business he needed to transact in Scotland. The Gloucester was chosen, a frigate carrying 52 guns, and rated to have a crew of 210, 117 ft long and, crucially, with a draught of 17ft 7in, much more than a yacht. She had been built in 1654, and after active service had been moored at Portsmouth dockyard for many years. She had a history of leaking but had been expensively refitted between 1678 and 1680 in readiness for active service again first in Ireland and then Tangier. Given the short notice, she may have been the only vessel of a suitable size ready to sail.

Right from the time James boarded the Gloucester off Margate, visibility had been poor. This meant that sightings of landmarks on the coast, and taking a noon reading of the sun to establish their position had been impossible. The ships' captain, Sir John Berry had been forced to estimate their position by reference to their estimated speed and wind direction. They did have a chart covering the Norfolk coast but it was seriously misleading. It had been printed by John Sellers, a supplier of navigation instruments, and dedicated, ironically, to the Duke of York. However, the chart was in essence a reprint of a 50 year old Dutch chart, and it showed the Leman and Ower sandbanks off Great Yarmouth as 12 miles nearer the coast than they actually were.

To add irony on irony, the year before, an experienced seafarer, Captain Collins, had finally been contracted by the Admiralty to produce an accurate chart of the coastal waters of the whole country. He mapped the Leman and Ower sandbanks shortly after the disaster. None of these problems meant it was inevitable that the Gloucester would strike one of the sandbanks and sink. But, in the hours and minutes before the Gloucester ran aground there were yet more failures, this time of seamanship and judgement.

Captain Gunman was in command of the royal yacht the Mary. An experienced sailor, he was also very sure of himself and not one to brook disagreement over navigation. On the Duke of York's ship, a pilot, Captain Ayres, with local knowledge, had been engaged to guide the ship through the hazards around the coast of East Anglia

In the hours before the wreck Captain Gunman was sailing ahead of the Gloucester. Fatally, that night, Gunman and Ayres disagreed about where the flotilla was in relation to the Leman and Ower sandbanks and therefore the course which should be taken. Twice that evening Captain Gunman brought his yacht the Mary up to the Gloucester to advise them to change course. Captain Ayres was not best pleased to have his knowledge challenged, and the first time Captain Gunman was overruled. The second time, around 8pm, his forceful advice was accepted much to the disgust of Captain Ayres and Gloucester changed course. At 4am, thinking they were past all danger, the pilot went to bed.

At 5am the linesman on the royal yacht recorded only 7 fathoms of water, and Gunman realised that the Gloucester travelling behind was in danger. He waved the Union Jack five times as warning of shallow water but did not fire a warning gun as Admiralty regulations required. Too late. The Gloucester went aground with some force, and her rudder caught on the sandbank sheared off and water began to pour in. With the loss of control, the ship slipped off the bank into deeper water and sank within the hour. Had it stayed on the sandbank there may well have been time to rescue more of those aboard.

James initially did not want to abandon ship (which meant that no one else could as protocol dictated that royalty leave first) but was eventually persuaded, with Colonel John Churchill, the future Duke of Marlborough, actively preventing too many joining his boat and risking a capsizing in the rough conditions. These conditions made rescue difficult but James' delay cost lives. The precise number is unknown but around 200 men drowned, courtiers, servants, and seamen alike. James and those with him were taken to the royal yacht Mary and after a short delay carried on to Edinburgh. In the ensuing inquiry the blame fell on Captain Ayres and Captain Gunman, although both were subsequently pardoned, Gunman almost immediately and Ayres after a year.

Jeremy Worth

Thomas Paine, a talk by Robert Knee, March 2023

Thomas Paine is one of Norfolk's greatest sons. Born in Thetford in 1737, Paine, by the power of his writings, became a leading figure in both the American struggle for Independence and French Revolution. Norwich contained a large number of those who sympathised with the French revolutionaries who would meet in the Maids Head and toast the deeds of Tom Paine. Paine's writings eventually led to his downfall. He was outlawed, exiled and there were over 300 occasions when his effigy was publicly burnt.



Robert Knee as Thomas Paine

Paine's father was a stay maker (corsets) and a Quaker. The Quaker's belief that all men and women are equal in the sight of God had a great influence on Paine's thinking. Paine would also have been aware of the hangings and other severe punishments meted out to the poor in Thetford, for often relatively minor misdemeanours.

Paine was fortunate to attend Thetford Grammar School where he not only developed a thirst for learning but also an ambition to see the New World and go to sea.

On leaving school and after several years apprenticed to his father as a stay maker, Paine ran away to sea. His first escape was unsuccessful and his father brought him home before the ship sailed. However, he eventually obtained his parents' blessing and he enlisted with the privateer The King of Prussia for a 6 month period, experiencing several sea battles and gaining a good share of the ship's bounty. When he disembarked in London, Paine was able to spend his time studying the ideas of the Enlightenment. When his money ran out Paine set up in Kent as a stay maker and married.

Tragically his wife died in childbirth and on the advice of his father-in-law, Paine joined the Customs and Excise Service in Lincolnshire. He was

dismissed from this most difficult and dangerous occupation but had his post reinstated, this time in Lewes, Sussex.

In Lewes Paine was able to further develop his thinking and communication skills at weekly debates at the Headstrong Club in Lewes. He was asked to petition the Crown on behalf of the Customs Officers for better pay and conditions. The petition was ignored and with the help of his friend Benjamin Franklin, Paine set sail for America.

Paine wrote his first great pamphlet 'Common Sense' in response to the hesitation to seek independence shown by the settlers in America. The pamphlet was very widely read and hugely influential and it later earned Paine the sobriquet as 'The Godfather of the American Revolution'. He had in fact also coined the term the United States.

Paine was aware that many of his audience couldn't read so he developed a concise, highly accessible style of writing which when read out, as it often was to eager audiences, was highly effective. He later put these skills to good use with his pamphlets "Crises", written to bolster the courage of the young American army in the face of superior British troops and German mercenaries.

Following the eventual success of the War of Independence, Paine returned to England, just as the French Revolution was taking shape. Edmund Burke had spoken out against the French, arguing that they had no right to overthrow their rulers. Paine replied with arguably his greatest piece of work 'The Rights of Man' which sold nearly a million copies.

Paine argued that all men always had the right to push for freedom and fair government. He also proposed ideas to support the welfare of the poor. In the febrile nature of the times, Paine's enemies amongst the ruling classes, fearing an English revolution, put a price on his head. With the help of his friend, the poet William Blake, Paine escaped to a hero's welcome in Paris.

Paine then became an influential figure in the French Revolution. However, as the mood of the mob soon turned violent, Paine spoke out in opposition and was subsequently imprisoned. In prison, Paine had written 'The Age of Reason'. This publication challenged many orthodox religious ideas and allowed Paine's enemies to unjustly label him as an atheist. From this time onwards, Paine was to suffer further hatred.

Narrowly avoiding the guillotine, Paine was eventually rescued by his friends in America where he returned for the last time. Concerned about how

the people of this new nation might be supported, Paine produced his paper *Agrarian Justice* with ideas far ahead of its time about pensions and welfare. He also campaigned against slavery throughout his time in America.

There was time for one last great contribution. He advised Jefferson to purchase Louisiana from a near bankrupt French government. This bargain purchase more than doubled the land mass of the new nation of America and in many ways secured the remarkable future for this country that was to follow.

Paine died in La Rochelle, New York, friendless and in poverty. Considering his humble Norfolk origins, his life had been truly remarkable and his challenge to our rulers is as powerful today as it was in the 18th century.

"When it shall be said in any country in the world, my poor are happy; neither ignorance nor distress is to be found among them; my jails are empty of prisoners, my streets of beggars; the aged are not in want; the taxes are not oppressive; the rational world is my friend, because I am the friend of its happiness: When these things can be said, then may that country boast its Constitution and its Government." *Common Sense* 1775

Hazel Jones

Paine's Writings

The Case for the Customs Officers. (1772)

Common Sense (1775)

American Crisis (1776)

The Rights of Man (1791)

The Age of Reason (1794)

Agrarian Justice (1795)

The Aylsham and Brampton Aerial Investigation and Mapping project, a talk by Jack Powell

The Aylsham and Brampton Aerial Investigation and Mapping (AIM) project is a Historic England funded, 99 square kilometre survey of northeast Norfolk covering Aylsham, Brampton and the surrounding landscapes. The project aims to contribute to the protection of historic places by making new discoveries and improving the records of known sites. The project involves the analysis of a range of aerial sources including modern and historical aerial photographs and visualised 'lidar' (airborne laser scanning) data. The survey is being carried out by Norfolk County Council's Air Photo Interpretation Team.

The Aylsham and Brampton AIM survey has made a significant contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the historic environment of the project area. The project has created 458 new records in the Norfolk Historic Environment Record (NHER) and enhancing a further 129 records. Crucially, many sites have been accurately mapped for the first time, allowing them to be both better understood and better managed.

The survey has discovered, interpreted, mapped and recorded sites ranging in date from the Neolithic to the 20th century. Highlights have included numerous prehistoric funerary sites, including several of likely Neolithic date. Mapping of Brampton Roman town and the surrounding area has added significantly to our understanding of the environs of this Roman small town. A wealth of features relating to medieval and post-medieval fields, enclosures and routeways provides a fantastic resource for future research into the settlement and land use of the period. The six manorial and/or moated sites recorded by the project are an interesting group in their own right, as well as contributing to our understanding of the wider medieval and post-medieval landscape.

If you would like to find out more, the project report will be available for download from Historic England's Research Reports database, which is available at <https://historicengland.org.uk/research/results/reports/>. Records and maps can be accessed via the Norfolk Historic Environment Record, available at <https://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/>.

Jack Powell, is an Air Photo Interpreter, Norfolk County Council



The cropmarks of a chapel (left), manor house (right), and part of a third structure (centre), relating to the site of Nowers Manor and St Nicholas's Chapel (NHER 12525). Photograph (detail) by Derek Edwards, Norfolk Air Photo Library: Oblique Collection TG1530/A 16-JUL-1986 (NLA 179/DBM 8) © Norfolk County Council.

The site lies to the south of the village of Itteringham

Elizabeth Jill Sheringham **28 February 1926 – 3 March 2023**



Jill came from a Norfolk farming family – the Rivetts – but as her father was the fourth son, he chose to start retail businesses in High Wycombe, Bucks. The fourth of five children, Jill fell in love with Norfolk in the 1930s when her father bought a shack (no electricity, running water or drainage) behind the dunes at Holme, where she and her younger brother Digby spent happy summers, playing on the beach and hunting for stray golf balls.

Jill showed her independent spirit at a young age by refusing to go to Canada with Digby at the start of the War. Instead, she stayed and helped her mother care for traumatised firemen who had dealt with the aftermath of London bombings. She was evacuated twice from her West Country boarding school, where she was head girl, and went, aged 16, to Reading University to study Agriculture and Dairying. She remembers Reading town being full of British and American troops with tanks, lorries and jeeps rumbling through day and night for D-Day. She also remembers a dearth of eligible males at university as all the fit ones had gone to war. The student vets were much in demand!

After graduating, she worked for the War Agricultural Committee inspecting milk on farms, first in Durham then Norfolk. And it was there – at a tennis-club dance in Aylsham – that she met Hubert, also from a Norfolk farming family. It was a true love match and Hubert proposed soon afterwards.

They married in 1949 and started off in one half of Brandiston Hall near Cawston, with their friends Ben and Lynette Rust living in the other half.

Hubert worked long hours at Irelands as an auctioneer, valuer and land agent – later, also a farmer – and Jill, a young mother with a large house to run, managed to squeeze in some voluntary work and run a market garden.

In the late 1950s they moved to Dix's House in Cawston where, during the severe winter of 1963, ten stranded lorry drivers landed on the doorstep in a blizzard and stayed several days. Jill immediately put them to work peeling potatoes by firelight as there was no electricity. As a thank-you for her hospitality, the lorry drivers bought us teddy bears and sent Jill Christmas cards for years afterwards.

That year Jill and Hubert's next move was to Erpingham Lodge Farm in Ingworth, a dilapidated 1680s farmhouse that they renovated, and it became a dearly loved family home for over 50 years.

They got involved in village life, organising the Ingworth Social Club and fund-raising events. Every evening, Jill walked a mile there and back to lock up Ingworth Church, and was a regular on the cleaning rota, doing battle with the bats' droppings. They were involved with the Aylsham Show from its humble beginnings on the recreation ground, when the only livestock were a few Shetland ponies. Jill, a Life Vice President, only recently retired from the Show committee.

She was a loyal, long-standing member of Colby and Banningham WI, and was secretary to five presidents; she helped plot and record the gravestones in ten churchyards. She was treasurer for the Aylsham branch of the Workers Educational Association and later for all the WEA Norfolk branches.

All her life Jill loved driving, so she was perfectly suited to be a founder driver of the Aldborough Community Bus, picking up passengers from around the villages. She was secretary and driver-organiser for over 20 years. Later she drove passengers – whom she referred to as 'old people' though she was usually many years their senior! – to medical appointments for the Aylsham Care Trust, which she continued to do well into her 90s.

She was supportive of the Aylsham Local History Society from its outset, Tom Mollard expressing his appreciation of Jill and Ben Rust for contributing articles to the first volume of the Journal. Her article on *Norfolk Churchyard Recording* in Volume 1: 68-70 (1986) ends with the following paragraph.

The country churchyards are places of peace. The beauty of the old headstones, leaning at all angles, often covered with moss and ivy and

the bright yellow, black and white patterns of the lichens, the trees, the wildlife, and the flowers all provide endless interest.

She was a continuous member of the Society from 1995 until the last year of her life. She wrote reports on talks and with Hubert she contributed to the article on *The Masque of Anne Boleyn* in 8: 65 (2008). She enjoyed the talks and went on many of the outings. She enthusiastically helped with the survey of the Aylsham Baptist Church graveyard in 2014.

When Hubert retired any worry he might get under Jill's feet was soon dispersed as most days they set off on long country or coastal walks, rucksacks on their backs. They also enjoyed salmon-fishing in Scotland, Jill sitting on the bank happily sketching or reading her book.

When her beloved Hubert died in 2010, Jill moved to a bungalow in Aylsham. She had kind, friendly neighbours and it suited her well though she claimed she was a village not a town person. She went on coach holidays, continued her art classes and was a regular – and the oldest, by a long chalk – participant at Extend keep fit classes, which she attended until a few weeks before her death. Proud of her fitness, she went for a daily walk in all weathers along the disused railway line, pooh-poohing her mobility scooter and refusing to give in to a stick. She was a frequent cinema-goer and enjoyed most genres – though she did walk out of *Hot Fuzz*!

Jill was a brilliant mother – an accomplished cook, needlewoman, practical problem-solver, carpenter, mender, nurse, pet-sitter, GCSE coach, listener, shoulder to cry on, but she was no selfless, saintly do-gooder. She was also pretty feisty, hated being told what to do, believed in tough love, gave as good as she got and was very much her own person. In other words, a true Rivett!

She was once asked at a dinner what she was interested in. She replied: 'Everything!' Which sums her up, really. And she never lost that thirst for knowledge and zest for life. Doctors were astounded that at 96 she was on no medication. In her last few days, she was exclaiming over a carpet of snowdrops with her son, enjoying opening her 97th birthday cards and beating me at Scrabble. She leaves a son, two daughters, four granddaughters and four greatgrandsons.

Sally Sheringham

Back Cover

Thomas Paine's statue in Thetford outside the Kings House in King Street. It was designed by Sir Charles Wheeler, erected in 1964 and regilded in 2020. Picture <https://thetford.mathmos.net/amenities/artwork-memorials/thomas-paine/>

