

Aylsham Local History Society



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AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

September 15-16 Norfolk History Fair - Rural
 Life Museum, Gressenhall
 10 - 5 each day

September 25th. "A history of Aylsham and its
 area" - a course of 10 lectures,
 focussing on the Millgate area, where
 river, navigation, railway and town
 met. Students will be guided in their
 own researches into the history of
 this interesting part of the town.

Course Director; C.Barringer. 10am - 12
alternate Tuesdays at the Friendship Club.

October ? AGM Date to be determined

October 25th. "Seventeenth Century maps" by
 Dr.V.Morgan. Friendship Club. 7.30pm

November 22nd. "On being a labourer in the
 Sixteenth century". by Professor
 A.Hassell Smith. 7.30pm. at the
 Friendship Club.



AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Volume 2

Number 10

HARRY PROUDFOOT (1869 - 1961)

In the last issue of our Newsletter & Journal (March 1990) appeared the article on Aylsham Baptist Church written in 1894 by Harry Proudfoot, together with a brief note of how much the existence of the Parish archives is due to him, through his assiduous collecting and preserving of documents which he eventually presented to the Town Council.

In those same archives, there is a brief autobiographical note by Harry Proudfoot grandly entitled "A history of the parish of Aylsham since the year 1873 to 1934". It was clearly used as source material by Dr. Sapwell in his history of Aylsham, and a note left by Sapwell states - "this is really an autobiography up to the time of his marriage in 1892, . . . what a pity he did not continue it up to 1934 or later". This is fair comment, as the 'history' comprises a mere eight pages, nevertheless, it is of sufficient interest to be worth reproducing here. A newspaper cutting from the "Cromer Post" of Dec. 7th. 1934, which is also in the archives, gives more detail of his later life, for instance, how he organised the local celebrations for the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, when 1800 people were seated in Aylsham market place and were served by 360 carvers and waiters. It is also clear from that account how deeply he was involved in organisations and activities in the town.

(The account begins). . . "I am simply putting down what I remember since I was about four years of age. I was born at the old corner shop on Bank plain facing toward the Norwich Road, on February 15th, 1869, my father's name being Robert Proudfoot, and my mother's Elizabeth.

I had three brothers - Robert Thomas, William Freeman and Herbert Miles, also two sisters - Elizabeth Louise and Phillis Gertrude.

My father was a joiner and cabinet maker and his workshop was in Red Lion Street, behind Mr. Dale's shop (this place was afterwards used as a Mission Room by the Plymouth Brethren when they opened up in Aylsham.) In the year 1875, I was sent to the National School, the new part of the Schools being opened this year. Mr. Thomas Hill was the schoolmaster. My parents had to pay twopence per week for our education, half of which was refunded if a certain number of attendances were made during the year.

In those days, we had to take our slates and pencils, with a sponge attached to our slate (after each lesson we spat on our slate to clean it ready for the next lesson.) The subjects taught were Reading, Writing and Arithmetic. Grammar, Geography, History and Singing were also taught with a smattering of Algebra and Euclid.

Mr. Hill was a fine old master, and took the deepest interest in his scholars. This was the only education I received, and I estimate the total cost of the same at about twenty-five shillings for the seven years that I attended school. There being five of us, my parents always looked out to get the half fees returned.

During the seven years that I attended school, I was employed out of school hours, especially between the age of eleven and thirteen (when I left) as follows:- At 7 o'clock in the morning I had to take out about twelve copies of the Eastern Daily Press to the principal houses in the parish, some of which were a mile from the market place; for this I

was paid threepence weekly, my employer being Mr. Charles Clements (now Mr.F.C.Barnwell). After I came out of morning school, I had to go to Miss Clover in the market place (now the Post Office) and also on Saturday mornings I had to run errands, help in the garden, clean knives and forks for all of which I received another threepence per week.

In the summer months, with my brother Freeman we were on the Dog Hotel bowling green, wiping bowls. My father was the secretary of the club. Very often we would be there until 11 o'clock at night, but we quite enjoyed this work as we did not always account to our parents for all the money we had picked up.

In those days, the game of bowls was a more sociable one than that of today. Farmers, tradesmen and their friends would sometimes meet in the afternoon, and play on until late at night. Among the many I have wiped bowls for, I well remember the following-Lawyer Henry Scott, Charles Roger Dewhirst, Samuel Hatcher, Horace Laxen, Major Archdale, Philip Elden, James Watts, James Sands, James Gambling, Dr.Little, William Gay, Dr.R.J.Morton and his father R.K.Morton, Henry Page, Charles Harvey Ward, Christmas Stapleton, Charles Clements, William Calver, James Breese, James Cornish, Edward George, William F.White, John Goulder, Charles Goulder, Thornton Bullock, George Fitt, William Payne and Charles Wade.

At the age of 13 I left school. My first place was at Mr.E.Nuthall's, a chemist in Red Lion St. His manager was a Major Maude (he is still alive and lives at Cawston). There was a large family; I had to be at work at 7 o'clock each morning, cleaning boots, knives and forks and lighting the fire before the shop was opened. Early closing was on Wednesdays at 5 o'clock, and on Saturdays, the shop did not close until 10pm. I was at this place for about two years, my wages being two shillings per week for the first year and two shillings and sixpence the second year.

I left this place and went to Mr.England's, a grocer in Red Lion St. as warehouse boy. I did not

stay there very long. I left and went to Mr.Bexfield's. he had a baking powder factory in some buildings situated in Red Lion St. up a yard behind the present International Stores, he occupying the shop which is now owned and occupied by Mr.James Roofe. We made baking powder and all sorts of bottled sauces. At this time, the present International Stores was used as a coffee tavern and refreshment house carried on by the late Mr.James Applegate. He was a brickmaker on the Blickling estate, and later, a member of the Norfolk County Council and an Alderman. He was a leading light of the old Radical party.

At the age of 18 I was employed by Messrs. Brady & Pert, painters and plumbers whose workshops were on the Cromer Road on part of the Vicarage Glebe garden (now occupied by Mr.James D.Partridge). I was a bricklayer's labourer to Charles Dove, and from May 1887 was at work at Burgh Hall until the September following. I had to be at the workshop by 5.30 in the morning and walk to Burgh Hall, leaving there about 6 o'clock at night. On Saturdays we left about 4.30 to be home at the workshop by 5pm for payment of my wages, viz. Nine shillings per week for 60 hours work.

I had to do all kinds of jobs, making up mortar, painting wood and ironwork, helping the paper-hangers and making myself generally useful. My employers, Mr.William Pert and Mr.Harry Brady, were very kind to me and the workmen (some ten in all). We were a very happy party. We took our food with us, and generally had same out in the plantations attached to the Hall. In the June of this year, the Norfolk Agricultural Show was held in the east park at Blickling. It has not been held at Aylsham since that year i.e. 1887. In October of 1887, we had finished at Burgh Hall, and I then went to work at painting a house at Banningham occupied by a Mr.G. Frostick and owned by Benjamin Cook of Aylsham. About the middle of October, there was no more work for me

with Messrs. Brady & Pert, and for a fortnight I was unemployed. My parents were getting a bit upset at my not being able to earn something toward my keep.

My father at this time had given up his cabinet-making business, and had been appointed assistant overseer and rate collector for the parishes of Aylsham and Blickling at a combined salary of about £75 per annum. My eldest brother, Robert, had left home leaving five of us with our father and mother to provide for. We each of us had to do some kind of work for the house, when children, and looked forward to Saturday when we each received a half-penny for sweets (that is if we had done our allotted work during the week).

At the latter part of October 1887 I was called into my father's little office, and there asked to sign a document to apprentice me to a Mr. Fred Culley, a builder of Cawston Rd., Aylsham, as a bricklayer for three years. This I refused to do, and I well remember saying to them "I am not going to be a bricklayer" ending up with these words, "Father, you have no idea what I have got in my skull". After this, things were none too pleasant in the old home!

At this time, Mr. Culley had a lot of work in hand, employing several men & boys. Dove, with whom I had previously worked at Brady & Pert, had left there, and gone to Mr. Culley. I had been making out his time-sheets, and being fond of writing, my works had been seen by Mr. Culley, and a few days after our meeting at my father's office, he saw me in the market place and arranged that I should try my hand at carpentering but under no agreement whatever. My father provided me with some tools, but I never did much in that line. I was fond of my writing, and I was soon engaged on clerical work with Mr. Culley

This was my great starting point for my future, and I shall ever remember how kind Mr. & Mrs. Culley and their daughter (later on my dear wife) were

to me. I have much to thank them for. At this time, there were no motor vehicles,,and I have seen ten to twelve horses and carts go out of Mr.Culley's yard at 6 o'clock in the morning to the various works then in progress. It was a worry every Friday to get in the cash to pay the wages bill. Twenty five shillings was the highest then paid for a week of 60 hours. I started with a wage of fifteen shillings per week.

During the first three years, the largest job we did was the building of Weybourne Hall for Mr. Walpole (afterwards Earl of Orford). This place was built for a sum of just over £2,000, and when it was completed, Mr.Walpole came there to live, from Burgh Hall near Aylsham. I remember all this place as a ploughed field, and the present drive was planned out by me, assisted by the late Mr.Mark Witham who was then Mr.R.J.W.Purdy's gardener at Woodgate, Aylsham. Weybourne church door was given by Mr.Walpole, and I designed the ironwork scrolls on the same; the top one has the initials R.H.W. (for Robert Horace Walpole) and the lower one L.M.W. - his wife's initials. The ironwork was cast by Messrs.Barnes & Pye of Norwich.

In the year 1892, on September 27th., I was married in our old parish church to Mr.Culley's only child, Edith Sophia, the ceremony being performed by the vicar, John Gurney Hoare. Our first home was on the Pound Road, and here we stayed some six to seven years, moving later on into the market place where my father and grandfather had lived. This house is now (1934) occupied by the Aylsham Rural District Council for their offices.

The account ends there, somewhat abruptly, and one wishes, like Sapwell, that he had continued it further.

THE AYLSHAM BRANCH

Tom West

The branch of the railway (The GER) on which Aylsham stands, opened on the first of January 1880, and closed for passenger traffic on the fifteenth of September 1952. It started at Wroxham, the junction on the Cromer line.

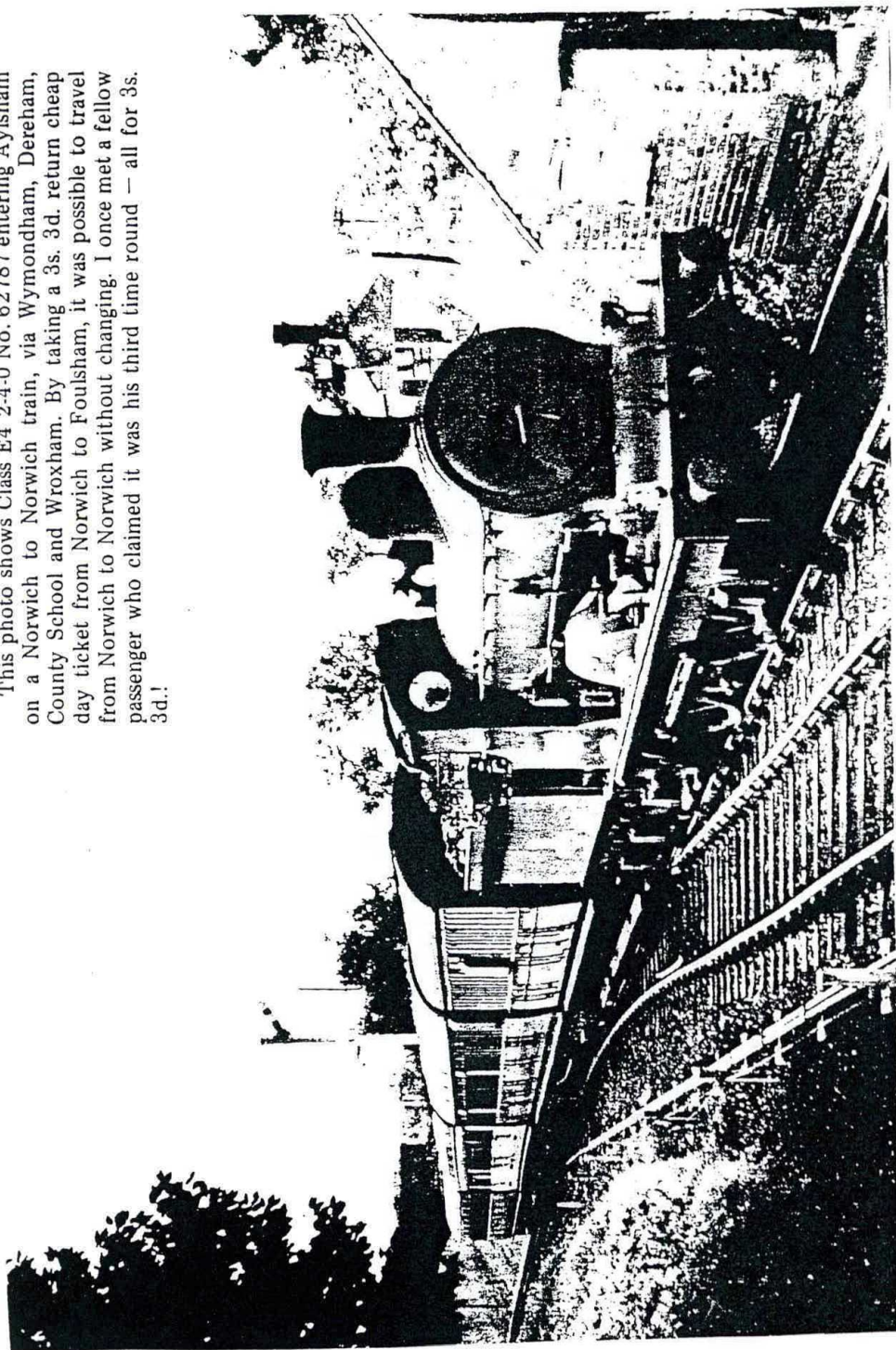
The stations after Wroxham were first, Coltishall, then Buxton. It was called Buxton Lammas by the Railway Company - much to the resentment of the people of Lammas, who considered themselves a separate community. Then came Aylsham which, later, under BR came to be called Aylsham South, followed by Cawston. Then came Reepham-Norfolk, the other, the M&GN station was known as Reepham & Whitwell, followed by Foulsham and County School, where it joined the Dereham and Wells branch.

This was a single line, worked on a staff and ticket system. The brass staffs formed a key to unlock the ticket box in the booking office, except for the one from Wroxham to Buxton, as there was no passing loop at Coltishall.

In my time, the token from Wroxham to Buxton was called a ticket staff. It was a leather disc about a foot across with a wire hoop on it like a tablet pouch. It had three large iron keys on it, and was quite heavy. When you picked it up at a signal-box, the box would be some distance from the platform, so you were going at a fair speed, and it would give your arm quite a clout!

I worked on the branch when I was stationed at Dereham, early in the war. I worked first on passenger trains, then later in the local goods link from Norwich (known as the Old Man's gang). Then I worked in the main-line freight link where we had

This photo shows Class E4 2-4-0 No. 62787 entering Aylsham on a Norwich to Norwich train, via Wymondham, Dereham, County School and Wroxham. By taking a 3s. 3d. return cheap day ticket from Norwich to Foulsham, it was possible to travel from Norwich to Norwich without changing. I once met a fellow passenger who claimed it was his third time round — all for 3s. 3d.!



two passenger jobs, one in the morning starting from Norwich to Wymondham, Dereham thence to Wroxham, and so back to Norwich on the Cromer branch. The late one went round the opposite way, and this working was known as "round the world". I liked these jobs as you kept going, and did not have to turn the engine, or clean the fire.

We got water at Dereham and Wroxham. You could only get water at Aylsham in cases of dire emergency as the tank on the water tower was filled by a hand pump worked by a great wheel. If the tank had to be re-filled, it necessitated sending two men from Norwich Loco. I do not recall this happening, but in 1880 it may have been in regular use. The water cranes at Wroxham and Dereham were originally worked by steam pumps, although in my time they were electric.

The motive power on the branch that I remember, consisted of Great Eastern six-wheelers, or as we called them, the J15, which is familiar to most people now on the North Norfolk Railway, where it has appeared on television in various programmes. There were two versions of this; the mixed-traffic one like the one at Sheringham which had Westinghouse brakes, and also vacuum ejectors, and steam heating for working passenger trains. The other version, the freight one, had a steam brake and no train pipes.

A third mark had vacuum pipes and steam brakes plus an enclosed cab for passenger working. These were at Cambridge, but none were in this district. They started life in 1889 as the Worsdel Y14, but engines were still running until after World War 2, some with a tender bearing the date 1881, so they must have come off an earlier engine.

Then there were the two types of 'Knock-John' - J17 and J19 which were also 0-6-0s. Some J17s

were fitted with train pipes, and some were not; all had steam brakes. Two J19 'Knock Johns' (4644 and 4674) worked the up and down goods trains, one starting from Norwich via Dereham, and the other via Wroxham.

They were powerful engines fitted with vacuum and steam heating pipes so that they could take over passenger trains in the event of the failure of a passenger engine. Other types of 'Knock John' were the J18 and J20 which never, as far as I know, came on the branch. The J20 was the Great Eastern's most powerful freight locomotive. I never remember seeing a J18.

Other types worked passenger and occasionally goods trains. There were also the 2-4-0 (intermediates) once Great Eastern express passenger locomotives, and also the F4T (2-4-2-) which was the tank version of the E4.

The N7Ts came off the London suburban services; some were left hand and some were right hand drive. Then there were the Clauds - various marks of the D16 (4-4-0). There was also a D15 Claud, the B12 (4-6-0) sometimes used on freight trains when they were near to re-conditioning. No.1572, the engine on the North Norfolk Railway, is a B12 mark 3. There were also Great Northern 'W's (2-4-0) 'Iron Clads'

At one time Great Northern (2-6-2) K2s (Ragtimers) worked the branch, which was all right as long as they stopped at every station, but one day, one came through with the breakdown train. On going through Coltishall non-stop, the left hand cylinder of the "Raggie" hit the platform. After this, outside-cylinder engines, apart from M&GN 4MTs and the Britannia Pacifics were banned. A Britannia never came on the branch, although one nearly did, a replacement being found at the last moment.

During the war, the engines were renumbered - the 1500s (B12) reverting to their old Great Eastern numbers. When British Rail took over, they had a '6' in front as a regional number. At the end of steam, we had Midland Type I, VAT 2-6-0s, and 4MTs, (Wells Fargos) They had come from Melton Constable when it closed. They were left-hand drive engines with steam brakes and vacuum pipes. They were one of the latest steam types.

The last engines were diesels - Paxmans, Brushes and English Electrics.

An engine was, at one time, stabled at Foulsham. There were two crews based there in 1917, and plans were drawn up to build an engine-shed and turn-table there, although these were never actually built. Correspondence in the Great Eastern Society Journal of April 1983 suggests, with some considerable logic, that this out-station of Norwich owed its existence to the practice of stopping the last Norwich-Dereham train of the day short, at Foulsham. A pit, a pair of crews and water supply would thus have been basic requirements.

The engine, off this service, was actually allocated to Foulsham for a period from at least 1885. It was required to work the first up service of the day to Norwich. Engines also ran 'light' to and from Dereham - the nearest engine shed proper. The 'depot' came to an end during the First World War. This means that the last train from Norwich came through Aylsham, thus the branch had its own motive-power depot. As there was no turntable at Foulsham, it entailed a lot of tender-first running, unless it was a tank-engine. If you wanted to go beyond Foulsham from Norwich on the last train, presumably you had to go on the 'Wells'

I remember Mr. Herbert Mallet of Hungate St at one time Aylsham's oldest inhabitant; this would be about 1946, talking about the local cattle trade before the First World War. Aylsham was an important

centre for cattle sales then, the sale ground being opposite the 'Feathers', where the Friendship Club now is. A cattle train left Aylsham Great Eastern station for London at 4am on the morning after the sale. The loaders, having worked all night, then repaired to the 'Red Lion' where they were each given a pint-pot. Beer was then placed on the floor, in pails, and they helped themselves.

The cattle train came from Norwich the previous night, bringing with it a "passed" cleaner to look after the engine. The train crew were accommodated at the 'Dog' Hotel which remained on the railway's list of hotels until the end. The last time this was used was in the great snowfalls of 1947, when the train from Dereham could get no further. The three passengers and the train crew were lodged there, at the 'Dog'. Mr.W.O.West, a lorry driver was asked if he would take the train crew (not the passengers) back to Dereham, their home station, as they would be on overtime until they returned. As he had already been on duty for 16 hours, and there was no guarantee that he would get there, or back again, he refused, (his actual words not being for publication!)

There was a story in Norwich-Loco, that one cattle train was sent to Aylsham without the acting fireman - a passed cleaner - there being no one available at the train departure time. When one came on duty later, he had to walk to Aylsham to look after the engine. Men were tough in those days!.

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This issue of the Newsletter appears close to the time of the opening of the Bure Valley Railway. With good fortune, this new railway will enjoy many years of hauling passengers over part of the track-bed which once formed a section of the 'Aylsham Branch'.

By happy coincidence, we have this article from Tom West, reminiscing about the branch from when it was in its prime up to the last days under BR. These memories are from someone who actually worked on the line.

Once the new railway is operating, memories of the old railway will be pushed further and further into the background. It is valuable to record some of these memories before the new railway takes over completely.

Ed.

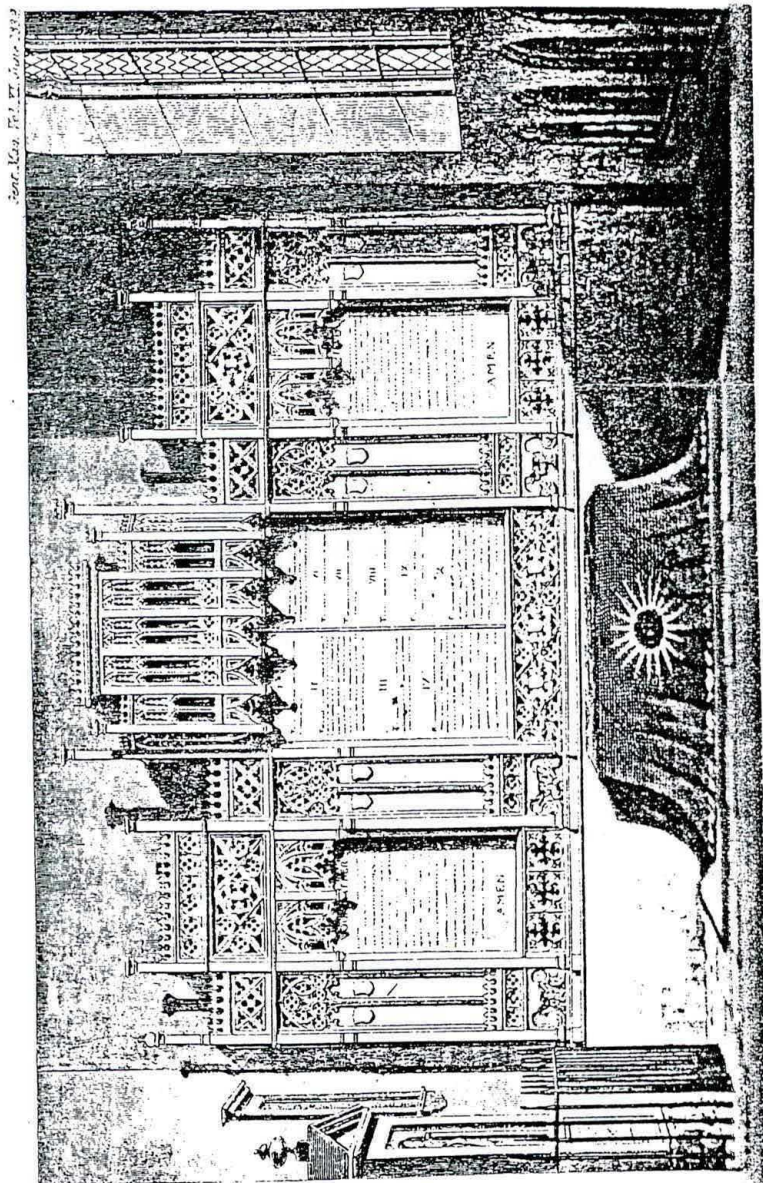
COVER ILLUSTRATION

"John Jegon, Bishop of Norwich, aged 50 in 1601. Died 1617.
Published Jan.1st 1800, by Wm.Richardson, York House No.31 Strand."

He was born in Essex in 1550, appointed Dean of Norwich in 1601 and Bishop of Norwich in 1603. He was described as - short, fat, dour and mean with money. He married a wife years younger than himself, and was accused of neglecting charity and hospitality in order to enrich his family. He built up an estate of his own at Aylsham and Buxton and economised by living in the episcopal manor house at Ludham in preference to the Bishop's palace at Norwich.

When the Bishops manor house at Ludham burnt down in 1611, there were rumours that he had been involved in arson to save himself expense. He refused to restore the Ludham house, and spent his remaining years in the Manor House at Aylsham which he had bought earlier and enlarged. He died in Aylsham and is buried in St.Michael's Church where a monument to him, and another to one of his sons can still be seen.

The photograph which accompanies the article by Tom West comes from a book in the County Library stock. We have not been able to trace which book it originally came from and cannot, therefore, acknowledge properly our source. Our thanks go to the unknown author and photographer.



THE ALTAR SCREEN IN AYLSHAM CHURCH, NORFOLK

GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE 1839

In the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1839 appeared the illustration on the page opposite, and the letter, below, which accompanied it. The letter was to the editor of the day, Mr. Urban, but I am afraid I do not know who the writer J.A.R. was.

"ALTAR PIECE IN AYLSHAM CHURCH, NORFOLK" (With a plate)

Springfield, near
Chelmsford

Mr. Urban,

In passing through the town of Aylsham a short time since, in my way to Cromer, I went into the church of the former place and was struck with the appearance of the rich altar-piece there. I found on inquiry, it was erected by the late Rev. Charles Norris, a former vicar of the parish. The screen is composed of several pieces of old carving, collected from different parts of the church. Many of them were concealed behind the cloth linings of the pews. In clearing away the lower part of the south wall, within the rails, three plain arches of the stone stalls were discovered, and also two rude trefoil arches for a piscina. These arches were evidently filled up soon after the Reformation, as the balusters of the rails before the altar appear to be of the date of Elizabeth

J.A.R.

SOCIETY NEWS

"THE WORK OF ANGELS" On Thursday, 22nd.March, a party of members and friends left Aylsham at 8.30am for another of our highly popular outings. This time, it was to the British Museum to see the exhibition of masterpieces of Celtic metalwork from the 6th. to 9th.centuries AD. It was rightly described as 'Work of Angels', beautifully crafted exhibits, all the more remarkable as they were all made during the so-called 'Dark Ages'.

The pieces on display ranged from domestic items to ecclesiastical treasures, and came from British and Irish finds. The most recent were a hoard of church vessels discovered in County Tipperary in 1980. As we have come to expect, it was an excellent day out. We were able to explore other areas of the British Museum's treasures, and even a little of the city close by.

On these outings of ours, the actual journeys become part of the pleasure. They certainly have their own excitements. This time was no exception. We left Aylsham promptly at 8.30am and made excellent time into London, and apart from getting lost on the way in, and having to make a couple of circuits of Bedford Square, we were deposited no more than a quarter of a mile from the entrance to the museum, but it was a pleasure to enjoy the walk. Getting lost coming into London is understandable; it could happen to anyone not completely familiar with the route. However, to get lost again on the way out takes considerable skill, and our driver was equal to the occasion. We saw parts of London we have never seen before, and hopefully, will never need to see again. Having found the right road, we made excellent speed homewards and the closer we got to Norfolk, the less the danger of going wrong again.

Or so we thought! At Barton Mills we said farewell to the Norwich Road and headed for RAF Lakenheath and Brandon. Ah well! he can soon get from Brandon back to Thetford and pick up the Norwich road again, I thought, but our driver was made of sterner stuff than that. Straight on we went. Mundford, Hilborough and eventually Swaffham passed by in the darkness. Eventually, by way of East Dereham and Swanton Morley, we arrived back in Aylsham at exactly 8.30pm. It was an interesting additional tour of the County, but a pity it was too dark to see anything. I still wonder why the driver missed out Kings Lynn and Gorleston. Has he got something against them?

THE CASTLE MALL DEVELOPMENT. In early April, one of the largest turn-outs for some time came to the Friendship Club to hear Brian Ayers lecture on the Norwich Castle Mall excavations. Brian Ayers is the Field Officer in charge of the project, and graphically and entertainingly brought us all up to date on what is happening on what he described as the largest archaeological dig currently in operation in Europe.

Understandably, there is a wide interest in what is happening there. The site covers some five acres, right in the heart of one of the most historic cities in the country. The sheer size of the site, plus the urgency to excavate as much as possible before the developers move in, is one of the major problems. There is less than 18 months time left, but already a great deal has been learned about the position of the Castle Bailey and other ditches and defences. Human bones point to the existence of earlier churches destroyed during the building of the Castle mound. Coins already discovered reveal the earliest appearance of the name NORWICH recorded on coinage. Every find is computer-plotted and at the end of the dig, the final report should be of the greatest value. It became clear how work on the site is hampered by

18th.Century landscaping, 19th.Century roadbuilding and 20th.Century construction of air-raid shelters etc., but patient detective work still reveals valuable information. I thought that the most exciting picture we saw was of the cross section of the Castle Bailey ditch, where one could clearly see the original surface level of Saxon England, covered by the later Norman earthworks. This was clearly defined in the soil, and we could actually see the Norman Conquest!. More mundane finds, but finds nearly as valuable, came from the exploration of ancient cess-pits. A lot can be learned from what a society throws away.

It does make you think, though. If you are on mains drainage you have no problem, but if you are one of the many still relying on septic tank drainage, do bear in mind that two to three hundred years from now there could well be a successor to the Norfolk Archaeological Unit happily excavating it, and preparing a learned paper on its contents.

NORFOLK HISTORY FAIR 1990

The official launch of the Norfolk History Fair 1990 took place at Strangers' Hall on April 30th. The audience consisted of representatives of those organisations intending to take part in the fair, and members of the press. The meeting was opened by Mr. Peter Stibbons Chairman of the joint organising committee, and the audience was welcomed by Mrs. Toni Dutton, chairman of the Norfolk Museums Service. We learned that it is intended that there will be 70 stands this year and an attendance of 10,000 is hoped for. Gressenhall Rural Life museum now occupies 50 acres, and since the last fair in 1988, a working, 1920s farm has been established. The entrance fee of £3 will include entry to the farm, chapel (where rural/farm archive film will be shown), the museum and car parking.

Mr. Mike Vincent, chairman of the Friends of Gressenhall, described the planned programme of events, mentioning such varied activities as calligraphy, flint-knapping, cider-pressing and the use of a printing press. There will be actors, dancers and musicians, and the Napoleonic Society practising pike and musket drill. An Antiques Roadshow will be held, although the information imparted will not include valuations. Mr. C. Barringer of Cambridge Extramural Board will be giving lectures on local subjects lasting for approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ hour. It is intended that as many participating members as possible will wear period costume - visitors will also be encouraged to do the same. The fundamental idea - is simple - to bring together people who are involved with, or interested in, the history and archaeology of their area, and give them a chance to show each other what they are up to. A successful history fair is a rich and colourful mix, with something new at every corner. The documentary delver, digger, craftsman, collector all have a place alongside the musician, actor and dancer.

Publicity was discussed by Mr. John Birchall, Press Officer for Norfolk County Council. Advice was supplied on the most effective ways of publicising the Fair, using local papers and radio stations, not forgetting the use of posters and word of mouth. In all, it was a most constructive and informative meeting, the underlying message being:-

HISTORY IS FUN!

Posters will be available; if any member would be willing to display a poster, please contact Adele Sutherland at Stranger's Hall Museum.

Wendy MacGregor.

CASTLE RISING AND KINGS LYNN Following several days of glorious sunshine, it was unfortunate that the weather changed abruptly on the day chosen for our outing to Castle Rising and the historic town of Kings Lynn. Sudden heavy showers accompanied us all day, but they did nothing to dampen the spirits of the sixteen-strong group led by Chris Barringer, which enjoyed a fascinating day out to a part of the county not too well known by people on this side of Norfolk.

First stop was at Castle Rising castle, where the most impressive feature was the enormous man-made earthworks surrounding the castle itself. These earthworks spread over twelve acres, and leave one wondering how they were made with no other tools than a pick and shovel. The castle is completely surrounded by an inner ring of earthworks, which are so steep that even today, they would present a formidable obstacle to any attacker. Inside, the castle, based very closely on the design of Norwich castle, showed what a splendid building it had once been, and in some ways, still is.

Our good fortune was to have Chris Barringer as our guide. With his extensive knowledge of all the places we visited during the day, we assimilated easily and quickly the history, the architecture and the reasons why, of the buildings we saw. Our next visit was to the parish church, built at precisely the same date as the castle, and intended to replace the earlier parish church, which was partly buried under the inner rampart when the castle was built.

The font, bearing the carvings of three cats' faces, came from the earlier church. A lightening visit then followed to the Trinity Hospital, the home of twelve poor spinsters or widows, founded in 1614 by Henry Howard, and still in use today. We arrived at the wrong time to visit the chapel, or to see the ladies in their red cloaks and pointed hats. After a pic-nic lunch, we continued to Kings Lynn - to the Saturday market place,

and an extensive tour of St.Margaret's church. With such a wealth of ancient buildings in the vicinity, we were able to take in a visit to Hampton Court, walk by the Hanseatic warehouses to Thoresby College and into the Guildhall to see the Lynn Regalia.

A brisk walk past the Purfleet and the old Custom House, and through the Tuesday market place brought us to St.Nicholas's chapel. This was a private viewing, as the church is closed and rarely used. This magnificent church highlighted the dilemma of Kings Lynn, What to do with two magnificent church buildings? when nowadays, only one is needed.

After so much history, the need for refreshment was becoming urgent, and we finished our tour of Kings Lynn at Gifford's Wine bar where welcoming dishes awaited us, and we were certainly ready for them. But before a drop of tea could pass our lips, or a morsel of sandwich reach our plates, we were treated to a deluge - a massive burst occured in a water-pipe just inside the door. For the staff it was literally all hands to the pump for quite some time. Happily, just when it seemed that the burst could not be contained, someone succeeded and order was restored. The staff were to be congratulated on how quickly the sandwiches and cups of tea magically appeared despite the difficulties.

We had a splendid day out, despite all the water (inside and out) and a day not to be missed. Our journey home was swift and uneventful. I am now left wondering - with unexplained mystery tours happening on our previous trip, - inexplicable burst pipes on this one - are we carrying a Jonah in our midst on these outings?

I must not ask too loudly - it might be me.!

Ed

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

LIST OF MEMBERS - JUNE 1990

Below is the latest, up-to-date list of members of our Society. It should be completely accurate but, human nature being what it is, errors are quite likely to exist. Please check the list to confirm that your name is included. If your name is not there, it probably means that you have forgotten to renew your subscription (£3)

If it is not there, and you are positive that you have paid your current subscription, then please check with either our Chairman or Secretary for confirmation. (Telephone numbers are on the inside front cover). This is most important, as the distribution of future copies of the Newsletter will be based on this list.

ADAMSON Mr.
ADAMSON Mrs.
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BACON Mrs.H.
BALLS Mr.R.
BARWICK Mrs.G.
BATES Mrs.
BATTYE Mrs.D.
BECKHAM Mr.T.
BELTON Miss V.
BIBBY Mr.D.
BISHOP Mr.T.
BRADSHAW Mrs.M.
BRATT Miss R.
BURR Mrs.K.
BUTLER Mr.A
BUTLER Mrs.E.
CHAPMAN Mrs.T.

CHING Mrs.V.
COLLINS Mr.G.
COOK Mrs.M.
CORBIN Mr.N.
CORBIN Mrs.
DACK Mr.S.
DAINES Mrs.E.
DAINES Mr.J.
DENNIS Mr. R.B.
DUCKER Mr.G.
DYER Mrs.F.
ELSEY Mrs.M.
ENGLAND Mrs.D.
EVE Dr.J.
FISKE Mr.R.
FLETCHER Mrs.J.
FOSTER Mrs.V.
GAYMER Mrs.A.

A NORFOLK TOUR

The directory entries for Aylsham have become a familiar item in the Newsletter, as we work our way steadily onwards through the series of County Directories that appeared between 1836 and 1937.

At roughly the same time that the early directories were appearing, there were also appearing County Guidebooks, usually two-volume affairs, but not as comprehensive as the directories, by any means. They were quite selective in the places they described, and names of residents etc. were not given. However, those places that were included were given a much more detailed description than the directories were able to manage. The extract which follows is taken from an 1829 publication with the long-winded title:-

*A General History of the County of Norfolk,
intended to convey all the information of*

a NORFOLK TOUR

*with the more extended details of
Antiquarian, Statistical, Pictorial,
Architectural and Miscellaneous
information including Biographical
Notices, original & selected.*

2 volumes

Printed by and for John Stacy.

5 Old Haymarket

No author's name is given anywhere in the book, but pencilled on the title-page is the note - "by J. Chambers, Rector of Hedenham. Lower Close". This is quite curious. I have examined two separate copies of the work, both in separate and unconnected libraries and both copies bear the same pencilled note in what appears to be the same handwriting! Did the writer put

the same message in every copy of the book?. The writer is correct, though. There was a Rev.J.Chambers who was Rector of Hedenham at this time, and the Dictionary of National Biography tells a little bit more about him:-

John Chambers 1780-1839. Topographer, trained as an architect. Of ample private means, resided at Worcester; afterwards at Norwich. Published histories of Worcestershire (1819-20) and Norfolk (1829)

Here then, is his description of Aylsham in 1829.

NORFOLK TOUR.

AYLSHAM. Eleven miles. St. Michael. P.1853. Written in Domesday-book, Elesham; that is, the pasture by the water.—In the time of the Conqueror, the manor extended into Tuttington: it had in the whole no less than eighteen carucates. The woods here were then large enough to maintain four hundred swine; there were twenty villains and eighty-eight borderers or tenants that paid poultry and other provisions for the lord's board or table, &c. Aylsham is a pleasant town, one hundred and twenty-one miles from London, situate on the south side of the Bure, which is navigable hence to Yarmouth, for barges of several tons burthen. During the reigns of Edward II. and III., Aylsham was the chief town in this part of the kingdom for the linen manufacture, in ancient writings denominated Aylsham webs, cloth of Aylsham, &c. In succeeding ages, this branch was superseded by the woollen manufacture; and in the reign of James I., the people here were principally employed in knitting worsted stockings, breeches, and waistcoat pieces; but since the introduction of frame-knitting, this trade has also been lost. This town, formerly governed by a bailiff, had a weekly market on Saturday, now changed to Tuesday: the fairs were held on the 23rd of March, the last Tuesday in September, and on the 6th of October.

The church was built by John-of-Gaunt, duke of Lancaster, (the court of which dutchy was once held in this town) and is a regular pile, having a nave, two aisles, two transepts, and a chancel thereto adjoining; a square tower, an organ, clock, and ten bells, with a small spire. There is an old charnel-house at the end of the chancel. The south

transept chapel is dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and was fitted up new in 1489: on the south window there remains a neat painting of the salutation—this window was made of stone and glass, in 1516, at the cost of Joan, wife of Robert Bell, citizen of Norwich. The north transept was called St. Peter's chapel, and a saint's guild was kept in it in 1490. The south chancel aisle was St. Thomas' chapel. The font has over it an architectural elevation of some consequence, with basso-relievos of the four emblems of the evangelists, the instruments of the passion, and the arms of Gaunt, with other armorial insignia. Here are inscriptions to the memory of the Howards, of whom, Richard, sheriff of Norwich, in 1488, built the church-porch; also to the memory of Thomas Wymer—he is represented in his winding-sheet. He adorned the church, and caused the screens to be beautifully painted with saints, martyrs, and confessors, as was the roof: the remaining inscription shews us that this work was done in 1507, at the charges of this Thomas Wymer, Joan and Agnes his wives, John Jannys, and others, whose names are now lost. This John and Agnes were father and mother to Robert Jannys, grocer, sheriff in 1509, and mayor of Norwich in 1517 and 1524, who, out of affection to the place of his birth, founded a free-school here, and endowed it with 10*l.* per annum clear, paid from the city of Norwich: he lies buried in the church of St. George's Colegate, Norwich—his picture is in the Guildhall, to which he was a great benefactor. Here is the mutilated monument of bishop Jeggon, who died at this place: see a sketch of his life under the article *Coltishall*. Near bishop Jeggon's monument is a small one to the memory of his second son, whose quaint eulogy is followed by the following, as quaint, inscription:—

“See, here's noe Pyramis—here is noe costly peece
That boasts of Memphis, or all skilful Greece!
He wrongs thy better part, mistakes thy worth,
That thinks carv'd statues can set thee forth:
False mettals need the artist's help; to add
Aught to the purer gold would shewe him madd:
And stately structures, in vain on thee were spent—
Thou, to thyself, art the best monument.”

Here are also inscriptions to the memory of Warkhouse, Doughty, Norgate, Reppingall, de Bayfield, Scott, &c.

The free-school stands not far from the churchyard. It was first founded by Robert Jannys, mayor of Norwich, in 1517, and endowed with 10*l.* a year, paid by the treasurer of the Great hospital of Norwich, of which the mayor, &c., of the city, are governors, it being due quarterly, and the manor of Pakenham, in Shropshire, is tied for it.

Archbishop Parker* founded two fellowships in *Corpus Christi*, commonly called Bennett's college, in Cambridge, and appropriated them to this and Wymondham school. One of the scholars must be born in Aylsham—but it is sufficient for the other to be educated at the free-school there; and he must be sent up to the college by the nomination of the mayor and court of Norwich—the other to be admitted by the college without any such nomination.

In 1506, John Boller, priest, was buried in St. Thomas' chapel, in this church, by his father, and ordered thirty marble stones of the length and breadth of those covering his father's, to cover his grave with. He gave to the church a pair of organs, and willed that they should serve both the choir and Lady mass; and that they should be set in the same key with the great organs in the church; and the principal pipe to be five quarters of a yard long, of good metal, and sweet harmony; and shall stand on that side the choir next our Lady's chapel, to serve both.

Near the porch of the church, and in a recess in the church-yard, in a piece of lawn inclosed with iron rails, planted with roses, hearts'-ease, &c., is the grave of Repton, the landscape gardener; and on a gravestone attached to the church wall, and ornamented with an arch of the florid Gothic, is the following inscription:—

“The tomb of HUMPHREY REPTON, who died, March 24, 1818.

Not like the Egyptian tyrants—consecrate,
Unmixt with others, shall my dust remain:
But mould'ring, blended, melting into earth,
Mine shall give form and colour to the rose;
And while its vivid blossoms cheer mankind,
Its perfum'd odour shall ascend to heaven.”

The effect of this novel tribute to the dead, has a very pleasing effect; and the churchyard commands an extensive view over a pleasant country.

On the front of Aylsham bridewell, rebuilt in 1787, upon a wall-plate of oak or chesnut, the following legend is embossed:—

“GOD SAVE : OURE : SUPPREM : KYNG HENRY . THE HYGHT .
PRAY : FOR : THE GOOD PROSPERYTE : AND ASSTATE : OF
ROBERD MARSHAM : AND : JONE : HIS : WYFE : THE : WICHE :
THIS : HOWSE : THEY : CAWSID : TO : BE : MADE : TO : THE :
HONOR : OF : THE TOWNE . BE THIR QWYCK LYFE FINES .
1543 .”

* These were to be called Canterbury scholars; and to have 12*d.* a week for their commons; their chamberer, barber, larderer, and other necessities free, &c.

This is noticed in Blomefield, but not correctly copied; it is in one line, of thirty-seven feet ten inches in length: and over the entrance door is still preserved a flat Gothic arch, in wood, (of the style prevalent at that time, and first used in the reign of Henry VIII.) three feet eleven inches in length, and has the following legend:—

“THIS . HOWSE . WAS MADE . IN . THE YER : OF . OUR .
LORDE . 1543 :”

And on the shields of the spandrels of the arch, the initials R. M. and J. B.—the letters are painted white on a brown ground, and are in good preservation by the projection of the superincumbent floor.*—See the figure in *Gents' Mag. Jan. 1795.*

In March, 1805, an earthen pot, containing five hundred pieces of ancient silver coin, was ploughed up in a field near Aylsham, chiefly groats of Henry VII., pennies of the Edwards, and two gold angels of Henry VI. In July, 1808, the great barrow at Stow heath, near Aylsham, was opened, the diameter of which was thirty yards, and about four yards high. After digging through some sand, they discovered an urn, which was cut through the middle by a spade, but it was so soft as only to be taken up in small fragments. This urn was placed with its mouth upwards, and resting upon a square tile, but contained only a few dry bones: its form was curious, and probably intended as an expedient to protect the bones from the water which soaked through the barrow. At three or four feet, but at the same distance from the centre, (from the urn) was found another of a broad flat shape, with the mouth upwards, containing a small quantity of burnt ashes, and bedded on flints. This great barrow is surrounded by several of smaller size, of about twenty yards diameter. Stow heath is about two miles east of Aylsham. Between these two places is Tuttington common, which contains a few barrows of twenty yards, and two of only twelve yards diameter, every one of which, besides those at Stow heath, were opened, but nothing found except a few burnt bones collected together: and not far from them, a quantity of ashes—these were all placed on the natural surface of the common. It is curious to observe, that one of the barrows is actually the boundary mark of the three parishes of Aylsham, Burgh, and Tuttington.

* The writer of the above, under the signature of W. W., imagines Robert Mersham to have been of the family of Marshams, of Stratton Strawless, from whom the present lord Romney is a descendant, although he finds no mention of him, or Joan his wife, to accord with the date in Blomefield's account of the Marsham family—he was probably a son of John, who died in 1515, called in evidences; *Senior of Stratton.*

In the reign of queen Mary, Thomas Hudson, Aylsham, glover, was committed by *Commissary* Berry, vicar of Aylsham, a most bloody persecutor, who was so severe with his parishioners, that he made two hundred of them creep on their knees to the cross, on Whit-Sunday; besides other punishments for suspicion only of favouring the reformed religion, as practised in good king Edward the VI's days.

Aylsham is a very neat market-town, and several gentlemen have been induced to reside here from the beauty of the country around it. There is a market on Tuesday for corn, which was at one time delivered either at Cromer or Coltishall; but an act of parliament was obtained, entitled, "An act for making and extending the river Bure, commonly called the North river, by and from Coltishall to Aylsham bridge:" and although this act was procured in 1773, it was not till October, 1779, that the river was made completely navigable. A survey and estimate had been made previous to application to parliament, and the amount computed at 4006*l.* 5*s.* 4½*d.* The act permitted the borrowing of 5000*l.*; but by unskillful management in the original surveyor, the commissioners found in October, 1777, 3600*l.* had been expended, and the work not likely to be completed. Their difficulties seemed increased by the new estimate of Mr. John Smith, a person employed for this purpose; for he made it appear, that, to complete the design, a further sum of 2951*l.* would be required, which, together with 450*l.* of the donations unpaid, would exceed the sum allowed to be raised by the act, 1101*l.* To apply again to parliament for leave to borrow this additional sum, would be attended with a heavy expense; and without such leave, no one would deem the security safe to lend upon. The lenders then agreed to give up 25*l.* per cent. of the sums lent by them, as a free gift, with this proviso—that if ever the profits should enable the navigation to pay off the principal borrowed, they should receive that 25*l.* per cent. with interest, before it became a free navigation. On Feb. 25, 1778, the aforesaid John Smith agreed to complete the work for the sum mentioned in his estimate; and in March, 1779, Mr. John Green, of Wroxham, joined him in the undertaking: but another difficulty occurred in August, from a deficiency of 160*l.*, which, though subscribed to be lent, was not paid in, and so bad was the credit of the undertaking at this time, that the whole would again have been stopped, had not eight of the commissioners, then present, generously advanced 20*l.* each; and thus the river was made navigable for boats of thirteen tons burthen, carrying nine chaldrons of coals, and drawing two feet four or five inches water, and finally completed in October, 1779.

Here are the manors of Sextons, Bolwick, and the Vicarage. Blomefield says, "Aylsham is the most agreeable and pleasant part of Norfolk, and much frequented by persons coming to the spa, a spring about half a mile distant south-west from the town, the water of which, tasting very strong of a mineral, was deemed serviceable in asthma." The resort to this chalybeate is now but trifling.

Mr. JONATHAN WRENCH, who built the vicarage-house of Aylsham, published "A short View of the principal Duties of the Christian Religion." London, 1700, price 3d.; dedicated to the parishioners of Aylsham.

HUMPHREY REPTON, the landscape gardener, was a native of Bury St. Edmund's, (*and not, as has been supposed by some, of Norfolk*), and born in 1752. At the age of twenty-three, he resided in this town, attracted here, perhaps, in consequence of the marriage of an only sister to Mr. Adey, a respectable solicitor of Aylsham. Having remained, during the space of eight years, in this county, it was his good fortune to become acquainted with the late Mr. Windham, with whom he had frequent intercourse, and who, on his being appointed to an official situation, he followed to Ireland, but soon after returned with his patron to England, with a young and increasing family, and a profession to seek. He eventually adopted that line of business in which he afterwards so much excelled. Mr. Repton was forty years of age before he attained any considerable notice: he is now remembered as the author of "Improvement in Lands," "Cape Scenery at Cobham-hall, Woburn," "White's Lodge, Richmond Gardens," "Ashbridge," "Beau Desert," "Wingerworth," "Streatham," &c., &c. Mr. Repton, besides his splendid work, "Fragments on the Theory and Practise of Landscape Gardening, including some Remarks on Gothic and Grecian Architecture," wrote "An Account of the Hundred of North Erpingham," &c.—For a list of his works, see *Ann. Obit.* for 1819. But we must not omit mentioning his "Variety," because the late Miss Seward, in her letters, has eulogized it as being "very superior to the much-talked of Spectator!!" Mr. Repton drew many designs for ladies' "Souvenirs," &c. He died in 1818. His son, a pupil of Mr. Nash, now practises as an able and accomplished architect; and is the author of some interesting communications printed in the *Archæological Trans.*

