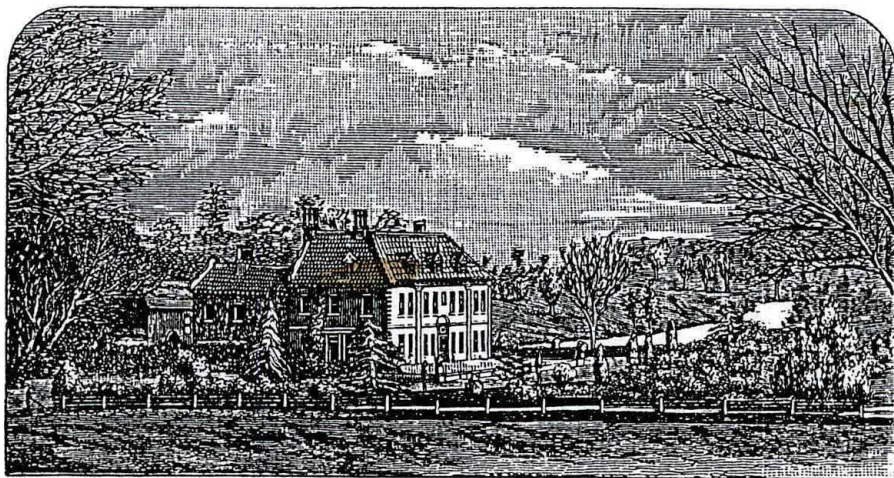


# Aylsham Local History Society



WOODGATE.

Vol.3 No.11

September 1993

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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DIARY DATES

Thursday, 9th. September - MYSTERY HISTORY TOUR.

Tuesday, 28th.September- Start of a new session of the Archives course under our new tutor, Nesta Evans. 10am at the Town Hall and fortnightly thereafter.

Thursday, October 7th. - ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING [see note on p.345]

Thursday, October 28th. - Dr. Christopher Woollam on Joseph Clover, the anaesthetist.

Thursday, 25th.November - Tom Williamson - "Norfolk in Saxon Times"

Friday, 28th.January 1994 - NEW YEARS PARTY

Thursday, 24th. February - Tom Townsend on "How old is my house"

Two further lectures are being arranged; (details to be finalised.) It is hoped that one will be a talk on Joseph Clover, the portrait painter.



AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

## JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

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Vol.3

No.11

HUNGATE STREET IN 1838

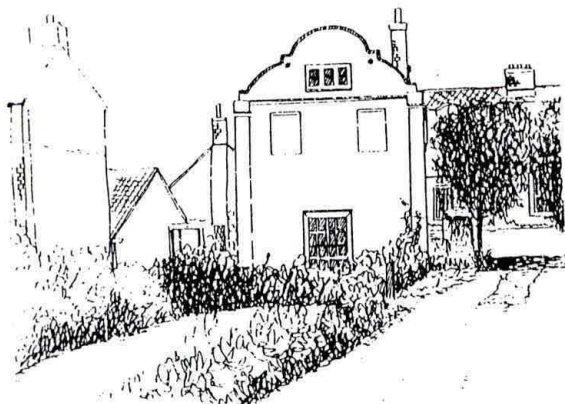
Joan Turville-Petre

Where the Post Office now stands, there was a prosperous ironmonger. Between this and the Unicorn came Anne Frary who kept a shop, and James Sands, the butcher. Ten families lived in the Unicorn Yard. On the north side there was a row of seven cottages with small yards and one privy for the lot. One occupant was a cobbler, another a sweep, yet none of these people was absolutely poor; none was excused payment of the Poor Rate, although four were assessed at a low rate. At the end of the Yard stood two larger cottages and a house with stabling. At the edge of the Butts Land was the Methodist meeting house, and a well - presumably to supply the whole Yard.

Continuing along the west side of Hungate Street; at No.12 (lately Daniels the saddler) lived Elizabeth Nobbs, postmistress and druggist, aged 67. In the 1845 directory her daughter Mary had taken over, and was still keeping shop here in 1864 when the Post Office had been moved to the Market Place.

The next three houses (Nos. 14 - 18) were owned by the Horestead family, John and James, both bricklayers and builders. John, aged 47, was the prosperous one. He owned most of the property in the next entry, then called Horstead's Yard. Here there were eight cottages (Nos. 20 - 28); one house remains, two have been rebuilt, one demolished. There was a grocer, a cobbler and three agricultural labourers. One occupant was excused payment of the Poor Rate, and three others were assessed at a low rate.

The next three houses contained one householder who was excused the Poor Rate. Then comes the entry with the Dutch-gable house (no.46), which was the property of John Bane, the Baptist minister.



46 & 48 HUNGATE STREET

He had a wife and son, and kept a female servant. Behind this stands the thatched house (Nos. 38 - 40), at this time occupied by five families, one of which had a large garden. The two houses built on to the thatched house also had fair-sized gardens. There were other cottages, now pulled down, where the house with 'Gothic' windows (No. 50) now stands, and at the north end of

the doctors' car park. All these people were assessed at a low rate for payment of the Poor Rate, except for Mr. Bane and one other householder.

About level with the surgery, but again on the road, was a large house with stables and outbuildings. Here lived Richard Feek, cattle-dealer and horse-breaker. He was still there in 1841, but by 1848 he had moved to the Bull Inn in Red Lion Street, according to the directory. Collegiate House is given as the residence of Astley Cooper Spurgeon, who was parish doctor in 1834 and spent some years in Aylsham according to Dr. Sapwell. However, he practised in Penfold Street, and did not own this house, which in 1838 was the property of "Ficklin's executor". H.P. Ficklin lived here in 1821. He was a doctor who practised in Aylsham between 1821 and 1825 (again according to Dr. Sapwell). The 1841 census records that the house was then occupied by a lady with a family who kept a manservant and two maids.

On the opposite corner of Mill Road stood the Swan tavern, pulled down within the last thirty years. Adjoining it on the west side was an L-shaped tenement block, on what is now the car-park



of the Ex-servicemen's Club. This block was called "Beasey's Rookery", and it consisted of thirteen tiny dwellings with yards behind. It had been built a few years before by Robert Beasey, who had been a man of substance. In 1838 he was living here himself. The occupants of this place were amongst the poorest in the area. In 1839, three of them were excused payment of the Poor Rate, four were assessed at under £1, and the remaining six at between £1 and £3. These tenements were also pulled down within living memory.

In Upper Hungate Street (between Mill Road and the bridge) there were cottages all along the west side; none on the east side, except for one double cottage, now demolished. The double white cottage (Nos. 82 and 84) housed two single women and two families. Three of them were excused payment of the Poor Rate. Then came Hungate Farm (No. 90). It was occupied by Richard Clark, who owned many properties in Aylsham. This one he rented, and he did not stay long. Above Hungate Farm several cottages have been demolished. The white, double cottage (Nos. 100 and 102) was inhabited by two families, each with ample garden. Two more cottages have gone. Two families lived in each; one householder here had been getting outdoor relief in 1830-31. The white house at the top (No. 110) appears to have been a prosperous little farm.

The east side of the street at the corner of Palmer's Lane was garden land. Going north, the row of six cottages (Nos. 47 - 37) has been rebuilt, except for No. 47, probably one of the oldest houses in the street.

There are two substantial little houses at the end of the row, one half-timbered. John Proudfoot, a successful carpenter of 42 owned the first, and a yard at the back. (He had a garden on the otherside of the street). The other was occupied by a woman of over 80, probably the widow of



35 HUNGATE STREET

the householder who was there in the 1821 census. The house standing back from the road (no.27) was shared by five families, including the owner. The large house with a carriage entrance (No.21) was owned by a young married man, a currier, who kept a female servant and had six children. The big low house with a long yard (Nos. 17 - 19) belonged to Joseph Sexton, the baker, who also kept a female servant. He was in business here until 1872. Since he was only 30 in 1841, the Joseph Sexton recorded here in 1821 was probably his father, and Mary Sexton, who was running her own business as baker/confectioner here, according to the 1836 and 1843 directories, was probably his mother.

No.15 was occupied by two women, one a dressmaker. At Norfolk House lived a doctor, son of an Aylsham doctor and father of another. He was William Saunders who died in 1839. His widow, Amelia Warnes, lived until 1884, at least part of the time in this house, which was occupied by a succession of doctors. At the Rolling Pin Cafe (No.11) Robert Boughey kept a lodging house. The last house in the street had stabling and was occupied by Edward Beasy, a fishmonger. It is not clear whether his shop was on the premises.

Altogether, the street was prosperous. The 1821 census records twenty-four labourers and small farmers. By the 1841 census there are only eleven. The number of traders was constant:- thirty-two in 1821, and thirty-three in 1841. There were six cobblers, three carpenters, two blacksmiths, four tailors, two builders, two market-gardeners, two curriers and two publicans. There was also a baker, a butcher, a grocer, a druggist, a brazier, a netmaker, a milliner, a sweep, a cooper, a fishmonger, a weaver and one ironmonger. No doubt some of these enterprises were humble, but John Horstead, the builder/bricklayer, and John Proudfoot, the carpenter, each had his own yard. Joseph Sexton, the baker, was carrying on a family business in large premises, and W.B.Cook, the ironmonger owned a prime site at the corner of the Market Place. One curious distinction may be mentioned. Thomas Hewitt, a farm labourer living in the Unicorn Yard in 1838 is described as a Chelsea Pensioner in the 1851 census. There were three other pensioners in the street at this date.

Between 1821 and 1839 there were two doctors living in the street; W.T.Saunders at Norfolk House, and H.P.Ficklin and (briefly) A.C.Spurgeon at Collegiate House. The only other professional man was John Bane, the Baptist minister. Most of the population were cottagers. Some lived in cramped conditions, with no more than a back yard, but many had gardens to feed their families, even if their houses were close-set. Some people on the west side had separate gardens, in open ground beside the Butts Land. One market-gardener had his land here, the other off Palmer's Lane. The Unicorn bowling green lay between Horstead's Yard and the Butts Land. The Dog bowling green now lies beneath Budgen's; beyond that was Mr.Repton's extensive orchard. So there was open space all around the crowded housing of lower Hungate Street. Upper Hungate Street was still among fields.

*This reconstruction is based on the Tithe Award Schedule and map of 1838. Other sources used are the census returns of 1821 and 1841, some Poor Rate Books, directories of the period and Dr. Sapwell's History of Aylsham. (1960)*

*The illustrations are by Brian Bowhill, and first appeared in Aylsham; A guided walk produced by Aylsham WEA, to whom due acknowledgment is made.*

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## THE GREAT FIRE AT GUNTON HALL

Until a few years ago, visitors to Gunton Park at Suffield would have only been able to see the fire-damaged ruins of Gunton Hall. Happily, new owners of the estate have since restored the Hall and the Tower, and although both are now in multiple ownership as opposed to a one-family stately home, at least both buildings are now fully restored to their former glory. The fire took place in 1882. All the local fire brigades were summoned to assist, including the



Aylsham contingent. The Aylsham crew, under Mr. Bullock, earned high praise, being described by the newspaper reporter as "a very active and courageous body of men". The local newspaper account of November 1882 gives all the details of the adventures of that fateful day:-

"Guntton Hall, near Cromer, the seat of Lord Suffield, was on Monday morning nearly entirely destroyed by fire. The public, who have during the summer season had opportunities of visiting Guntton Park, will remember that the hall stands upon an eminence of land in the park, and commands from the south side a view of picturesque beauty, composed of woodland and water scenery. The most imposing part of the building was the large square block of white brick, at the south side of which was the principal entrance to the hall. This block contained the drawing, dining and breakfast rooms, the library, the billiard and smoking rooms, and these apartments together with those above have been entirely destroyed by fire. The whole of the block is in fact completely gutted.

The hall was much enlarged in 1785, and was again improved by the third Lord Suffield, and the present owner of the estate who succeeded his brother in 1853 has done much to beautify the building both externally and internally, and has had the honour on many occasions of entertaining HRH The Prince of Wales at his seat.

The discovery of the fire was made about 5.30 in the morning by a lad named Reynolds, who had risen to light the fires. The young man was startled to discover that a fire had broken out in a flue in a room on the south-west side. The fact that the fire was found to have commenced so early in the morning has led to the inference that it must have been smouldering since the previous day. This inference is supported by the statement, positively made on Monday at Guntton - though it was difficult to get any authoritative confirmation of it - that a fire was on Sunday afternoon discovered to have broken out in the flue leading from the library stove. It was supposed, it is stated, that the fire was completely extinguished, but the feeling of security entertained turned out to be a most unfounded one.



It is somewhat remarkable that some two years ago, at the same period of the year, a fire broke out in the same spot where this one originated, but then, happily, no amount of damage was done. Another coincidence may also be mentioned. The lessee of the shooting, E.M. Mundy, Esq. of Shipley Hall, Derbyshire, was at the outbreak two years ago on the eve of leaving the hall after the shooting season, and in the present instance, preparations were being made for that gentleman's departure during the present week.

The discovery of the fire seems to have been made simultaneously by the lad Reynolds and by the head housemaid, Mrs. Gibson, who was sleeping in the room above. The alarm, which was of course at once given, came none too soon, as several persons found themselves in dangerous positions. Mrs. Gibson herself had a narrow escape. Occupying a room in the neighbourhood of the fire was Mr. Keppel (one of Mr. Mundy's party), at that time asleep. Fortunately it occurred to one of the female servants, who had hastily risen and dressed, to awaken and warn Mr. Keppel of his dangerous position. The warning came in time. When he prepared to leave his room by the usual entrance he found his way blocked by smoke and flames, and he effected his escape by another communication. Shortly after, the floor of the bed room he had so recently occupied fell with a crash into the room beneath.

At the first outbreak a small Carisbrooke hand engine was put into use and brought to bear on the flames, but though energetically used, it was incapable of coping with the flames, which had, in an incredibly short space of time extended to an amazing extent the area of their operations. Messengers were at once despatched to Aylsham, North Walsham and Cromer for the assistance of the fire-brigades of those places, and in the meantime the whole of the household, whose members were quickly supplemented by those summoned from a distance, turned their attention to saving the moveable valuables, and thus a large quantity of furniture, the whole of the pictures (with one exception), and the library of books were saved from destruction. A room containing some valuable specimens of Chippendale furniture was, however, sacrificed together with its contents.

Very early to arrive on the spot was Lord Suffield's brother, the Hon. Harbord Harbord, who lives at Elderton Lodge, situate within a short distance of the hall. This gentleman took the direction of the efforts of those whose assistance was so readily given. Mr. Mundy's party, who consisted of Major Paget Mosley, Major Chapman, the Hon. A. Denison RN, Mr. Keppel and Mr. Pender, all worked with a will, and later on their numbers were augmented by the Rev. H.H. Lubbock (rector of Gunton and Harworth), the Rev. H. Bonnington (rector of Suffield), Dr. Cresswell (rector of Northrepps), S. Hoare Esq., Major Mott, Messrs. Ives, C. Le Neve, M. Clarke, R. Le Neve, R. Bartram, R. Wortley, Chamberlin, Rice, Plumbly, Walpole, Taylor, Chapman, Bloom etc., while Mr P.E. Hansell, managing director of the North British and Mercantile Insurance Office, with whom the hall is insured, was quickly summoned from Cromer. During the day Lord Orford drove upon the ground.

Of the engines summoned, the Aylsham one was the first to arrive, and was soon after followed by that from North Walsham, and subsequently the Cromer brigade arrived, bringing with them an excellent engine from Northrepps Hall. By 9 am. all the engines were in actual work, and at this time the flames were at the highest, and what was feared at first now became apparent, viz. that the whole of the large square before mentioned must be yielded to the flames. The efforts made against such a calamitous consummation to the outbreak were, however, of the most heroic description, but the streams of water which the engines were capable of throwing were felt and seen to be inadequate to the occasion.

The Cromer brigade, which was under the command of Mr. Sandford and Mr. Priest, with Mr. Rogers as fireman, did good service with the Northrepps engine which is of a new, efficient type. The North Walsham engine, which was under the charge of Mr. Webster, was worked energetically, but the town of North Walsham should awaken itself to the necessity of replacing its fire-engine by one of a more modern and powerful type. Mr. Bullock had charge of the Aylsham contingent, a very active and courageous body of men.

For some time water was obtained from a well in the hall, but afterwards a supply was procured from the ornamental water

in the park, about 150 yards distant, being brought from that place in a number of water carts which the tenantry had forwarded for use. It was not till half past eleven o'clock that the fire was got under control, and about half an hour after, it may be said to have been subdued. The fire however, seemed rather to have died out from exhaustion. Efforts had been made to isolate the older part of the building from the block in which the fire originated, and these efforts were attended with eminent success. The fire, in fact, hardly made any intrusion into the ivy-clad part which adjoins the block destroyed on the north side. It confined its ravages almost entirely to the richest and the most stately part of the hall.

The sight presented in the latter part of the day was affecting. In place of what was, the day before, a handsome, imposing structure, now stood tall gaunt walls, forming a shell containing a mass of charred, smouldering debris, still sullenly smoking, and here and there furtively and persistently bursting out into flames. There was the necessity for the vigilance of the brigades until late in the day. Around in the park, on the grass, lay piles of furniture which had hurriedly been removed from the building, the more valuable portions having been taken to the cricket pavilion and sheds and barns. It is difficult to estimate the amount of damage, but we understand that the property is fully insured in the North British and Mercantile Insurance Office.

Early in the day Superintendent Boutell, of North Walsham, arrived on the spot with a contingent of the County Constabulary, and much valuable assistance was rendered by this body of men. Subsequently, Mr. Paynton Pigott (the Chief Constable) arrived from Blofield Petty Sessions, from which place he had been summoned, and took command of the police, and organised gangs of workmen for bringing the water from the ornamental lake to the engines, to work which, there was always a supply of willing hands from the surrounding villages. The Chief Constable and the county police and a portion of the fire brigade remained on duty all night to render assistance in case the smouldering embers should burst into flame.

TWM

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## AYLSHAM 100 YEARS AGO.

As a change from reproducing the sequence of directory entries for Aylsham, we did publish in December 1992, (Volume 2 No.10) an extract from the local newspaper, written by a Robert Whitmore and entitled "Aylsham - garden of Norfolk". At the time we were unsure of the date, but we now know that it was written in the 1920s. It gave an entertaining picture of the town as the writer saw it then. It is always interesting to read how other eyes in other times see the town that we know today.

Now we have another and even earlier description, written in August 1906 by a James Hooper, who draws a picture of the town as he saw it almost 100 years ago. The article appeared in the Norfolk Chronicle in 1906 and the newspaper extract has been carefully preserved in the library of the Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society. This explains why the rubber stamp "N&NAS" appears as the mark of ownership at intervals throughout the following piece. Fortunately it is still readable!

### XIX.—AYLSHAM.

CLOUDLAND—EIGIL'S HOME—A BAD BISHOP  
—AYLS-HAM — TOWN HALL'S VARIOUS  
USES — "GATES" — DEAD AYLSHAM—A  
LOST BRIDEWELL—CHURCH OF ST. MICHAEL  
—AN AYLSHAM VICAR AND AN AYLSHAM  
MARTYR—A GARDENER AND A THIEF—  
STEALER—THE SPAW—AYLSHAM—DEER—  
MANORS—A NORFOLK ANTIQUARY.

We are told that Aylsham is often called  
"The Garden of Norfolk," from its picturesque  
appearance and the number of gardens and  
trees in its vicinity, and it is on a pleasant,  
though distinctly autumnal, day that we



start to travel nearly eighteen miles on the railway to reach this little paradise. As we escape from the smoke and whirr of the train, the sky from the horizon to the zenith is piled with the multiform shapes of soft cushiony clouds, and through their rifts dances a sweet shifting light. The sylvan landscape is alive—

With flickering winds, whose flash and play  
Made sunlight sunnier where the day  
Laughed, leapt, and fluttered like a bird.

The temptation to turn from the town towards the quieter rural ways was great; but, having resisted it, we strolled along the Station Road, which leads right into the Market Square of *Elesham*, as the town was called in the Domesday Book, the name meaning, says Blomefield, the village at the leas, or the pasture by water; but Mr. Munford derives the name from Eigil, or Ægil, the mythical archer of our Norse ancestors. This seems to us the more probable derivation, for so great an authority as Canon Isaac Taylor connects the names of Aylesbury, Aylesford, Aylstone, &c., with the sharp-shooting hero of this twilight religion of the Scandinavians. More recently Aylsham has been nicknamed "Oak Apple Town," from its great friendly society gatherings, which should, it is presumed, always be held on "Oak Apple Day," a sort of Stuart holy day and chief feast.

As we near the centre of the town we observe a new fashioned gabled house of some pretensions on our left, but we know that behind the high brick wall on the other side is the abode of Dr. Little, called the Manor House. This was the country seat of John Jegon, bishop of Norwich from 1603 till 1613; his predecessor died in 1602, but Jegon was not consecrated, if the "Diocesan Calendar" be correct, till the following year.

He was so unpopular that he was charged with burning Ludham Grange, the former country house of the Norwich bishops. He was a squat stout man, and, judging from his portrait at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge (of which he was Master), with a distinctly unpleasing expression. Evidently he was judged by his enemies to be a miser of the worst sort, for a ballad—printed by Mr. Mark Knights in the *Norfolk and Norwich Annual* of 1889—begins with these uncompromising lines:

Our short, fat Lord Bishop of Norfolk, 'twas he  
That caused that great fire at Luddom to be,  
There burnt were the goods that came by his devine  
That might have relieved pore subjects of thyne.  
He could not abide, King, the pore at his gat,  
Noe, nor yet for to see them, neyther erely nor late.

The ballad-monger ventures upon a very scathing account of Jegon's end:—

He dwelt since at Alsome, as wee did heare tell,  
He died and was buried without ring of bell;  
For even as he lived, even soe he did dye,  
And like a swine buried, and so he doe lie.  
That Lord's secretarie, as we did heare say,  
Fell drunke and was drowned upon the hie way.

This hearsay about the mode of the bishop's death has not been accepted by his latest biographer, Mr. Bass Mullinger, and it may at least be said that this "inhospitable and penurious" bishop had in his younger days a pretty wit.

In olden times Aylsham was often spelt, as above, *Alsome*—examples may be found in Dr. Venn's *Admissions to Gonville and Caius College*, where Alesam also occurs, and this reminds us of the little controversy about the pronunciation of such names as Aylsham, Walsham, &c.

The more excellent way, we judge, is to sound the *ham* quite distinctly, and to bar *sham*—thus Ayls-ham, not Ayl-sham, and so forth.

But here we are in the “fine open Market Place,” facing the Black Boys Hotel, kept by Mr. Christmas Stapleton, a good old-fashioned hostelry, the stopping place of many pilgrims on their way to grand, romantic Blackling, not much more than a mile distant. Just to our left the march of events is signalled by a bright brass plate inscribed “Barclay & Co.,” though the good old name of “Gurneys” still appears in the windows of the bank. Opposite the bank is the Town Hall, built about 40 years ago at a cost of £2100, raised by £10 shares. The building has since been bought and enlarged by Mr. W. Forster. There are two or three vacant rooms, but the large room is used for many purposes, “from grave to gay, from lively to severe.” Now a solemn county court or magisterial sitting, then a ventriloquist or conjuror, or, again, what our ancestors loved to call a *ridotto*, an assembly for music and dancing. In the Town Hall is the Literary Institution, which now numbers 146 members, and is well supplied with current literature, the stock of books being augmented annually by the purchase of £10 worth from Mudie’s second-hand list. There is also a capital selection of standard works in a room called “Mr. Forster’s Library,” and these, by Mr. Forster’s kindness, are available for members of the institution,

It is noticeable that Aylsham has a Hungate—needlessly called Hungate Street. It is a long narrowish thoroughfare, running off from Black Boys’ corner. There are Hungates in



many places, e.g., at Beccles, Emneth, Norwich, and York. Mr. Mark Knights ("Highways and Byeways of Old Norwich," p. 75), states that the Norwich Hungate means the way to the *Hundred gemot*. Kirkpatrick, who wrote before 1728, considered that Hungate meant Dogs Street, perhaps from the sign of a Dog there in olden times. While Blomefield, soon after Kirkpatrick, states as a fact, that the "gate" was so named because the Bishops' hounds were once kept there. There are other "gates" in and about Aylsham, as Millgate, Silvergate, Drabblegate, and Woodgate. In the old city of York there are numerous *gates*, but the inhabitants never think of saying Jubbergate *Street* as we say Pottergate Street in Norwich. Yet Marshgate stands by itself at North Walsham.

About the commerce of Aylsham not much can be said. In the 14th century the town was noted for its manufacture of linen goods, celebrated as "Aylsham webs." Later on came the trade in woollen and worsted goods manufactured here; but these commercial activities have long ceased, and an inhabitant dolefully informed us that at the present moment Aylsham is really *dead*, and is not even galvanised into temporary life by the Fair formerly held on the Butt Lands. The population increased from about 1600 in 1801 to about 2600 in 1881. It is now nearly 150 less, even when the poor denizens of the Workhouse are included. Yet we were told that, spite of this decrease, there is such lack of houses that some young couples are suffering compulsory celibacy because they could find no suitable dwelling if married. A sad case indeed! Some little merchandise reaches



Aylsham by the Bure, which, as the books say, "washes the foot of the town." It is worth while to journey to this "foot," and see the old mill, and the bright expanse of the Bure, but it cannot, of course, be compared with that so-beautiful foot of Trilby—sketched so fondly and so faithfully by Little Billee on the wall of that now historic painting-room in the Latin quarter of Paris.

Visitors to Aylsham may look in vain for the old Bridewell, with its curious inscription, nearly 38 feet long, which set forth how "Roberd Marsham, and Ione, his wyfe, the wiche this howse they cawsed to be made to the honor of the towne be their quwick lives. fines: 1543." Down Burgh Road, a very little distance from the Market Place, are some houses embowered in greenery, within which, we believe, may be found remains of the "howse" so generously bestowed upon Aylsham by Roberd and Ione. These prisons were called *Bridewells*, from the original in London, which, at first a hospital over the well of St. Bride, or Bridget, in Blackfriars (near the present St. Bride's Church), was converted by Edward VI. into a penitentiary. A neat brick police-station has superseded Aylsham Bridewell.

We turn to the Church of St. Michael, founded, as they say, by John of Gaunt, whose arms appear here and there in this church as they do at Fakenham—notably here on the font, on which also are some very vivid emblems of the Passion—the spear, reed, and sponge, and a scourging pillar. In the chancel we find the handsome tomb of Bishop Jegon. His effigy is gone, but his shield of arms stands out large and clear,

the golden falcon winging its way heavenwards and other heraldic devices, impaled with the three mitres of the See of Norwich, borrowed from Fécamp by Losinga. Poor John Jekon! Yet his inscription confidently affirms *placide obdormivit in Christo, cui semper invigilavit*. His widow Lilia married Sir John Cornwallis—his son John died young, and there is an odd inscription to him on a tablet near the bishop's tomb, Robert, his elder son, built a large house at Buxton Lamas. There are several interesting brasses at Aylsham, notably one to Thomas Wymer in a winding sheet. He was a thriving worsted weaver, and gave the handsome screen to the church. He died in 1507. Robert Jannys of Norwich was another benefactor, whose grand tomb may be seen in St. George's Colegate, and his portrait in Norwich Guildhall. Of this picture Blomefield says that he had "one of the same kind and age." In 1542 Aylsham had a vicar, John Bury, of whom Blomefield says, "that vile persecutor, whose name ought to be branded to posterity for an evil doer; he was commissary to the bishop, and by that power did abundance of mischief, being a proper instrument for such a man as Bishop Nix was." Bury resigned when Edward VI. came to the throne, but was presented by Mary in 1554, when he became the active agent of Bishop Hopton, of whom Fuller says, "He played the very Devill himself, enough to make wood dear, so many did he consume to ashes." Hopton it was who insisted that his parishioners should creep to the Cross on Good Friday. Hopton it was, on Bury's procurement, who had Thomas Hudson of Aylsham burnt at Norwich, with two other "godly martyrs," on May 19th, 1558. Blomefield seems to

accept unquestioningly all the details given by Foxe in his "Book of Martyrs," and refers to men being punished on *suspicion* of favouring the reformed religion. But this bold Hudson of Aylsham told Bury that the Sacrament was "Worms' meat," and the Mass "a patched up monster." Can we wonder that the severely orthodox *fumed*, as we are told that he did. But we always remember that many Papists also went cheerfully to death for *their* particular view of things, and could say, as Anne Askew did in her swan-song, before her burning in 1546:—

Faith is that weapon strong,  
Which will not fail at need;  
My foes, therefore, among  
Therewith will I proceed.

As it is had in strength  
And force of Christe's way,  
It will prevail at length,  
Though all the devils say nay.

Faith in the fathers old  
Obtained righteousness;  
Which makes me very bold  
To fear no world's distress.

There are two tombs in Aylsham Churchyard interesting for far different reasons. One is the burial place of Humphrey Repton, a celebrated landscape gardener. It is in a small enclosure, kept well planted with flowers by some of his descendants and his tablet has the very appropriate lines:—

Not like Egyptian tyrants consecrate,  
Unmixed with others shall my dust remain;  
But mold'ring, blending into earth,  
Mine shall give form and colour to the rose;  
And while its vivid blossoms cheer mankind,  
Its perfumed odours shall ascend to heaven.



Repton was born at Bury St. Edmunds in 1752, and died 24th March, 1818. He resided great part of his life at Aylsham, though described in his epitaph as "of Hare Street, in the county of Essex." He wrote several works bearing on his profession, an "Account of the Hundred of North Erpingham," and a volume, entitled "Variety," which one lady said was "very superior to the much-talked-of Spectator!" That lady was Miss Seward. The other noteworthy tomb is on the north side of the burial ground. The stone is "in memory of Robert Gibson, who died April 10th, 1824, aged 55 years." The parish clerk informed us that this poor fellow was the last man hanged in England for sheep-stealing. He was executed at Norwich Castle, and his body, after hanging one hour, was handed to his friends for burial. A strong belief existed that Gibson was innocent of the crime for which he was convicted.

In Blomesfield's time Aylsham was, says the historian, "much frequented in the summer season by reason of the SPAW . . the water of which tasting very strong of the mineral is esteemed of great service in Asthmas; it is purgative, and is said to be of the Vitriolick kind; and being touched with Galls, or an oaken leaf, turns very black immediately." The spring until quite recently had been choked up, but Mr. Purdy, the present owner, has had it restored. We journeyed to it down Hungate, over the railway, and through two fields to the right, and a woman from the adjoining cottage drew us a glass. The taste is ferruginous, and — well, we were disinclined to walk far the next day.



If some prominent medical man would recommend Aylsham Spa perhaps it might again come into favour, and bring profitable visitors to the little town in "the most agreeable and pleasant part of Norfolk," according to Blomefield. Perhaps Mr. Purdy is a descendant of that Robert Purdy whose widow, in 1471, left a legacy for the light maintained by the money collected at the Plowlode of Hundegate. Mr. Rye, in his recent edition of "Forby's Vocabulary," says that *purdy* means surly; but adds, "this is not correct at Aylsham." There used to be an "Aylsham Derby," a so-called race meeting partly for horses and partly for foot-racing, and in an advertisement some years ago the course was described as "first rate flag," flag meaning a level plot of grass suitable for sports.

It might be interesting to say something of the various manors of Aylsham and the manor houses, but we must be content to note that Aylsham Sextons was sometimes described as *Sacreds* from a misreading of the abbreviation of the Latin word *sacristani*; and to indicate that on the 22nd June, 1381, Litester's men sacked the manor house of the Abbot of Bury, on the site of which now stands the farm-house known as *Abbott's Hall*.

One native of Aylsham deserves to be had in grateful remembrance. Henry Harrod, author of "Gleanings Among the Castles and Convents of Norfolk," 1857, was born here on the 30th September, 1817. He practised in Norwich as a solicitor for some years, entered into a ruinous partnership at Marlborough in 1862,

and in 1865 settled in London as a professional antiquary. He died at 2, Rector's Grove, Clapham, on the 24th January, 1871. His widow survives. Another Aylsham lawyer, Christopher Layer, distinguished himself by treasonable practices, and was hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn, 17th May, 1723. His skull was fondly preserved by Dr Rawlinson, a Jacobite antiquary, who was buried with it in his right hand.—Layer's *Life*, by "A gentleman of Norwich," was published in 1723.

JAMES HOOPER.

Norwich, 6th August, 1896.



## THE NORFOLK HERO.

Our good friend and contributor, Ron Fiske from North Walsham has sent the extract on the page opposite, describing the naval procession held at Aylsham for Horatio Nelson. Quite rightly, Ron thinks that it would be of interest to Aylsham readers. The procession must have been quite a sight and attracted most of the population of Aylsham to pay their respects to their local hero.

Nelson had been killed at Trafalgar on 21st. October 1805 and the Thanksgiving Day in his memory was arranged for 5th. December 1805.

Ever since then, the memory of Nelson has been well preserved, and his exploits are known by every school-child. Quite recently, on a smaller scale, Horatio Nelson was in the news again. Late in 1992, a portrait of Lord Nelson which had been displayed for nearly 200 years was stolen from the wall of the dining room of the Norfolk Club in Norwich. It seems unlikely that the portrait will be recovered, so Ron Fiske has produced a small pamphlet written to preserve its history. The pamphlet also tells of how the news of Nelson's death reached England. "News of Trafalgar and a lost Portrait" is available from Ron Fiske at 26 Yarmouth Rd. North Walsham, at £3 a copy, p & p included. Proceeds will go to the Ben Burgess Nelson Memorabilia Trust.

### NAVAL PROCESSION AT AYLSHAM, ON THE LATE THANKSGIVING DAY.

AT Aylsham (under the patronage of the noblemen, ladies, and gentlemen of the town and its vicinity), the Thanksgiving Day was observed with peculiar demonstrations of joy, accompanied at the same time with proper marks of respect to the memory of the departed Hero, whose name will survive to the latest posterity. A procession was made to church in the following order:—

Blue flag, carried by a British Sailor.

Band of music.

Red flag, carried on horseback by a British Sailor, with a drawn sword.

State horse, covered with black cloth, and led by two British Sailors, and mounted by a Captain in the Navy, wearing a black silk scarf, and carrying a sword reversed in the left arm, covered with black crape.

Flag of an Admiral of the White, borne by a British Sailor.

A ship, carried by four Sailors, bearing the flag of an Admiral of the White.

King's Arms, carried by a Volunteer in the South Erpingham Cavalry, supported by two other Volunteers of the same troop.

A Banner, with the words, "The immortal NELSON," painted on an anchor, surrounded with cannon balls, and a piece of cannon at each corner—trimmed with black crape—borne by a Lieutenant of the Navy.

Banners, with the following inscriptions, borne by British Sailors:—

"England expects every man will do his duty."

"Show me my Country's Foes the Hero cried—

"He saw, he fought, he conquer'd, and he died."

"The Combined Fleets of France and Spain, defeated off Cape Trafalgar."

"Rule Britannia."

"The Duke of YORK and the Army."

"Success to Lord COLLINGWOOD and his valiant Crew."

"Sir RICHARD STRACHAN and the British Navy."

"Earl ST. VINCENT, Sir J. B. WARREN,

"Sir SIDNEY SMITH, Viscount DUNCAN,

"ABERCROMBIE, COOK,

"BURGESS, DUFF."

"We rejoice for our Country, but mourn for our Friend."

"The British Volunteers."

"May every Briton prove a Norfolk Hero."

"Prosperity to the town of Aylsham."

"In thee, O Lord! we put our trust."

"Almighty God has blessed His Majesty's arms."

"God save the King!"

## SOCIETY NEWS

**MYSTERY HISTORY TOUR** - depending on how quickly you receive your copy of the Newsletter, the event is either still to take place on 9th. September, or you may actually be sitting on the coach, reading this, and wondering where on earth you are heading for. Full report will be included in our next issue.

**"AYLSHAM, Millgate"** - When we had our first glimpse of the 'Bishop Bundles' it seemed an unlikely prospect that their contents could ever lead to a published work. This was three or more years ago, and I for one never thought that the jumble of information which the bundles contained could be turned into a readable account. I was obviously not allowing for the varied and eager talents of those of our members who formed the Archives Group. Under the guidance, first of Elizabeth Rutledge then of Christopher Barringer as our course tutors, the jumble began to take shape, and we can now proudly announce the appearance of "Aylsham, Millgate", published by our own society. Details of contents, price and availability are in the leaflet accompanying this Newsletter. Now is the moment of truth. Anyone can obtain a copy and judge for themselves whether we succeeded in what we set out to do. Copies are on sale to the general public at £3.75, but for our members there is a special price of £3. All the details are on the enclosed leaflet.

**ARCHIVES COURSE** - With the publication of our book on Millgate, we finally conclude all the work put into the study of the 'Bishop Bundles' and other Millgate documents. We have already made some progress into a study of the Poor Law documents which are contained in the Town archives. When the Archives Group re-assembles on 28th. September, under our new tutor, Mrs. Nesta Evans, it is hoped that we can explore this subject further, and with Mrs. Evans guidance we might be able to turn all this study into another publication. On the other hand, the Group might decide to tackle a completely different topic. The Archives Study Group starts afresh each September, and any member is welcome to join the group. It is



appreciated (and sympathised with) that only those members who are free during the day are able to do this.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** - This will take place at the Friendship Club on Thursday, 7th. October, starting 7pm. Papers concerning the meeting will be circulated with this copy of the Newsletter. After the business part of the meeting is concluded, our own member, Dr. Julian Eve will give a talk on the St.Faith's Horse Fairs. There will also be the usual refreshments, making it a sociable as well as a business meeting. Members are urged to attend the AGM. It is the one meeting where the activities of our society are determined and approved, and it is every members opportunity to take part in that. Subscriptions [currently £5.50] become due for renewal at the AGM each year.

If you are unable to attend the AGM it would be helpful to our treasurer if you could remember to renew your subscription by October 7th. Any member who pays by Standing Order needs to be aware that our bank is now the Midland Bank, North Walsham. All members will continue to receive a copy of the Newsletter in December, but for any members who have not renewed their subscription by then, it will be assumed that they do not wish to renew their membership and no further copies will be sent.

**HELP REQUIRED** - Help is needed from any willing member who could keep our membership list of names and addresses up to date and in a form that would make it possible to produce address labels to use in the circulation of notices and copies of this Newsletter. At present, these notices are addressed laboriously, and heroically, by hand by our Membership Secretary. Ideally what we need is a computer buff with the equipment and know-how to store all the information on disc and produce it at the touch of a button. Also needed, is the help of someone to type up the minutes of committee meetings. These meetings are held roughly every six weeks and the minutes are always under two A4 pages in extent, so there is not an enormous amount of typing involved. If you can spare the time, and if you feel you could help, Jane Nolan would be delighted to hear from you.

## ST. FAITH'S AGRICULTURAL WORKERS STRIKE OF 1894.

Dr. Julian Eve

When, in 1957, I first arrived as the village doctor in St. Faith's, several retired farm workers enjoyed telling me about the great Norfolk agricultural strike of 1923. "Did you know they had to send 600 extra police to Norfolk. . . ?". Any remark about the cost of food, for example, would set them off, "You should have seen how we managed during the strike. . . one herring between five of us." They would name the families in the village who had moved in during the strike to work as 'blacklegs'; they still remembered nearly forty years later. The older men would then tell me about the strike of 1910 when St. Faith's stood all on its own.

Occasionally, I would hear about a strike which had taken place much earlier, in 1894. One man, a skilled thatcher called Walter Woodcock, a great Methodist preacher and ardent trade unionist who was interested in the history of the village, got me involved, and I began an investigation that continues to this day. The 1910 strike is fairly well documented as the Union minutes have survived, but the earlier strike intrigued me and seemed worth investigating.

### The Origins of the strike.

The so-called golden age of farming was from 1830 to 1870. After 1875, Free Trade completed its work of destroying the prosperity of British agriculture, and as the majority of the population no longer lived in the countryside there was a town-bred indifference to the decay of rural life. Agricultural workers had not shared in the earlier prosperity of the farmers and continued to feel resentful towards their employers. Fewer men were now employed on the land and labourers were leaving the village in search of work elsewhere.

Joseph Arch (1826-1919), who was born in Marsham, started forming his Agricultural Workers Union in 1872. Trade Unionism seems to have reached Horsham St. Faith in 1874 when a Sunday open-air meeting of the labourers' union was held in the village, and speakers came out from Norwich. The parish vicar, in his Sunday sermon, advised the labourers to - "give no credit to these revolutionary talkers and uproarious dreamers". Virtually all the farm labourers in the parish, however, attended the Methodist Chapel, and never heard the vicar's sermons.

The two principal farmers in the parish, William Warner Cook and George Reynolds, who farmed about 600 acres each, were the two churchwardens and supported the established church. They preferred their men to attend church and show their employers due deference when in church. It is easy to see, then, why the farm workers attended the chapel - a man was amongst equals, and could freely express his opinions and let his emotions run free. Good rousing hymns were a help. An uneducated labourer could lead the service and often did.

The Methodist church also supported the agricultural labourers' union, and union meetings were usually held in the chapel. It was fortunate, at this time, that so many of the Trade Union leaders were influential methodists as they often prevented violence that would have occurred otherwise. The year 1887 marked civil unrest in Norwich, and there was trouble in the village when two well-known Socialist speakers came out from Norwich with their followers, and addressed a public meeting. The crowd became unruly, and shop windows were broken and some meat pies and ham taken. The two leaders, Henderson and Mowbray, were arrested and charged with causing a riot. At their trial they were found guilty and sentenced to eight months in Norwich prison. (They returned to St. Faith's a year later to address another meeting.)

The vicar gives us his views in his parochial magazine of January 1887:-

"A token for good during the month was the check given to the Socialists. The red flag has come to grief. Prayer



has been offered by us and others that they might be stopped, and now they have stopped themselves. . . Let us pray that these men be brought to right mind and changed in heart during their stay in prison."

Joseph Arch spoke in St. Faith's in January a year later. Again the vicar was critical of what he said. That year, for the first time, many members of the Chapel, (those who were ratepayers and eligible) attended the annual Vestry meeting when the village officers were elected. Instead of the usual dozen regular prominent members of the church, over 40 villagers attended. They voted out the two churchwardens, farmers Warner Cook and George Reynolds, as Village Surveyors and put forward their own Methodist nominees who were elected, and so their confidence increased.

In 1889 the St. Faith's labourers demanded allotments. There were 40 cottages in the village without gardens. St. Faith's was the first village in England to make use of the new Allotment Act. They were backed by Sir Edward Birkbeck. M.P. and the County Council was obliged to arrange a hearing before a Select Committee of the House of Commons for the compulsory purchase of fifteen acres of land from the Countess of Rechberg who owned all the farms in the parish [2,000 acres]. The Countess had refused to lease them any land for use as allotments. It was her opinion that labourers should not hold allotments. She claimed that those who had no garden should walk to Norwich if they wanted fresh vegetables.

After a three day hearing, which involved expensive barristers and fifteen witnesses, the House of Commons confirmed the compulsory purchase. The labourers had won their case. The Countess had to pay nearly all the County Council's costs as well as her own. Two St. Faith's labourers went up to London and gave evidence at the enquiry. One of them, William Norgate, a keen union man who worked for George Reynolds, was sacked for his trouble.

### The 1894 Strike

The unrest of the farm workers continued into the 1890s and there were local harvest strikes on some farms. To combat this,

Norfolk farmers in 1890 formed the Farmers Federation. Wages and conditions were agreed amongst themselves and mutual assistance provided in the case of a strike. Early in August 1894 the Union branch in St. Faith's decided to act in an effort to obtain a living wage. They sent notices by post bearing the Union stamp to all the St. Faith's farmers, threatening to withdraw their labour if their demands were not met. The farmers refused to meet their demands.

Mr. Warner Cook of Abbey Farm set the pace in the village, and no farmer in the parish dare pay more than he did. He contacted the Federation and 'blacklegs' soon arrived from Yarmouth to help get in the harvest. This infuriated the strikers. Joined by their women and children, they formed a band and marched, beating drums and making music, round the huts where Warner Cook had housed his 'blacklegs' at Abbey Farm.

They went further, and on 10th. August five of them were arrested for entering the Abbey farmyard and doing damage to farm machinery. They were George and William Chapman, Robert and John Howard and William Furness. They were charged with, "unlawfully and riotously assembling with other persons to the number of 200 or more to disturb the public peace." Four of them pleaded guilty and through their counsel expressed regret at the part they had taken in the riot. They were bound over to keep the peace and George Chapman was fined £5; the Union paid his fine.

William Furness, however, pleaded not guilty, and he was tried before a jury. They were unable to agree a verdict, and a new jury was sworn in who, after a further hearing, found him guilty. He was sentenced to two months hard labour. That would teach him to plead "not guilty" !

During the strike the Trade Unions from Norwich marched out to support the Sunday meetings in St. Faith's which were held on the village green. Such meetings were well reported in the Daily Press and Norfolk Chronicle. On 2nd. September, the Norwich unions appeared with Trade Union banners and a band. The following Sunday, they came again and the Daily Press report of the meeting was

headed, "Women to the Front". The meeting had been addressed by a female orator - a great improvement on Mowbray and Co. according to the vicar, as her language was not abusive. She led the party back to Norwich herself in pouring rain. The 'blackleg' labour eventually brought in the harvest, and the strikers could not survive a winter without work. During November the strike collapsed - it had failed.

William Furness returned home from prison on 15th. December to a public tea held in his honour at the Cross Keys club room. Here, Herbert Day, the Union's Vice President, congratulated the people of St. Faith's and said,

"through your pluck and determination in standing up for your rights you have made St. Faith's known throughout the length and breadth of the land. The labouring classes have long been oppressed by landowners, and farmers and now one of your number has been sent to prison and trodden underfoot by the landlords and the aristocracy."

Soon after, however, men were sacked for simply being members of a union, and George Edwards was forced to close the Union in 1896. St. Faith's labourers had not finished their protest yet, however. The Parish Meeting to form the first Parish Council was held on 4th. December 1894. [Local Government Act 1894]. The strike had only just ended, and the resentment in the village was shown at this Parish Meeting. Mr. Eglington, the miller, was chosen to chair the meeting, not Warner Cook or the vicar who generally presided at village meetings. The election of councillors was by a show of hands. Eighteen were proposed for the nine available places. The vicar and Warner Cook received only ten votes each, while the nine successful candidates, all tradesmen or labourers, obtained more than 80 votes each.

The ill feeling did not last and the following year Mr. Warner Cook and the village doctor were elected as Parish Councillors. Herbert Day, who paid the strikers' fines and the solicitor's fees, was the son of a Norwich boot and shoe manufacturer. Although



educated at Rugby and Cambridge he was an ardent left wing liberal who helped to found the Eastern Counties and Agricultural Labourers and Smallholders Union later in 1906. He was very active in supporting St. Faith's in its long, lonely struggle in 1910 when the whole village came out on strike, but that is another story, however, and for another time.

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## SOME AYLSHAM DATES - A COMPETITION

Peter Holman sets out, once again to test your local history knowledge. The 12 dates listed below are of important events in the development of the town of Aylsham. Most of them concern places and things, rather than people. Can you identify the dates? A small prize might be squeezed out of the editor for the best set of answers.

- |    |        |     |      |
|----|--------|-----|------|
| 1. | c.500  | 7.  | 1849 |
| 2. | 1085   | 8.  | 1857 |
| 3. | c.1380 | 9.  | 1912 |
| 4. | 1543   | 10. | 1913 |
| 5. | c.1624 | 11. | 1981 |
| 6. | 1779   | 12. | 1990 |

The official answers will appear in the next issue

## NOTES & QUERIES



Molly Long writes:- "Does anyone know anything about the thatcher's gravestone in Aylsham churchyard?. It has the symbols of his trade on it; the needle, the rake and the comb. As children we loved to run our fingers over these. The date on the stone is 1759, but it is no longer possible to read the name. He must have been a well-known local tradesman, and it would be interesting to find out more about him. The stone stands alone on the left hand side of the path going from the west end of the church towards the lych-gate. It is corroded in places and has recently received some damage.

AYLSHAM/LAMAS. - A Mr. Peter Darby writes seeking any information concerning a branch of his family which lived in the Aylsham/Lamas area during the 18th. & 19th. centuries. They lived and worked on the waterways in the area. Any help to Mr. P. Darby, 117 Moss Lane, Timperley, Cheshire. WA15 6JG.

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**Front Cover Picture:** Woodgate House. Standing in extensive grounds on the Cawston Road. According to Dr. Sapwell, it was built in 1726 by the Soame family. The illustration comes from "The History of Norfolk" by Mason. (1885). According to Mason, the house was the family home of the Soames for more than 200 years, and was added to and considerably rebuilt in 1706. I am not sure which dates are the correct ones, although Sapwell states that the date "1726" is carved in the spandrels of the panel over the front door. By 1885 the house was owned and occupied by R.J.W. Purdy.