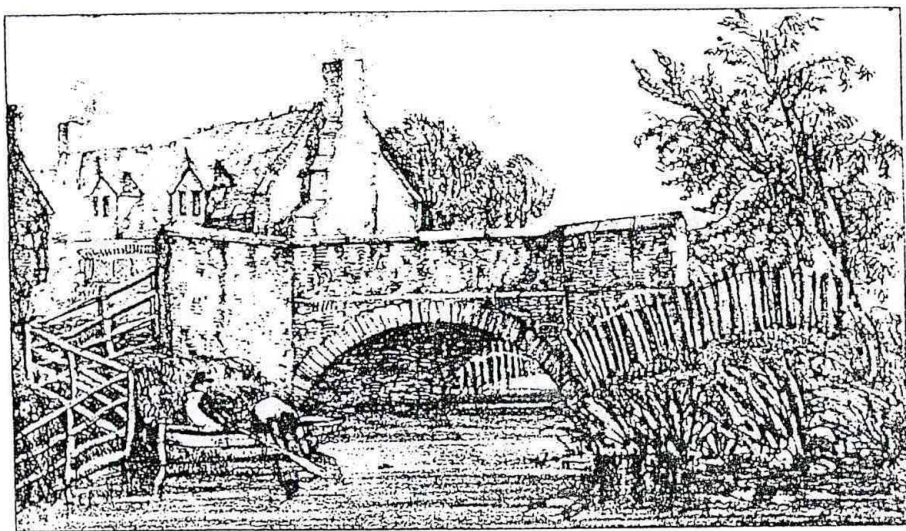


Aylsham Local History Society



The Stone by D. Medley. From a drawing by Thomas Stone & Son.

Printed by T. Medley, 1841. (Reproduced by permission of the Society.)

AYLSHAM

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AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

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A NOTABLE NORFOLK FAMILY (III)

A footnote to the previous two items which have already appeared on the Curties family of Aylsham [in the last two issues]. It was suggested that the history of the family could be well worth researching.

It looks as if more research has already been done, more than we realised. There is much information to be found in:-

"THE NORFOLK ANCESTOR" Vol.2 No.2 Sept '80 pp17-22.
- 'The Curties family of Norfolk' by E.A.Curties.

There is no shortage of mention of Curties's in this issue of our own Newsletter & Journal - read on!

COVER PICTURE

The bridge at Aylsham. One of two engravings of Aylsham bridges by the artist Francis Stone. It is from the book "Picturesque views of all the bridges belonging to the county of Norfolk" published in 1840. By date and place, it fits in perfectly with our coverage of the Millgate area.



AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

Volume 3

Number 4

OAKAPPLE DAY

If one were to ask a younger resident of Aylsham for the date of 'Oakapple Day', the reply would probably be a blank stare. Not only would the date be unknown, it is likely that the name 'Oakapple Day' had never been heard of. How different it would have been in Victorian Aylsham. Everyone would have looked forward eagerly to the 29th. May as one of the high points of the year. It was one of the very few public holidays enjoyed in the town, and very few of the inhabitants would have missed out on the festivities.

These festivities centred on the celebrations of the many Friendly Societies that existed in the town. Dr. Sapwell describes in some detail the bands, the feasting, the processions, the games and the dancing that went on until the early hours of the following day. All the unpublished memoirs that we have in the Town Archives describe in great detail what went on, and it is better to read these original accounts, than for me to repeat them here.

Now, it is hardly even a memory. The passing of 'Oakapple Day' was inevitable, coinciding with the ending of the popularity of the Friendly Societies, when they were superseded by the National Health

Insurance Act in 1911. At the height of its popularity, even the wherrymen who sailed into Aylsham via the Navigation, treated Oakapple Day as their annual holiday, wearing their traditional uniform, and joining in all the merrymaking.

Looking through some of the records in the Town Archives, one can follow the decline of Oakapple Day as it began to fade away. In 1902, the first hint appears:-

Oak Apple Day was celebrated on the 29th, although not on so large a scale as in years gone by. There was a procession to church, of the Foresters' Court "Pride of Aylsham" and the Oddfellows' N. & N. Unity, Loyal "Friendship" Lodge. They displayed their banners and regalia and were headed by bands. An appropriate sermon was preached by the Rev. A. J. Steed (Tuttington) from the words, "What think ye of Christ." The clubmen afterwards had their Annual Feasts and Balls were held in the evening.

In 1903, only one society took part:-

Oak apple day or "the 29th," which in years gone by was celebrated with considerable enthusiasm by the inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood, was this year but slightly regarded. The only Friendly Society to observe the day was "Court Pride" of Aylsham, who paraded the town, headed by the local volunteer band, after which they dined at the Forester's Hall, under the presidency of Mr. J. Goulder. Sports were held in the evening for the juvenile Foresters on Mr. F. Starling's meadow.

The following year it did pick up a little:-

Oak Apple Day, the 29th, was kept up with a little more enthusiasm than it had been for the past few years. The various Friendly Societies had public dinners at their respective lodge and court rooms, and some good speeches were afterwards made. The Foresters paraded the town, and in the evening the societies united in holding sports for the juvenile members in Mr. F. Starling's meadow.

after this, it is not even mentioned until 1910, when again, only one society took part:-

In days gone by, Oak-apple Day, or the "29th," was a great day with the Aylsham Friendly Societies, who would muster in a huge procession, attended by several brass bands, with the members of the various societies in full regalia, and bearing aloft their resplendent banners, and then each would dine in state at their respective club rooms. This year only one Society partook in celebrating the day, namely, the "Marquis of Lothian" Lodge, Manchester Unity. Dr. Sapwell, the Noble Grand for the year, presided at the dinner, supported by the district officers and gentlemen of the town and neighbourhood interested in Friendly Society work. In the afternoon, thanks to the members of the band of the Aylsham detachment, 5th B.N.R., a most pleasing programme of sports for the juveniles of the town and district was provided, Mr. W. F. Starling kindly placing his meadow at the disposal of the band committee for the occasion. At the conclusion of the sports, Miss Morton presented the prizes to the successful competitors.

In 1912, there was the last flicker;

Oak Apple Day, otherwise "the 29th May," and the anniversary of the restoration of King Charles II., was in years gone by a high day at Aylsham, especially with the friendly societies, who would muster in huge processions, attended with bands, and with members in full regalia and bearing aloft their resplendent banners. This year, however, the festival certainly showed signs of decay. The Loyal "Marquis of Lothian" Lodge of Oddfellows, M.U., was the only society which recognised the day, and that was by holding a dinner at the "Black Boys" Hotel in the evening. A few branches of oak were to be seen at one or two business premises, and some of the youngsters wore a sprig of oak in the button-hole, perhaps more to avoid being pinched by their comrades (the ancient penalty provided for disregard of the day) than anything else. An itinerant cornet player was out blowing the plaintive air, "Good old Jeff has gone to rest," and a companion had a card attached to an oak branch with the words, "The 29th May is dead; funds required for the resurrection," and it was stated that an aged Oddfellow travelled from Yarmouth to join in the usual festivities, only to find there were none.

and by 1913, the end was declared:-

The decline of an old festival, to wit, "Oak-apple day or the 29th May", was very evident this year. The day was wont to be observed in Aylsham as a general holiday. Young and old from the surrounding districts would meet in the town, and the day was given over to feasting and frolicking. The shops would be profusely decorated, and the whole place would present a gay and animated appearance. It was, moreover, the occasion of the annual dinners, and church parades of the local friendly societies and clubs but as one decade succeeded another, the rejoicings gradually fell off, and this year Oak-apple day could hardly be recognised as a shadow even of its former glory. Not a single society dinner was held, no bands were playing, there was no procession, the church bells were silent, and the flag-staff on the church steeple was unadorned. "Oak" was conspicuous by its absence and the school children instead of having their customary holiday, were busy over their studies. In fact the "29th" was a dead letter.

The final reference appears in the 1914 Aylsham Almanac, where we read:-

"On Oakapple Day, the only interesting event which took place was the opening of a new well and pump with a canopy, which has been erected by Mr.J.Soame Austen in memory of his uncle, the late Mr. John Soame, on the triangular space known as Carr's Corner"

By this time, there were no longer any wherry-men who might have joined in. The great floods of 1912 had destroyed the Navigation for ever, and none could sail any nearer to Aylsham than the lock at Coltishall. In its heyday, the festival even had a poem or ballad written about it, and a copy of this still survives in our Archives:-

Tom Mollard

AYLSHAM

TWENTY-NINTH OF MAY CELEBRATION.

Written by W. M.

Tune, "I would rather have a Guinea." Sung by W. W. ENGLAND.

Aurora has chased night's murky clouds away,
And the bright saffron morning, bespeaks a glorious day;
The lads and the lasses from their chamber windows peep,
And the drowsy are aroused from out their balmy sleep.
CHORUS.—For 'tis the happy morning of Aylsham's Holiday,
The meeting of the Clubs, on the Twenty-ninth of May.

From out the old church tower, our merry ten bells ring,
Dispensing joyous music, and strangers welcoming.
Now houses deck'd with boughs and flower's appear so bright and gay,
Flags and banners woo the breeze, and with the zephyr's play.
For 'tis, &c.

'Midst the chiming of the bells, and clashing of the bands,
Arrive the smart "Odd Fellows" with Past and Noble Grands.
Bedeck'd with sashes and rosettes, "Lord Lothian's Lodge" so true,
Rejoicing in their emblems, the silver and the blue.
For 'tis, &c.

The "Economic Club," and "Friendly Society,"
Likewise there is the "Norfolk and Norwich Unity;"
"Foresters" with caps and scarfs of verdant Lincoln Green,
"Robin Hood" and "Little John" on horseback close the scene.
For 'tis, &c.

Service over at the church, the members go to dine,
And pledge the cup of fellowship in liquor, ale, or wine.
Dick Feck has so many guests, the New Inn is too small,
He's oblig'd to honor them by dining in the Hall.
For 'tis, &c.

The pipe, the glass, the cheerful song, incline some friends to stay;
Others seek the Bowling Greens, to pass the time away;
Here the good old country dance, gay children too are seen,
And many a lass displays her bulky crinoline.
Oh! long may continue, &c.

Long may this Old Holiday, in weather ever clear,
Be kept with jollity and mirth the happiest of the year.
Prosperity to all the clubs, success on them attend,
In hours of trial they have prov'd the poor man's greatest friend.
So long may continue the Aylsham Holiday,
The Meeting of the Clubs on the Twenty-ninth of May.

CLEMENTS AND SON, PRINTERS, AYLSHAM.

BOOK REVIEW

"The Church Bells of Norfolk: their inscriptions and founders, with an account of the towers and bell-frames which contain them." Part 1; The Hundred of Clavering, by Paul CATTERMOLLE.

31pp. Aylsham. The Golden Bell Press. 1991

£3.

Last year, Paul Cattermole produced his excellent book - "Church bells and bell-ringing, a Norfolk profile". That book was produced in response to the decision of the Norwich Diocesan Association of Ringers, in its centenary year [1977] to record the contents of the church towers which formed its territory. The book gave a general introduction, but it was obvious that the listing of the contents of every church tower was going to be a formidable task.

This new book is the first of a series which will eventually complete that task. Those of the 34 ancient Hundreds into which the county is divided, and which lie in the present diocese of Norwich plus the city of Norwich, will be covered in turn, and a complete survey will result which should supersede the standard book on the subject, written by J.L'Estrange in 1874. It should interest anyone concerned with local history, not just campanologists, and there are two connections with Aylsham which are pleasing - the publisher is Mr. Nolan Golden of Aylsham, who makes possible the book's appearance, and the printer is Barnwells of Aylsham who have turned out a most attractive publication which is a joy to read. It is in a limited edition of 1000 copies, available from the publisher.

In due course, the volume dealing with the Hundred of South Erpingham will appear, and that will be even

more interesting for us in Aylsham. We will have to be patient until then, but in the meantime, below is a chance to read Nolan Golden's account of Aylsham bells, contained in a taped message which Ron Peabody has kindly transcribed for us from the recording he made for the parish archives. TWM

THE BELLS OF ST.MICHAEL'S CHURCH, AYLSHAM.

by Nolan Golden

[The tape recording I made for the people of Aylsham, Saskatchewan, Canada, in March 1979, begins with a recording of our parish church bells made by Mr.Nolan Golden, followed by his account of the bells' history. He has kindly granted me permission to transcribe these notes. RON PEABODY]

"John Betts, the elder, an Aylsham shoemaker, willed £10 for a new bell in 1529, when there were five bells in the splendid, late-decorated period tower. However, the inventory of the 6 Edward VI (1552-53) lists but five, so the bequest was never carried out.

In 1700 the bells were increased to eight, and 36 years later, they became one of the earliest rings of ten bells. Unfortunately, all the original five have been re-cast, and the oldest now date from 1700 - a comparatively late date for English bells. For instance, but seven miles distant, three bells cast in 1440 still ring from a six bell tower, and 16th.century bells are common.

The youngest of the Aylsham ring of bells was cast in 1860. The two bells added in 1736 weren't deemed good enough, and the four bells with the highest notes - G, F, E flat, and D were re-cast in 1775. The ninth bell, the second heaviest, weighing nearly 14cwt., was

cast at Aylsham, as was the old tenor, the heaviest, in 1648. The present tenor weighs 17cwt.34lbs. and dates from 1700. There is also in the tower (not part of the ringing peal) a small bell cast in 1683 which can only be chimed, and traditionally was rung as the five-minute bell to let churchgoers know that the service was about to begin.

As a matter of interest, there are 5,411 rings of bells of five bells and more in the British Isles, eight in Canada, and 15 in the USA. [1979]

Change ringing, an English invention, and still confined to the English-speaking world, developed in the last decades of the 16th.century, and has about 40,000 devotees today. It is too technical to be explained in a few words, but basically, it consists in swinging all the bells used through a full circle, in a different order, to form a more or less complicated mathematical pattern of sound.

In 1731, the ringers at Aylsham were more proficient in the art and science than most in the country, and they rang on November 1st. in that year, every possible change - that is to say 5,040 on seven bells with the heaviest bell striking last at every change. This performance took three hours and eleven minutes of non-stop ringing. Although a common occurrence nowadays, such peals were very rare until the latter part of the 19th.century. When the bells were augmented to ten in 1736, the local ringers rang 6,048 changes on the Queen's birthday, an unusual and considerable feat for the time. Altogether, 64 peals of 5,000 changes or more, have been rung on the bells.

The present guild of ringers [1979] ring twice on Sundays for services and for the greater festivals, such as the midnight Eucharist on Christmas Eve, and practice once a week. They also keep up the tradition

of ringing out the old year, and ringing in the new. A voluntary band of church workers, they come from all walks of life - gardeners, engineers, teachers, students, woodworkers, housewives, a solicitor's clerk who has recently been ordained, and a Royal Air Force technician."

[On 22nd. March 1990, various documents were sold by auction at Phillips. Several referred to Aylsham bells, either re-casting or maintenance of, and covered the period 1648-1775. Photocopies of these documents are now in the Norfolk Record Office where they can be consulted. They were also listed in our Journal - Volume 2. p323. Sept,1990. Ed.]

Sadly, the day after this article was typed out, we learned of the sudden death of Nolan Golden. The article gives some idea of what a sad loss his death will mean. R.I.P. 27.10.91

JOSEPH THOMAS CLOVER (1825-1882)

There is an increasing interest in Joseph Thomas Clover, and an increasing awareness of his significant contribution to medicine. At a recent display in the Town Hall, Clover was featured, and the following brief account of his life was displayed. These notes were prepared by Dr.Sapwell.

A nephew of Joseph Clover, the artist, (1779-1853), he was born, like his uncle, over a shop at the south west corner of Aylsham Market Place. After a general education at Grey Friars Priory school, and a surgical apprenticeship in Norwich, he went to University College Hospital London, where he qualified, F.R.C.S and L.S.A. and after holding

various junior appointments, he was appointed Resident Medical Officer in 1848.

In 1853 he set up in private practice in London, and shortly afterwards decided to confine his work to the administration of anaesthetics, thereby probably becoming the first full-time consulting anaesthetist in England. After the death of Dr. John Snow in 1858, he was recognised as the leading anaesthetist in London, and worked with many of the principal surgeons of his time. He was the anaesthetist when Sir Henry Thompson, the urologist, operated on King Leopold of the Belgians in 1863, and the exiled Emperor Napoleon III in 1872.

He invented several sets of anaesthetic apparatus, one of which, his "Portable Regulating Ether Inhaler" of 1873, widely used and known as "Clover's Inhaler" was in general use in London hospitals until about 1930. He also designed several instruments for crushing stones in the bladder, and an aspirator for washing out the powdered stones.

In character he was modest and sympathetic to the needs and cares of others. Wholly dedicated to his profession, he was content to follow the path of duty, as he saw it, so long as his strength lasted. Throughout his life he suffered from a chronic chest condition which underwent exacerbations at intervals sufficient to incapacitate him for prolonged periods.

He died peacefully at his London home on 27 September 1882.

[Dr. J. Sapwell]

Curious Advertisement taken from an Aylsham
Paper, in 1680.

COPY OF THE ORIGINAL.

“BY his Majesty's letters patent, cards taken out and registered by Isaac Punchard, barber, perriwig maker, surgeon, parish clerk, schoolmaster, blacksmith, and man midwife. I shaves for a penne, cuts hair for two pence, and oyl and powdird in the bargane, young ladies gently educated, lamps lited by the year or quarter, young gentlemen also taut the grammer language in the neatest manner, and great keer takin of their morrels and spelen. Also salme singing, and horce showing by the reel maker, likewise maks and mends all sorts of butes and shews, teachos the ho boy and Jews' harp, cuts corns, bleds and blisters on the lowest terms. Cowtillions and other dances taut at hoam and abroad, also deals holesalo and retail in perfumery in all its branches, sells all sorts of stashinary waro, together with blackin ball, red herins, gingerbread, coles, scrubbin brushes, treycle, mouse-traps, and all other sweetmeats, likewise Godfather's cordial, red rutes, tatoes, sasnges, black puddins, and other garden stuff.

[P.S.—I teeches goggrify, and all them outlanguaged kind of things. A bawl on Wensday and Friday. All performed God willon by me ISAAC PUNCHARD. To be hard off at my wharehouse, where you may be sarved with the very best 'bacca, by ounce, ream, quire, or single sheets.]

[N.B.—Also likewise, beware of counterfeets, for such is abroad.”]

[If the item above ever saw the inside of any newspaper, let alone an Aylsham newspaper, I'll eat my hat! Ed.]

It comes from the "Aylsham & North Walsham Almanac" for 1890.

SOCIETY NEWS

BINHAM PRIORY - It seems a long time since our visit to Binham, but our excursion has not yet been reported. The 900th anniversary of the founding of the priory was celebrated in excellent style with a pageant and *Son et Lumiere* held over three perfect summer evenings in the middle of August.



A select group of our members went on the middle evening, and joined the crowds pouring into the meadow next to the priory. It is hard to imagine a more beautiful setting for such an event. The lighting and the effects were of the highest quality, and together with the setting, it would have been difficult not to have made a success of the spectacle.

Happily, the commentary and the acting matched the quality of the visual effects, and we watched in delight as the major events of the priory's 900 year existence unfolded before our eyes. All were brought most realistically to life. The dissolution of the priory and its partial destruction and fire were particularly well portrayed. It was certainly enjoyed by all; everything ran so smoothly, even the mass exodus from the site in near total darkness went without a hitch. For us, all we had to do was step aboard our waiting coach and be driven home - a splendid night out.

TWM

MYSTERY HISTORY TOUR - On 19th. September, a coach load of members gathered for a mystery history tour which had been planned by Peter Holman. Before we set off, Peter told us we would meet with lawyers, both good and bad, sheep farmers, priests, Romans and Ancient Britons - but not a hint was given as to where we were going.

We left Aylsham via Blickling and towards Mannington Hall, but continued past this to Bacons-thorpe Castle. This was never a castle but a moated fortified manor house built by the Heydons who had become rich from a lucrative legal practice, and marrying wealthy women. A later Heydon became a wealthy sheep farmer and rural industrialist. He set up a factory at the Hall for fulling, dyeing and weaving his own wool. He had a vast number of sheep, and in 1570 he entertained thirty shepherds at the Hall, all from his own estate. The old manor house was eventually abandoned to the sheep, but the outer gate house continued to be inhabited until 1920. The building stone from the old house was sold and, John Windham (in 1654) took 18 cartloads to help build Felbrigg Hall.

We drove away from 'High Norfolk' but paused to look at Hempstead mill, where we heard how the six mills on the River Glaven coped with a limited amount of water. When the highest miller had used his mill-pond's worth of water, he blew a whistle to tell the next miller downstream to start up, as the water was on its way. Each miller in turn warned his neighbour as the water flowed downstream.

Our next destination was the Iron Age fort at Warham. This is the best preserved Iron Age fort in Norfolk. As we walked up the hill towards the fort, there was no difficulty imagining the whole fort alive with busy fierce Iceni. Roman sherds, found near the surface in the centre, show that the fort is pre-Roman

and not Saxon. The earth bank is of chalk, and some lime-loving plants were to be seen (Wall rocket, lesser scabious, dwarf thistle and Harebell).

After a brief visit to the Slipper Chapel at Houghton St.Giles, we reached our picnic spot at Hempton Green on the outskirts of Fakenham. I was particularly pleased, as I have been researching the sites of the Scottish cattle fairs in Norfolk. Hempton Green is no village green but a vast common where the Scottish drovers held a large fair every 16th.November. We may well have had our picnic on the very spot where the drovers took their 'bait' - oatmeal mixed with bullock blood and cooked to make black pudding was a favourite. A special drove of cattle left Dumfries on a particular day in October every year, known as Hempton Wednesday. The beasts were destined for sale at Hempton three weeks later. The common was large enough to take the whole drove which could number anything up to 2,000. The two pubs that served the drovers still remain.

Refreshed, we set off again, only to come to a halt in a remote farm yard where we learned that we had arrived at the deserted village of Godwick. This was deserted in the 15th.century and the land acquired by the Coke family, who built an Elizabethan manor here, of which no trace remains, but the Tudor barn still stands and is in use. From here we travelled to Tittleshall church, where the Cokes were also Lords of the Manor. Inside the 14th.cent. church are many monuments to the Coke family, sculptured by Nicholas Stone, Nollekins, Charles Atkinson and Rombiliac. In the floor was a memorial slab to Rev.Dixon Hoste, father of William Hoste who was a protege of Nelson, and became almost as famous as Nelson himself.

We set off homewards, noting the site of Mileham Castle, and stopping briefly outside Booton church,

now fully restored. Booton is the church that takes everyone by surprise and is worth a visit on its own. From Booton, we made a small diversion so that the Roman road opposite Botany Bay farm could be pointed out to us - and so back to Aylsham, via Marsham.

We had a marvellous afternoon, and Peter must be congratulated on the choice and variety of the places visited. His map-reading was phenomenal (to me) and not once did we take a wrong turn. Altogether, a most enjoyable trip, and thanks are due to Peter for all his hard work in planning and imparting all the interesting information to us. I look forward to next year.

Julian Eve

EARLY BAPTISTS IN AYLSHAM - Our programmed lecture on the early Baptists in Aylsham was a lecture with a difference. On this occasion it was held 'on site' in the most appropriate place possible - the Baptist church itself.

We were welcomed by the Rev. Bert Allcock who introduced us to the features of the building and the graveyard next to it. With the guidance of someone knowledgeable in the building's history, we could see how the church had grown and been adapted over the years. This is one of the oldest Free Church buildings in Aylsham, and has a well established history of its own. Its origins are still obscure in some details. It was built for the Wesleyans by a speculative builder and later offered to the Baptists. Mr. Allcock believes confidently that in its earliest days it was a Meeting House for non-conformists in general, and used by them all. Only later, following the missionary work of the Rev. Kinghorn, did it become specifically used by the Baptist Church, and the non-Baptist elements moved elsewhere.

At the end, when we assembled inside the church, Mr. Allcock answered a barrage of questions which

indicated the interest aroused. He fielded all the questions most expertly, and it was interesting to see that although there were many questions on the history of the Baptists, there were just as many on current Baptist Church practices and beliefs. A most interesting evening, and we were so warmly welcomed.

TWM

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - took place at the Friendship Club on 9th. October. Our Chairman, Jane Nolan welcomed some 40 members and guests to our 8th. AGM. Jane began with a tribute to our late member and committee member, Kay Mosse, who died during the year. Recognition was also made to Tom West and Mollie Long for presenting the exhibition at Aylsham station during the Bure Valley Railway, Steam Gala weekend.

After a report on the Newsletter, where the editor made his usual plea for material to publish and for illustrations to reproduce, the Chairman and Secretary both reported on the Society's activities during the year. Hearing these reports is a useful reminder of how much activity the Society is involved in, and how much work is performed by individual members to keep the organisation running smoothly. The Chairman acknowledged her thanks to all concerned.

The treasurer's report showed that we were still solvent and building up a small useful balance in hand. [see page 128 for the figures.]

Elections of Officers and committee members were swiftly dealt with, and resulted as follows:

Chairman	Jane Nolan
Vice-Chairman	Peter Holman
Secretary	Valerie Belton
Treasurer	Wendy MacGregor

Committee members elected are:

Jill Fletcher	Maureen Strong [also Member-
Tom Mollard	Tom West ship sec.]
Frank Stageman	Wenda Wiles

Julian Eve was appointed as a co-opted member for a further year.

By the time this report appears, members will have received their programme cards with all the addresses and telephone numbers of the above.

After refreshments, Jane Nolan and Valerie Belton spoke in turn on the activities of the members of the Archives course, and the progress so far. This was a potentially difficult presentation to make and to put over in an interesting way. In fact, the two speakers made it so successful that great interest was aroused. Two lines of research were described - tracing some of the individuals, and correctly identifying some of the properties described in the Millgate documents. The interest of the audience was clear from the questions which followed. It was a most clearly presented outline of what the Archives course has achieved so far, and what direction it was working in. It was obviously very informative for those not actually involved in the course. I also have to confess that at least one member who is involved in the course, now has a much clearer idea of what he is supposed to be doing.

The text of both papers appears in this issue of the Journal. Those members who were not able to attend the AGM will have the chance to discover what happens on Tuesday mornings in the Town Hall.
[see pages 117-127 for both papers.]

CARLTON HOUSE - "The past Glories of George IV's Palace"

On Thursday, 17th. October, 23 members assembled in Aylsham Market Place to board a somewhat uncomfortable small coach for our outing to visit this exhibition at The Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace, where we arrived at 11.30am.

In 1813, Carlton House was apparently described as "Mahomet's Paradise", and this exhibition contained a selection of the finest of these treasures, many of which had never been shown to the public before. On entering the Gallery, one was quite stunned by the splendour of selected pieces from the collection of French furniture, clocks, cabinets, Sevres porcelain, of English gold and silver plate, of European swords, fire-arms and far Eastern weapons.

George IV patronised English artists - Reynolds, Stubbs, Hogarth, Gainsborough and Wilkie. He was also a great admirer of the 17th. Century Dutch and Flemish schools - Rubens, Rembrandt, Cuyp and de Hoocke. The pictures that particularly interested me were 'The Prince of Wales's Phaeton' by George Stubbs (1793), and 'Soldiers of the Tenth Light Dragoons' by the same artist. Two light-hearted paintings by Sir David Wilkie also caught my attention - 'The Penny Wedding' and 'Blind man's Buff'. It was also interesting to see the well-known and much reproduced painting by Thomas Lawrence, of George IV.

The Palace attendants - guardians of the exhibition, in their navy and red uniform, including top hats with gold cockade - were most forthcoming with fascinating anecdotes concerning various exhibits.

It was quite a small display so in the afternoon members were free. Some of us visited the Queens pictures at the National Gallery, others the Guards Exhibition, Westminster Abbey, or even sat in Green

Park, it was such a nice day. The coach picked us up outside the gallery entrance, and we were back in Aylsham by 7.30 after a memorable and enjoyable day's trip.

Ruth Bratt.

--ooOoo--

[Papers read at the Annual General Meeting. 9.10.1991]

THE MILLGATE PAPERS (1)

Jane Nolan

Since Autumn 1990, a group of the Society has been meeting fortnightly, on Tuesday mornings, in order to find out about the history of Millgate. - Why Millgate? - there were two reasons.

Firstly, our tutor, Chris Barringer, suggested that it was a suitably sized portion of the town for detailed study, having a distinctive character of its own, and with possible interesting points to explore e.g. river, staithe, mill, Navigation, railway, workhouse etc.

Secondly, we knew that Tom Bishop of Bridge House, Millgate, had bundles of documents and deeds relating to properties in Millgate, and wanted help in studying these.

These ideas came together, and this evening we propose to tell you something of what Tom Bishop's bundles have revealed, the gaps that they have left, the unanswered questions which remain, and how we hope to learn more. In all, some 18 people have made contributions to our study over the year.

An individual may acquire property in different

ways; either by inheritance, as a gift, or by purchase. However the transfer occurs, it is necessary to have a record of such transactions, i.e. title deeds. The documents available to us include wills, abstracts of titles to property, mortgages, copies of manor court rolls, sale notices etc. They relate to properties, mostly in the Millgate area, but are not just confined to the land and buildings on the main street. They vary as to date, but cover a period from about 1740 onwards.

In times past, land was held by the Lord of the Manor, granted to him by the King. Manors could vary in size and importance. They might be a sub-division of a parish, or spread over many parishes. There were four manors in Aylsham:-

Aylsham Lancaster - the largest, and a royal manor, granted to John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, by Edward III

Aylsham Wood - originally Sexton's Manor. At the dissolution of the monasteries, the King granted the manor to Edward Wood; later it passed to the Peterson family.

Aylsham Vicarage - originally this belonged to the rector of Aylsham but later, the rectory was appropriated to Battle Abbey. At the dissolution it passed to the Dean & Chapter of Canterbury.

Bolwick - part of Aylsham Lancaster granted by King John to a Henry Boves, and later to Henry de Bolvic.

The Lord of the Manor in early days, would grant land to individuals in return for services rendered. There were different types of tenure such as freehold, leasehold and copyhold. Copyhold tenure meant that the land was held by title, written in the manor court

rolls, and was subject to the customs of the manor and the will of the Lord. Later on, and particularly after the Black Death when labour became scarce, the services were commuted to money payments. Tenants were given a copy of the entry in the rolls, hence the term - copyhold.

The properties we are talking about tonight, were mostly copyhold, and in the manors of Lancaster, Wood or Vicarage. Now, over to Valerie who will tell you about some individuals and families who held property in and around Millgate:-

THE MILLGATE PAPERS (2)

Valerie Belton

Because of the nature of the documents, i.e. wills, conveyances, mortgages, indentures etc, not many personal details emerge, so the people, in general, remain no more than names. The names too, are not necessarily those of the leading citizens of the Millgate area of Aylsham, because the documents refer, almost exclusively to copyhold, not freehold property. Within these limitations, however, it is possible to build up a picture of the fortunes of a few families in the 18th. and 19th. centuries, and in some cases to link the information gained from the Millgate Documents with facts acquired from other sources, for instance, church and chapel memorial tablets and tombstones, parish registers, and the lists of window tax payers published by Tom Mollard in the Journal. In this way, some of the people begin to assume identities.

One to emerge from the shadows was a member of what Ivan Morris, in a recent article, described as 'A Notable Aylsham Family'. James Curties first makes his appearance in the documents in 1766, when he bought

ten acres of land from George Johnson. In 1771, he acquired three and a half acres from the estate of Thomas Spurrell, late miller, of Aylsham. James is described in these documents as "grocer, of Aylsham". In his will, dated 1798, however, he is called 'gentleman', as is Thomas Spurrell, the miller, when he died in 1770.

James Curties's will is very detailed. He was obviously a man of some wealth, and as a bachelor, took great care to be fair to his numerous nephews and nieces. His bequests ranged from a gift of £50 to his youngest nephew, to £300 to his eldest great-niece, Anne, who was perhaps his favourite. Incidentally, this Anne married Thomas Plowright of Kings Lynn, a member of the family of ironmongers still in the town today.

The thirteen acres of land which James Curties owned, was left to Stephen Ashley, another Aylsham shopkeeper, later referred to as a wine merchant. He in turn sold to John Tuck, a yeoman farmer, in 1810. The impression we get from this group of documents is of people successful in trade or farming, who invested their profits in land, sometimes quite small pieces, as it came on the market. We must assume that most made their money through their businesses, but there were other ways. One of the Curties family (Thomas) had married a member of the Doughty family (Anne). No doubt marriages of this sort played a part in furthering a family's fortunes.

I don't know the maiden name of Elizabeth, wife of Thomas Hawkins, carpenter of Aylsham who died in 1765(3?) and who has a memorial tablet in the nave of the parish church. He also, was a man of substance. We find him joining with Jonathan Custans, a maltster, in drawing up an inventory of the goods of Jonathan Ulph, millwright in 1740. In 1761, he and

James Curties were executors of the will of Mary Rannels, and in 1762, he lent Elizabeth Custans, sister of Jonathan, £336 on the security of the land she had recently acquired from her brother. He himself had been admitted to eight acres of land in the Millgate area in 1760, and may well have owned more elsewhere. Here is another example of a man in quite a humble occupation, making good.

It was not only those in trade who invested in land. The documents make clear that some of the property acquired by James Curties from Thomas Spurrell had previously been in the possession of John Rush, Clerk, of Baconsthorpe and that Thomas Hawkins's eight acres came from the family of John Jeffery, Clerk, of Aylsham. When Thomas's widow died, they passed into the hands of the Hunt Holleys; George, the first of that name to be mentioned, being a solicitor. People successful in many walks of life, were putting their money into land.

With the coming of the 19th. century the documents seem to indicate a change which is, I believe, not peculiar to Aylsham. This was the tendency for land ownership to be concentrated in the hands of fewer, relatively wealthy families. So we come to the story of the Fielde/Phillippo/Aldis family. John Fielde, millwright, first makes his appearance in the documents in 1820, when he purchased from Robert Parmeter and others, a small piece of land on the Ingworth Road. The following year, he was admitted to property surrendered by Thomas Rackham and his daughter, Hannah. He was buying in 1829, again from Robert Parmeter, and again in 1830 (from the executors of John Steward of Norwich) This latter purchase included some of the lands formerly owned by James Curties. We have the sale notices for 1820 and 1831.

Clearly, John Fielde was doing well, and so it is no surprise to find his only child and heir, Anne,

making what must have been considered a good marriage, when she became the wife of Matthias Phillippo, a Norwich surgeon. Her daughter, Anne Elizabeth, wife of J.B.Aldis, left Aylsham and lived in Eaton. The property, however, remained with the family, and in 1901 an indenture mentions the appointment of new trustees to administer the will of Matthias Phillippo.

In fact, most of the transactions detailed in the Millgate documents relate to property which eventually came to Anne Elizabeth Aldis. Along the way, however, many other, perhaps better-known families appear:- Robert Francis, grocer and draper, whose memorial tablet can be seen in the parish church, - his son, Thomas Clement, described as 'gentleman of Newcastle' - his daughter, Sarah, who married into the Parmeter family, - the Rackhams, and Copemans, and the Petersons, Lords of the Manor of Aylsham Wood.

These are all mentioned, but rather as peripheral figures. For instance, John Peterson sold a double cottage to Robert Harvey in 1829. The abstract of his title to this small property does, however, contain valuable details about the Peterson family in the 18th. century. In fact there is a bundle of documents dealing with this and other properties which did not fall into the hands of the Fieldes, but came to the Baptist families of Harvey and Bane.* Another interesting bundle deals with cottages in Millgate, which in the 18th. century, belonged to John Drozier, a yeoman farmer from Colby.² That property eventually came to the portrait painter, Joseph Clover

* see Dec 1990 issue, of Journal & Newsletter (Vol 2 pp349-53) but note a correction to be made on p.352 - for 26 Millgate, one should read 46 Millgate.

² The Drozier (Drosier) family, yeomen farmers and tanners in Colby and Banningham.

The general conclusion to be drawn from a study of the Millgate documents, is that land and houses in the district, between 1750 and 1850, were regarded as a good investment. The investors were mainly tradesmen and yeomen farmers, but the gentry and clergy were also involved. By the end of the period it is probable that not many of the owners actually lived in Aylsham.

This brings us to the much more difficult subject of identifying some of the houses and lands mentioned in the documents, and this brings us back to Jane!

THE MILLGATE PAPERS (3)

Jane Nolan

The next question is - where did these people live? In many instances, we don't know, at least at the moment. Quite often, people, in making a will didn't name or locate their house. It was enough to say "my house in Millgate", or just leave "all my property", to an heir. Or they identified it by saying that it had previously belonged to a named person, who had lived there in the past. Very useful documents are 'abstracts of titles' because they are a summary of owners of the properties with dates of transfer, and often with extracts from wills.

I have chosen two properties that we can identify, to tell you about.

Valerie spoke of John Fielde, and about how, in the period 1820-1831, he built up a collection of properties which were in earlier days, in different hands. John Fielde was a millwright, and he lived in the house just south of the Maltings and described as a double house [nos. 15 & 17 Millgate], as well as holding other pieces of land in the area. We can

be confident about this. We know that John Fielde left his property in his will, first to his wife, and then to his daughter. When she inherited it, it is described as 'a messuage (i.e. a house) with barn, stable and outhouses, yard, garden and orchard'. Mattias and Anne Phillipo (formerly Fielde) are listed as holding this property and other pieces of land over the river, in the Tithe map of 1839. The property then passed into Aldis hands, and was sold on the death of E.A.Aldis to John Flaxman Daniels in 1906, and to a George Sidney Durrell in 1928.

Furthermore, our documents tell us that John Fielde obtained by surrender through the manor court, a messuage and lands in Millgate from a Thomas Rackham. These properties had been in the Rackham family for a couple of generations, inherited from John Custans who died in 1757. He is described as being a 'maulster', and with 'a barn, house and 18 acres over the brig'. As late as 1839, we know Anne Phillipo held considerable lands to the north, and it seems a reasonable assumption that these properties were handed on more or less intact. It is also worth noting that Custans was a maltster. Was there perhaps an earlier maltings on this site? The date of the present building, now converted into private dwellings, is about 1772.

The second block of properties includes Nos. 28-34 Millgate, the Stonemason's Arms, and Nos. 42 & 44 Millgate.

Our information starts with the marriage of a John Power, farmer of Alby and barber-surgeon of Aylsham, to an Ann Drosier, daughter of Edward Drosier, a tanner, in 1743. They had three children - John, Mary and Ann. They planned to divide their properties (some in other parts of Aylsham as well as Millgate) between the three, but in the event, only Mary survived

her parents, and as Mary Berry, widow of John Berry, master of the Bridewell, inherited everything in 1789. The property in Millgate was two roods of land on which was one tenement, and later, two tenements or cottages, and adjoining pigstie.

In 1820, Mary Berry died, leaving all her property to the painter, Joseph Clover, whose father, Thomas, was a shopkeeper in Millgate, living probably next door to the Powers. It is interesting to speculate why she did this - we will come back to this later.

Joseph Clover, by now, was in London, and sold out to John Freeman who was a stonemason. The bond describing the transaction was - 'a bond for the quiet enjoyment' - of the property. Later, through a mortgage indenture of 1863, we find that John Freeman has had built on the pigstie of land, a Public House with a stonemason's yard, outbuildings, yards and gardens. He also still held the two adjacent tenements we heard of before. His daughters later inherit and buy half each; Fanny Freeman who later marries Richard Chapman, paid £900 for four cottages (which had replaced the earlier two tenements) i.e. Nos.28-34, the stonemason's yard, and the Stonemason's Arms, by then occupied by Messrs Bullard & Co. Her sister, married to Edmund Balls, executor, retained land to the north, and they must have built Nos.42 & 44. Richard Chapman and the children inherit, and when he dies in 1926, the property (by this time, one shop and three cottages and stonemason's yard) is sold. We have the sale notices. The properties were bought individually by Messrs Pert, Dyball and Atkins. We don't know when the pub was sold.

Now to come back to Mary Berry and her bequest to Joseph Clover, the painter. We have very recently discovered that Joseph Clover and Mary Berry were very interested in a body or organisation called the

New Church, or the New Church of Jerusalem which was Swedenborgian in its thinking. Mary Berry became so interested that she bought in 1796 -

"all that now-erected meeting house, situate in Aylsham, including seats, pews and other features now standing and being therein, and also all that cottage or West End of a tenement, situate in Aylsham aforesaid, near the said meeting house and now in the occupation of William Shreeve; and also, all those pieces and parcels of land adjoining and belonging to the said premises, or to some part thereof."

Her daughter, Ann, Thomas Clover and Dr.Saunders, surgeon, became trustees, and a letter from her in 1798 to Mr.Clover reveals how involved she was in its aims and management. I think this may be the reason for her leaving her property to Joseph.

You will have observed that we have made no mention of the Mill and Mill properties which are such a significant feature of the Millgate scene. This is because they are not mentioned in the deeds until 1856, by which time they are no longer Parmeter property, but have passed into the hands of the Bullock brothers. There are a number of references to members of the Parmeter family buying smallish properties, but not their major possessions, such as the Mill and the Maltings, or the Mill House and Bure House. We have sale notices for the Mills in 1907 and 1914.

You may also have observed that we have made no mention of Tom Bishop's house [Bridge House], because it too, is not mentioned in the deeds. He may find this a bit hard, So, in thanking him for making this fund of material available, I should like to throw him a crumb of comfort. In this new session, we hope to extend our investigations into other

historical material, both in our Aylsham archives and in the Norwich Record Office, and to relate the new information we find there to what we have already learnt from the deeds.

In the meantime, let me draw your attention to an extract from the Court Book of Aylsham Wood dated 24th.June 1771. It speaks of Robert Parmeter being admitted to:

"all those two messuages adjacent, situate near the bridge in Aylsham wherein Hamond Beeton, John Beeton and John Smith now live; with the yards and gardens to the same belonging, and also to all that meadow called and known by name of Pond Meadow lying in Aylsham adjacent in part to the yards and garden of the said messuages containing 1 acre, 3 roods and now in the occupation of Michael Francis; which premises by different description, the said Thomas Spurrell was admitted on the surrender of John Webster and his wife Hannah at a court on 15th.October 1753,"

I think this may be Tom's house - Pond meadow is easily and reliably identifiable. I promise to take the investigation of the Webster property of 1753 further before the next AGM!

--ooOoo--

HELP! WANTED for ORAL HISTORY

The society's plans for building up an Oral History Archive have never materialised, and yet this is the area of Local History where delay means the possible loss of valuable memories.

ARE YOU INTERESTED? - Volunteers are wanted to help organise this. We have all the necessary equipment. All we need are bodies. Please contact JANE NOLAN or VALERIE BELTON.

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st.AUGUST 1991

Income

Sale of Newsletters & publications	44.10
Subscriptions	352.50
Flag Fen visit	195.50
Binham Priory visit	115.00
Mystery coach tour	100.30
Millgate course fees	460.90
Visitors' fees	9.25
Coffee money	27.40
Party income	242.50
Deposit A/C interest	15.57
Transfer from petty cash a/c	25.00
Net transfers from deposit a/c to current a/c	13.27
TOTAL INCOME	1601.29

Balances, 1st September 1990

Bank current account	13.02
Bank deposit account	243.27
Petty cash	1.20
	<u>257.49</u>

£1858.78

Treasurer. Mrs.W.MacGregor

Expenditure

Officers' expenses reimbursed	114.94
Printing and photocopying	313.59
Party costs	148.69
Town Hall rent	44.00
Friendship club rent	318.75
Binham Priory visit	115.00
Flag Fen visit	186.80
Mystery coach tour	90.00
CUFMB Millgate	147.00
Lecture fees	50.00
Friendship Club donation	10.00
Research Committee Sub.	3.00
Transfer from petty cash a/c to current a/c	25.00
Net transfers from deposit to current a/c	13.27

TOTAL EXPENDITURE

1580.04

Balances 31st.August 1991

Bank current account	33.10
Bank deposit account	245.57
Petty cash	<u>.07</u>
	278.74

£1858.78

Audited 7.10.1991. Graeme Johnston, Accountant