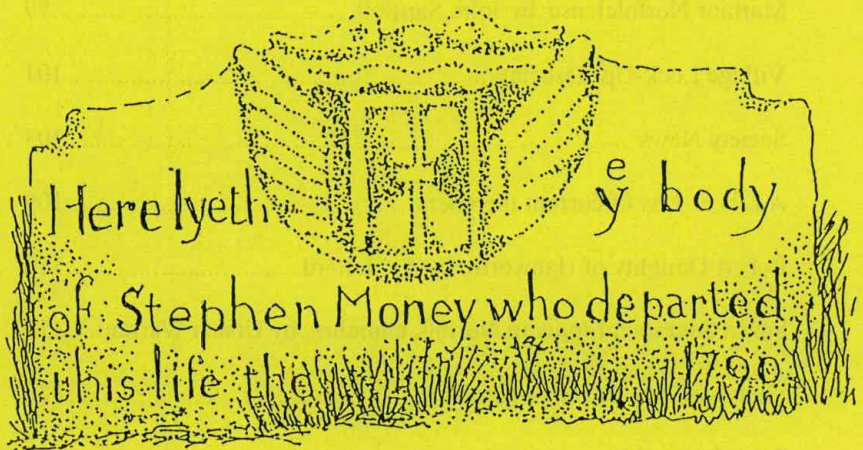


# AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



## THE WINGED HOURGLASS

Vol. 5 No. 4

December 1997

The **JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER** is the Quarterly publication of the Aylsham Local History Society. It is published each March, June, September and December, and is issued free to members. Contributions are welcomed from members and others. Contact:-

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## CONTENTS

Marmor Norfolciense, by John Sapwell.....	99
Village Lock-Up Association .....	101
Society News .....	103
A.L.H.S. List of current members .....	109
Robert Doughty of Hanworth, by T. Mollard .....	110
Seven Sacrament fonts in Norfolk churches, by Ursula Warren.....	114
Short story, by Frank Stageman .....	125
Some Diary dates.....	126
And finally .....	126
Jim Daines.....	127
Society Balance sheet. 1996-7.....	128

### FRONT COVER

Illustration of the winged hourglass design on a tombstone in Corpusty churchyard, taken from Peter Holman's new book, *"Six High and lonely churches"*. Just published by the society.



AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY  
SOCIETY

## JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

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### MARMOR NORFOLCIENSE. John Sapwell

In the days of his early literary struggles in London, when he once finished a letter to his publisher, Mr. Cave, with the subscription "*I am, Sir, your impransus*"<sup>1</sup> Dr. Samuel Johnson, actuated by a sense of frustration combined with patriotic feeling, produced a number of social and political satires in sympathy with the current opposition to the Whig government then in power under the premiership of Sir Robert Walpole.

Probably the best of these was his "*London*" an imitation of the third satire of Juvenal, the anonymous publication of which evoked the tribute - "*here is an unknown poet, greater even than Pope*". One of the lesser was published as a shilling pamphlet, in 1739, under the title *Marmor Norfolciense, or an essay on an ancient prophetic inscription in monkish rhyme lately discover'd near Lynn in Norfolk.* by Probus Britannicus. In the first part, Johnson relates how a farmer ploughing in a field near Lynn discovered a large square block of marble on which was incised a number of verses in rhymed Latin couplets, and how the stone accidentally came to the notice of a gentleman, "*distinguished by the patronage of the Maecenas of Norfolk*" who



copied the inscription and forwarded it to him with a free translation in verse.

The inscription takes the form of a prophecy embodying various allegorical figures foretelling and lamenting the state of the country and the world at the time should be found, on which Johnson proceeds to make a subtle though somewhat ponderous commentary in the manner of the time.

The allusions are somewhat obscure today, but may have been more apparent to contemporary readers. Red serpents, swarming over and devouring the country may refer to King George's redcoats, and the simile of a horse sucking the blood of the lion is probably intended to signify the white horse of the Hanoverian arms spending the British tax-payers money.

The whole pamphlet clearly inveighs against the Hanoverian succession, the government and the Prime Minister, and also the illiteracy of army officers and lawyers. The pamphlet did not excite a great deal of notice. Comparatively few copies were sold and it is correspondingly rare<sup>2</sup>.

A story that, although published under a pseudonym, the author was identified by those in authority and a warrant issued for his arrest, which obliged him to go into hiding for a time, has been discredited. In 1775, one of Johnson's enemies writing under the name of "Tribunus" published a new edition, "*with notes and a dedication to Samuel Johnson, L.L.D*" in which he charged Johnson with inconsistency on account of having accepted a pension from King George III, but this shaft hardly reached its mark as the republication was unknown to Johnson until Boswell brought it to his notice about a year later, when he scoffed at it. As far as the finding of the stone is concerned, the whole thing was a palpable hoax, the inscription being Johnson's own composition which he used as a peg on which to hang his satire. The only significance of Norfolk as the county in which it was alleged to

have been found, may lie in the fact that it was the native county of Sir Robert Walpole who is presumably the "*Maecenas of Norfolk*".

#### NOTES

1. It is interesting that Dr. Sapwell did not bother to translate or explain the word 'Impransus'. Perhaps he felt confident that any intelligent reader would have instantly recognised it, and explanations would be superfluous.  
Times have changed since this article was written, and for the benefit of anyone else as ignorant as the editor, I discover that 'Impransus' means 'unbreakfasted' or 'fasting', clearly alluding to his impoverished state.
2. There is a copy of the book in the cathedral library.

---ooOoo---

## THE VILLAGE LOCK-UP ASSOCIATION

Tom Mollard

Now, be perfectly honest. Had you ever heard of the Village Lock-Up Association? I certainly had not, and I must confess that when I did first hear of it I thought it might be some sort of leg-pull. But then I thought, why shouldn't there be such a society? It takes all sorts to make a world. We are interested in local history, and the Village Lock-Up Association is simply pursuing a rather narrower field in the same subject area.

I first came across the existence of the association when one of their questionnaires was sent to Aylsham Town Council. The first paragraph of the covering letter sets out the society's purpose and reads thus:-

The National Register of Village Lock-Ups is an exciting project being undertaken by the Village Lock-Up Association, and will for the first time identify and record Britain's village lock-ups, stocks,

pillories, gallows, gibbets, whipping posts and other early detention and punishment devices. There has never before been an inventory made of these unique structures, and our findings will provide important information about those which exist and an indication of those which have been lost.

The survey will also identify who are the owners and keyholders, and chronicle whether the buildings are accessible and open to members of the public. . . .

As the questionnaire runs into several pages seeking detailed answers to the most obscure questions, the Town Clerk, very shrewdly passed it straight over to our town archivist, Ron Peabody. Ron has not been feeling very well since then, and I am not surprised. Looking through the numerous questions, I realise that I would simply not have known where to start.

One section of the questions was a complete eye-opener. This is section F [so you realise there are five previous sections to this] quaintly headed "Other ancient detention and punishment devices" In this section the survey wishes to establish whether our town ever possessed any of the following implements of correction as part of the equipment in its lock-up:-

- ☐ Axe and Block
- ☐ Blinding knife
- ☐ Branding Irons
- ☐ Breast ripper
- ☐ Chain flails
- ☐ Disembowelment Rack
- ☐ Guillotine
- ☐ Hatchet for cutting off hands
- ☐ Head crusher
- ☐ Knee splitter
- ☐ The Rack
- ☐ Red Hot pincers and tongs
- ☐ Skull splitter

- ☐ Thumbscrews
- and (on a gentler note)*
- ☐ Wrist & Leg irons.

This is by no means a complete list. These are just the ones I might make an intelligent guess at recognising. What on earth might these others be?:-

- ☐ Cat's Paw
- ☐ Darbies
- ☐ Heretic's fork
- ☐ Ne'er-do-well's necklaces
- ☐ Noise maker's fifes

I shudder to think, and we are still no where near to listing all the items. I know I am prejudiced. I am fascinated by all aspects of local history, and I know we could all be regarded as cranks by people who are not at all interested in the subject, but in a way, I feel glad (and relieved) that all our society involves itself in, is struggling to decipher unreadable documents, or ploughing through hundreds of names in a census return.

Rather than recording the number of disembowelment racks into a national database. However, if any member is interested, I have the address of the Village lock-Up Association. I wonder if Ron has finished answering the other questions?

---ooOoo---

## SOCIETY NEWS

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING** - was held at the Friendship Club on 9th. October '97. Approximately fifty members and visitors attended. This was a most significant AGM, as following the death of



our former Chairman, Jane, and aware that our Secretary, Valerie, had some time ago indicated that she wished to resign from her post, it was clear that several changes of officers and committee would need to take place.

Vice Chairman, Peter Holman conducting the meeting, quite appropriately held us all in one minute's silence as a tribute to Jane, and we also remembered our other member, Jim Daines, who has also died since our last AGM. A letter was also read from our distant member, Canon Jack Vyse, our first Chairman, now retired in Lincolnshire, who wrote wishing the society well. His good wishes were accompanied by his usual generous donation.

The Secretary's report reviewed the previous year's activities of lectures, visits etc. and as this was to be Valerie's last report as secretary, she was warmly thanked for the many years of service in that post which had contributed greatly to the successful running of the society. Peter presented Valerie with a small gift from the members as a mark of our appreciation.

The editor reported on the *Journal & Newsletter* and made his annual plea for members to keep up a supply of material for publication, as each year it became harder to find suitable items, and the continuing success of the *Journal* depended on members keeping the editor supplied with articles, and reports on the work that they were involved in. Fortunately for the editor, several members do help and the editor was delighted to be able to acknowledge contributions from Julian Eve, Ron Fiske, Derek Lyons, Liz Gale and Ron Peabody together with the source material provided by David Walker which had led to the appearance of several articles of interest. Sincere thanks go to these people and others without whose help this journal would consist of 32 blank pages.

The editor digressed into reporting on material received by the society which would be lodged in the Town Archives and which would be of value to our members and others. Firstly, we should receive the surviving papers of Captain Beard which largely consist of material



published over many years in the EDP. This has been brought together and photocopied by Julian Eve. These papers have come to the society via Liz Gale. We are also indebted to Liz Gale for the second item which consists of 13 oral history recordings prepared by herself and Derek Lyons, together with transcripts of these recordings. These will be added to the existing recordings made by Ron Peabody many years ago and a catalogue of the whole collection will appear in the *Journal* as soon as possible.

Finally, a set of the Archdeacons transcripts of the Aylsham Parish Registers covering a large part of the 17th. century have also been deposited in the Town archives. This particular study was prepared by a group within the Archives Group consisting of Frank Stageman, Annie Alston, Jane Nolan and possibly others. Many of the available transcripts in the Norfolk Record Office have been photocopied, transcribed and the whole work indexed. The original documents are far from easy to transcribe, so this is a valuable contribution to Aylsham's records. The actual dates covered are:-

1600-1603    1623, 1628-1630,    1633, 1665-1666,    1668,  
1670,            1677, 1693-1695,    and 1698.

A brief report on publications recorded that a new edition of *Aylsham in 1821* had appeared, and a small book by Peter Holman was almost ready for publication and should be out before Christmas. Details of this should appear elsewhere in this issue of the *Journal*. Peter's book - *Six high and lonely churches* - is the result of the UEA course in Aylsham last year. Another product of the same course is a book by Julian Eve on the *Saints and Painted screens of North East Norfolk*. It is a great regret that the society has not sufficient resources to publish this book also, but the extensive and essential colour printing precludes this. However, a limited number of copies have been produced by the author and can be seen in the Cathedral Library in Norwich and also in the library of the Norfolk and Norwich Archaeological Society. Two further publications lie in the future and will be reported on at the appropriate time.

Liz Gale reported on the final work of the Oral History Group that she and Derek Lyons had been involved in, and she appealed for others to follow up the work that she and Derek had started. It is particularly valuable work and would increase in importance as the new Record Office was developed on the University site and as the sound archive to be developed there grew in size.

Our Treasurer's report was given by Betty Gee. This turned out to be Betty's final report as Treasurer, and it recorded a healthy financial state of affairs. [see page 128 for full financial statement]

The election of Officers followed resulting in the following:-

Chairman	- Peter Holman
Vice-Chairman	- Julian Eve
Hon. Secretary.	- Mrs Betty Gee
Hon. Treasurer	- Mrs Gillian Barwick

Hon. membership secretary continues to be Mrs. Sheila Mollard.

Committee elections resulted as follows:-

Geoffrey Gale	John Harris	Derek Lyons
Mrs Jean McChesney	Mrs Ursula Warren	Tom West

Discussion on society activities followed. The Chairman reported that only a small take-up had occurred of the UEA course under Dr. Joby. Only seven persons had signed up so far. As a result the scale of the course has been altered to the lecture being every fortnight instead of weekly and the course fee has been halved to £35.

It is hoped that a small group of members might be formed to organise the Winter Party, and also that a member might be persuaded to take over the organising of outings. The subject of outings was discussed at some length, together with the suggestion that we might align with other organisations to share joint outings. Although no final details were decided on, it was clear from the views expressed that there

is a wealth of ideas amongst members on places to visit and no doubt the committee members would crystalize these into positive arrangements.

The meeting concluded with a talk. The programmed item was to have been presented by Joan Turville-Petre, but as she was unable to attend the gap was filled by Julian Eve who talked entertainingly on the Saints and painted rood screens of NE Norfolk - the subject of his project on the recent UEA course. This was illustrated by fascinating slides showing the saints and their emblems that are still recorded on the 152 surviving rood screens in the 656 mediæval Norfolk parish churches. These are too many to list individually but it was particularly interesting to see the oldest screen in Norfolk [Edingthorpe] and the one remaining complete rood loft at Upper Sheringham.

**Norfolk in the age of Stonehenge** - This talk, at the Friendship Club on October 30th., attracted over 40 members and other visitors on what was a cold and frosty night. Trevor Ashwin, the speaker, is a professional archaeologist from the Norfolk Archaeological Unit, who worked for seven years largely on the route of the Norwich southern by-pass excavating and recording ahead of the road contractors who were digging through an area rich in archaeological sites.

The Neolithic Age seems so remote that I felt few would venture out on such an unwelcoming night to hear about a distant past too old to have left any documentary record. The sizeable audience was well rewarded. Mr. Ashwin highlighted the problems at the outset, by stressing that the period is so remote that it is hard to visualise it. It is twice as far back in the mists of time from the days of the Roman Empire, than the Romans are distant from today.

Nevertheless, a wealth of sites exist, particularly in Norfolk, all telling something of that age. The most important is the Arminghall Wood Henge discovered in the 1920s by the aerial photographers that World War I produced. Many sites are now only identifiable by their marks in the crops and fields as the surface remains are long ploughed out by continuous agriculture. Many barrows and burial mounds do still exist. The only regret is that most of what survives records burial or ceremonial features and not the domestic life of the Neolithic Age

Mr. Ashwin's talk was wide ranging and well illustrated by numerous excellent slides. He is well versed in his subject and period as one can confirm from reading his article in '*A Festival of Norfolk Archaeology*' published by the N. & N. Archaeological Society in 1996, where he writes of "Neolithic & Bronze Age Norfolk". He passed on his enthusiasm and interest to a receptive audience. T.W.M.

**The Glaven Ports** - This last talk of 1997 attracted the largest audience of the year to the Friendship Club on 27th. November, to hear Jonathan Hooton on the history of the Glaven ports of Blakeney, Cley and Wiveton. The audience was well rewarded with an excellent talk, well illustrated, on the rise and fall of these local ports. The speaker teaches geography at the Notre Dame High School and was well versed in his topic, having used the Glaven ports as the subject of his dissertation. This has since been turned into an excellent book, a most comprehensive survey on the subject. We even covered the pronunciation of 'Cley'. From the evidence of earlier spellings on maps, it would seem that the village has been called "Clay" or "Cly" at different periods in its history, but, on balance, "Clay" seems the favourite.

We learnt how these ports ranked high in importance in their early years, with a growing foreign and coastal trade. Ships sailed for Icelandic waters, and south to the Mediterranean. Physical conditions later affected this growth. Shifting sands and sea surges, or "rages" altered the waterways, and the shingle bank grew steadily westwards. This process continues to this day. The heyday was during Elizabethan times, and thereafter a steady decline set in. Ships also became larger and needed deeper water for navigation, and the trade drifted elsewhere.

Fortunately for us, the possible revival that the railways brought about never took place, and we enjoy the benefit of an unspoilt coastline. The publication of Mr. Hooton's book, "*The Glaven Ports*" was through the Blakeney History Group. This is a society like our own, and a publication of the size, scope and quality that this one possesses is a great tribute to the members, as well as to the author. T.W.M.

---oooOooo---



## AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

### *List of current members.*

Each year, following the Annual General Meeting, at which membership subscriptions become due, we publish the list of members who have renewed their subscriptions, plus new members who have joined the society.

This issue of the *Journal* goes out to all members of the society, but the next issue (for March 1998) will only be distributed to current members and the circulation will be based on the list of paid-up members recorded below. If you wish to continue receiving issues of the *Journal & Newsletter* now is your opportunity to get your name on the list! (*With the usual apologies to anyone who has renewed their subscription since the list was typed!*)

BALLS Mr. R  
BARWICK Mrs. G.  
BAYES, Mrs. R.  
BELTON Miss V.  
BIRD Mrs. M.  
BRATT Miss R.  
COOK Mrs. M  
COOTE Mr. A  
CORBIN Mr & Mrs.N  
CROUCH Mr.R  
DAINES, Mrs E.  
DUCKER Mr. G  
EVE Dr. & Mrs.J  
FLETCHER Mrs.G  
GALE Mr & Mrs.G  
GARDNER Miss O  
GEE Mrs.B  
GRIMBLE Mr.J.  
HARRIS Mr. J  
HAWKE Mr & Mrs D.A  
HAWKINS Mr & Mrs.A.  
HOLMAN Mr & Mrs.P  
HOWES, Miss B.  
JOHNSTON Mr.G  
LAMB Mrs.J.  
LLOYD, Mrs T.

LONG Mrs. M.  
LOWE Mr. B.  
LYONS Mr.D.  
McCHESNEY Mrs.J  
McMANUS Mrs. S.M.  
MOLLARD Mr & Mrs T  
MORRIS Mr & Mrs.J.J.L  
NEWELL Mrs. J.  
NOBBS Mr. G.  
NOLAN Miss E.  
NOLAN Mr F.  
PEABODY Mr & Mrs R.  
PINK Mr P.  
ROWE, Mrs. M.  
SEWELL Mr. M.  
SHAW Mr & Mrs A  
SHAW Mr & Mrs. J  
SHERINGHAM Mrs.J  
STEVENS Mr & Mrs C.  
STEWART, Mrs. L.  
TULLOCH, Mr & Mrs. B.  
TURVILLE-PETRE Mrs J  
ULPH Mr.C.  
VAN REES, Mr & Mrs R.  
VAUGHAN-LEWIS, Mrs.M.  
VYSE Revd. Canon J

WARREN Dr. & Mrs J.  
WARREN, Mrs. R.  
WEST Mr.T  
WILLIAMS Mr & Mrs. G.  
WILSON Ms. C.R.  
WINTLE Mrs. S.

## ROBERT LEE DOUGHTY of HANWORTH

Tom Mollard

On 31st. March 1771, Mr. Robert Lee Doughty of Hanworth Hall was sent his quarterly account, up to Lady day 1771, for his college accommodation at Trinity College, Cambridge.

I am grateful to David Walker who lent me the original, here illustrated at a reduced size. It is a simple 10 x 7½ inches sheet printed on one side only with a list of possible expenses. It had been addressed on the reverse, folded, sealed with wax and sent through the postal service of the day and franked "CAMBRIDGE". There is no indication of what it might have cost to be sent through the post.

Robert's quarterly expenses read:-

Arrears	27 - 4 - 6¼
Bed maker	0 - 15 - 0
Butler and commons	5 - 3 - 5
Chamber	1 - 10 - 0
Coals	0 - 19 - 0
Cobler [sic]	0 - 5 - 0
Cook	3 - 0 - 0
Glazier	0 - 4 - 0
Grocer	0 - 18 - 2
Laundress	1 - 5 - 0
Taylor [sic]	4 - 17 - 0
Tutor	4 - 0 - 0
TOTAL	<u>50 - 1 - 1¼</u>
Caution	25 - 0 - 0
Table	<u>1 - 8 - 0</u>
	<u>26 - 8 - 0</u>

Mr. Doughty's  
to Lady Jay 1771

Quarterly Account

	£.	s.	d.
Apothecary			
Arrears	27	4	6 $\frac{1}{4}$
Barber			
Beamaker	0	15	0
Bookseller			
Brazier			
Butler and Commons	5	3	5
Cash			
Chamber	1	10	0
Coals	0	19	0
Cobler	0	5	0
Cook	3	0	0
Draper			
French Master			
Furniture			
Glazier	0	4	0
Glover			
Grocer	0	18	2
Hatter			
Income			
Joyner			
Laundrefs	1	5	0
Milliner			
Painter			
Scullion			
Sempstrefs			
Skoemaker			
Smith			
Table-linen, per Annum			
Taylor	4	17	0
Tutor	4	0	0
Window-tax			
	50	1	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
Cautions	25	0	0
Table	1	8	0
	26	8	0
	50	1	1 $\frac{1}{4}$
	26	8	0
	23	13	1 $\frac{1}{4}$

Sir  
Agreeable to your Request, I have detached to you your quarterly account after deducting your Cautions Money, and a little in your Room, which was your Property, there remains the underwritten Balance in my favour I am with real Regard  
Your Humble Servant  
Edward Gregory  
Trinity Hall March 31<sup>st</sup> 1771.

To

Robert Lee Doughty Esq.  
at Harborough  
near Ryeham

North

1851



50 - 1 - 1¼

26 - 8 - 0

£23 - 13 - 1¼

The brief note along the side reads:-

Sir,

Agreeable to your request, I have dispatched to you your quarter's account, after deducting your caution money and the appraised value of a table in your room which was your property, there remains the underwritten balance in my favour. I am with real Regard

Your Humble Servant,

*Edward Gregory*

Trinity Hall, March 31st. 1771

It is interesting to see that Robert was perhaps a bit of a dandy, as his tailor's bill was more than he paid for his tutor. The address is also interesting:-

To.

Robert Lee Doughty Esqr.  
at Hannorth  
near Aylsham.

It gives a good indication of how Hanworth was probably pronounced in the 1700s. It still reached its correct destination!

---ooOoo---

## SEVEN SACRAMENT FONTS IN NORFOLK CHURCHES

Ursula Warren

The altar and the font are the most venerated of all church furnishings and are the essence of Christian worship, but the font is more accessible than the altar, which is almost hidden in the sanctuary. Indeed, before the Reformation the chancel was almost cut off by the rood screen, and the altar became mysterious, out of reach, the ultimate, whilst the font, positioned near the west door is the start of the path of faith and salvation. Or, as Francis Bond writes, *"in the first three centuries of Christianity, to enter on the Christian novitiate was to many, to take the first step on the Christian road to martyrdom"*

Richly decorated fonts seem a far cry from the idyllic simplicity of . . . *"and by the baptism of thy well-beloved Son Jesus Christ in the River Jordan, didst sanctify water to the mystical washing away of sin"* as described in the Book of Common Prayer, but without doubt, they have become of enormous interest, and some of them, of great beauty.

Earliest baptisms were adult, conducted by a bishop, in the open air by running water. Such a ceremony is often depicted on old tapestries. As a consequence sites of churches were frequently positioned near a holy well, a stream or a pool. It has been suggested that persecuted Christians may well have been immersed in the Roman Baths. The earliest baptistries may well have developed from this sort of situation.

As it was considered unacceptable, up to the Middle Ages, to enter the holy precincts of a church until purification, the first part of the service took place in the porch. The local priest, and not the bishop, was allowed to officiate. He instructed the adult converts, met the parents and sponsors of a baby and performed the first part of the service administering salt as a symbol of wisdom, before moving on to the font, which was always positioned at the end of the nave by the west door.

Mortlock and Roberts write that when a child was baptised, it was swaddled for the service in the Chrysom cloth or sheet, which often belonged to the parish. If the child died before the mother had been Churched, it was buried in the Chrysom cloth. Thus becoming a chrysom child. In this form it was represented on tombs and brasses. There is one on the John Clippesby brass at **Clippesby St Peter**. It is not easily seen as it is in a dark corner of the sanctuary. The pathetic bundle lies at the feet of its parents, charmingly guarded by three angels.

Enormous importance was placed on being baptised, because it was seriously thought that without this sacrament a person was destined, even little children, to Limbo as they had been born in a state of Original Sin. Therefore, sickly babies were baptised immediately, and healthy ones when they were about three days old. Baptism is a symbol of re-birth and unless we are born again, we cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven, so it is essential for one's future well-being in the next life.

Although fonts had always been kept locked for the double purpose of cleanliness and for stopping the use of the water for superstitious purposes, in the fifteenth century font covers became an elaborate feature of many a church, and were lofty, tabernacled covers, masterpieces of the joiner's and painter's craft. The cover at **Terrington St. Clement** is fitted with doors, which on being opened reveal paintings depicting the baptism of Christ and two scenes from the Temptation. At Saints Peter & Paul, **Salle**, the tall font cover is suspended from a bracket in the ringers' gallery. The fact that the cover has lost the tracery between its sixteen slender buttresses gives it a lightness and delicacy that cannot have been intended and makes it very beautiful.

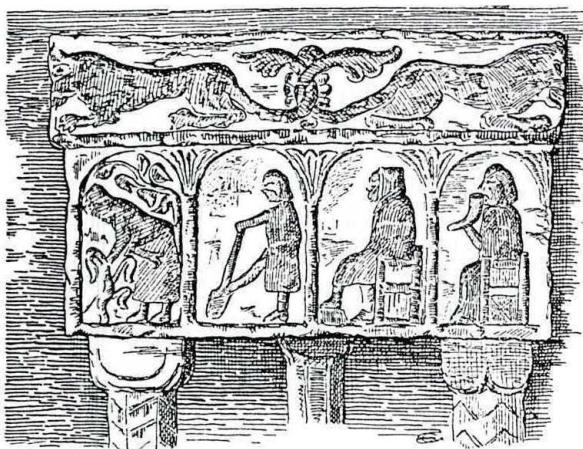
There were many inscriptions on fonts. The most common, a Greek palindrome, the translation of which is "*Wash my sins and not my face only*". There are many emblems on mediæval fonts; emblems of the Trinity being a regular feature. One was the trefoil design of three inter-locking circles representing the idea of the three persons of

the Godhead. Another called Solomon's seal, which was a figure of God as King, with Christ on the Cross and a Dove of Peace hovering over them. Yet another was a shield design, linking indissolubly Pater, Filius et Spiritus Sanctus, with Deus at the centre of the shield.

The Evangelistic symbols of fonts have John represented by an eagle, Luke by an ox. Matthew by a man and Mark by a lion. All are winged. There is a wonderful lion on the font at St. Michael's, **Aylsham**. Instruments of the Passion were often carved too. They are, of course, Christ's Cross, the Crown of Thorns, the Spear thrust into his side, the cup of vinegar and the reed and sponge by which the vinegar was offered.

Secular subjects also figure on fonts. The early Norman font at **Burnham Deepdale** made of Barnack stone, tells the story of the labours of the months. Francis Bond interprets it thus:-

<i>January</i>	A man carousing
<i>February</i>	A man warming his toes.
<i>March</i>	A man digging



BURNHAM DEEPPDALE: FONT

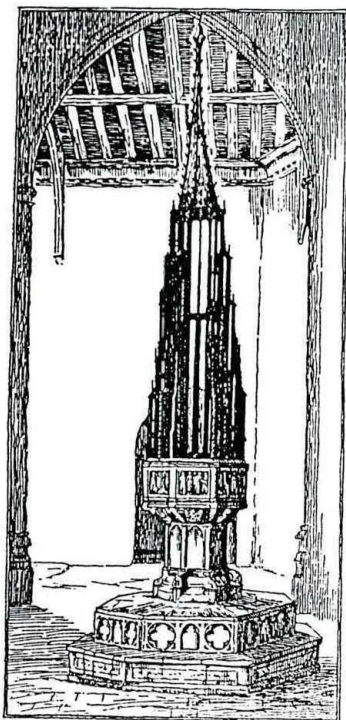


<i>April</i>	A man pruning a plant
<i>May</i>	A woman carrying a Rogationtide flag
<i>June</i>	Weeding
<i>July</i>	Mowing
<i>August</i>	Binding a sheaf
<i>September</i>	Threshing
<i>October</i>	Grinding corn
<i>November</i>	Pig killing
<i>December</i>	Four people feasting at Christmas.

On the west side is a decorative panel with trees of life and lions, interwoven in the top frieze with a vine (thought to have been grown locally)

Among the great treasures of Norfolk churches are the *Seven Sacrament Fonts*. H.O. Mansfield describes them as "*the crowning glory of the pre-reformation church*", and I intend to see and photograph some of them. The seven panels contain representations of the seven holy sacraments - Baptism, Confirmation, Confession, Eucharist, Ordination to Holy Orders, Marriage and Extreme Unction. On the eighth panel the choice of subject varies from the Baptism of Christ [seen at **Sloley**] The Assumption of the Virgin, or the Crucifixion. Because they emphasised these sacraments of the Roman church many were severely mutilated at the Reformation.

Of the 25 in Norfolk which include Alderford, Binham, Brooke, Burgh. St. Mary, Cley, South Creake, East Dereham, Earsham, Gayton Thorpe, Gorleston, Loddon, West Lynn, Marsham, Martham, Norwich St. Peter Mancroft, Norwich Cathedral, Seething, Walpole St. Peter, Little Walsingham, Wendling, Great Witchingham. The least mutilated according to H.O. Mansfield, are in the churches at Gresham, Salle, Sloley and Walsoken. C.L.S. Linnell, in his church guide says of **Salle** that "*on entering the church one is struck by the beauty magnificence and proportion of the font and its cover.*" Sadly, the day I visited, it was full of workmen and scaffolding which made photography difficult.



SALL: THE FONT

At the foot of the font were the figures of the four evangelists, seated on chairs with their symbols, but only the feet and tail of St. Luke's ox and St. Mark's lion remains. One speciality of this font is that seven of the angels hold symbols corresponding to the panel above:-

Sacrament of the altar

*Altar stone*

Holy Orders *Chalice*

Holy Baptism *Chrismatory*

Confirmation *Mitre*

Penance *Scourge*

Holy Matrimony *Lyre*

Holy Unction

*a figure representing  
the soul of the sick  
man.*

The eighth panel is of the Crucifixion. Despite the inconvenience, I was pleased that work was being done to the fabric of this magnificent church, but was troubled at the thought of the undoubtedly enormous cost.

St. Mary's church, **Burgh-next-Aylsham**, is a complete contrast. Although small, it is light and intimate. The anonymous writer of the church guide says of the font, "*Although it has been battered and defaced (probably by the Puritans) it is still a superb example of the mediæval stonemason's art - serving not only as a teaching aid for for folks who could not read, but also as a record of church life of the fifteenth century.*" As at Salle, immediately beneath the bowl are angels

holding the sacred emblems:-

Holy Unction	A priest holding a Chrismatory
Marriage	A Book
Penance	Scourges
Baptism	A naked, praying figure representing innocence
Confirmation	Emblems of the Holy Trinity
Ordination	Chrismatory
Mass	A chalice

The eighth panel shows the side view of a figure in habit and cowl kneeling before an altar. What was standing upon the altar is now defaced. It may have been a crucifix and the kneeling figure St. Gregory, who was thought to have received visions of Our Lord whilst celebrating the Holy Eucharist, - the emblem for this panel is a scroll. At the foot of the stem are the emblems of the four evangelists. Round the stem are four figures with shields, alternating with blank shields and flowers. Mortlock and Roberts say that this *"has the distinction of being signed. The mason's mark can be seen incised below the Penance panel."* This church is set in an idyllic pastoral setting, with its churchyard stretching down to what John Betjeman aptly describes as, *"the lap, lap, lapping of the weedy Bure."*

All Saints, **Marshall**, is not my favourite church. It was, unlike Salle and Burgh, locked, and I had to get the key from the new vicarage which was difficult to find being tucked away behind an enormous graveyard. In the church guide, Richard Butler-Stoney writes that,

*"the font was turned when moved in 1880 from under the arcade in the north aisle, and this explains why the Eucharist panel is not facing east."*

The panels depict:-

Baptism	A child immersed in font
Confirmation	The bishop's head has gone but his mitre remains. Arthur Mee writes <i>"in the confirmation panel are babies in arms recalling the fact that before the</i>

	<i>Reformation babies were sometimes confirmed at their Christening</i>
Resurrection	Christ seated on a rainbow and angels coming down to open the graves
Penance	Priest in chair under lead roof with devil slinking away
Matrimony	Bride and groom clasp hands
Ordination	Bishop lays his hands on head of priest.
Eucharist	Sanctus bell hangs from wall bracket.
The eighth panel is of the Resurrection or Last Judgement.	

Below the bowl are a ring of angels with wings to hold up the baptised; two of them carry shields which might have referred to the donors. The stem of the font is carved. As a point of some interest, I discovered from Lady Harrod's book that Titus Oates's father had once been rector here. Nothing to do with the font, but as I walked up the centre aisle I saw on the floor this uncompromising piece of honesty:-

*Sarah Beard (d.1757) aged 58*  
*"To die, I must*  
*To stay, I'd rather*  
*I go, I must*  
*I know not whither."*

With that thought I left the church.

*"A thing of beauty is a joy for ever."* John Keats's words came to mind as I stood in front of the font at All Saints church **Gresham**. Arthur Mee writes, *"The greatest treasure of this church is its font, famous even in this county of splendid fonts. . . its groups are like gems of mediæval ivory."* The descriptions of the panels are taken from the church guide, written by Richard Butler-Stoney,

Eighth panel	The Baptism of Christ
Extreme Unction	A dying man propped up in bed being anointed with oil; his family gathered round him. Arthur Mee writes, <i>"the face of the dying man is</i>



	<i>portrayed with real sympathy."</i>
Confirmation	Five children in arms are being confirmed
Baptism	An infant being immersed in an octagonal font
Communion ]	The elevation of the Host; two candles on the altar, missal on a cushion and a Sanctus bell with a rope
Penance	Satan flies out of the penitent who is being scourged by an angel.
Holy Matrimony	Priest joining the hands of a couple. The bride wears a pointed head dress
Ordination	Ordinand kneels before the bishop who wears a mitre; the archdeacon behind wears a biretta, and an acolyte holds a censer.

Richard Butler- Stoney writes in his paragraph on memorials, *"The Rev. Francis Arden was a rector here for 54 years. His family tree includes Leofric, the Earl of Mercia, and Mary Arden, the mother of William Shakespeare"*.

The font at St. Bartholomew's church, **Sloley**, is indeed a thing of glory. When I visited, the aged churchwarden was there and he seemed delighted at my interest. He said he was worried about the future. The scaffolding was up outside and there was £15,000 worth of work to be done. There were also bills to replace the windows which were frequently being broken by local lads.

Six elderly ladies were cheerfully cleaning the church. They were very friendly and said how sad it was that the church had to be locked, but they had to protect their greatest treasure, the font.

I was told that the previous squire, Sir Richard Neville, had taken a great interest in the church and had written the church guide - *"with the help of clever men"*. These were, I think, Revd. W.T. Spurdens, The Rev. Mgr. H.S. Squirrell and Dr. A.C. Fryer. Since the squire's death the congregation has dwindled and the village seems disinterested.

The chief cleaning lady, the churchwarden's wife, wondered if

the font would be safer in the Castle Museum. Because of this troubled background, I did not have that wonderful feeling of awe and exhilaration I had felt at **Gresham**. Nevertheless, I was glad I had come and read the erudite guide with interest

The panels portrayed:-

**Extreme Unction** a sick person lying in bed, being anointed by the priest.

**Penance** Showing the penitent kneeling before the priest, the devil represented as a little dragon is being thrown out by the leg, by an angel wearing feathered trousers.

[It was too dark, even using a flash to photograph this amusing representation.]

**Confirmation** Infants in arms are being confirmed. The bishop is wearing a long robe with a cape, possibly his walking dress, because in the Middle Ages Confirmation was not always administered in a church. I read in the guide, *"This panel at Sloley is therefore one of the most interesting representations of an outdoor confirmation."* There is an interesting unattributable footnote - *"that children receive the Sacrament of Confirmation within three years of their birth . . . otherwise their parents shall fast on bread and water, every Friday until they are confirmed."*

**The Mass** The sculptor depicts the celebrant not, as is usually the case, in the act of elevating the Host after the Consecration, but turning towards the people for the bidding "Orate Fratres", or for the blessing.

**Baptism** The infant is being totally immersed, the almost invariable practice during the Middle Ages - hence the large fonts. Affusion or sprinkling being regarded only as an alternative in cases of necessity. In the 1662 Prayer Book comes the rubric *" . . . he shall dip it in the water discreetly and warily saying, I baptise . . . etc. but if they certify that the child is*

*weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it saying the aforesaid words."*

**Matrimony** The Bride and bridegroom are diminutive. Mgr. Squirrell writes that the marriage of very young people was common in the Middle Ages. There is an unattributable footnote - *"Margaret Tudor became the mother of Henry VII at the age of 14."*

**Ordination** - The tonsured candidate kneels before the bishop who is holding the pastoral staff in his left hand.

**Baptism of Our Lord** -by St. John the Baptist. The four evangelists appear on four sides of the stem and are interspersed with Tudor or Lancastrian roses. Beneath the panels are figures of winged angels holding shields. Arthur Mee writes - *"The rites of the sacraments from birth to death are shown in bold fashion, only equalled by the font at Gresham, and they form an exquisite gallery of fifteenth century custom and costume."*

I left my favourite church until last. Although I worship in St. Michael's, Aylsham, St. Margaret's, Cley-next-sea is where I go when the world is too much with me. Its surroundings epitomise all that I love in Norfolk - the horizon studded with churches - the shimmering saltings alive with wild life - the distant browsing cattle - the ever changing skies - and above all the tranquillity.

When I entered the church it was flooded with light pouring in from the clerestory with its great cinquefoil windows and the breathtaking perpendicular west window.

The font stands proudly, almost haloed with light, the easiest to photograph of the fonts I have visited. Sadly, one is instantly aware of its imperfections. On the stem there are no Evangelists, no evangelistic symbols, no winged angels beneath the panels and no shields. They have been defaced. Nothing remains. No hint of what has been. Margery Missen has written the church guide and I quote from this for the description of the panels:-

The western panel, now blank, probably contained a representation of the Crucifixion.

Extreme Unction Panel - with the priest above the dying person and assistants carrying a book and a vase of holy oil.

Holy Matrimony panel - The priest on the right of the couple with his server.

Penance panel - in the centre is a faldstool (A portable folding seat used by a bishop officiating out of his own cathedral.)

Confirmation panel - a group of children.

Baptism panel - the child is being baptised in a font similar to the one at Cley.

Ordination panel - the kneeling ordinand is tonsured (his head is shaven showing admittance to the priesthood.)

Mass panel - The sacred bell hangs in its case; servers carry tapers; the Host, held in the priest's hands was inlaid, probably with marble or other bright stone.

In a perfect world, the font at Sloley would be here, resplendently perfect, but we must be grateful for what remains of the Cley font in its magnificent setting. Some of its former glory still remains.

You cannot live in Norfolk and ignore its rich varied churches. They are ubiquitous. Sir John Betjeman has said, *"Norfolk would not be Norfolk without a church tower on the horizon, or round the corner, up a lane. We cannot spare a single Norfolk church. When a church has been pulled down, the country seems empty, or is like a necklace with a jewel missing."*



Whilst I was writing this essay, I visited six churches and was amazed at the riches they held, not only architecturally, but also in church furnishings. I realised that this was a great priceless heritage that we must fight to preserve for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

Today, redundancy, when applied to churches is as much a threat as the Reformation or the Commonwealth. We need government help in the form of more and more generous grants, as there is obviously a limit to the amount of money raised by coffee mornings, church fêtes and jumble sales.

Writing of Norfolk churches, Lady Harrod says, *"the landscape is dotted with them. In some parts they are like a fleet of ships riding the waves. They have survived storms before and will go on doing so."* I sincerely hope such optimism is not ill-founded.

---ooOoo---

## *Short Story*

### **"Send not for whom the bell tolls . . . "**

Just back home from an uncomfortable spell in hospital I decided to take a recuperative stroll through the village.

As I approached the church, I could see that a funeral service was evidently about to be held; a small group of soberly dressed people had gathered at the church gate and a hearse had just drawn up. Out of deference I crossed to the opposite side of the street, but as I drew nearer, thought I recognised one or two friends and acquaintances among the mourners already passing into the church. Now curious as to the identity of the deceased, I re-crossed the street just as the undertaker's men were removing the coffin from the hearse to transfer it to an old-fashioned four wheeled bier, giving me an opportunity to examine the plate on the coffin lid.

At first my mind refused to believe what I was reading. I stared hard; it was true, beyond doubt - the name was my own, with the correct

date of birth and the date of death on some day of the previous week.

Struck speechless, I returned to the opposite pavement where a small knot of people, strangers to me, had gathered. I wanted to ask questions, but realised I would not only find it difficult to frame the words, but was more than half afraid to do so, even had I been able to. I overheard muttered phrases like ".....nasty accident....." ".....poor devils....." and the like. Needing urgently to talk to somebody, I determined to seek out my friend, James.

Like me, James was a widower living alone, and I found him seated in his favourite place under a chestnut tree in the garden of his cottage. Without ceremony I said, *"You won't believe this, James - I can't myself, I think I've just witnessed my own funeral."*

James, always imperturbable, looked up and nodded. *"Fine"* he said. *"Mine was yesterday."*

*Frank Stageman.*

### **SOME DIARY DATES**

**NEW YEAR'S PARTY**- for members and friends on **30th. January 1998** cost £8 per head. Buffet Dinner, welcoming glass of punch, competition, good company, a good evening,

**FULL DAY OUTING** - planned for early May, but no firm date as yet. Visiting Ickworth House and Bury St. Edmunds with lunch between. More details later.

**....and finally,**

A father took his young son to see the House of Commons at work. They arrived in the public gallery just as the Chaplain opened the day's session with a prayer.

The boy asked his father, *"What did the vicar pray for all those people for?"*

Dad replied, *"He didn't. He just looked at them and then prayed for the country."*

### JIM DAINES died 1997

Jim Daines was another of our members who has sadly died since our last Annual Meeting. Although Jim was a regular attendee at our meetings, as a quiet unassuming man, he was not that widely known to many members. At the editor's request, Jim's wife Eileen, has kindly given more details of Jim's character and an indication of what a talented member our society has lost.

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Jim Daines was born in Norwich. He spent most of the Second World War repairing aeroplanes in Egypt, and then returned to England and married a Yorkshire lass.

He was always a keen sportsman, playing football and cricket and eventually becoming an umpire. He and his family moved to Aylsham in 1968. Unfortunately, his wife died suddenly in 1972, and he then spent a great deal of his time cycling round Norfolk country lanes and took up indoor and outdoor bowling and won a large number of trophies.

Jim and I met at the North Walsham Indoor Bowling club, and as I had half an acre of garden, I was delighted to find that he was a keen gardener who lived in a flat!

I also found out that he *"did a little scribbling"* To my complete surprise I found his sketches well worth framing and I have many on my walls to remind me of our happy years together.

*Eileen Daines*



# **AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY** **Account for the year ended 31st. August, 1997**

<u>1996</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>1997</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>1997</u>
256	Sale of Publications and Journals	56	116	Officers' expenses reimbursed	88
506	Subscriptions	636	282	Journal Printing & Photocopying	304
528	Receipts from Visits	76	468	Payments for Visits	67
376	Party Income	336	348	Party Costs	343
318	UEA Course Fees	534	335	UEA Course Costs	370
260	Antiques Evening	-	223	Antiques Evening	-
25	Visitors' Fees	28	84	Friendship Club Rent	126
11	Miscellaneous Donations	37	15	Methodist Hall Rent	-
33	Wright's Map Receipts	7	35	Quaker Room rent	35
20	Coffee Profit	30	-	Carnival Stall	10
15	Bank Interest	19	10	Donation	-
	Carnival Stall receipts	12	88	Lecture Fees	133
			20	Research Organisations Subscriptions	20
			58	Programme cards	-
2348	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<u>1771</u>	<u>2082</u>	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<u>1496</u>
	<u>Balance, 1st. September 1996:-</u>			<u>Balance, 31st. August 1997:-</u>	
60	Bank Treasurer Account	118	118	Bank Treasurer Account	79
352	Bank Moneymaster Account	362	362	Bank Moneymaster Account	628
10	Petty cash	16	16	Petty Cash	15
184	Girobank Publications account	376	376	Girobank Publications account	425
		<u>872</u>			<u>1147</u>
2954		<u>2643</u>	<u>2954</u>		<u>2643</u>

Checked with records and found to be correct, 8th October 1997. Graeme Johnston, Accountant; Treasurer, Mrs. B.M.A. Gee.