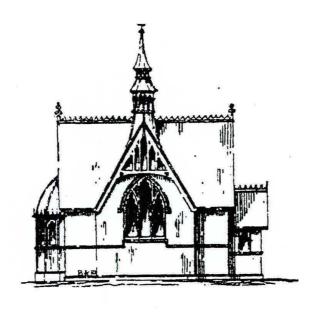
AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Tin Tabernacle

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AYLSHAM TRIBUNAL 1916 Elizabeth Gale

At the beginning of the 1914-18 war, many men with patriotic enthusiasm, volunteered to join the armed forces. By 1916 with the heavy loss of lives, particularly in France, more men were needed to replace those who had been killed in action. For some, conscription often caused hardship for their families, and employers were also affected when those whom they employed were called up.

Tribunals were established throughout the country and individuals could put forward a case for exemption from war service, either for themselves or for their employees. A Tribunal was formed in Aylsham, and one report in the Aylsham Archives, which in part reads like the script of a play, gives the details of one session.

27th MAY 1916 A sitting of the Aylsham Tribunal took place there yesterday. Mr W.Case was in the chair. Mr C.J. Littlewood represented the Board of Agriculture. Mr J.H. Farmer, Major H.S.Marsham, and Captain Blofield successively represented the military authority.

PUBLICAN'S OBJECTION TO TRIBUNALS

A young publican said he took a licensed house two years ago, for the reason that he was in bad health. His wife was delicate and unfit to run a public house. His father-in-law, an old age pensioner, lived with him, but being 74 years of age, and otherwise incapacitated, he could not attend the bar. Also, applicant had to help support his father and

mother, who were receiving Poor Law relief in Norwich.

Mr Ewing said he wished there were no such places, but still this was a legitimate business, and there ought to be a man on the premises, especially while the military were about. Mr Sapwell, 'Do you think it is in the national interest in these times to have three public houses in the same street?' Mr Ewing, 'I don't think it is in the national interest, but the nation allows it'. The Tribunal allowed a month's exemption.

On being called into the room and acquainted with this decision, the applicant said he should not have come to ask for exemption, but that there were so many single men about.

The Clerk, 'Whom do you refer to?'.

Applicant, 'Single men at the station'.

The Clerk, 'That has nothing to do with the Tribunal. The railway companies have agreed with the military authorities as to which men shall be kept'.

Mr Sapwell, 'The railways are already under the Government'.

Applicant, 'Yes, but they have taken single men on when they might just as well have taken married men. I don't believe in Tribunals at all. If the men were all to go that would be fair'.

Mr Sapwell, 'You had better send that suggestion to the Prime Minister'.

BRAVO, FAMILY MAN

A farmer and miller asked for the exemption of his carter, a married man with nine children, and his stone dresser, a married man with seven children. The Chairman said the national expenditure was already nearly five millions a day. It would be more than five million if everybody had to be allowed for family on that basis. Other members of the Tribunal agreed that the men in question had done well for the country. Conditional exemption was granted in both cases.

WHY NOT A CHAUFFEUSE?

A doctor asking for the exemption of his chauffeur and mechanic, said he had lost two chauffeurs by enlistment, and had had great difficulty in obtaining the last one, who was a married man, passed at his attestation only for Class B.

Mr Sapwell, 'Can't you drive yourself?'

The Doctor, 'It is not a question of driving, but of keeping the car in driving order'. He had not tried to get a woman chauffeur, who he supposed, would know nothing about the mechanical work.

Mr J.H. Farmer, 'There are long lists of certificated women in London waiting for appointments. A trained cousin of mine has released a man for service, and she is a delicate little thing'.

The Doctor, 'But she would have to be called up at all hours of the night'.

Mr Farmer, 'These girls will do anything that a man can do, and a good deal more than most'.

Two months exemption was allowed, and the doctor was recommended to apply to one of the motoring schools in accordance with Mr Farmer's suggestion.

NOT A TIME FOR PERSONAL SERVANTS

A gentleman, plainly in a state of partial incapacity, appealed for the exemption of a man of 31, who was his gardener, stockman, car cleaner, and man of all work. Applicant said that if he was able to do the work himself he would do it gladly, but he could not even dress himself. His daughters were away from home, and his son was in the firing line in France. As a patriot he could not say, don't send the man, but all the same he would be very glad of the exemption. Captain Blofield said this man was really a personal servant, and he could not admit that personal servants, even for a cripple, were necessary, at this time of day. The Tribunal accepted this view, and gave the man a month only.



ENJOYING THE AYLSHAM ARCHIVES Tom Mollard

One of the delights of working with the Aylsham Archives is the insight one obtains from its contents into the history of events held in the town. These details are tucked away in photographs, documents, newscuttings, etc., and occasionally these different sources come together to reveal a little cameo of Aylsham's history. Amongst the

photographs in the collection, which Derek Lyons is gradually sorting into a usable order, are some which show the interior of Aylsham Town Hall, very cleverly decorated as an old English village scene. I had never known what the occasion was for certain.

Quite recently we came across a small A5 printed leaflet advertising an event in the Town Hall on 7th & 8th. December 1920. I still didn't make the connection until very recently, when reading through some of the newscuttings in Harry Proudfoot's scrapbooks I came across the following leaflet advertising an event which is reproduced below, or part of it is! The original carried a picture of an "olde English" village", which is of such appalling quality that I am sure Barnwell's couldn't have printed it, so I have omitted it. If it proves possible to reproduce some of the photographs of the Town Hall interior, I will include those instead. Now I know what the photographs referred to: it was this:-

Ve Olde English Sale

In aid of the AYLSHAM PARISH CHURCH FUNDS,

TOWN HALL, AYLSHAM, On Tuesday & Wednesday, 7th & 8th December, 1920.

Opening Ceremony by the Rev. Canon Hoare.

Silver Casket, arranged by Mr. H. F. Proudfoot.

Xmas Tree and Children's Toy Room, and other Attractions.

PROGRAMME OF CHIEF EVENTS.

2-30 p m. OPENING CEREMONY by the Rev. Canon HOARE.
3-30 to 4-15 p.m. CONCERT (Mrs. B. W. TALBOT'S PARTY), 40 minutes.

4-0 p.m -TEAS and LIGHT REFRESHMENTS.

4-15 to 5-15 p.m.-ORCHESTRAL MUSIC.

5-30 p.m. MAYPOLE DANCES (arranged by Miss CHAPMAN). 6-0 p.m.-PIANOFORTE SOLO.

6-30 to 7-10 p.m. -CONCERT (Mr. A. GEORGE'S PARTY), 40 minutes,

7-30 to 8-30 p.m.-PLAY (Mrs. B. W. TALBOT'S PARTY). 8 to 9 p.m.-ORCHESTRAL MUSIC.

9-15 p.m.-CAROLS.

Admission, 1/-., Children Half-price. Tax Extra.

YE OLDE ENGLISH SALE AT AYLSHAM

A PICTURESQUE SETTING

This week, the parishioners of Aylsham are making a big effort by means of 'An Olde English Sale' to augment the parish church funds, which during the war fell to a low ebb, and are now badly in need of support if much necessary work is to be carried out. The idea of a sale of work conducted amid charming mediæval scenery, originated with the churchwardens - Major H. Jackson and Mr R. Rust, and they have been ably assisted in carrying out the scheme by Mrs Gurney Hoare, Mrs Jackson, Mrs Rust and Mrs. Harvey Meale, who have been indefatigable in arranging working parties and collections. Aylsham is one of those few parishes in the county which have a really admirable Town Hall, and this having been placed at the disposal of the organisers, Mr Walter Wade very generously staged the setting for the sale, supplying all the timbers required, and, with the help of Mr. Miller and other friends, turning the interior of the Hall into a charming little 15th. century village.

The scenery was loaned by Mr. Cockerell, the Borough Engineer of Yarmouth, who prepared it for a similar fête held in the Yarmouth Town Hall. A profusion of greenery added to the general picturesqueness of the scene, and the well-laden stalls at yesterday's opening ceremony augured well for a bumper increase for the church funds.

The ladies in attendance at the various stalls were gowned in harmony with the delightful surroundings, and Mr. Harry F. Proudfoot, who acted as the village bellman, was almost unrecognisable in his quaint beadle's uniform. The stall-holders were:-

Fancy stall - Mrs Miller, Miss L. Meadows and Mrs Quantrill.

Wool stall - Mrs Lester and Miss Breese.

Plain stall - Mrs. Southgate, Mrs. W. Wades, Mrs T. Sutton, Mrs Partridge and Miss Edwards.

Sweet stall - Mrs Cheetham, Miss Sapwell and Miss Ives.

Produce stall - Mrs T. Purdy, Mrs B. Sapwell, jnr, Mrs Morton, Mrs Edward Case and Miss Meadows.

Basket stall - Mrs Sapwell, Mrs Gurney Hoare and Miss Boffee.

Antique stall - Mrs and Miss Brawn.

Pound stall - Mrs C. Gilbert, Mrs A. Gilbert and Miss K. Gilbert.

Tea stall - Mrs Green and party.

In an adjoining room were stalls set apart for childrens' toys, several gaily decorated Christmas trees, fish ponds and wishing well; this department being under the direction of Mr. and Mrs Buckingham, Mrs Sewell, Mrs Burnand, Mrs J.T. Barker and Mrs Barnwell.

The opening ceremony was performed by the vicar, (Canon Hoare), who remarked that the war period was an extremely trying time for the finances of all churches. They at Aylsham were somewhat unfortunate as their heating apparatus broke down in the second year of the war, and many parishioners would remember how they were starved with cold, there being no fire in the church during one of the bitterest winters of recent years. The cost of repair practically took away all their reserve funds, and afterwards they had to spend a good deal to keep the organ warm during cold weather.

Since the war, the cost of everything had about trebled, and church receipts had not gone up by that rate - far from it. So, the church had become short of money. The churchwardens, however, recognised that the whole parish would gladly join in keeping up the old church, and maintaining the fabric, and they came to him and offered to arrange such a sale, and take the whole burden in connection with it, off his shoulders. For that he most heartily thanked them. A friend at Yarmouth had kindly lent them the scenery, which had been fixed by local friends. Other friends had contributed to the stalls, and the result was that beautiful show. All had worked most earnestly, and he heartily thanked everybody who had taken part. He looked upon such work as work in which people could serve God. Not only could people serve God with their prayers and their lips, but they could serve God with their hands . . . he looked forward to the sale being a great success, and he had much pleasure in declaring it open.

During the afternoon there were Maypole dances arranged by Miss Chapman, and competitions conducted by Sister Lucas. Carols were sung by Miss M. Wade and the church choir, and bell-ringing performances given by Mr. Moy. Other attractions were concerts and

plays arranged by Mrs Bertram Talbot and Mr. A. George, and selections by the orchestra, under the direction of Miss Hilda Little.

The "Silver Casket" was under the charge of Mr. H.F. Proudfoot and Miss D. Edwards, and Captain and Mrs Mileham exhibited the Turkish Dwarf. Business was brisk throughout the afternoon and evening and the sale will be continued today.

[from local press - 8th. December 1920]

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ABBOT'S HALL FARM

The possible site of Abbot Sampson's, or Sexton's Hall lies on gently sloping land between the 15 metre contour and the River Bure. A road called Drabblegate runs adjacent to the present house and follows the contour northward from Aylsham towards Ingworth and Erpingham. At this point the road allowance becomes unusually wide, and is joined by a "green lane" (OS 6" 1884) coming from the east. The area has extensive deep drainage channels, some of which may form part of a moat system which existed prior to, and possibly after, construction of a house in 1610. Northwest of the present buildings is a wooded area bounded (except on the east) and crossed by deep drainage. Its eastern third rises 1.6 metres along a north/south scarp and ditch, but whether this is natural or man-made has not been ascertained. In either case it is considered a likely site for early habitation in an area of low-lying river border land. In pasture to the south there are interesting humps and hollows.

The existence of a moat is also suggested by the Tithe Map² illustration of a north-south narrow pond, having a distinct right-angle bend to the west at its lower end, from which a ditch is shown proceeding west and curving to the north in line with buildings existing then and now. A long narrow pond running north-south, to the east of the barn, and now only vestigial, may have been part of the moat system; however, the Tithe Map also shows other ditches with possible moat connections, and the long pond may have had another use.

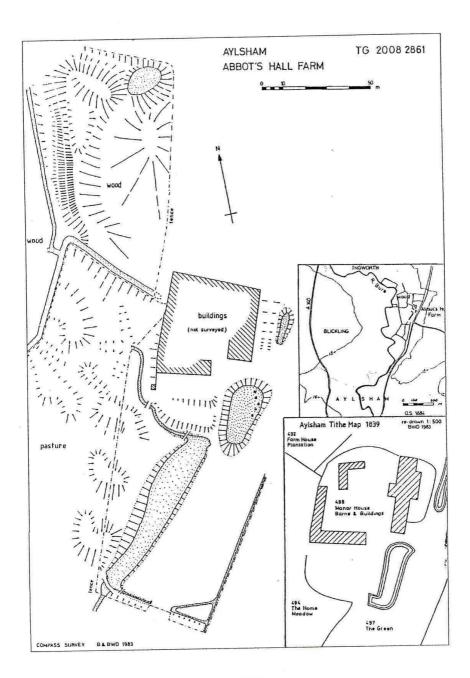
The barn carries a reconstruction date of 1860, when possibly the long lake was also constructed around an existing ditch shown on the Tithe Map as bounding field 497 "The Green". The curving ditch running west and north was retained, and, although somewhat modified, still suggests a possible moat with connection from the river.

The capital manor of Aylsham belonged to the Crown, but in 1189 Richard I granted Abbot Sampson of Bury St. Edmunds and his successors, 10 librates of land, in return for candles to be burned before the martyr's shrine "in free, pure and perpetual alms for our health." The endowment was later appropriated to the Sacristan of the monastery, and the estate became known as Sexton's Manor. In 1285 the Abbot had view of frankpledge, assize of bread and ale, free warren and a ducking-stool. In 1296, all the tenants of the manor were obliged to grind at his watermill, the possible site of which appears as a rectangular island enclosed by the River Bure some 200 metres west of the manor house.

After the Dissolution, Edward Wood petitioned for, and was granted the manor with its appurtenances, on payment of £516-15-2d. The enquiry relating to this evaluation mentioned, 'houses standing upon the site of the manor' 44 tofts, Sexton's Wood and other woodlands, several farms and an alder carr. In addition there was a 'Deed stock or stoore' a quantity of household furniture, a lectern for an altar, an iron-bound chest for evidence, various items relating to the stables, a kiln for drying malt, etc.

The manor became generally known as Aylsham Wood, and the lordship continued in the Wood family for more than two hundred years. In the late eighteenth century ownership passed to one J. Paterson, or Peterson, and by 1818 the preamble to the Enclosure Act named Katherine Copeman, a widow, lady of the manor of Aylsham Wood. Mason, writing about 1885, calls Thomas Copeman "the present lord", although in 1884 ownership of the estate passed to Philip Candler Shepheard.

The house called Abbot's Hall Farm appears basically unchanged from an illustration, said by Mason to represent a moated



Manor house built around 1610. The present owner puts this somewhat earlier, in view of the fine diaper-patterned brickwork (which would be a bit late for 1610) and the presence of the date 1571 on a main fireplace beam. The Tithe Map refers to it as 'The Manor House', but also shows the later complex of buildings to the south west, now called Abbot's Hall.

NOTES

- 1. Mason, R.H. History of Norfolk. Vol 5 Parishes and townships
- 2. Aylsham Tithe Map. NRO Map No. 303

[The above comes from a typescript report in the Town archives. No author indicated, but probably by Edwin J. Rose Ed.]

--ooOoo--

THE SEARS CENTRE Geoffrey Nobbs

My family and I arrived at Aylsham in 1942, our home having suffered in the April 'Blitz'. and I clearly recall how impressive I found the Centre, quite the latest thing; I had seen nothing like it in Norwich. Margaret, Aylsham born and bred, remembers visiting the Centre during the early years of the 1939-45 War for her 'jabs', seeing a seated row of pale-faced young sufferers having just received their treatment, and being warned by other youthful well-wishers that 'they shove a sort of big knitting needle into your arm' - all very painful. In fact, the inoculation was no problem at all.

During the forties, the Centre was used for a while as the Branch Library, partly staffed by W.l. Volunteers, including my mother Marjorie. I have no idea when those arrangements came to an end, or whether by the time we left Aylsham in about 1950 the Library had

moved to fresh premises.

The other aspect which does not seem to appear in the newspaper reports of the opening, is that, very tragically, young Ian Sears had lost his life as a result of an accident on the swings on Aylsham Rec. I imagine this took place in about 1934, but was still very much in the forefront of townspeoples' minds during my time there.

When my father and others started up the annual Gymkhana on the Rec after the War, this was initially to raise funds to put up new swings etc and the Committee was very anxious to ensure that the equipment was as safe as possible, bearing in mind the sad loss of lan's young life..

The Norfolk Chronicle also ran a piece on the opening of the Centre, recording that it was designed and planned by Captain Sears himself, (including the unique ventilation system). Attention was drawn to the "commodious garage for perambulators" at the rear. The Lord Lieutenant Russell Colman in acknowledging the gift, remarked that no Centre in the county, in the Kingdom, or he might go so far as to say in the world was comparable with the Aylsham Centre. I think this was probably fair comment.

The General Election results reported in the Times of 16th November 1935 for St Pancras SW. show that GG Mitcheson (Unionist), a lawyer, won with 13,035 votes whilst JE Sears (Labour) took 10,670 votes. There were no other candidates - such colourful characters as Screaming Lord Such did not feature in those days. The majority for the Unionist Conservative was 2,365. However Captain Sears in fact did well, for at the previous election, the Unionists had defeated Labour with a hefty majority of 11,223. It would be interesting to know whether lan's father had another shot at St Pancras SW in the following election and maybe took it, or indeed stood elsewhere. A subject for further research perhaps? I take it, incidentally, that the lovely portrait of the little boy at the Centre in the 1940s was that in crayon, or was it the oil painting referred to. Where are they now? one wonders.

Kellys Directory for 1929 shows J. Sears as then residing at the Orchards. Possibly the property was at one time occupied by one of the town's doctors, whilst maybe, the much liked founder of Postles electrical business, John B Postle, was connected with the property when converted to flats. Perhaps a Society member may be able to offer further enlightenment as to past ownership.

Finally, a comment on the Dr Rosenberg who laid the Cenotaph wreath. Shirer's 'Rise and Fall of the Third Reich' confirms that Alfred Rosenberg was one of the Nazis sentenced to death with nine others including Ribbentrop in 1946 at Nuremburg. Rosenberg had for instance recommended that the new National Church of Germany should have an open copy of Hitler's Mein Kampf on every altar, together with a naked

sword! Shirer refers to him as the 'Doltish Balt' and the 'befuddled philosopher' of the Nazi movement. No wonder Captain Sears was outraged at this leading member of the Nazi party adorning the Cenotaph with wreath & swastika.

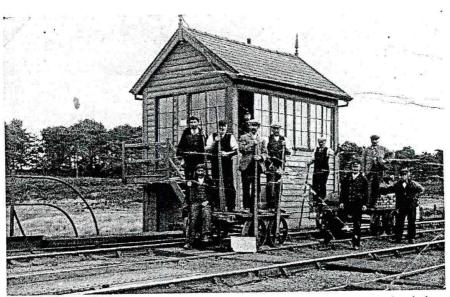
INCIDENT AT BERT KEELER'S CROSSING Molly Long and Tom West

We have a photograph, taken in 1910, of a platelayers' trolley outside Two Mile Bottom signal box with our grandfather's platelaying gang mounted on it. Two Mile Bottom signal box is two miles from Thetford on the Cambridge line. The signal box owed its existence to Fison's fertiliser factory accessed by a private road. Tom was born in the gatehouse here in 1920.

Using four men with trolley poles to punt it along, the trolley poles fitted into a hole cast into each wheel. These were later withdrawn as being dangerous, although the wheels still retained the holes into which these fitted, until the end of the flat bed trolley. The photograph below clearly shows this arrangement. Grandad Chenery is on the extreme right of the left hand trolley in the centre of the picture. The man looking out of the signal box is Mr. Webb. The other signal man, Ernie Porter, finished his railway service in Wroxham signal box.

This is the story of the one that ran away. The platelayers had been working at Story Bridge, (Low Bridge). When they had finished this job, the sleepers had to be taken down to Bert Keeler's (Spratt's Green), The regulation load was, I think, six sleepers to a trolley load. However this would have meant several trips, so they decided to put all the sleepers on the trolley, which was then considerably overloaded.

They started off all right, but the gradient was downwards. Our father (Westy) was the lorry driver who was acting as patrolman that day. This entailed going to Buxton by train and walking back towards Aylsham carrying a long-handled keying hammer, inspecting the track and driving in any keys that had come out. On approaching the crossing, he thought something was funny as he could see road traffic passing over the crossing, but no gates across the railway. When he got



to the crossing he discovered what had happened. The overloaded trolley had got away from the men who were accompanying it, and smashed its way through both gates. This sometimes happened with a steam train, but never with a trolley.

Someone suggested making marks along the foot path to pretend that they had tried to stop it. This story appears to have been accepted, and the gate keeper never said anything to the contrary.

The last vehicle that ever ran on the standard gauge when the track was taken up, was the platelayers' trolley. Bert Keeler, who kept the crossing where the trolley ran away was the last signalman on the M&GN. One of his daughters still lives in the gatehouse.

This article written by Molly Long and Tom West first appeared in the *Bure Valley News*; Number 37; Spring 2000. Grateful acknowledgment is made to the authors and the *Bure Valley News*.

SOCIETY NEWS

My appeal for material for future issues of the *Journal* did not fall on deaf ears. I am grateful to those who responded. One suggestion was

for a feature on the origins of Aylsham's street names. This could be of considerable interest, particularly to people who have only recently moved into the area. Some work on this topic was carried out some years ago by the Aylsham Association, but since then many new roads have appeared and most have been named with some connection to aspects of Aylsham's past. To bring the work up to date would be very useful, but it would take some effort to do the job thoroughly - and considerable time, which the editor is short of. Are there any volunteers amongst our members who would be interested to undertake this? I could provide them with details of what has been done so far.

Visit to Castle Museum - On Tuesday, 18th. September, over thirty members made their separate ways to the Castle Museum, assembling just ahead of opening time, ready for our visit to the newly refurbished interior. The museum has been closed to the public for over twelve months whilst the work took place, so it was inevitable that everything we were about to see would be compared to our memory of what was there before.

So, when the doors were opened, what did we see? At first glance nothing seemed to have changed, then I realised that the Rotunda was cleared. The museum shop and all its attendant clutter had been moved out to a new location. The café had visibly been improved, but in the Natural History area little seemed to have been changed. I have always liked the Ted Ellis Norfolk Room, so that was no problem, but the stuffed mammals and the birds looked as tired and boring as I had always remembered them.

However, there were some very enjoyable features. The Boudicca Gallery was very imaginative and a lot of work had gone into the new presentation. I was pleased to see so much of the Snettisham Hoard on display and that most of the items were the originals and not replicas. The Norwich Union Gallery and the Bernard Matthews Gallery were very attractive, and the Cotman Gallery was always a delight to visit. On this occasion it seemed even more attractive. Finally, the Keep - this is the focal point in the whole museum. Improvements there were, and more of the area of the Keep is available to the public, but despite the visible improvements, there is still the lingering impression that they have still not got it quite right.

Despite what I have written, it would be wrong to think I did not

enjoy the visit because I did enjoy it, and I am grateful to our Secretary, Betty Gee, for all the hard work put into arranging the trip. When all the improvements are fully in place it will be worth a return visit, but considering the length of time the museum has been closed there are still too many areas closed to the public and too many empty spaces in the show-cases that we can see. One cannot help but ask - why has it taken so long? It would be interesting to know what other members felt.

Annual General Meeting

The Annual General meeting of the society was held in the Friendship Club on Thursday 4th October before a large audience of members. It was noted with great regret that four past members, Ray Balls, Margaret Peabody, Joan Vyse and Tom West had died during the

past year.

Our Secretary, Betty Gee, reported in detail on the activities of the Club during the previous year. She reminded us of the speakers and visits we had enjoyed; all of which have already been reported in the *Journal*. It is only when you listen to a summary of the year's activities that you realise how much work is undertaken by the officers and committee to keep the society functioning. Membership now stands at 115. Betty ended by thanking all those who helped in the smooth running of the society meetings and activities, in particular the membership Secretary, Sheila Mollard and the new Minuting Secretary, Mrs Diane Polhill, and also the editor for producing the *Journal* regularly and to the usual high standard, despite having to take enforced breaks from it.

Our Treasurer, Peter Pink, who replaced Eileen Daines at the last AGM, reported on the financial state of the society, which is healthy, and therefore does not require any increase in membership fees for this year at least. The editor made his usual grovelling appeal for material to keep the journal supplied with publishable material, and he waits with interest to see what result will come from it. He also thanked those members who had supplied him already with welcome items. Geoffrey Gale reported on the work of the Publications committee which, during

the year has produced the recent publication *Inns and Public Houses of Aylsham*, by Elizabeth Gale and published jointly by the author and the society. The publication committee's funds are in a very healthy state. The previous publication, *Memories of Aylsham*, has by now recouped all its production costs and any sales from now on are profit. The *Inns and Public Houses* has now recovered over half the printing costs and is still selling well. Any funds that the committee can build up are intended to provide working capital for future publications.

Election of officers and Committee: All retiring members were prepared to stand again and were duly re-elected. The committee comprises:- Chairman - Peter Holman, Vice Chairman - Geoffrey Gale, Secretary - Betty Gee, Treasurer - Peter Pink. Membership Secretary, Sheila Mollard was again co-opted, and Diana Polhill will continue as Minute Secretary

Committee Members:- Gillian Fletcher; John Harris; Jean McChesney; Diana Polhill; Rosemarie Powell; Ursula Warren

Chairman's Report - Peter Holman finished off the business part of this meeting with some comments on the present state of the society which I will feature separately in the *Journal*. Mrs Molly Cook proposed a vote of thanks to the committee for its hard work, and members then settled down to enjoy the advertised talk "Tin Tabernacles"

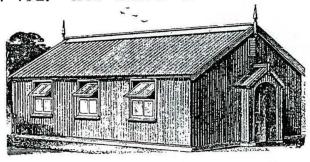
Tin Tabernacles - Following the excitement of our Annual General Meeting, which is reported above in the Journal, we were entertained with a talk by John Bracey on Iron Churches, or as they are more popularly known, Tin Tabernacles. It grew out of an interesting piece of architectural research with socio/religious undertones which I believe he has been working on for some years. I am always interested to hear about these private pieces of research which have been slowly gestating and are then revealed in a talk such as this. They disclose a hidden interest, explain a curious and neglected mystery still lying about in the countryside and it provokes a curiosity in the listener.

John Bracey in his talk said that there are now just a few of these buildings still standing, the majority have been demolished so the opportunity to hear the history and see slides of the few remaining examples was very welcome. The need for these prefabricated, metallized places of worship apparently arose around the mid 1800's. A period when attendance in the main-stream churches was flourishing, and when there was also a marked growth of irregular Christian groups and utopian sects. It was also the time when our towns were developing, changing and expanding. As a result, the populations of the towns were beginning to move away from the centres and out to the surrounding areas to live, work and pray. These movements created a need for smaller places of worship since the conventional brick buildings were too large for these small communities. These corrugated iron buildings were the answer to this problem, although they were little more than large sheds. However, they could be produced in a variety of sizes and were not expensive A suitable building could cost between £62 and £500 and could be selected from a number that were offered through a company catalogue. They were manufactured by a number of different local companies, but in Norfolk, most of them were produced by Bolton & Paul, whose works were originally in Rose Lane, but later moved to the Riverside Works in Norwich.

These social changes happened at the time when the manufacturing



No. 152. Iron School or Mission Room



of corrugated iron sheet had been discovered, and this was the primary component of these small prefabricated buildings. The buildings were a factory made product and could be supplied to the customers by train, carrier or by the manufacturer's own transport, and the building was then assembled on site. The only preparation by the church was to provide a good foundation on which to erect the building and could later serve as the floor. The buildings were simple, not very handsome but strong, and more importantly the size met the needs of the community. However, they were poorly insulated and the congregations found them cold in winter, hot in summer and extremely noisy when worship was in full voice. Interiors were sometimes covered with matchboarding, but this minimum cladding was little proof against the reverberations caused by mass singing with instruments.

Bolton and Paul also produced a catalogue with a range of items which could be purchased to add to their basic building. For the interior there were lecterns, chairs, pulpits and altar tables. Outside they could supply large crosses for the roof, Gothic shaped windows, Victorian gable ends and even small bell towers all of which could be reached through a Lych gate costing £75. I have only once been involved with a tin tabernacle, although I didn't know it was that at the time. Many years ago I went to see a corrugated iron building at Tenbury Wells in Hereford. It had been built around a curative well and included a seated waiting area. Unfortunately the fashion for curative wells had just passed when the building was erected and most of them were closed. There it stood in all its Victorian grandeur some hundred years later. The circular seated waiting area now used as part of a community building. At the time of the failed well they had also hoped for a post road to be built into the town. Unfortunately the road was no sooner built when the railway line bypassed the town entirely. The railway line still passes in the distance and the well building is still there hidden in the back of the town but now sadly neglected. This sad tale is reflected in the story of Geoffrey Gale our own Tin Tabernacles

Norfolk Country Houses from the air - A lecture by Derek Edwards on 25th. October. Mr Edwards worked until a few years ago for the Norfolk Archæology Unit at Gressenhall, where he specialised in aerial surveys of the Norfolk landscape. He has developed an enviable skill in locating and photographing previously unknown sites of human occupation.

Without his efforts large sections of Norfolk's archaeology are likely to have remained undiscovered. He still engages in aerial photography but now as an independent operator and not as an employee of the county, although, I believe, he still does some survey work for the Museum Service from time to time.

He began his talk with a short history of aerial photography, illustrating this with a number of pictures, including the earliest known aerial photograph of Norwich, taken by a Mr Coe (founder of the well known photographers shop), from a basket suspended beneath a gas filled balloon.

His aerial tour of many of the county's stately piles retained the audience's attention right to the end of his talk, and his illustration of how things have changed over the years, by the judicious choice of pictures made many decades apart, came as an eye-opener to many of us. The comparison of what Melton Constable Hall estate used to be with what remains today was particularly striking.

Most of the pictures he showed were his own, taken over the course of a thirty year career in aerial archaeology. Once or twice he afforded us a literal "peep over the hedge" into properties that are normally hidden from the public gaze. On other occasions he was able to show the locations of long demolished buildings from the "parch marks" and "crop marks" which are visible only from the air, and only under rather abnormal conditions, such as drought. One example with local interest was a photograph of Blickling which showed "parch marks" in the present turf outlining the layout of a pre-war garden, referred to as the "Marchioness of Lothian's" garden.

Altogether, we had a grand tour of many of the county's "posher" houses including Sandringham, Raynham, East Lexham, Holkham, Houghton and Dunston. This, combined with Mr Edwards erudite and enthusiastic commentary, made for a thoroughly enjoyable and informative evening. It is astonishing that the new regime at the County Museum Service saw fit to dispense with the services of somebody with Mr Edwards skill and experience. But, I suppose, they felt they had to find the money from somewhere to pay for the conversion of our once respected museums into the juvenile theme parks that they seem to have become.

Derek Lyons

AFTER THE AGM - What next?

At the Annual General Meeting our chairman spoke of his problem in trying to report on the past year's activities, after every previous speaker had already stolen his thunder. Not that he needed to have worried; he always rises to the occasion as he did again this year.

In his remarks, I was struck by one particular comment. Peter asked whether the society seems to have drifted away slightly from engaging in any original research, either as a society or by individual members. If this is right, then it would be a great pity for our society. Some sort of research into aspects of Aylsham's history is the life blood of our society, and in the past we have tackled a variety of topics with some degree of success.

I realise that several members do engage in research. All those who attend the day courses arranged each year, are very involved, but the subjects are not always local. I am not suggesting that every course should be parochial every time, but when they are not, should we not also have some parallel local subject to explore to keep us in touch with

our original purpose.

Our society started life as the result of a very local piece of research which resulted, not only in the birth of the society but also the publication of Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century. This led on to organised exploration of the Town Archives where various topics were explored under the guidance of tutors from the Centre for East Anglian Studies. This led to the appearance of Millgate, Aylsham, which was the result of group study and to several individual projects such as the Poor in Aylsham by Julian Eve, and to several other projects which were eventually written up in the Backwards Glance.

We are fortunate to have a Town Archive in Aylsham; very few other towns have one, but it does not lend itself easily to private research and is not very easy to access, but it is there! Nor does the Town Archive always have the documents that are required. The parish church records, for example are only available in the Norfolk Record Office, but this has not prevented some members from carrying out serious research. The latest example that I can recall is the excellent transcription and indexing of the parish registers for the 17th. century,

which was carried out by a group of members which included Annie Alston and the late Frank Stageman and also our former chairman, Iane Nolan.

So, plenty of research has gone on during the society's history, and possibly much individual work is going on currently that I am not aware of. If Peter is right, should we not be looking for useful local studies that we could become involved in? No one is obliged to be involved in serious studies; after all, members can enjoy their membership of the society at any level they choose, but should we be creating the opportunities for those members who so wish, to become so involved? I think our chairman was right to pin point this as a possible problem. What happens next? - I should think members ideas would be welcomed by the committee.

Tom Mollard

---ooOoo---

HUBERT DE BURGH

At the Annual general meeting, it was mentioned that a postal enquiry had been received for information about Hugh de Burgh - a request that had proved difficult to answer. However, there is plenty of information about him as the following item from the encyclopædia reveals. He was known as Hugh, or Hubert de Burgh, but whether the 'Burgh' refers to our neighbouring 'Burgh-next-Aylsham' is not so clear.

Editor.

Professional administrator and chief justiciar of England (1215-32) under King John and Henry III, he was the last great holder of that office and a member of a knightly family of moderate estates in East Anglia. He served in John's household before he came to the throne, and was his chamberlain by 1198. After John's accession (1199) he became sheriff of five counties, custodian of several castles and Warden of the Welsh Marches and of the Cinque Ports.

In Normandy he had charge of Falaise castle, and, for a time, of Arthur I, Duke of Brittany, whom he is said to have preserved from the mutilation ordered by the king. He became Constable of Chinon and

was captured there when the castle fell to the French in 1205. After two years of captivity in France he became sheriff of Lincolnshire, but his harsh administration was unpopular, and the king removed him and his deputy in 1213 when he became one of the Seneschals of Poitou.

He was with the king when Magna Carta was sealed at Runnymede in June 1215, and was there made chief justiciar. Although appointed partly because he was more acceptable to the barons than his predecessor, Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester, Hubert remained loyal to John and Henry III during the war with the barons. He led a successful defence of Dover castle against Prince Louis of France who had come over to oppose King John, and he was one of the leaders of the naval victory at Sandwich in August 1217 which finally destroyed Louis's hopes of obtaining the English crown. After the end of the war, Hubert was one of the most influential men in a government consisting of an increasingly uneasy coalition of men held together initially by the regent, William Marshal, Earl of Pembroke, and by the presence of Papal legates up to 1221. Thereafter a struggle developed between Hubert, supported by Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury, and Peter des Roches, the king's tutor, who headed a group of alien administrators and soldiers and who was occasionally supported by various English barons.

Hubert managed in 1223-24 to recover many castles from the rival party, and to deprive many of the aliens of office. He was now predominant, and seemed secure when Henry III declared his majority in 1227 and Peter des Roches ceased to be the king's tutor. He enjoyed enormous territorial power, partly as a result of royal favour, and partly as a result of his three marriages, in 1209, 1217 and 1221, with Beatrice de Warrene an heiress from East Anglia, with Isabella Countess of Gloucester, and with Margaret, sister of Alexander II of Scotland. He was made Earl of Kent in February 1227 and chief justiciar for life in April 1228.

He was a typical member of the administrative class created by Henry II and his sons. His revival in the 1220s of some administrative policies condemned in the 1215 version of Magna Carta_icontributed to the renewed struggle for the charters from 1225 onward and provided excuses for attacks upon him. His love of power, wealth and title also made enemies, especially in Wales and the Welsh Marches where, by

1231 he held the castles of Skenfrith, Grosmont and Llantilio, and the castles and lordships of Montgomery, Cardigan and Carmarthen, the honour of Gower and the wardship of the honours of Gloucester and of Brecon and Radnor. This threatened the interests of the Earls of Pembroke and Chester and other Marcher lords, and provoked unsuccessful wars with Llewelyn of Wales in 1228 and 1231.

The first sign of his fall came in 1229 when Hubert was violently blamed by the king for the breakdown of an expedition to France. Peter des Roches who had been abroad since 1227, returned in 1231 to intrigue against him. Scattered attacks on alien clergy in England for which Hubert was held responsible were used as an excuse to try him on trumped-up charges and to deprive him of the justiciarship and of his offices and custodies. He was humiliated and later imprisoned at Devizes, but not deprived of his private lands and earldom. Released by the baronial opponents of Peter des Roches's party, he was admitted to the king's peace with them, but was submitted to another inconclusive trial in 1239.

He died at Banstead, Surrey on May 12th. 1243 and his lands, but not his title, descended to his son, John de Burgh. Hubert was the last of the great chief justiciars and was not replaced in office. While earlier justiciars owed their prominence to long royal absences, Hubert owed his to the minority of Henry III. After the loss of England's continental possessions, and following the increasing specialization of fiscal administration, the office had outlived its most obvious and useful functions.

NB There is also a published biography of Hubert de Burgh, by Clarence Ellis (1952)

---ooOoo---

REFLECTIONS OF A SOCIETY SECRETARY Betty Gee

When I took on the position of Secretary to this society, I realised that the task of appointing speakers for meetings would be the most challenging. I could find some answer to queries about families (or pass them on), deal with the small amount of correspondence and

make preparations for committee meetings, but the finding of lecturers for the winter season would be more difficult.

To start with it was very simple. The lecturers had been booked months before, and possibly a screen or projector borrowed. All went smoothly. Then in January I had to start finding lecturers for the next season. Other members gave me a few suggestions, and it was up to me to search them out. Valerie Belton had been secretary for nine years, and knew a great deal about the history of this area. Her file was very useful.

I found that the Museum Service issued a list of officers prepared to offer lectures on a variety of subjects. It was for me to contact the individual person and negotiate terms. Most of these are excellent. Another useful source is the *Diary*, issued twice-yearly by the Federation of Norfolk Historical and Archæological Organisations, which lists lectures arranged by all member societies, as well as the UEA. We subscribe to this organisation. Tom Mollard often publishes extracts from the *Diary*. I have found useful names and interesting titles, but so often found it hard to contact them.

Once I started trying to book people, I realised that there are a number of other groups wanting speakers; not only the WEA, PROBUS and the WIs. but also Gardening societies, Wild Life and library groups. Most of these might not want a museum lecturer, but there are other speakers offering very professional slide presentations, and these get booked up years ahead. The title is quite important. An interesting one attracts visitors who might later become members.

Another consideration is that different topics appeal to different members. A lecture about Aylsham is always interesting to newer members, but long-standing members have probably heard it before. As we are a Local History Society and not an Historical Society, I have not booked lectures about national events and personalities. We try to have a talk by a member after the AGM, usually about Aylsham. That only leaves five lecturers to be booked; not very difficult! However, I have found that one or two popular lecturers from past years now do not want to come out to Aylsham, especially in the cold evenings of winter.

My ideal lecturer would be one with an enthusiasm for his topic, a good voice which reaches the back of the hall, bringing with him or her good slides or illustrations or objects, and willing to answer questions. The fact that listeners are stimulated to ask questions gives, in my opinion, some indication of their enjoyment of the lecture. Perhaps I should add the ability to give a good introduction, and not assume the audience knows a lot about the subject. Some of them will, but many won't.

So now, at the beginning of another season of lectures, what comes to mind? I have, due to family holidays, missed one or two lectures that I have booked, and regrettably I have not always written a comment on the booking letter. I do remember lectures or slide presentations which have been very good, e.g. *Norwich in the year 1000* by Brian Ayers (chosen because of the Millennium) or Anthea Taigel's lecture on Humphry Repton, landscape gardener. I particularly liked the Victorian Magic Lantern Show of Cromer and District by Peter Stibbons and his daughter. On the other hand, there were two lectures last season which I would hesitate to recommend. However, on the whole, members are very polite in the few comments I hear.

This coming season we should have very good lectures. (Am I tempting fate?). We have three people who have lectured before to the society; two whom I have not met, and one Peter Larter, who gave an excellent account of *The Rise and fall of Costessey Hall* two years ago, based on photos of a local historian. Derek Edwards, an aerial archæologist, came a number of years ago, and so, I found, did Joy Lodey. The latter has lectured recently to other societies on *The Ins and Outs of the Workhouse*, and I found when I consulted the invaluable index to our *Journal*, that she had lectured to our society years ago. There are often queries about the workhouse, and I hope this lecture will appeal to members and friends. We have John Davies, a Chief Curator at Norwich Castle Museum, speaking about *The Land of the Iceni - the Iron Age in Norfolk*, and we have Dr. John Alban speaking about the work of the Norfolk Record Office.

I resolve to get an up-to-date Museum Lecturers list, if there is one, after the changes of the last eighteen months. After three years of trying, I am abandoning the quest for a lecturer on the Runton elephant, but would still like a speaker on Felbrigg, and/or Ketton-Cremer, the writer, and I am always interested on members' views on possible speakers or past speakers.

Betty Gee

REEPHAM - One of our members (David Case of 25 Archery Square, Walmer, Deal, Kent CT14 7JA) is trying to contact anyone with a knowledge of the history of Reepham. In particular, he is trying to learn more about James Shreeve Woolmer, clockmaker of Market Place, Reepham, who took over the business of John Symonds in about 1814, when John Symonds retired.

LIST OF MEMBERS - DECEMBER 2001

Subscriptions fall due each October, and below is the list of current members up to date. After this issue of the *Journal*, the circulation list for future issues will be based on this list, so, if your name does not appear there, you could miss out on future issues of the *Journal!* With apologies to any members who might have renewed their subscriptions within the last few days and still missed inclusion in the list.

BAKER, D.W. BARWICK, Mrs G. BAYES, Mrs R. BELTON Miss V. BLAKE, Mrs J... BRASNETT Mr & Mrs D. BRATT Miss R. BRETT, Mr E. BRETT Mr & Mrs F. BUTLER, Mrs J. CASE Dr. D.E. COOK, Mrs M. COOTE Mr A. CORBIN Mr & Mrs N COX, Mrs F. CRIPPS Mr & Mrs A. CROUCH Mr. R. DAINES Mrs E. DALE, Mrs R. DAVY Mr & Mrs R. DOWNING Mr & Mrs E DUCKER Mr G. DYBALL, Miss A ELLIOTT, Mrs P. EVE, Dr. & Mrs J. FLETCHER, Mrs G. GALE Mr & Mrs G. GARDNER Miss O. GARFORTH, Mrs P.

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NOLAN Miss E. PEABODY Mr R. PERRY Mrs M PINK Mr P. POLHILL Mr & Mrs R. POWELL, Mr & Mrs I RADFORD, Miss N. ROUSE, Mr P. ROWE, Mrs M. RUST, Mrs J.L.. SEWELL Mr M. SHEPHERD, Mrs A SHERINGHAM, Mrs J. SMITH, Mrs E. STEWARD Mrs L. TAYLOR, Mr H. TURVILLE-PETRE, Mrs J. ULPH Mr.C. VAUGHAN-LEWIS Mrs M. VYSE, Rev. Canon J. WADLEY, Mr D. WALKER Mr D. The Lady WALPOLE WARREN Mrs U. WILLIAMS, Mr & Mrs G. WINTLE, Mrs S. WRIGHT, Mr J.

DIARY DATES

Below is a selection of diary dates listed in the September 2001 to March 2002 diary published by the Federation of Norfolk Historical and Archæological Organisations. It is only a selection and includes those which might appeal to our members and which are close enough to Aylsham to be easy to get to.

December		
Saturday 8th.	Narrative of Elizabeth Marsh: Barbary, se power, by Linda Colley	HA
Saturday 8th.	Recent excavations in Norwich, by Ian Sod	en NNAS
January 2002		20/
Saturday 12th.	Medieval Islamic world, as viewed through architecture and art, by Sarah Searight.	HA
Saturday 19th.	The Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Carlton Colv by Richard Mortimer.	NNAS
Tuesday 29th	Recollections from around the Glaven. Loc residents contribute.	BAHS
February		
Saturday, 2nd.	A Load of old guff [Norfolk Dialect] by Tony Bradstreet	NAHRG
Saturday, 9th. Wednesday, 14t	Petticoat politics, by John Charmley	HA
wednesday, 1 ii	Jill Blanchard	RS
Saturday, 16th. Tuesday, 26th	5,000 years of Domes, by Tony Egglestone History of the RNLI & Norfolk lifeboats,	NNAS
140044, 2044	by Michael Softley	BAHS
March	and the Alleman	TT A
Saturday, 9th	The execution of Charles I, by John Adam	son HA
Saturday, 9th	The trials of Wells harbour, by John Barne	
Thurs. 14th.	An evening on the internet	RS

The search for early man in East Anglia, by Saturday 16th John Wymer

NNAS

KEY Blakeney Area Historical Society - meetings held in the Methodist BAHS Chapel at 7.30pm Historical Assoc. meetings held in the Pierce Room, Assembly HA House, Norwich at 2.30 pm unless stated otherwise Norfolk & Norwich Archaeological Society, meet in the Music NNAS Room, Assembly House at 3pm £2 NAHRG Norfolk Archaeological & Historical Research group, meet at CEAS, UEA at 2.30 pm

RS

Reepham Society, meet at Bircham Institute, Market Place 8pm

WINTER PARTY

This will be held at the Aylsham Lodge Hotel, Norwich Road, on Thursday, 24th. January 2002 at 7 for 7.30pm

It will take the form of a DINNER. A bar will be open for drinks to be purchased. The cost of the Dinner will be £12 per person, excluding drinks.

There will be competitions before and after the meal for those who like them.

One of these will require articles of historical interest or curios, so please let Jean McChesney know, (Tele. No. 01263-733511)

if you can bring one.

Please reserve the date, and send

the form enclosed with this Journal as soon as possible to the Secretary, Betty Gee. There are choices on the three courses, so please choose from the menu given on the form for yourself and your guest(s)

BOOK REVIEW

"Natural Allies" Vol 2 - by Stephen Cook and friends. published by Stephen Cook, ISBN 0-9529318-1-8 Paperback; Price £2-75 plus p&p

This volume of poems, published in July of this year, comes completely new to me. From the title we can infer that a previous volume Natural Allies vol 1. has already been published, but I must have missed it. The authors of these poems describe themselves as 'a collection of Norfolk poets ("Calthorpe Voices") on a crusade to free people's lives from chains of crises and hardship' they have 'met to invite the spirit of unity, lateral thinking and self-sustaining ideals'

The poems, as you would expect, are of mixed quality, and the reader will recognise those that appeal to them, or connect with a shared feeling. One impression that comes across to me, was that many of the authors had experienced some of the harder knocks of life and could express their responses extremely well. The poets come from a variety of different backgrounds - University student, abstract artist, former policewoman, and the landlady of the Unicorn public house in Aylsham.



illustration from 'Natural Allies'

The volume is very well produced, well printed and quality high with a illustrated cover. How one can produce a volume of such attractive appearance and even more attractive price of £2-75 intrigues me, but that's all it costs. Copies are available from Molly Cook, a member of our own society, at £2-75 plus p&p. She can be contacted on

01263-733628.

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY - Account for the year ended 31st. August 2001

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Treasurer, P.R. Pink

Checked with records and found to be correct
Graeme Johnston. Accountant

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