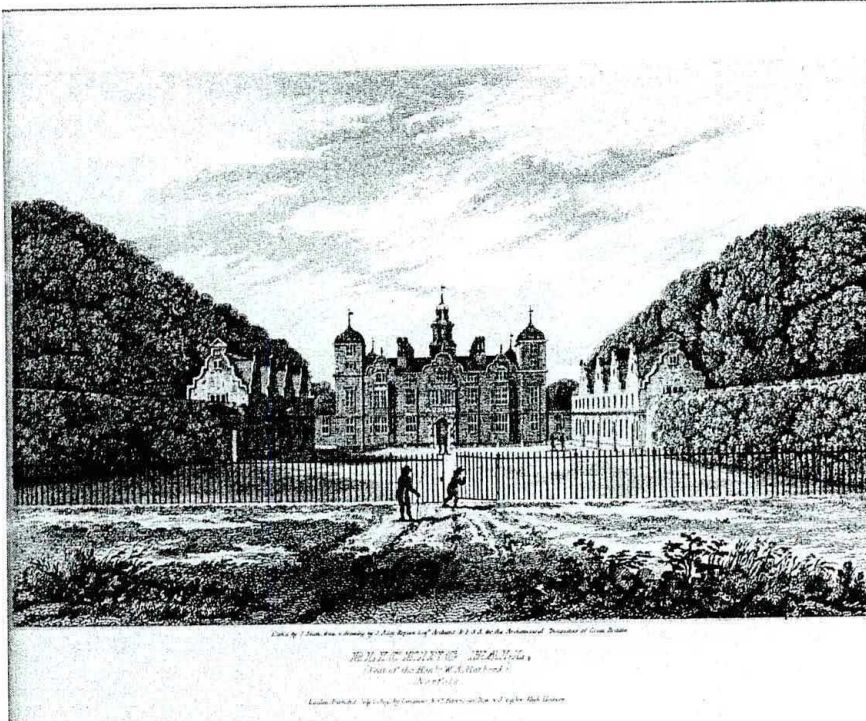


AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Vol. 6 No.9

March 2002

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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Cover Illus. Blickling Hall 1809 from a drawing by John Adey Repton



AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

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THE DEATHLESS STORY OF THE “*EGYPT*”

For three years the Italian divers of the *Artiglio* and her successors, strove through storm and peril, disappointment and disaster, to salvage the treasure of the sunken *Egypt* before they laid bare the bullion room.

It is a thrilling story! But when the liner went down in 1922, after colliding with another vessel 25 miles south west of Ushant, there occurred in the very hour of her sinking, a salvage far more precious than all the gold she carried. It was the salvage of a human life, the triumph in the hour of sacrifice of a human soul.

Some part of the story has been told here before. We are now privileged to tell it with the name of the woman who gave up the last seat in the last boat. The details of one of the most unselfish and unseeking acts of heroism of our time, have been told to us by the brother of the woman with whose name it is imperishably associated. He is the Rev. A. Patrick McNeile, vicar of Aylsham in Norfolk, and we cannot improve on the simplicity of his moving narrative of what happened in that hour of confusion and dismay when the *Egypt* went down to the bottom of the sea.

There had been a mutiny of the Goanese stewards. It was quelled, but the time left for getting out the boats before the ship went down was then short. A number of passengers had failed to

get their lifebelts. The water had reached their cabins. They could not get to them. The assistant Marconi operator took off his own life-jacket, and gave it to a lady who had none. That brave fellow did not come home. The women and children were lined up. They could not stand on the deck, it was tilted too sharply. They lay along the rail, edging their way as best they could toward the waiting boat.

The Chief Purser, who was superintending the loading of the boat, and counting heads as the passengers were helped into it, called "three more". Miss McNeile was number three in the line. Hers was the last place. On her right was a married woman who murmured something. "Oh, my children, what will they do without a mother?"

So, Miss McNeile naturally put her arm under the woman, and hoisted her across, and said, "If you don't mind, we will change places." There was no time for anything to be said; no time for a message to Miss McNeile's brother, or to anyone else, because the woman who had been given her place was at once seized by the sailors and pushed into the boat. This was cut adrift, and a minute afterwards the *Egypt* turned turtle and went down. The one was taken, and the other left. But she who gave her life, left the world an imperishable memory of sacrifice and greatness.

"My sister naturally gave her place" says her brother, "because she was a Christian. It would have hurt her more that the children should be motherless, than that her own life should be at an end. Had she not done what she did, all her life would have been haunted by that thought. She was always capable of rapid thinking and quick decision, and she used both in that second of mortal peril, in order not to miss her opportunity. If she had been slow about it, she would have been grabbed and put into the boat. Her chance would have been gone."

Her chance of immortality, Mr. McNeile means. That is what this noble woman seized. Her name in full was Ethel Rhoda

McNeile, and it will be graven for ever among those of the noble army of martyrs and heroes. She was of Girton College, Cambridge and the Church Missionary Society, and India knew her as Sister Rhoda. She spent her last night in England at Murston vicarage in Kent, where her brother was then, and she has a tablet to her memory at Bishops Sutton, near Alresford in Hampshire, where both her father and brother lie.

All that remains of her body will lie near a bullion room just reached by the divers, but her imperishable spirit, the glory of her great example, and the memory of her life of love and sacrifice and true nobility can never pass away.

From "Children's Newspaper. November 21st. 1931"

Articles which have appeared in the *Journal* over the years, have come from a wide variety of sources, but I never expected that the *Children's Newspaper* would provide us with a useful story. I had never previously heard of Rhoda McNeile, but her brother, Rev. A. Patrick McNeile was the vicar of Aylsham from 1930 to 1936. **Ed.**

The recovery of the treasure which was on board the sunken *Egypt* is another story altogether. An account of the salvage operation appeared in the book *'When ships go down'* by David Masters. The *Egypt*, a P & O liner, left Tilbury in May 1922 bound for the Far East. After passing through the English Channel she encountered dense fog on her second day out, and at about 7pm. on that day she was rammed amidships by a French cargo ship *Seine*. The *Egypt* sank so quickly that fifteen passengers (including Rhoda McNeile) and seventy-one crew members perished with her.

In addition to the loss of lives, gold and silver bars and boxes of sovereigns, all to the value of £1,058,979 went to the bottom with her. Plans to recover such a fortune were soon under

consideration, but the difficulties were enormous. The *Egypt* lay in over 300 feet of water - too deep for ordinary divers, and when she was eventually located, she turned out to be some three miles from her assumed position. The only way to get at the bullion room was by blowing the wreck up with explosives and using a grab to haul up the remains. Despite all the problems the Italian salvage team finally succeeded in reaching the treasure and by 1931 the first ingots and sovereigns began to appear in the grab that the crane hauled up. By 1932, ten years after the sinking, bullion to the value of £732,250 had been recovered. Quite an achievement.

Ed.

---ooOoo---

“THE TRIANGLE”

Peter Pink

In a conveyance, dated 24th. December 1881, the corner of a field on the Buxton Road was described as ‘*a piece of land. . . containing. . . thirteen perches*’ and as being ‘*triangular*’. The house subsequently built on the plot became “The Triangle”.

Today, the Buxton Road leads to many houses and bungalows - but not to Buxton. In 1881 there were a few houses scattered along the road. Then, the road did go to Buxton with cultivated fields on both sides. It would have been, no doubt, fairly busy from time to time, particularly on market days. “The Triangle” was built by 1884, it being insured for £200 before that year according to a note on a document. The purchaser of the plot was described as a builder in the 1881 conveyance. Perhaps it was the intention to provide a comfortable new home for the owner, but it would have also served simultaneously as an advertisement, showing the expertise of the builder/owner who was to live there.

This is conjecture, but the evidence for it being a reasonable assumption is the house itself. When the house was sold at an auction on 28th. January 1902 at the Black Boys in Aylsham, it

was described as *a Brick and Tile Villa Residence*. The claim to being a Villa was not overblown, though houses given this description were then, and are certainly now, larger than 'The Triangle'. It was small, even smaller than it is now, but the overall impression must have been most impressive.

It was mainly constructed in red brick, but there was an extensive use of buff/white bricks to give the house a striking decorative look. These bricks of contrasting colour frame the windows and the points at which the walls meet, and they were also used in the bands which go round the house at two levels. The gables are pedimented, and there is elaborate quorning. The cornice is dentilled. All these fine details made it a most distinctive building, a Villa. It was a striking building to have been erected on the edge of Aylsham in the late nineteenth century.

When the building was sold in 1902, as mentioned above, the purchasers were acting on behalf of the Loyal Walpole Lodge No.25, of the Norfolk & Norwich Unity of the Independent Order of Oddfellows. At the time of the sale, the Triangle was rented out at the 'low yearly rent of £12, the tenant paying all rates'. It is obvious the Oddfellows bought it as an investment to yield an income. Three men who bid for, and bought the house at the sale were acting as trustees of the Oddfellows lodge. They were, "a farming bailiff" of Saxthorpe; a "platelayer" and a "wheelwright" of Reepham, when described in the Memorandum of Sale. Two other trustees are mentioned in the actual conveyance of March 1st. 1902; both of them labourers - One from Itteringham, and the other from Barningham.

The sellers were the sons of the Aylsham builder who bought the plot of land in 1881. They did not have the money raised paid into their pockets, since their father had an overdraft, and the £230 agreed price was put to that debt. The two sons were both described as 'builders' in the Memorandum of Sale, but one was designated 'Sanitary Inspector' in the conveyance. The Oddfellows sold the Triangle in 1971.

A house built between 1881 and 1884, will have had many alterations and additions, even “a handsome villa”. A main alteration/addition was a two storey front extension with a porch. It was built to match the main structure. Red and buff facing bricks were carefully selected, as were the red clay pantiles used on the roof over the extension. The casual observer can be taken in and believe this is no new work, but it is, as careful inspection soon reveals. That it is so easy to be taken in is a tribute to the high quality of the work.

There have been other alterations, but they are sometimes not so easy to understand or describe. There is a cellar which appears to be part of the original structure, under one of the original rooms, but the entrance to it, a trapdoor, is in a room which appears not to be part of the original building, although the trapdoor itself appears to be original. There are patches of more modern brickwork awkwardly extending the original structure of the house, and perhaps replacing an existing part of the building, but this is conjecture. The evidence is unclear.

When the house was put up for sale on 28th. January 1902, at the Black Boys Hotel, in the Notice of Sale a “pump and outbuildings” were mentioned, as was a “stable and gighouse” which was specifically noted as being ‘the property of the tenant’. Now there is a modern garage. So things are different. Nevertheless, the overall impression today is of a “Brick and Tile Villa Residence” of some distinction — and a handsome reminder of the end of the nineteenth century in the twentyfirst.

I am indebted to Dr. and Mrs Wickens, the present owner occupiers of the Triangle, for help in compiling this short history of their house.

Peter Pink

---ooOoo---

SOCIETY NEWS

How we lived 1850-1950 - On November 22nd. Peter Larter gave a talk illustrated with slides of pictures of Norwich taken between 1850 and 1950. His commentary was lucid, witty and compassionate. This was social history made easy and enjoyable. The early slides were of a grim, dark city with many slums, and where infection was rife and with the killers of cholera and diphtheria all too prevalent. The sky then became grey, polluted with the smoke from the many industries.

We saw the transition of the modes of travel, from horse-drawn vehicles to boats, to trains, to buses and to trams. The cattle market with its drovers herding their flocks through quiet streets, showed an idyllic city, with rural roots. Slum clearance and the advent of a hygienic system of drainage altered the city's street plan, but the Market Place was always recognisable from different viewpoints. It was interesting to be reminded of the opposition there was to the new City Hall. Too modern, it was thought by many.

We were made aware of the simplicity of life in those days, with children being taken by waggons to the seaside; of street parties to celebrate Royal Jubilees, etc., and the patriotism with which royalty was received, with massed choirs of young citizens. The most heart-rending pictures were of young men going smiling to the carnage of the First World War. Many of us had forgotten how Norwich had suffered during the last war, and the shocking pictures reminded us. It was a memorable evening. The pictures were well-presented, and showed a many-faceted city

Ursula Warren

Winter Party - On Thursday 24th. January we held our Winter Party at the Aylsham Lodge Hotel. Between 40 and 50 members attended a well organised and highly successful party. The venue

was the same as last year, but on this occasion we enjoyed a sit-down meal which was of first rate quality. I think the choice of venue was a great success, and we enjoyed comfortable and pleasant surroundings.

In addition to the good food we had several brain teasers to keep our minds occupied. The variety of antiques and curiosities to identify kept us well intrigued, and the pictures of well-known(?) faces to identify, showed how not so well-known some of them were. More likely, it showed how poor our memories have become. It was equally embarrassing to look at the photographs of well-known parts of Aylsham that we pass regularly, but could still be a puzzle to recognise. Another reminder of how unobservant we can be.

We owe a great deal of thanks to the organisers of the evening's entertainment - particularly to our hard working secretary, Betty Gee. Also to Julian Eve, Jean McChesney and our chairman, Peter Holman and all the others who helped. A lot of work went into the preparation, and it showed. One of the best features of this annual event is the chance it provides to meet up with and chat to other members whom we see fleetingly at our more formal meetings. The evening seemed to have been enjoyed by all, and in my case, as I missed it last year, it was doubly enjoyed.

Tom Mollard

Land of The Iceni - The Iron Age in Norfolk. - On March 21st. Dr. John Davies spoke to a large audience in the Friendship Club. To me the title did not sound wildly exciting, nevertheless, despite that and the atrocious weather outside, he was speaking to a packed audience which included 14 visitors and two new members, which once again, shows what a great interest exists in Aylsham when there is a good subject and a good speaker.

Dr Davies, Curator of the Castle Museum, took us through the various phases of the Iron Age in Britain generally and in Norfolk

specifically, so we ranged from about 700BC to 45AD. He explained how moving from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age brought about changes in society; social structures and farming practices altered; artistic skills developed, examples of which we can see in the Snettisham hoard and other artefacts which are frequently discovered in the Norfolk soil.

There are clearly locations in the county which warrant further excavation and exploration - Saham Toney, for example - could it be the site of Queen Boadicea's home? and Caistor St. Edmund could have been a well developed Icenii oppidum before the Romans came. That could have persuaded the Romans to develop it into the fortified town of which we can still see the traces today.

The talk was well illustrated with an abundance of slides, but time prevented us seeing all of them. All in all, it was a very interesting lecture, and we were left with one puzzle - why are there so very few remains of Iron Age burial sites?

Tom Mollard

Outings - As a follow-up to the afternoon course run by Charles Lewis, a trip to Kings Lynn was arranged for those members who attended the course. I imagine the trip was a great success, although I have no account of where they actually went. It has been suggested that a similar outing might take place in early Spring which could be open to all members. This would probably be to the Great Yarmouth area, where there is much to see nowadays. If this outing is to take place, there should be a separate notice with the details accompanying this issue of the *Journal*.

From the editor . . .

I really should think before I burst into print, but then I probably wouldn't print anything. In the last issue I rambled on about a perceived shortage of research going on currently amongst members. A few moments of reflection would have told me that I really have no idea of what members are quietly beavering away at, not even amongst the members I know in Aylsham. Even less do I know of what other members, who are not living locally, are involved in.

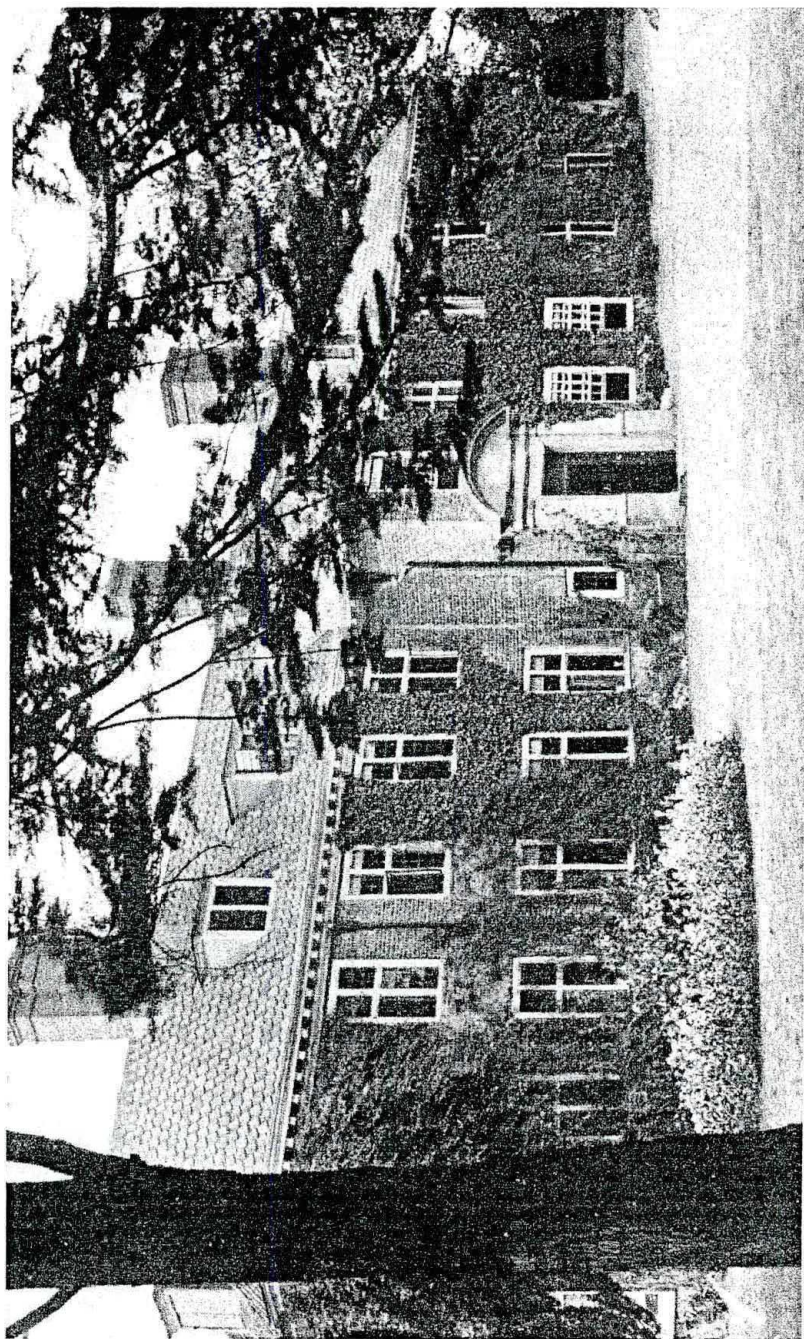
This was brought home to me quite clearly. Nicolas Corbin promptly sent in his article on Hubert De Burgh, and Linda Steward who is a member living in Kent, sent in two remarkable publications which she had produced - one on Blickling Hall and the other on Sheringham Hall. Linda's publications are beautifully produced and make me envious. All the contributions were sent as a result of my other appeal for material for the *Journal*, but it made me realise how much other work probably goes on that I never know of.

My thanks to both of them. Nicolas's article appears in this issue, and Linda's works are now housed in the Archive room in the Town Hall, and are available to anyone who wishes to see them. From now on I will just concentrate on typing, but if there are more articles out there waiting to be sent in, I shall be eternally grateful.

---ooOoo---

THE MANOR HOUSE, AYLSHAM

The following, detailed account of the Manor House in Aylsham, is reproduced from a four page typescript in the Aylsham Archives. The document was written in 1985 by Edwin J. Rose, who is from the Norfolk Museum Service, and I wish to acknowledge him as



The Manor House, Aylsham

the author of the work. The survey of the building and its history is very detailed, and is worthy of a much wider readership. I am grateful to Mr. Rose for his permission to reproduce his work in our *Journal*.

The photograph of the Manor house is taken from a sale catalogue c1900 in the Aylsham Archives.. Ed.

This very long building is situated in its own grounds (which were once more extensive) at the south end of the town, on the east side of the main Norwich Road. It consists of one major block and various outbuildings and subsidiary wings.

Exterior

The main building is aligned east-west. The main entrance facade is to the north. It is a magnificent range of eleven bays (including the central porch tower) on two storeys with dormers above. The basic brickwork is 16th/17th. century with diaperwork, in English bond, although in places the bonding is irregular. There is a plinth of brickwork with one course of flints to the west of the porch, and of flint with brick edging east of the porch, and also on both side walls of the porch itself.

However, all the windows have been replaced. All except two are wooden-cross of the late 17th. century. The eastern two on the upper storey, and the easternmost on the ground floor are original windows rendered false by having the glass blocked in - presumably to avoid Window Tax, as there is no structural reason. The brickwork round the windows is clearly later than the original; in places only the immediate quoins have been replaced, elsewhere considerable areas between windows have been rebuilt. Also, all the upper section of the facade and the porch tower are in later brickwork. The two windows not wooden-cross are the third and fourth from the west, and these are Georgian sashes. The walling around them has been replaced en bloc and protrudes slightly. As

the facade was formerly covered in ivy, this may be one of the reasons for the mistaken idea that the building has been extended [see final paragraph]. The brickwork has also been lime washed at some date; now mostly eroded. A Victorian cast-iron vent has been inserted by the westernmost ground floor window, and the NW corner patched. The porch entrance has a segmental pediment with broken base, on brick pilasters. The whole facade and porch has a massive modillioned eaves cornice. The porch tower has a flat roof, and set back above this is a large dormer with wooden pilasters. Two smaller flat-roofed dormers are set to each side at equal distances. Three chimney stacks are set along the ridge, one in line with the westernmost bay's east wall, a smaller one between the fourth and fifth bays from the west, and the largest on the third bay from the east. All these stacks have been rebuilt above roof level.

The west wall (the roof is hipped, so there is no gable) is of one build with the original brickwork of the facade, but remarkably it slopes at an acute angle to the facade. This echoes the line of the roadway some distance to the south-west, suggesting that the road once followed a similar alignment nearer to the building. The same eaves cornice continues; there is one upper and two lower windows, again with the brickwork replaced around them.

At the east end of the north facade is a straight join to the thickness of the east wall, but the house has not been shortened, for the flint plinth is stopped with original brickwork. The east wall is entirely of 18th/19th. century brickwork and has two windows on each level, plus a central dormer. The windows are sashes with frames indented at the corners, not paralleled elsewhere in the building. The modillioned eaves survives in fragments, but is cut by the upper windows.

The south (rear) wall is obscured by many alterations and extensions. The east end has, again, the straight join to the east

wall's thickness, and is then of original brickwork as far as a projecting nineteenth century wing with shaped gable. Single storey outshuts of late date continue westwards. Above these can be seen a wooden-cross window, partly surrounded by original brickwork, and partly by what seems from the ground, to be eighteenth century bricks. Then comes a wide projection containing the main staircase, seemingly also in eighteenth century brick, with a tall window, but its shaped gable is modern (perhaps rebuilt) and an oculus in the east side wall is in a patch of modern brickwork. West of this, projecting outbuildings form a courtyard (see below). The main house wall is again screened by later extensions, with original brickwork visible at the extreme west on the upper level.

Interior

It must be stressed that owing to the building's present use as a residential home for the elderly, and the necessary decorations etc., little of the original structure is visible on the interior.

Ground Floor

The central porch gives access to a very large single-storey hall, crossed longitudinally by what is claimed to be the longest hall ceiling beam in the county. It has single roll mouldings and concave chamfers. A post has been inserted at the west end to support it. This post has nineteenth century capital and base, but the roll-chamfers to each corner, and the woodwork seem much older. It appears as though two seventeenth century beams have been set back to form it, but there is no trace of a join. Each wall of the room has a cornice beam moulded like the main beam. The walls are panelled in what seems to be Georgian panelling. There is a stone fireplace in the east wall in Georgian or Regency style, and a small, blocked fireplace in the west wall. The former is situated below the east end of the main beam, whereas the latter is

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



PROGRAMME 2001 - 2002

Meetings are usually held at the FRIENDSHIP CLUB, Aylsham, starting at 7.30pm. Any variations from this are noted in the programme below.

Additional lectures or events, or changes to the programme are notified in the Society's "Journal and Newsletter" which is published quarterly and issued free to members

2001

Tuesday September 25th

Starts at the Meeting House, Pegg's Yard, Aylsham. A weekly course of lectures. The subject is *Norfolk Ships and Seafarers*, given by Charles Lewis. Course of 10 meetings. Starting at 2pm. Further details, if needed from Peter Holman, 01263-733434

Thursday October 4th at 7pm

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, followed by a talk on "*Tin Tabernacles*", by John Bracey - Friendship Club

Thursday October 25th

7.30pm at the Friendship Club. "*Norfolk Country Houses from the air*" by Derek Edwards.

Date ... 4.10.01

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Mr M. Sewell

the sum of

£7. Cash

For

AYLSHAM LOCAL
HISTORY SOCIETY

Gu

Thursday November 22nd

7.30pm at the Friendship Club. *"How we used to live 1850-1950"* by Peter Larter.

2002

Thursday January 24th

WINTER PARTY - details will be circulated.

Thursday February 21st

7.30pm at the Friendship Club. *"Land of the Icen - The Iron Age in Norfolk"* by John Davies.

Thursday March 21st

7.30pm at the Friendship Club *"The Work of the Norfolk Records Office"* by John Alban.

Thursday April 25th

7.30pm at the Friendship Club. *"The Ins and Outs of the Workhouse"*, by Joy Lodey.

It is hoped to organise at least one all-day expedition and one or two shorter trips. Details will appear in the *Journal & Newsletter*, and on the Notice Board on the Town Hall, or by circular.

Subscriptions

Individuals - £7. Married Couples £12.

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01263 733013

to one side of the beam, which appears to pass through the cornice. Has the cornice been moved outwards at some date? A small cupboard set beside this west stack curves round behind it.

Off the hall's south wall, towards the east end, is the main staircase with Georgian twisted balusters. Beside the east stack on the south is a small closet, now with a hatch through to the east, but probably originally the base of the spiralling staircase remaining on the level above. A passage on the north of the stack leads to the easternmost room, which has nothing of interest visible.

West of the hall, the building is slightly narrower, the original south wall being stepped in. This end is entered by a passage on the north of the central stack (i.e. the stack in the hall's west wall). The first room entered has no fireplace in the rear of the stack, but has a fireplace in its west wall belonging to the western stack. This room is again in Georgian style. The final main room has a lateral beam some feet to the west of the stack, in its east wall, and a longitudinal beam running west from it; both are plain. A small triangular room at the extreme east regularises the plan - possibly the partition forming this is late.

On the outside of the original south wall runs a corridor, with a dogleg around the change in width of the main building. By the westernmost stack, a winding stair descends into the corridor; very probably it originally came down into one of the main rooms. The remainder of the interiors of the extensions have nothing worth of note, except one beam behind the hall, which crosses a corridor and seems to be a nineteenth century copy of a sixteenth century style. For the re-set date plaque, see below.

Cellar

Where the corridor forms a dogleg around the projection of the hall, a staircase descends through the west wall of the hall, in a space hacked out of the brickwork and plastered over. The plan

of the cellar is rectangular. One side is partitioned off, with a door and window in the partition, but this is probably a late alteration. A barrel chute entering on the north is modern, dating from when the house was used as a pub in recent times. There is one ceiling beam with small stops. A barrel-vaulted narrow and high passage passes through the thick west wall to enter a circular chamber, apparently built of eighteenth century bricks. The top seems to have been domed, but to have been destroyed by a lowered floor level above. A small deep hole which opens on the cellar stairs may connect with this chamber. It seems probable that this was an ice-house. Domed, as opposed to rectangular icehouses, are rare in cellars, though a similar example is said to have been found in the Guild House at Long Stratton. A slight reservation to this identification is that it is not easy to work out the relationship of the chamber to the central stack, and the heat from the fireplace may have had a detrimental effect on the storage of ice. It is possible that this, therefore, may have been some sort of furnace connecting with the stack. However, an icehouse seems far more probable and the chamber is probably far enough away from the stack for this function.

Upper Floor

This level has been subdivided both recently and in the past. An internal corridor has been formed along the inside of the south wall, in the hall block. It passes through the original wall line at the dogleg to become an external corridor to the western section. There are closets by the central stack. By the eastern stack, on the south side, is a winding stair to the attics and a closet, which no doubt formerly contained a continuation to the ground floor. The easternmost room has a very fine ceiling of c.1800.

Attics

These have been converted to rooms and thus not much is

visible. The attic of the western section has straight windbraces, but all of the hall block has arched windbraces. On the north side of the eastern stack is a so called, priest hole, with a door formed of panelling, but this is such an obvious place for any priest hunter to look, that it is almost certainly only some sort of store cupboard.

Outbuildings and grounds

The court to the south of the west end of the house is formed by barns, now converted, which in part seem to be of c.1800, but largely are later nineteenth century, including industrial buildings with iron-framed windows. In the block forming the east side of the court is a remarkable conical, or beehive-shaped hearth or fireplace, formed of rubbed bricks, with a comparatively small opening for the fire. A polygonal nineteenth century chimney rises from this. It is presumably for some sort of industrial process needing an enclosed fire.

A stone plaque bearing the date 1600 and initials that may be L. I. was formerly set in an external wall at the north end of this building, but the walling here is nineteenth century, and the plaque must have been re-set. It is now in an internal wall.

A lady working as a voluntary helper in Norwich museum in 1983 told the writer that she had been born in the hall, and there was a fourteenth century barn here. No trace of such a building was seen, nor is there any evidence of one having been demolished. The date is unlikely in any case, and there must be some confusion here.

The grounds are said to retain their seventeenth century layout. There is a yew hedge and a circular yew which is said to have contained a garden house with a tunnel leading from it. (for a parallel, see Kirby Cane Hall). In overgrown land to the south-east, now under separate ownership, are two large ponds. There was formerly a third some distance further east that may now have been

built over. There is no evidence that these ever formed a moat, but they may have been fishponds.

DISCUSSION

Mr. C.Barringer has hypothesized that the medieval manor stood nearer to the fishponds, to the south east.

The present building has apparently been said, by local historians, to date from c.1550, and to have been extended when Bishop Jegon lived here, around 1610. The moulding of the beam in the hall would certainly fit a date of c1550. The external brickwork is suitable to either date. As already noted, there is now no doubt that the north facade is all of one build and has not been extended. Therefore, if the bishop did extend the building, he must have added an overall facade covering the original section also, but is there any real evidence for two early periods of building?

Blomefield states that Bishop Jegon built the house after the destruction by fire of Ludham palace in 1611, but Mr. C. Barringer suggests that the site by the ponds was the site of the Great Manor formerly belonging to Lancaster; that the present house was built c1580, and that Jegon only made alterations. Mr. Barringer believes that the diaperwork of the front is of c1580 and pre-Jegon, which is very probable.

The shape of the building also should be noted. The narrower width of the west end does not necessarily mean that this is an extension. One should compare Elsing Hall, which although earlier by 80 years or so, is a close parallel in plan. If this end was an extension to the original, the original plan would have been very strange, for even if one accepts that the central stack was original, and was on an external gable, the original house, being an end-stack house and extended both to east and west, as has apparently been suggested, this would result in the great hall occupying the whole ground floor (for the beam has no marks of divisions, neither has the cornice) - a plan with no known parallel. Rather, it seems

certain that the plan was almost identical to the Elsing plan - a large central hall (although at Elsing that is an open hall, not single-storeyed as here) entered by a porch tower (central here, on a screens passage at Elsing - the fashion was dying out by the late sixteenth century) with, to the east the parlour, and the service rooms arranged in the narrower section west of the hall. The central stack (in the hall's west wall) appears to be a later insertion. The writer would have assigned a date c1550-1580 independently to such a house with this brickwork and beam, if no other date had been known.

What, then, can one assign to Bishop Jegon? The alteration of the windows dates to 1680, and is far too late for him. Nothing else is now visible that could be assigned to 1611. Mr Barringer suggests that the windows in the facade were altered by Jegon, and then the present windows in turn removed his. Did he also alter the top of the wall, the present cornice again removing his work? It would be helpful also if we knew the history of the date plaque. If Jegon did not come here until 1611 the date of 1600 cannot refer to him, and the "I" (perhaps standing for "J") on the plaque must be a coincidence. However, as the plaque came from a nineteenth century wall, we cannot even be sure that it has anything to do with the house. Possibly it either referred to an earlier outbuilding, not the present ones, or perhaps to some addition on the rear of the building, removed when the present outbuildings were added.

The present fenestration of the facade, the modillioned eaves, and the porch entrance are clearly of c1680, and mark a major modernisation. It may have been at this date that the central stack was inserted, if not during the later alterations.

The second major period of alteration is around 1800, when the present interiors were made and the east wall was rebuilt. The reason for the latter is unknown; one can only guess at some structural instability. The present main staircase is of this date, but very likely there was an original stair turret on this site. The

adjacent winding stairs beside the eastern stack would have surely been too small for a house of this size. The two sash windows in the facade are also of this date, as are some of the outbuildings. The cellar may have been an older feature, but the icehouse seems to belong to this period, and the present cellar entrance is a later alteration. If the cellar is original it may at first only have had trapdoor access.

Later nineteenth century alterations were (happily) mainly concerned with the rear wings, outbuildings and extensions.

It must be stressed that the above sequence must take into account the lack of visible original work, and may be altered if any more evidence comes to light, but it would appear to be basically an adequate explanation. There are some questions still unanswered - why, for example, is the plinth of flint in one part of the facade and brick in the other? Is the brick section of the plinth in fact a replacement of 1680 (it predates the sash windows of c1680 which cut it) or was this a change of plan during the original building? Again, why has the narrower western section a roof of different bracing to the eastern part? Was this to emphasise its difference in function as a service wing, or has this section of the roof been replaced? Not enough is visible to judge, but over all it can be seen that this is an important and very interesting building in all its phases.

Edwin J. Rose 21 June 1985.

Summary

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| c1550 - 1580 | House built of diaper brickwork, with large hall and narrower service rooms, perhaps refounding of medieval manor to the east. |
| 1600 - ?? | alterations - significance of date plaque? |
| 1611 | alterations by Bishop Jegon now removed? |
| c.1680 | facade refenestrated, entrance remade, new eaves cornice, dormers |

- c1800 interior panelled, ceilings made, icehouse in
 cellar, barns? staircase
- c1880 Rear wings and extensions, outbuildings.

THE AYLSHAM NAVIGATION

Some years ago, back in 1993, our society published the book - "Aylsham, Millgate", which naturally featured the Aylsham Navigation as part of its survey of that area of the town. Prior to this, not a lot of information was readily available about the Navigation. One chapter of the Millgate book pulled together most of the information we could discover about the Navigation into a conveniently readable form.

Now, another contribution to the history of the Navigation has appeared in print, adding a lot more detail to that in our publication. This new publication appears in the latest issue of the *Journal of the Norfolk Industrial Archaeological Society*, [Vol.7 No. 1. 2001 pp.53-74] and I can recommend it to any of our members who are interested in the history of the Aylsham Navigation. This account is not new, in fact it pre-dates our work by several years. It was written in 1976 as a thesis by Desmond Best.

Desmond Best died in 1991, and Peter Brown of the NIAS, with the consent of Mrs Best, has edited the work for its appearance in the *NIAS Journal*. The edited version has been reduced by a third in size from the original and by the omission of some appendices. The complete original work can be consulted in the Local Studies library in the new Forum building, and a copy of the edited version is available in the Aylsham Archives copy of the *NIAS Journal*.

HUBERT DE BURGH

The article in the last issue of the *Journal*, on Hubert De Burgh stirred a recollection in Nicolas Corbin's memory about a connection between Hubert De Burgh and one of the National Trust properties for which he was once responsible. Happily for the editor it has also prompted him to send in the article below:-

The National Trust's guidebook to Rayleigh Mount, Essex, published in 1951 gives information about Hubert De Burgh.* That guidebook, which may have been replaced by a later one after 1961, was written by W. A. Voss who became chairman of the Trust's local Management Committee. Voss was a scholarly scientist employed, from memory, by the Gas Board in London.

While I was the Senior Servant of the National Trust in East Anglia from 1948 to 1978, I stayed with Mr & Mrs Voss at least once and I encouraged him to write a guidebook to the property.

The Mount was given to the National Trust by Mr. E.B. Francis in 1923, and no one thought much of it for years! Excavations were carried out in 1959-61 under the direction of Mr. L. Helliwell, who, I believe, was Curator of the Prittlewell Priory Museum. He was assisted by Mr. D. G. Macleod, who, I think, was a professional archaeologist. The records - I hope! - are in the old file at the Trust's Blickling Office. Perhaps they are also with the Essex Archaeological Society. I cannot remember if there is a later guidebook to Rayleigh Mount giving information about the excavations referred to above.

When I started my job with the National Trust I visited the property, and found that the local management committee had

ceased to function during the war. Trenches were dug on the Mount, either by the Army or the Home Guard, and it was too late to get compensation from the government by the time I was acquainted with the very vague facts about war-time activities.

I went to see the rector, Rev. C.F. Carver, who helped me form a small local committee, and I was very lucky to find Mr. W.A. Voss. The committee was composed of rather hopeless people, but I managed to get a Miss Phyllis Ireland on to the committee, and she 'gingered' them up. She lived in Prittlewell with her widowed mother, and became very interested in the work of the National Trust. She formed the first National Trust Centre at Southend-on-Sea.

Those in authority at National Trust HQ in London were almost entirely doubtful if the sort of people who lived in the Southend-on-Sea area would be likely and useful supporters of the National Trust. How wrong that attitude was soon proved to be!

Phyllis Ireland took an archaeological course at Southend Technical College [I think]. She then attacked the National Trust in London for not looking properly after its prehistoric properties! These were situated mostly inside existing National Trust properties. She offered the National Trust to write a guidebook about them all. Robin Fedden, Historic Buildings Secretary to the National Trust was alarmed, so he got Sir Mortimer Wheeler to interview Miss Ireland. He said, "*take her on*".

1971 she wrote the National Trust's first guidebook to the prehistoric properties that it owned. Before that, she stirred up the Rayleigh Mount Local Committee, and persuaded the members to be much more active in seeing that the Mount was looked after properly and real efforts were made to combat vandalism. Later on, the Rayleigh Urban District Council became involved and helped with an annual grant. I remember that a couple of seats

were provided, but they lasted less than a week.

Robin Fedden, who got Miss Ireland's "approval" for writing the guidebook mentioned above, was the successor to the diarist, James Lees-Milne who I got to know quite well. He was invalided out of the Irish Guards during the war and went back to the National Trust which he virtually ran single-handed. In the early war years and immediately afterwards, he used to stay with the Birkbecks at Rippon Hall, Hevingham. Christopher Birkbeck had become the Blickling Land Agent in 1912, and I succeeded him in 1948. He was always very nice to me and understanding.

I am pretty certain that Phyllis Ireland was involved in the excavation of two Iron Age smelting sites at the National Trust Roman Camp at West Runton. That was in 1964. Dr. R.F. Tylecote of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne was in charge. His reports must be in the regional archives at Blickling, but see *Norfolk Archaeology Vol XXXIV part 2, 1967*.

Another of Miss Ireland's activities to support the National Trust was running coach tours for members of the National Trust. She was an extremely efficient organiser and very bossy! I got on well with her because she was so reliable. The coach tours were meticulously organised and always turned up on time!

Nicolas Corbin

* **Note:** Nicolas Corbin also enclosed a copy of the 1951 guide, which any member would be welcome to see. **Ed**

---ooOoo---

JOHN SOAME

(Details from a newspaper obituary cutting in the Aylsham Archives - title not given).

With regret we announce the death yesterday of Mr. John Soame, a well-known farmer, which took place at his residence,

Spratt's Green, Aylsham, after a long illness. The deceased was in his 77th. year and had farmed the Spratt's Green farm since 1873. He came of a very old Dutch family, his forebears coming to Norfolk in the reign of Henry VIII.

As a first rate practical farmer he was always willing to give advice to another in need of it. He had a rare fund of natural humour, and without any pretensions to oratory his speeches were always popular, and he always managed to get his audience into a roar of laughter. He was a kind hearted and generous man, and one of those who are content to pass through life doing his duty as a simple country gentleman, a man who never made an enemy, and his loss will be sincerely mourned by all his neighbours and friends.

Mr Soame was one of the early Volunteers, and rendered good service as Colour Sergeant to the old 'C' Company, 3rd. V.B.N.R. He was elected a District Councillor and Parish Councillor in 1894 and had acted as such up to his death, but he had previously been a Guardian for the parish of Tuttington many years ago. He was one of the oldest members of the Marquis of Lothian lodge of Oddfellows, and for many years acted as Trustee. He had been twice married; his first wife being the eldest daughter of Mrs Maria Soame of the Warren, Aylsham, and his second who survives him, was Miss Emily Soame. He leaves no family. (*John Soame died -Friday, November 25th 1910*)

---ooOoo--

CHANCEL SCREEN AT AYLSHAM CHURCH (from Eastern Counties Collectanea 1872/1873)

'I am anxious to have a list of the saints on the Chancel screen at Aylsham Church. I had only five or ten minutes to look at it one November afternoon last year, as I was passing through

Aylsham and was not able to make any notes. When I reached home I jotted down what I remembered of the screen, which has interested me very much.

The arcade is gone; the panels are sixteen in number, eight on either side of a central doorway. Each panel has a painted figure, but twelve - that is to say, the first six on the north side and the last six on the south - are painted not on the wood but on paper, & attached to the panel; whilst the middle four figures, two on each side next to the doorway, are painted on the panel itself. As far as I can judge, these last are much inferior in execution to the figures painted on paper, which I think are the finest works of art I have seen on a Norfolk rood-screen and I am not surprised that they are supposed to have been brought from Italy. Blomefield prints the inscription upon this screen but somewhat confuses it and us. It should read 'Orate pro animabus Thome Wymer Johanne et Agnetis uxorum ejus qui hanc partem hujus operis deaurari fecerunt qui obiit anno d'ni 1507 '. This inscription refers only to the figures painted on the paper. The first half of it, as far as the word 'partem ' is written under the six figures on the north side, and the remainder under the six figures on the south. 'Johannis Jannys' is under the figure on the north side nearest the door, and probably that with the three others painted on the wood were executed at his cost.

I learn from 'The Norfolk Topographer's Manual' that in Mr Dawson Turner's Illustrated Blomefield were twelve drawings of the figures on this screen, five only of which are named, as follows:- Moses, SS. Andrew, John, Lawrence, and Peter. One is said to be 'a Pilgrim', no doubt St James Major.

In the Very Reverend Doctor Husenbeth's 'Emblems of the Saints' I find mentioned as occurring on this screen, Moses holding a rod & tables, his face radiant; St Matthew with a money-box; St Paul, resting upon a sword, St Simon with a fish in his hand; St

Jude with a fuller's bat in his hand; and St Mathias bearing a halbert. I also noticed St John the Baptist with lamb & book; but, as I said at the commencement of these notes, I am anxious for a perfect list, which I do not think has appeared in print.'

(Article kindly supplied by Geoffrey Nobbs)

Reverend Canon Jack Vyse



On Christmas Eve Canon Jack Vyse, founder chairman of our society, died in Lincoln County Hospital at the age of 86. Canon Vyse, former rector of St. Michael's church, Aylsham, had been the society's chairman from the Inaugural meeting on 4th. June 1984, with Jane Nolan as our first secretary. Between them they established our society on its successful course.

Jack had been Vicar of Aylsham from 1970 and with his considerable knowledge of the town and its people, he was the ideal person to have as a founder Chairman. Jack was ordained in 1940, and when he eventually came to Norfolk in 1970 to become Vicar of Aylsham he also became priest-in-charge of Alby with Thwaite. In 1974 he also became Rural Dean of the Ingworth Deanery until his retirement in 1988. He was always very involved in activities in the town - as Parish Councillor, School Governor and as a member of many of the town's societies.

After his retirement in 1988 Jack settled in Ludford in Lincolnshire, with his wife Joan. He still made many visits to Norfolk, and many of us were pleased to meet him occasionally in Aylsham or Norwich. He remained a life member of our society, and was always interested in its activities. Sadly, his wife Joan, also a member of our society, died just a few months before Jack. They will both be missed and well remembered by many people in Aylsham.

Tom Mollard

A first-rate Landed Investment

AYLSHAM, NORFOLK.

Mr. BUTCHER

Has the honour to announce that he has received instructions from the Rev. SAM'L. PITMAN, Oulton Hall, Norfolk,

To SELL by AUCTION,

At the Royal Hotel, Norwich,

On Saturday, the 6th day of June, 1846,

At Three o'clock in the Afternoon,

THOSE WELL-KNOWN

PRODUCTIVE FARM

Called Boddy's and Clarke's,

Lying immediately in the vicinity of the town of Aylsham, which will be divided into the following Lots, unless an acceptable offer is previously made for the whole by Private Contract:

Lot 1. **B**ODDY'S FARM, comprising a Farm house, Cottage, three Barns, Stable and numerous Agricultural Buildings, and 175A. 0R. 19P. of extraordinary fine Arable and Pasture Land, lying in a ring fence, next the Estate of John Warnes, Esq.

Lot 2.—Clarke's Farm, containing 67A. 1R. 13P. of very fine Arable Land, with a good Farm-house, Cottage, Barn, Stables, &c., lying near the town of Aylsham.

Lot 3.—Four Inclosures of superior Arable Land called First Grove Six Acres, Further Grove Six Acres, Lower Garroldstone's and Mary's Beck Ten Acres, part of a Meadow called the Great Meadow and a Grove well planted with thriving young Oaks, containing together 35A. 2R. 14P.

Lot 4.—Two fine Inclosures of Arable Land abutting on the road leading from Boddy's Farm to Cawston, containing 11A. 3R. 38P.

Further particulars and Conditions of Sale may be had 14 days previous to the Sale, by applying to Messrs. Foster, Unthank, Burroughes, and Roberts, Solicitors, or to Mr. Butcher, Auctioneer, Norwich, at whose Office Plans of the Lots may be seen.

1846
advert

AYLSHAM FAIR.

WM. BARCHAM and SON
will Offer for SALE by AUCTION,

On Monday next, precisely at 12 o'clock.

Near the Dog Inn.

TWO very handsome **GREY FILLIES**, rising four and five years old, calculated for single or double harness.

An excellent Light Travelling Pair-horse Chariot, with additional shafts for one horse, Pony Phaeton, well-bred Colts, Brood Mare, Cart Horse, three Brace of staunch Pointers and Retrievers.

AYLSHAM FAIR.

WM. BARCHAM & SON

RESPECTFULLY acquaint the public, that they are Instructed by the Executors of Sir **F. BUXTON, Bart., deceased,**

To SELL by AUCTION,

on Monday, March 24th, 1845, the undermentioned Property:—

An excellent Light Travelling Chariot, in good condition, with driving seat, luggage boot, patent springs, &c., on elliptic springs, and has additional shafts for one horse, Phaeton for pair of ponies, or one horse.

Bay Filly, rising four years old, by Tristram, with fine action, and very promising.

Bay Yearling Colt, by Lambtonian, out of a well-bred mare.

Very handsome Brown Brood Mare, in foal by Yearwell.

A very superior Bay Cart Horse, six years old.

Likewise Three Brace of Staunch Pointers and Retrievers.

Sale to commence at Half-past Eleven o'clock, near the Dog Inn.

1845
advert

AYLSHAM ON THE INTERNET.

We are often quite unaware of what exists on the Internet. One of our readers has kindly sent me details of a second hand bookseller's catalogue, listing Norfolk titles available. I have reprinted some of the material with Aylsham connections below. I was intrigued to see that Valerie Belton's recent work on the Norwich/Cromer Turnpike was also included! How did it find its way down to Chepstow?

[Aylsham] Abstract of title to 8 acres of land.

An 1831 abstract relating to former copyhold land known as "Blundens" on the Aylsham/North Walsham Rd. It summarises the main documents/transactions going back to 1760. Principal families involved are Jeffery[-1760] Hawkins [1760-83] Trampletts and Kings [1783-86] Holley [1786-1830]. Manuscript on 4 sheets of double-foolscap £12.00 (Ref 4961)

[Aylsham] Sale conditions of house/shop in the Market Place.

A draft made up from an earlier printed form with manuscript additions. It concerns a "commodious dwelling house and small shop next the Market Place.[1861] £5 (Ref G.297/26.

[Aylsham] Abstract of title to property in Market Place

Undated, but approx. 1850 abstract provides details of property transactions and those involved going back to 1752. This copyhold property was the concern of the following families:- 1752-83 Hawkins; 1783-1821 Francis and Parmeter; 1821-29 Miller; 1829-49 Soame; The property consisted of a house, shop stable and other buildings on the west side of the Market Place. Mss on 12 large paper sheets. £10 (Ref.G297/30)

These are all offered for sale by "Chapel Books, Chapel Cottage, Llanishen, Chepstow. NP16 6QT. Tele: 01600-860055 and no! this is not the start of an advertising section in the *Journal*.

And finally . . .

Two elderly ladies were chatting in Ten Mile Bank

First Elderly lady: *"What d'ya think about goin' into the Common Market?"*

Second Elderly lady: *"I shan't bother - I kin git all I want from Downham Market"*