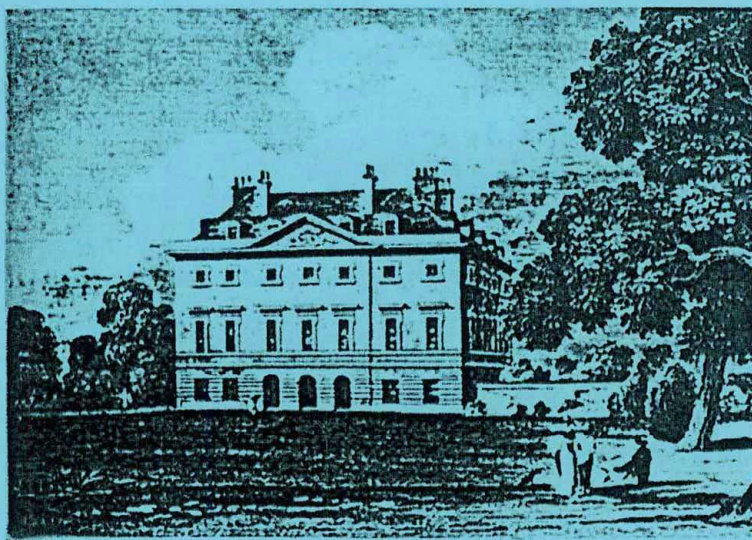


AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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The cover illustration is of Wolterton Hall, drawn by J P Neale , and published in 1820 in London.



AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

**JOURNAL &
NEWSLETTER**

Volume 7

No 10

By the time you receive this Edition, the winter season will be coming to an end and only one lecture will remain. The February talk will have taken place without a hitch. Indeed an excellent audience on a cold evening heard Barbara Miller's fascinating talk about Norwich Cathedral. Following the talk on 23rd March about *The Plantation Garden, Norwich*, I understand there will be a visit to the Garden in May. The last talk this spring will be on Thursday 27th April at the Friendship Hall entitled *Norwich Bridges, their history and importance* by Janet Smith, who has given interesting talks to us in other years.

I was very surprised and pleased to be made a Life Member at the Winter Party. I have very much enjoyed my years with the Society, which started in 1991, although I actually attended a special occasion in August 1987 when a lecture about the special relationship between the Manor of Aylsham Lancaster and the Blickling Estate by Mrs E M Griffiths drew a record attendance. Tom Mollard's report on this talk in Volume 1 of our Journal is reprinted in this edition.

Betty Gee
Editor

VISITS

As this edition goes to print, Ann Dyball is confirming arrangements for several visits this spring. On Friday April 7th there will be a combined morning visit with the WEA to three churches with wall paintings. In May there will be an afternoon visit to the *Plantation Garden* and on Thursday 14th September an all-day visit to the Sir John Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London is being planned.

It is with much regret that we learn of the death of one of our oldest members, Mrs Joan Turville-Petre, aged 95 years. The funeral will be at St Michael's Church on 24th March at 2 pm. There will be an obituary in the next edition.

SOCIETY NEWS

“HOW OUR PRESENT COUNTRYSIDE HAS DEVELOPED”

a talk by David Papworth on 27th October 2005

Betty Gee

David Papworth gave a very interesting and wide-ranging talk about the problems farmers faced today. He first explained that he was an arable farmer living at Tuttington, to the east of Aylsham. His family came from Cambridge and moved to a farm in Felmingham. Then in 1929 they obtained the tenancy of Tuttington Hall and bought Lower Farm, Tuttington; their son lived there now. In 1951 they purchased Tuttington Hall (which was owned by a Cambridge College) - 202 acres for £9,500.

Mr Papworth explained that, in wartime, the Ministry of Food, Fisheries and Agriculture acted as a referee to see farmers were productive enough. Extra allotments were introduced in towns and villages. A system of rationing operated until 1953, with extra rations for workers. That Ministry had now become DEFRA, the Department of Food and the Environment, and the Rural Payments Agency was important to farmers. Set Aside payments for land on the edge of fields had become the practice.

He regretted very much that a very low percentage of an average family's weekly pay viz 7% was (it was said) spent on food. It was a refuelling operation and family meals together were becoming a thing of the past. We were in a period of change. Climate change would mean that we would run out of fossil fuels, coal, natural gas and oil. One could get oil from a bottle and heat from solar means. What did we now make in the UK? We imported most manufactures, and relied on service industries.

There was a problem with land drainage. We were not bothering enough to defend our country from the sea (and the danger of salinity) or from rivers. He urged that we do more to look after ourselves. There had been major flooding in 1938 and 1953. He had deepened channels on his farm with grant aid to allow water to drain away. Hedges had been bulldozed and then had been put back. He emphasized that the countryside was a managed landscape. We must be pro-active and use grants for drainage. The Halvergate Drainage Scheme near Yarmouth meant that cattle were grazed there in winter on marshland.

Regarding the viability of the countryside, we could plant woodlands, but he thought people living there were the best custodians. We had opened up the countryside. He feared there was an urban/rural divide developing. Urban people did not understand the ways of country people. We were fostering better relations in our villages, talking to children and showing them products such as sugar beet. 30 acres a day of sugar beet could now be cut by machine. However, a cart horse grew its own fuel. Sugar could be used to make bio fuels. We produced a lot of sugar beet but there was now a threat from Brazil and Australia of supplying our markets by arrangement with the EU. A level playing field was wanted. Sugar was part of our crop rotation system and very important.

He then turned to the "Single Farm Payment" issue and "decoupling from production". A farmer received a payment no matter what they produced. It was difficult to make money on some land - good environmental conditions were needed. Farmers grew what they could grow. Livestock might disappear. Unanticipated results might become a problem. He stressed that conservation was not neglect because we were dealing with a managed landscape. Mr Papworth felt the Chancellor relied too much on the large taxes paid by oil companies and by car owners and did not encourage use of new fuels such as could be produced by farmers.

He was fortunate in that his son worked on the farm and he had a young grandson but in many farming families the sons were leaving farming.

Felicity Cox thanked Mr Papworth warmly for giving us a stimulating talk with many points which would remain with us.

ooOoo

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE NORFOLK VILLAGE – a talk by
Christopher Barringer**

Tom Mollard

On November 24th Christopher Barringer was on his usual high form describing to us how the normal Norfolk village evolved into its present shape. This was a well-timed choice of subject, following on naturally from the previous talk by David Papworth on how our countryside had developed.

Chris has spent nearly forty years living in Norfolk and has studied his subject extensively. There is no such thing as a 'normal' Norfolk village – and I am not just referring to the inhabitants – and he grouped the villages into four main categories.

The Coastal villages contain those that have been eroded, or in some cases have disappeared by the action of the sea, such as Eccles and Happisburgh, and others which have grown in size by the same action, such as Cley and Blakeney.

Fenland villages in the west of the county have mostly grown in size, but that is through the action of man, who has reclaimed vast acres of shore land from the sea and returned it to agriculture. The rich agricultural soil of that area has also helped to determine the shape and prosperity of those villages.

Broadland villages grew from the actions of the peat diggers whose actions created the Broads and the subsequent waterways, and water borne trade that grew from it had its effect on the growth and shape of the villages.

The Breckland which struggled to carve out an existence from the poor soil – only fit for sheep and rabbits.

Reasons other than geographical helped to create and shape Norfolk villages. Four hundred years of continuous Roman rule helped to shape the pattern of some, as did the arrival of the Danes, and later Christianity. Agriculture, particularly sheep breeding, determined the wealth of many places, and the present splendour of some of the village churches reveal how wealthy some villages must have been.

The Dissolution of the monasteries, which was followed later by the creation and growth of the larger country estates also contributed to the present state of many villages.

Modern activity also plays its part. The coming of the railways affected the growth of some villages, but on the whole the effect of the railways was mixed. The population growth has made some villages unrecognisable from how our grandparents would have known them. They have been absorbed into larger urban areas.

Altogether it was a most interesting talk, well illustrated by slides, and considering the wildness of the weather outside, it was a very well attended meeting.

WINTER PARTY 2006

Angela King

The evening of 26th January was cold, but fortunately the forecast sleet showers failed to arrive for the night of the Winter Party at the Aylsham Lodge Hotel.

From 7 o'clock the thirty-eight members and guests assembled in the spacious Function Room before being invited to take their places by our Chairman, Geoff Gale, for the excellent dinner that followed. Betty Gee provided each table with copies of a quiz on historical aspects of Aylsham and which we attempted between courses. There was also an acrostic which Peter Holmen had originally devised for the Journal of February 1988 for those guests who had the time, and knowledge of the roads of Aylsham, to complete.

Geoffrey Gale was pleased to present Betty Gee with Life Membership in recognition of the years in which Betty had served as Treasurer and Secretary and now as Journal Editor for the Society. The members were pleased to endorse this with a round of applause.

Betty then read out the answers to the quiz. Daphne and Rex Davy and also Tom Mollard had tied with 21 marks out of 23, and Jenni Cross came third. Prizes were awarded to them. The answers to Peter's puzzle had proved more of a challenge with Elsie Smith having the most correct answers.

We were then provided with some musical entertainment by Clive Ashwin on clarinet and saxophone accompanied by Gill Smith on the keyboard, the music ranging from Elgar to Gershwin. Gill Smith also performed two solo piano pieces by Beethoven. This brought a delightful end to an enjoyable evening.

The evening concluded with a further chance to chat before coats were collected and farewells said.

Note for next year's Winter Party.

The numbers at this year's party were fewer than normal. I understand that some members felt that £18 was too great a cost although this was a competitive price for such a good meal. The £4 increase this year was the result of a number of factors.

1. The hotel had increased the cost of the dinner by £2 since 2004 due to their rising fuel and staff costs. They had also devised a special menu as members had requested a change from the standard function menu offered in 2003 and 2004.
2. The committee decided not to subsidise the food element of the party this year as this would have meant a rise in the subscription for all members (approx 35% of members attended the party).
3. We were given a very special (and unrepeatable) deal for the party by the Black Boys in 2005.

The fact that the cost for the function as at present is likely to increase further has lead to some heart searching to consider ways in which the event could attract a higher proportion of the membership. Perhaps you would like to consider the following alternative options, suggested to me by members, for discussion at the AGM.

- a. An evening function with a two course meal.
- b. A lunch time function (this would be difficult for those still working).
- c. A function at the Friendship Hall using outside caterers. This is more likely to be a cold buffet and would probably involve more work for the committee.
- d. Having the function at a different time of year when the evenings are lighter and the weather less uncertain.

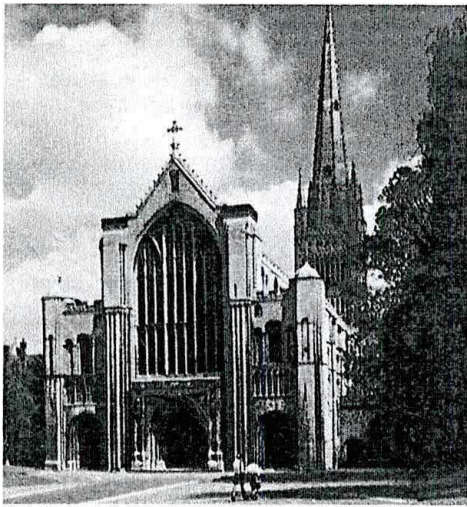
Angela King

ooOoo

NORWICH CATHEDRAL – a talk by Barbara Miller on 23rd February 2006
Daphne Davy

A title such as this gives a lot of scope, and Mrs Miller's talk covered a huge amount, all fascinating, delivered at a good speed and without, as far as I could see, any notes at all.

She started her talk by putting the Cathedral in its place, in a bend in the river Wensum. This was a virgin site, placed at the crossing of important west/east and north/south traverses. She spoke of the river crossings near



the Cathedral, sited where Bishop's Bridge and Fye Bridge now stand. Having placed the Cathedral in its geographical context, a brief resume of Christianity in East Anglia followed, until the transfer of the See in Norwich.

A few of the myriad interesting facts about the Cathedral followed. The Cathedral is unusual amongst English cathedrals in that it is Norman from end to end. There was contention between the city and the Cathedral, and, in 1272 the city actually rioted against the Cathedral, setting fire to the south side of the building and destroying the cloisters. During Henry VIII's reign, the chapterhouse was demolished, as the church moved from Roman Catholicism, initially to a church headed by the monarch. In Cromwell's time the books and vestments were despoiled, and the building suffered, like many other religious buildings, from neglect and multiple benefices during the nineteenth century.

After this brief canter through the geography, history and politics, Mrs Miller showed a number of slides, first of the various gates to the close, then of the buildings within the close, and then the glory that is our Cathedral. She showed a number of slides of the bosses of the Cathedral roof and pointed out that several of them have a specifically Norfolk take on the Bible stories, including Pharaoh being engulfed by the Red Sea, with his chariot bearing an uncanny resemblance to a Yarmouth cart.

We had a wonderful speaker, with a marvellous subject. I look forward to another visit from Mrs Miller.

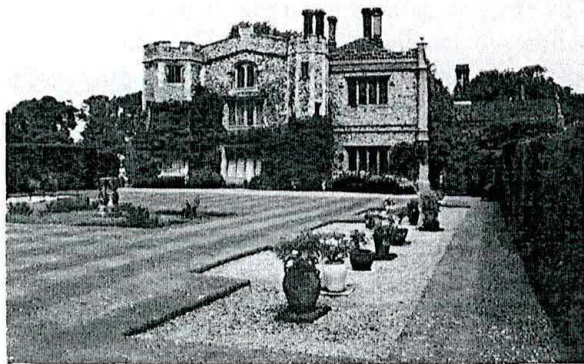
Daphne Davy

**TALK on MANNINGTON HALL GARDENS by Lady Walpole –
Part of the Autumn Course on Historic Gardens and Parks of Norfolk**

Lady Walpole gave us an interesting history of Mannington Gardens on 11th November 2005.

It is known that in 1560 there was a moated garden (the lake and the moat both held fish). In the early 18th century there was a lot of ground moisture in the area and on Tuesday 23rd July 1717 there occurred a strange phenomenon, regarded then as witchcraft! Three fully grown (3ft girth) oak trees just started to disappear into the ground. They sank without trace. In later years experts thought that the cause was underground springs.

Mannington Hall



The Hall was sold to the Walpole family with 1,700 trees on the estate, but only a vegetable garden and no flowers. For the next one hundred years it was let out to various people. The 4th Earl decided to live there and he created a folly garden. He planted cedar trees and yew borders, with

flowers such as dahlias and hollyhocks. He also moved some busts from Wolterton to grace the garden and he installed the fountain. When his nephew inherited the title he planted more trees around the house, but moved several items, including the conservatory, back to Wolterton for a peach house!

The drawbridge dates from 1860 but was restored in 1977 by local craftsmen. For many years after this, the property was rented out and some of the tenants altered, or added to, various aspects of the garden.



When they inherited Mannington in 1969, Lord and Lady Walpole decided that they would create the Heritage Rose Garden in order to reflect the different species of roses grown through the centuries. This Garden has now matured and attracts many people each year, who admire its beauty and the variety of roses.

Margaret Rowe

ooOoo

WOLVERTON HALL AND PARK – a talk by Lady Walpole as part of the Course on Historic Gardens and Parks of Norfolk in 2005

There was mention in a map of 1565 of a house called Mr Houghton's Hall but there was no picture or definite information about it. The first positive information related to Horatio Walpole, diplomat and younger brother of Sir Robert Walpole, buying the house and site. A canal was dug but the house was burnt down. Plans were prepared for Walpole by Thomas Ripley for a house two miles from Mannington House. Landscaping was by Charles Bridgeman and head gardener William Brand. There were splendid trees such as oaks and beeches. There is not much left of the original layout. A few chestnut trees survived and one is thought to be among the oldest in England. Horatio (Baron Walpole of Wolterton) built Wolterton as a family home; he and his wife Mary Magdalen had nine children. There is a famous painting by Annigoni of Horatio, his wife and eight children still at Wolterton Hall. In 1756 Horatio was created a Peer of Great Britain and became the 1st Baron Walpole of Wolterton. He died in 1757. His oldest son was also Horatio and became godfather to Horatio Nelson in 1758. Since Sir Robert Walpole's male line had died out, this branch of the Walpole family also succeeded to the Earldom of Orford.

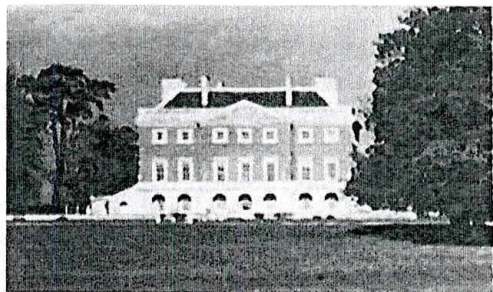
Lady Walpole told us that the Hall took from 1722 until 1741 to be built. Horace Walpole, famous letter writer, said in 1742 of his uncle's house that he was charmed by it; it was "all wood and water". The canal had been extended to become a lake. Further landscaping was by W S Gilpin. In the 1730s a bowling green was in place.

By the 19th century a church with a round tower and a village had been moved from the front of the house. There was a move towards a more natural, less formal landscaping. A wing was added to one side of the house. By 1809 more planting of conifers had taken place and also new hedges. A terrace with urns was laid and there is a reference to flowers nearer to the house and to smaller shrubs. The park was extended to the Wall Road.

More planting was done during the time of the 3rd Earl but on his death in 1858 the Hall was abandoned and his son moved to Mannington. The 5th Earl moved back in 1905; more flowers were planted and a second terrace added. A rose garden was in place by 1918 and also a herbaceous border was started in the 1920s. His first wife died and he married again. Two male heirs to the Walpole line were killed in World War I; they were the 7th Baron's father and his father's elder brother. The 7th Lord Walpole was married in 1937 to Nancy and they had three children. In 1969 Mannington Hall was made over to Robin Walpole, now Lord Walpole. After a fire in 1953, Wolterton Hall was restored; an entrance porch on the north front and dormer windows in the roof were removed, as were the damaged staff bedrooms on the 3rd floor. This reduced the size of the house and the cost of upkeep. The 7th Lord Walpole and his wife considered themselves very fortunate to have lost few things, although a lot of furniture had to be repaired and all the oil paintings cleaned.

The photograph below of Wolterton Hall from the 2005 information leaflet contrasts with the one on the cover of this edition, drawn by J P Neale and published in 1820 in London. The latter appears to show more bushes and trees on both sides of the house. Lord Walpole and his sister were keen gardeners and more flowers were planted. The 7th Baron took a great interest in his Jersey Herd and Hereford beef herd and in rearing race horses. The present Lord Walpole inherited the Wolterton and Mannington Estate in 1989. Since then there had been a programme of reorganisation, conservation and research into the history of the Hall and

park. An attempt has been made to put the park back to what it was, but livestock was not now owned by the Estate. The 18th century walled kitchen garden was now let to Barker Organics and there was an organic box scheme. The lake flowed into the River Bure.



Wolterton Hall

Lady Walpole finished her talk by telling us about another house of a very similar style to Wolterton in Essex, viz Copped Hall built about 1770 which can be seen from the M11 near Epping. This Hall is ruined and the large gardens neglected. I am sure listeners to Lady Walpole's talks were inspired to take a new look at the fine Parks so near Aylsham. **Betty Gee**

Note: *The Walpoles of Wolterton* by Nancy Walpole published in 1986 and available from the local library has been used for supplementary information about Wolterton.

FOLLIES and GROTTOS - A TALK by ANN GORE in the course on "Historic Parks and Gardens of Norfolk"

A most stimulating talk on Follies and Grottoes by Ann Gore rounded off the Course held in Autumn 2005. What is a Folly? Well, it is not a Temple – too classical but it should be a building with a whimsical air about it and of practical use.

Ann started off with Bark Houses used by hermits and took us through all shapes and sizes to the present-day dwellings converted from some of these Follies - not forgetting Banqueting Houses, Grottoes and Shell Houses on the way.

She recommended a visit to Paine Hill Garden near Esher which has a large collection of Follies.

GILLIAN FLETCHER

**THE REVEREND BENJAMIN JOHN ARMSTRONG,
Vicar of East Dereham 1850-1888**

Peter Pink

The Reverend Benjamin John Armstrong, Vicar of East Dereham 1850-1888, kept a diary. Excerpts from his entries, during his time as the Vicar of East Dereham, have been published. These give us a valuable source of knowledge of life in Victorian England. The Rev Armstrong emerges from the entries as a fascinating, intelligent man for me, very well aware of the world of the 1850s to the 1880s in Norfolk, England and the wider world.

He was not a Norfolk man, not even an East Anglian. He came from Southall in Middlesex, then quite countrified, but now swallowed up in the London Borough of Ealing. He was a High Churchman, not a popular background in the Diocese of Norwich, so he was never considered for promotion to higher office in the Church of England.

The Rev Armstrong carried out his duties as a Parish Priest, but also followed other wide interests. He went on trips all over Norfolk – and many, many more places – London, Paris, the Low Countries. He roved. He knew Aylsham, often passing through on his way to and from Cromer.

He seemed to have had a love-hate relationship with Cromer. He did not think too highly of the town, but nevertheless recognised it as a good place to go for the sea air. He often took his daughters there. One of the most attractive features of his personality for me was his obvious love for his wife and children, though sometimes his acceptance of his role as the heavy father jarred. In this he fitted into his time. He also delighted in hunting. Foxes and hares were there to be chased and birds were flying by so that they could be shot out of the air.

When it came to people, however, he was humane and caring. An indication of this is an entry made early on: “Here we are at Dereham with a long list of Agenda respecting the Church, the schools and the Poor.” His reference to the poor was not a nod towards what he would be expected to say. He returns to the question of the poor often. Sometimes he commented on the subject in strong words. An example: “Preached on the discipline of the body and drew a strong picture of the praiseworthy

efforts of the female poor in clothing their families – the great need of clothing where so many “gangs” of woman and children work in the fields. It is astonishing how the poor contrive to live.” He give details of his visits to the poor. He records, on February 6th 1864, that “he walked to Etling Green to visit a young woman who was dying – a victim of *field work*, a disgrace to the County.”

I have been told by some who know more about High Churchmen in the Victorian period than I do, that Armstrong’s concern for the poor was not uncommon in High Church circles; indeed, it would have been typical at the time. Armstrong would obviously have liked the C of E to go back to the role of the Church in medieval times concerning the poor and education in particular.

Armstrong had little time for some of the main players in the criminal justice system in his time. His diary entry of October 5th 1874 shows this. He had visited and was shown over Swaffham gaol the evening before and comments: “To me it seems very incongruous that such eccentric and ill-informed men as some of the County Magistrates really are, should have the power off sentencing prisoners to such an awful penalty as solitary confinement. Here, for example, was a man who was going through a year for the crime of stealing a watch!!!”

The least interesting matters which Armstrong deals with in his diary entries so far as I am concerned were those which reflected the divisions and in-fighting in the Church of England of his time. He had no chance of advancement with his views, with so much opposition, including opposition within his own congregation. He made this clear quite often; but he approached the question of making the ritual and practical alterations to his Church to make it High Church with great skill and sensitivity. He saw no point in antagonising those who came to worship and pray and was extremely critical of those clergyman who were impatient to impose their attitudes and High Church outlook and thus risk unnecessary hurt.

Now, a return to the visits. There is only one reference to a visit to Aylsham other than just passing through:

May 12th 1860 “Drove to Aylsham. The Vicarage a fine house with a raised terrace round it. The arms of a previous Vicar are over the entrance with the date 1700. The

gardens are pretty, but there is none of that fine stretch of glebe such as there is at Dereham. Mr Yates, my host" (Mr Yates was Vicar of Aylsham from 1839 to 1867) "told me an anecdote of Dr Wolf. He (Dr Wolf) was preaching at Aylsham for the gas and fittings already installed, and at that moment burning but, thinking that he was to appeal for apparatus still to be set up, he enlarged upon the meanness and inadequacy of the existing mode of lighting and the necessity of improvement. This was not appreciated by the congregation, who thought their lighting thoroughly successful."

May 13th: "Very wet. The congregation in Aylsham was small. Mr Yates officiated at Blickling, so the service was taken by the Curate. Everything is professedly High Church, but not up to standard."

The Rev Armstrong was a very complex man. He is a High Churchman who likes to enjoy the advantages of his place in society. He has entry into the circle of the ruling families in Norfolk. That does not mean he accepts attitudes and practices uncritically. The entry made on August 26th 1873 illustrates his rather semi-detached view of one of the most important men in Norfolk: the Marquis Townsend. The name Townsend is chiefly remembered today because of a nickname given to an ancestor of the Marquis referred to here. The ancestor is known as Turnip Townsend, because of his contribution to the development of the use of turnips in crop rotation; but that was only one side of this ancestor. The Encyclopaedia Britannica describes him as "Whig statesman who directed British Foreign Policy from 1721 to 1730, rich and a friend of George I".

So any Townsend is an important man. Armstrong's view of this rich and powerful man comes out in the entry in his diary:

"Took my wife and younger daughter to the meeting of the Dereham and Fakenham Archery club at Rainham. Our chief object was to see Rainham Hall. It is a mansion by Inigo Jones, of far greater importance than I had imagined, second only to Houghton among the palatial residences of Norfolk. It belongs to the Marquis Townsend, who seems somewhat peculiar, his chief hobby being to bring all mendicants before the magistrates and get them punished. His wife ran away about three months ago with a man old enough to be her father, but has returned. She went to Church arm-in-arm with the Marquis last Sunday to show that reconciliation was complete."

Most of Armstrong's statements of fact are just that – factual, but he appears to have slipped up in describing Raynham as having been by Inigo Jones. This is not accepted today. It was, so we are informed, designed by

a Roger Townsend, much under the influence of Inigo Jones, but not by that most famous architect.

This critical note shows up quite often. An example:

January 30th 1864 "Saw Mr Windham in Norwich. He has degraded himself from a first-class position in the County to become the driver of a stagecoach. His magnificent Felbrigg estate is sold to a mercantile man, one Kitton, so the saying is "Windham has gone to the dogs and Felbrigg to the Kittens."

On other occasions, Armstrong just records facts he has been made aware of during his meetings with people. Thus he writes on January 1st 1868:

"today I met with an old gentleman of 74 who last week married a lady of 84. He seems well off and travelled and had "a particular mind to see the land of Goshen". His grandfather had been Vicar of Aylsham, and his great-grandfather had been a clergyman also. He was related to the celebrated Sir B Wrench, for many years a great MD of Norwich. He cannot tell how he came to marry and supposed it was due to Providence. But it is said that the old lady has £800 a year." Father and son Wrench were both Vicars of Aylsham in 1730 and 1731-65 respectively.

Armstrong is sometimes bothered as to whether he should so frequently dine out and visit the grand houses for recreation. Should he be spending more time visiting the sick and attending to other duties? But he did enjoy the social round.

He was entertained by Lord Hastings at Melton Constable, and very frequently by the Haggards of Bradenham.

Aug 4th 1860: "Went to 3 o'clock luncheon-dinner at Captain Haggard's. At the head of the table was a peacock. We played a game of cricket afterwards, the Squire, myself, and the menservants all joining . . ."

Then: October 8th 1879: "Dined at Nathaniel Girling's and met, among others, Rider Haggard and his sister. Haggard has 1,000 acres in S Africa . . ."

On January 6th 1880: "My wife and her niece, Frances Duncombe, accompanied me to some theatricals at Bradenham Hall, and a dance afterwards. "Everybody" was there and the performance was really excellent. The plays selected were *Two heads are better than one* and *Ici on parle Francais*.

Two days later: "My wife and I dined with the Bulwers at Quebec House. Among other good things there was Swan for dinner, and very good eating it was – like venison." Four years earlier, Aug 7th 1876: "My wife and I dined at the Haggards' of Bradenham to meet Mrs William Haggard their son's American wife whom he picked up at Washington while he was with the Embassy to which he is an attache. Twenty-four sat down to dinner . . . The American was a very "fast" specimen and

although young was very much rouged and frizzed and wore very little covering above the waist.”

It is indicative of the dual nature of Armstrong that at the end of the same month where he is dining out in some luxury, he took the choir to Yarmouth.

Armstrong liked Paris particularly and regarded it as greatly superior to London. He travelled to Paris on August 8th 1861. He left from Victoria station in London. He arrived in the French capital before August 11th, since he spent that day visiting Paris churches. August 13th was devoted to the Louvre. The next day was spent in the Hotel Cluny museum of antiquities; August 15th he was riding in the Bois; on the 16th he visited Versailles, the next day he was in St Cloud. By the 22nd he was in Rouen on the way home. He arrived in London on the 24th.

The diaries are very full with his comments on international events: the Crimean War, with reference to Florence Nightingale; Garibaldi and the unification of Italy; the Franco-Prussian War; the American Civil War; the Indian Mutiny; the Serbians (he called them Servians, as did everybody then) fighting the Turks – this he depicts as Christians versus Moslems. He was particularly interested in the Sudan, since his son, an officer in the Army, was serving there.

The diarist was present at the opening of the new chapel at Gressenhall Union. Members of this Society heard a talk in this chapel when we organised a trip to the Gressenhall Museum, as it now is. The chapel was opened with prayers, and the Bishop preaching on December 2nd 1868. Armstrong visited the theatre when on his frequent trips to London. Here are two examples which will be familiar to us; in 1859 he heard Dickens read the trial scene from *Pickwick*; in 1879 he was present at one of the first performances of *HMS Pinafore*.

He also kept up to date with the literary scene. In 1857 Thackeray lectured in Norwich. Armstrong attended but was not impressed. On August 24th 1863, he called on Trollope at the King's Arms in Dereham. Trollope was in Dereham on Post Office business. Our Diarist praises Trollope greatly.

Note: The above talk was given by Peter Pink on 19th May 2005 at the Members' Evening.

AYLSHAM AND THE BLICKLING ESTATE

Mrs E M Griffiths

The full title of this article is "The relationship between the Manor of Aylsham Lancaster and the Blickling Estate, with particular reference to the dispute which occurred in the second quarter of the seventeenth century", and it is the text of a talk delivered to the members of the Society by Mrs E M Griffiths on Thursday 13th August 1987 at the Friendship Club.

Such was the interest aroused in the talk that a record attendance was achieved at the meeting, and arrangements were made for it to be reproduced later in our Newsletter & Journal for the benefit of those who were unable to be there on the night. We are very grateful to Mrs Griffiths for making the text available.

Tom Mollard

The dispute, which lasted from 1622 to 1646, is of particular interest as it provides the background to the Aylsham Rental which the Aylsham Local History Society worked on. More generally, it explains the continuing and close relationship between the townspeople of Aylsham and the owners of the Blickling Estate, and also tells us something about the development of the town. If you think that relations between the Agents of the Blickling Estate and the Aylsham Parish Council have on occasion been slightly acrimonious, I can assure you they are sweetness and light compared to the pitched battles of the seventeenth century.

This is quite a complicated story, touching, as it does, on the complexities of medieval and constitutional history. You must bear in mind that I am not an authority on medieval history, or particularly the intricate workings of the Duchy of Lancaster. To be honest, my only contact with the Duchy has been in the context of this dispute, and the part it played in the development of the Blickling Estate in the seventeenth century; this has been my principal concern, and this article is essentially a by-product of my research. I have, in fact, been down to the Public Record Office and seen the Rental and the Map attached to it, but for my purposes it was not especially useful, so my notes and memory of it are not detailed, but sufficient to ascertain the purpose and nature of the document.

To give this study some focus, I have structured it around a few questions:

First of all, what made the Manor of Aylsham Lancaster so special, and why was it worth fighting over?

Secondly, what was the dispute about, how did it proceed and what was the outcome?

Thirdly, how did the result affect the Blickling Estate and the townspeople of Aylsham?

Finally, was it a good or bad thing? - has Aylsham benefitted from the proximity of the Blickling Estate or suffered in its shadow?

From the time of the Norman Conquest until the reign of Richard I the town of Aylsham was a royal manor. It was then divided, and parts were granted to the Church (to Bury Abbey and the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury) and to a knight, whose identity remains unclear. This is why, today, there are four manors in Aylsham:- Sextons, Vicarage and Bolwicks in addition to Aylsham Lancaster. The latter remained the principal manor and was retained by the Crown until 1371, when Edward III granted it to his third son, John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster: it thus became part of the vast estates of the Duchy of Lancaster. These were united with those of the Crown in 1399, when John of Gaunt's son, Henry, deposed Richard II.

The estates of the Duchy were not, however, absorbed into the Crown Estates, nor did they lose their identity. Henry IV determined to maintain the honour and titles of the House of Lancaster, and to this end he instituted the 'Duchy-Court', which was a separate jurisdiction controlling the administration of the Duchy lands, offices and perquisites. This arrangement ensured that the lands belonging to the Duchy would for all times be distinguished and known from the Crown Lands. This is still the case, although only a fraction of the estate has survived, including 12,000 acres in Lancashire. The Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster has also remained a principal Office of State.

In 1401, the Duchy Court for the lands in Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire was established at Aylsham; for this reason, Aylsham Lancaster became the capital manor of the Duchy within those counties. The manor and its tenants also enjoyed numerous rights and privileges. Briefly, they were exempted from the payment of the King's taxes, levies and tolls, and were independent of the King's jurisdiction. Their cases were tried in the Duchy Court, rather than the King's Courts, and their payments for writs, fines, penalties and forfeitures were made to the Duchy. They also held their lands on favourable terms; a list of tenants and their holdings between 1621 and 1625 is contained in your Rental. Most of them, as far as I can remember, were copyholders, but as they held their lands on fixed rents it made little difference to their position. The Duchy also appointed its own Clerk of the Market who collected the assize on bread, wine and beer. These exemptions and privileges contributed to the.

rise of Aylsham as a prosperous and vibrant market town, and also to the creation of an independent, assertive and enterprising body of tenants.

The term 'copyholder' needs a little explanation. A copyholder's title to his lands was not guaranteed by the King's Courts as with the freeholder, but by the manor court roll; each copyholder kept a copy of his admission to the manor court, which detailed the conditions by which he held his property. Tenures were for a number of lives, usually three, and each generation was admitted to their lands through the payment of an entry fine and an annual rent to the lord of the manor. Sometimes the annual rent was fixed or certain, but other times it was not fixed or uncertain. Now, the crucial point about the Aylsham tenants was that their rents were fixed. This was not particularly significant until the late sixteenth century, as the important feature of these arrangements was the entry fine, which provided the lord with a lump sum. However, in the 1590s rents started to rise dramatically. If they were found to be uncertain or unfixed they could be raised, as they were on parts of the Felbrigg Estate in 1609, from a few pence to 6/8 and 10/- an acre, but if they were certain or fixed, the landowner could do nothing, and the copyholders, in effect, gained possession of their land. This happened to an estate of 400 acres which the Windhams owned in Banningham. Conversely, if the rates were unfixed, effective possession passed to the lord of the manor. The principal concern of the Aylsham tenants was that the Hobarts might find some legal loophole and raise their rents and fines. Furthermore, the profits of the markets and other perquisites appertaining to the manor were considerable. Not surprisingly, the tenants did not wish to see control pass to the newly established and ambitious Hobarts. To prevent this they were prepared to fight tooth and nail.

Until the appearance of Henry Hobart the tenants had things almost entirely their own way. In 1609, they had even joined together to purchase a 21 year lease of the Lordship of the Manor. That they were able to do this was due to King James I's need for money and to the decline of the Cleres of Blickling, so there was no local opposition. But times were soon to change. Following the death of Sir Edward Clere, his widow, Lady Agnes, turned to her kinsman Sir Henry Hobart, the Attorney General, for advice and assistance in the management of her affairs. From his subsequent actions it seems that they soon reached an agreement that he would eventually purchase the Blickling Estate, which he did in 1616,

paying Lady Agnes an annuity of £400 and her stepson - a debtor in the Fleet prison - £5000 for the repayment of debts.

In 1611, Sir Henry acquired the Office of Bailiwick for the Liberty of the Duchy of Lancaster within the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, together with the office of Feodary Coroner, Escheator and Clerk of the Markets. He purchased the office from John Trench of Gressenhall, to whom he paid 'a competent sum of money'. He also paid the Crown a rent of £25 a year. This system of buying Duchy offices was quite usual; the business of administration, collecting rents, dues and profits was traditionally farmed out to attorneys and collectors. Sir Henry did not perform the duties himself, but sub-let them to deputies. In 1613 Richard and Christopher Kirby paid £200 a year for the office of Bailiwick and Clerk of the Markets, and £20 a year for the profits of the Hundred Courts. It was they who held the Duchy Court in Aylsham, extracted fines and heriots from tenants, delivered writs, received the goods and chattels of felons and fugitives, and incarcerated miscreants and debtors in the Duchy Gaol, also in Aylsham. As Clerk of the market, they collected tolls and payments due; by these means they made their profit. You can see that through his deputies, Sir Henry gained a foothold in the town.

When Sir Henry finally acquired the Blickling Estate, it was in a state of some dilapidation. From the Blickling Particular and the documents relating to later acquisitions, it is clear that parts of the estate, particularly on the Aylsham side - that is the area of Flash Pit farm and Silvergate, and indeed even in the Park - had been sold in the early seventeenth century to Aylsham men. Names include Nicholas Bradye, William Cressie, John Some and John Barker, which as I remember, feature in the Rental. This process of fragmentation was a serious encroachment on the estate and an obstacle to improvement and expansion. At all costs, Sir Henry and his son, Sir John, had to reverse this trend.

In 1622, Sir Henry won a victory over the tenants when the King granted him a 23 year lease of the manor, which was to commence at the expiration of their 21 year lease in 1630. The grant was an honour and made in recognition of Sir Henry's services as Chancellor to the Prince of Wales, but one can be sure that Sir Henry used his influence to secure it. In the same year, King James sold a 99 year lease of the manor to the Commonality of the City of London in repayment of a loan of £1000; to recover this sum they had the right to dispose of the property.

This provided Sir Henry with a golden opportunity to secure the freehold. He moved swiftly but cautiously; his legal expertise would tell him that the tenants had a prior claim to the freehold as 'antient tenants' of the manor. He obtained from the King's legal officers, Sir James Fullerton, Lord Trevor and Thomas Savage, clarification as to the value and nature of the rents and profits of the manor, before he petitioned the King for permission to purchase the freehold. I would suggest that this was the context and purpose of the Rental which was drawn up between c1621 and c1625. Also, the fact that it includes entries from several manors in Wymondham which Sir Henry acquired between 1619 and 1623 would indicate that this interpretation is probably accurate. Furthermore, Sir Henry always commissioned a particular of the estates he purchased, or was about to purchase.

Sir Henry's motives are quite explicit in his petition; he was prepared to pay the King's officers 'what pence they shall sett upon it', as he sought it - 'not for profytt, but for ornament and convenyance'.

My Lo Hobartes Letter to Sir James Fullerton concerning the Manor of Aylsham. 28 June 1625

'There is a manner of his Maties called Aylsham pte of the Dutchy of Lancaster, lying the next towne to my house in Norfolk the yearly valewe of it £44-0-7 consistinge wholly of rents copy and free without land soe yt there can be noe improvement made of it. I would be a humble sutor to his Maties to be pleased . . . to countenance my poore seate as to grante it unto me for a full vallew either in money or lands. The consideration whereof yt it please his Maties to reserve to any of his officers of his revenue of whom it shall please him I will give what pence they shall sett upon it, for I seek it not for profytt but for ornament and convenyancye, And yett upon these termes I shall accounte it a greate honor to me to possesse a thinge lyinge soe neere unto me of his Maties grante, yf you will be pleased to move his Maties to this effecte and to receive his gracious answer I shall be much behouldinge unto yo for ye curtesie. . . '

The transaction was agreed in principle - 'the King who is well content to take some other land in lieu of Aylesham, but hath referred the contract to the managing of Lo. Trevor'. However, it was 'staid by the death of Sir Henry Hobarte' in December 1625. When Sir John renewed the application in 1629, circumstances were less propitious, but undeterred, Sir John fought a costly legal battle with the tenants of Aylsham in order to secure this prestigious manor, which lay so close to his 'poore seate'.

Sir John set about the task with steely determination. He approached Mr. Edmund Reeve, an attorney and the Steward of the Manor court for his advice on how to proceed. Implicit in their correspondence is the know-

ledge that the tenants had a superior claim to the manor. Reeve advised Sir John 'to play it carefully' so as not to 'enduce the Tennants to go about contrary to their promises to buy it which otherwise they would think of'; if he proceeded 'patiently' he would obtain it 'at farr under value'. This proved a miscalculation. In 1629, Sir John offered the Commonality of the City of London - who had the power of disposal - £600 for the Manor, but a member, who had Aylsham connections and had earlier offered to act as agent for Sir John, informed the tenants of his intentions and called upon them 'to joyne together to buy the reversion. . . for as sure as you live, the fines of your coppihold estate will all prove uncertain. . . both you and your posterity will fall into enlasting misery for upon any alteration or death to pay for fyne 2 or 3 years rent according to the rack may so fall out that in 20 yrs yo. may give as much as will purchase an inheritance'.

With his 'especial friends' on the Committee, he had 'caused the bargain for some 3 weeks to be deferred until I heard from you'. He informed them that 'Sir John Hobarte hath bidd £600. . . and for £700 it would be sold.'. In the event the tenants offered £800; Sir John then raised his bid to £1000, the tenants responded with £1200, at which price it was sold to them. Sir John did not, however, let the matter rest and used all his influence to obtain a reversal of the decision.

In November 1631, Sir John approached Lord Weston Lord High Treasurer, and Lord Cottingham, Chancellor of the Court of the Exchequer, who brought pressure to bear on the Mayor of the City of London:-

'To our very loving Friend Lo. Mayor of the City of London and the rest of the Commonality for the Sale of Feefarmes and their officers in that behalf.

OUR hearty commendacons! Whereas Sir John Hobart hath a Lease o/ the Manor of Ailesham in Nfk for 23 years yett to come; And hath desired us both in regard of the same, as it lyeth most conveniently for him, to recommend him unto yo. that he may be preferred to the other purchase thereof. We do therefore entreate yo. that you will respect him as a Gentleman of his Worth and Quality deserves, and admit him to contract with you, the rather because he is willing to give as much or more than any other, and cannot without great i'nconveniency to his other land adjoining miss the same, wch curtesy wee shall taken very kindly at yo. hands.

*Wallingford House
November 1631*

*Weston
Cottingham*

The City disclaimed any favouritism in the affair asserting that they had simply accepted the highest offer, but if any wrong had been done to Sir John 'it might be righted by yo. honors in the Exchequer Chamber where he hath exhibited his bill against them for the same'. Thus, the matter rested with the court. Sir John took the opportunity to petition the King directly. He reminded him that his father 'had obteyned yo. Majesties favor for the having of the sd. manner it lying convenient to him'; that he enjoyed 'a present lease of 23 years' and was 'ready to give more by £200'. He also claimed that the purpose of the tenants 'being men of turbulent spirits', was 'to manumize the Coppi-holds of the sd. Mannor to the several coppiholders thereof, being above 100 in number which may . . . be inconvenient in poynte of governance in those parts'. This point made its mark.

The tenants, in the meantime, submitted a Bill of Complaint in the Court of Chancery and petitioned the King for protection and justice, pointing out that they, not Sir John, were the 'antient tenants'. Despite their protests, the King directed that the sale should be overturned in Sir John's favour. He commanded 'the City to assure the Manor to Sir John Hobart, . . . for he was the antient farmer.



. . . he offered more for the purchase than the tenants', their claims to the contrary were 'a false suggestion'. Finally, 'his Majestie will not have such a manor dismembered'.

Blickling Hall near Aylsham

Illustration by **Dennis**
Flanders from the book

"Soho for East Anglia" by Michael Brander. Pub by G Bles 1963

The tenants, however, extracted considerable concessions from the ensuing agreement. They 'relinquished their bargain. . . on being assured of the certainty of their fines, and confirmation of their ancient customs'. Fines were to be fixed at 3/- and 4/-per acre, and other levies affecting messuages, stalls and mortgages were fixed at various rates. The cost of the purchase at £1200 was borne by Sir John, but the legal costs of £850 were to be shared between the tenants 'according to their coppihold rents'. Payment qualified them to be beneficiaries of the agreement. However, the Court Extracts 1630-43 shows that tenants received abatements, even

refunds of capital payments, and that fines and heriots went unpaid . Moreover, they were not appeased.

In 1641, they sought a reduction of fines to 1/6 per acre, leave to grant 21 year leases without licence, the right to fell and sell timber, 'to pull down houses, . . . plant trees on the waste against their own houses', and 'to cut them down to their own use'. Sir John was to repair the Market Cross, but they were to appoint the Hayward to collect the dues, thereby facilitating evasion. Sir John refused to ratify such demands, so the tenants brought another Bill of Complaint against him. This time, the judgement found in the tenants' favour, and Sir John was forced to comply, shortly before his death in 1647.

For a property worth only £44 a year, and with no prospect of improvement, it seems that Sir John paid a ludicrously high price for Aylsham Lancaster, but in fact it proved a far-sighted decision. He halted the process of encroachment on the Aylsham side of the estate, and to the present day, the Blickling Estate has been able to influence, and to some extent control, the development of that prosperous market town.

Sir John's other advances in Aylsham were not so long lasting. In the 1630s he purchased the mills, some land and the Tithes of Aylsham Parsonage, which were all sold on his death in 1647 for the repayment of debts. The Hobarts made no further acquisitions in Aylsham until 1751 when they acquired the Old Hall and a small estate adjoining. Much later, they acquired Manor Farm on the Heydon Rd. and the Blickling Lodge Estate. It seems that the townsmen of Aylsham, in their turn, were equally determined to resist the advance of the Blickling Estate into the town.

The Office of Bailiwick became less important with the abolition of feudal tenures during the Civil War. It remained with the Hobarts until 1701 when it was sold to Mr. Atthill of Foulsham.

Today, the Lordship of the Manor of Aylsham Lancaster is held by the National Trust. It still owns the trading rights over the Market Place, and the Buttlands which it manages in conjunction with the town Council. It appears that, despite the fierce struggles of the past, the relationship between the town and the Blickling Estate is mutually beneficial. They share the profits from the Market Place, and recently the Trust agreed to have the Buttlands converted into a free car park. The rather natty new bus shelter, I am informed, was designed with assistance from the Trust at the highest level. There is no doubt that the Trust has come to recognise the importance of the

relationship. Whether the townspeople of Aylsham feel the same is another matter.

E M GRIFFITHS. "The management of two East Norfolk Estates in the seventeenth century: Blicking and Felbrigg 1596 -1717" (Unpublished PhD thesis University of East Anglia. 1987)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Below is a selection of diary dates listed in the 2006 Diary published by the Federation of Norfolk Historical and Archaeological Organisations. It is only a selection and includes those which might appeal to our members and which are close enough to Aylsham to be possible to get to.

April 21 Fri *Boudicca & Iron Age Norfolk* - Dr Natasha Hutchinson
GYDAS

April 22 Sat *North West Norfolk Archaeology; some questions* -
by John Smallwood **NAHRG**

May 29 Mon **NORFOLK HISTORY FAIR** Gressenhall R Life Museum

June 7 Wed *Heraldry in Textiles* by Philippa Sims **NHS**

July 27 Thurs *Annual Summer Fete Plantation Garden, Norwich* **PGPT**

28 Jan – 2 July *Coast Exhibition* at Time & Tide Museum
Great Yarmouth Contact 01493 743930 for details

KEY

GYDAS Gt Yarmouth District Arch Soc: Central Library at 7.30 pm

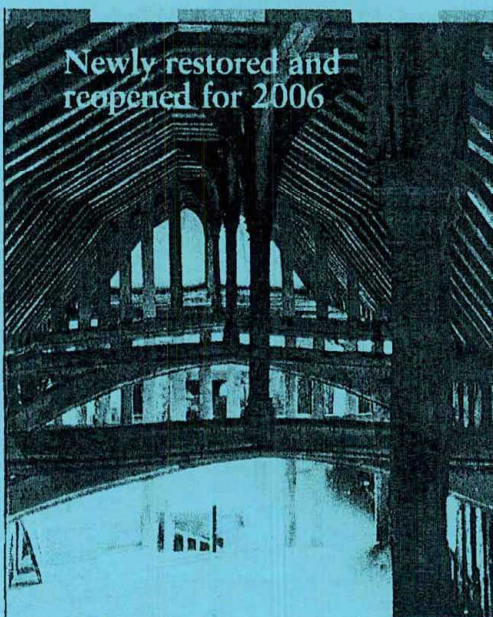
NAHRG Norfolk Arch Hist Research Group meet CEAS, UEA at 2.30

NHS Norfolk Heraldry Society meet United Reform Church
Princes St Norwich at 7.45 pm.



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Access

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