

AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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Cover Photograph was taken at Plantation Garden, Norwich and depicts the famous Gothic fountain



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NEWSLETTER

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The last two lectures of the winter season (on *The Plantation Garden* and *Norwich Bridges, their past and present*) were very well received by large audiences. At the one on 27th April, Peter Holman our Vice-Chairman told members that John Harris, a Committee Member for some years was leaving Aylsham for Suffolk. He had been a valued member, arranging the Hall for our meetings and making it comfortable, as well as contributing to the Journal. We gave John and Daphne our best wishes for their move.

Betty Gee

It is with much regret that we record the deaths recently of two well known residents of Aylsham and send condolences to the families.

Mr Kyrle Wintle died in May last, aged 93 years. He was the first Headteacher of Aylsham High School through its early years and husband to Sheila, a member of this Society from 1984. Mr Wintle was an outstanding headteacher and laid down some very strong foundations to the School. A new classroom building had been named after Mr Wintle at an opening ceremony in May this year.

Mrs Margaret Lyons died in June. She was a member of our Society for some years, and wife of Mr Derek Lyons, a member since the founding of the Society and Assistant Archivist to Aylsham Town Council. Margaret was a keen member of Aylsham Evening WI, a reader for *The Mardler Talking Newspaper* and also took part in several pantomimes with the Aylsham Operatic Society. She took a lively interest in the history of Aylsham

JOAN TURVILLE-PETRE nee BLOMFIELD

10th May 1911- 9th March 2006



Our oldest member Joan Turville-Petre died on the 9th of March at the age of 94. It is always after a member or an acquaintance has gone, that their lives begin to unfold, a realisation of a distinctly different history is revealed, but by then it is too late to ask questions. Joan was always a very determined woman with a quite remarkable history. Her life seems to have divided into three periods and we in the Society have only been acquainted with that last part when she came to live in Aylsham in 1981.

Joan, whose family name was Blomfield, was the oldest of the four Blomfield children; she had a sister and two younger brothers. The family owned a large furniture and hardware store in Colchester and when their father Samuel Blomfield retired the youngest son took over the business but unfortunately "Blomfield's Furniture and Ironmongery Store" was completely destroyed in a bombing raid on February 23rd 1944. The Blomfield family in the early 1900's had little experience of university education. It was unconventional at that time for a girl to go to university or even desirable for a girl to have a university education. When some of us were being born, Joan at the age of eighteen was just entering Somerville College as a student. In 1929 it was difficult to reach Oxford from Colchester so she simply rode her horse to the college where it remained quietly eating grass until the end of the term when they both made the journey home.

At Oxford she studied English, but she took an especial interest in pre-Norman language and literature; in addition she also studied Old Icelandic. Old English and Old Icelandic had a number of similarities and at Oxford it was possible to study both languages together. Eventually she became a Tutor and a Fellow at Somerville and went on to publish a study of the epic poem *Beowulf*. She also published others on Old and Middle English

and Old Icelandic. Almost inevitably she met and married another Icelandic scholar Gabriel Turville-Petre in 1943 while she was cataloguing an Icelandic library in Oxford and appropriately the witnesses to their wedding were J R R Tolkien and his wife. Joan's marriage to another Oxford scholar at that time triggered her retirement. However, she was reinstated but as a married woman which allowed them to employ her on a lower salary. After she retired she was appointed as an Honorary Research Fellow, a post which only one other has filled.

During this wartime period Gabriel worked at Bletchley Park. After the war he and Joan travelled all over Scandinavia and in the 1960's flew to Australia where they taught for a term. It was during this post war period they brought up three sons. Students remember coming to her class at that time and seeing a baby asleep in the drawer of a cupboard in the room. Their marriage was a very close one and the death of Gabriel in 1978 was a terrible blow which affected her deeply although she took some comfort in the distraction of teaching. During this period she put together an edition of the Old English biblical poem *Exodus*.

In 1981 she came to live in Aylsham and in 1986 joined the Aylsham Local History Society; by that time she was seventy five. In Aylsham she continued her researches and began examining medieval Norfolk documents and became a frequent visitor to the Norfolk Record Office. After the library burnt down and had been replaced by the Forum, she found the new building far too noisy for a library, 'a library was for quiet study'. Nevertheless she did publish a number of studies into the origins of Norfolk names "*The Tofts of Aylsham Manors*", "*Patronymics in the Late Thirteenth Century*", and "*Overhall and Netherhall*," for the Journal of the English Place-Name Society and was still planning to write up the research she had done on the medieval village of Bradfield.

Some of her work for the Society can be found in a number of articles in the Journal and she was responsible for the history of Hungate Street which was used in the Society's tenth anniversary exhibition held in the Town Hall during 1994. The results of that research appeared as an article in "*A Backward Glance*". She was also a staunch Socialist and supported the Labour Party at all the general elections held in Aylsham. I well remember at those times her house being invaded by a mixed group of supporters, her phone being taken over and her kitchen turned into an

office; throughout the day there was a steady flow of visitors to the house. Joan would come into the kitchen, make some lunch, retire to her library and quietly continue with her work only pausing when one of us would wander in to look at her books and ask a question.

Joan was a dedicated researcher with a clear view of her scholarship and her death marks the end of an era. She was the last of a generation of Somerville tutors appointed before the war and it also marks the passing of a level of scholarship in this town and Society. No longer will we see her going about her shopping with a small basket or find her sitting quietly in one of the pubs with a half pint of beer. She will be greatly missed.

My thanks to Daisy and Thoriac Turville-Petre for all their help with information about their family and for the photographs of Joan, Gabriel and the Blomfield family.

Geoff Gale

ooOoo

THE BLICKLING HUTS 1946

A few months after VJ Day many ex-servicemen and their wives were searching for homes, and those who were allocated one of the huts on the School Close site (behind the Blickling School) by the St Faith's & Aylsham Rural district Council, were considered to be very fortunate. These huts had been used to accommodate Air Force officers, and after the war had been converted into four-roomed dwellings by the local authority. Dividing walls were built to that each hut had two large rooms (a living room and a large bedroom), and two small rooms (a kitchen and another small bedroom). The windows in the living room were above eye level, which was rather depressing, but at least this ensured some privacy as the huts were rather close together. There were also windows at each end of the hut to give light to the bedrooms and the kitchen. The rents were reasonable at eight shillings and sixpence a week when the average was about five or six pounds.

The Nissen huts on this site had the luxury of a flush toilet some time before the sewerage system was built in Aylsham. In the town the night cart still made its weekly rounds with Webby sitting up "on top" eating his bread and cheese and reminding those who held their noses that, "Some of it is yours."

The School Close site had a hut which was used as a communal laundry with a piped water supply running into a row of coppers; and there were taps on each copper to empty them at the end of a steamy day's washing. The dirty water ran into an open duct and then on to the sewerage system, where it was treated before running into the Blickling lake. The coppers in the laundry were heated by wood or coal, and after the winter storms there was plenty of wood lying around to provide fuel if there was not enough money for coal. Another hut on the site was divided by a framework of wood and wire-netting into nine units which were used as sheds, and here it was that coal was stored and bicycles, garden tools etc could be locked up.

There were nine huts with families living in them on the School Close site, and seven of the huts were occupied by ex-servicemen and their families. One hut had an elderly couple living in it (who had to leave their tied cottage) and another accommodated an ex-evacuee and her three children who had settled in the area.

Babies were usually born at home in those days and one father-to-be cycled to Aylsham to call the doctor and the midwife, and to collect his mother-in-law, and he arrived back – all hot and bothered – in about twenty-five minutes. There were no mobiles or any other phones in School Close in those days.

One had to be tough to survive the conditions in the huts, for in the winter the black-leaded Bell Portable stove would go rusty in twenty-four hours if it wasn't black leaded daily, and in the mornings the tenants would see the frost glistening (inside) on the walls of the huts. Even though they had been lined with asbestos the huts were extremely damp and there was much condensation. The baby's cot mattress needed airing every evening to be sure it wasn't damp, and it was a constant battle to keep the rooms warm. The stove had an oven in the side but most tenants became adept at cooking on oil-fired stoves.

The electricity was supposed to be used only for lighting and ironing and if someone surreptitiously plugged in an electric kettle or a small electric fire, the lights went dim and the huts were sometimes plunged into darkness. No one ever admitted to being the culprit and everyone thought

they knew who it was, but they never did find out who was the guilty party. Well, it was a good excuse for an early night.

Although the School Close site was at least two miles from Aylsham, many of the tenants walked into the town. The purchase of a bicycle soon became a priority as there was only one bus, twice a week, into the town, which ran from Holt to Aylsham on Tuesday and Friday.

The summer months were paradise. It was wonderful to be surrounded by trees and fields and to spend time in Blickling Park with its lake and lovely walks, and even though the golf course had been ploughed up to provide more agricultural land for growing food during the war, there was ample room for picnics and children's games. Rabbits, blackberries, chestnuts and mushrooms were all readily available and helped to supplement the meagre rations. The local farmer was kindness itself to the families living in the huts and they were able to buy their milk and potatoes from him.

The tenants each had a strip of land for their allotment, and most of them took a great pride in the vegetables they grew. How fortunate it was for the tenant, not a very keen gardener, who had the allotment next to the Blickling Hall kitchen garden, for there were raspberries, gooseberries and potatoes etc all growing in the boundary fence.

They were happy times. There was little money to spare but as they nearly all had young children the families had much in common. People helped each other and everyone prayed for the day when they would live in a brick-built house. There were other huts, on the park site (just inside the park gates), two on the meadow opposite the church, and a large number on the meadow near the Orangery. Most of these had been occupied by squatters who were, in the main, ex-servicemen and their families, who were desperate for housing. When they were first occupied they had no dividing walls and consisted of one large area with a Tortoise stove in the middle. No doubt every one of those tenants knew by heart the words "Slow but sure combustion", which were written round the top of the stove. These huts were also converted by the Housing Authority, but they were not as "luxurious" as the School Close huts as they were lined with corrugated tins rather than the asbestos plaster board that had been used in School Close.

The water supply for the Nissen huts at Blickling and for the Oulton Airfield nearby was pumped by a submersible pump in a pump-house on the meadow beside Blickling Road near the Buckinghamshire Arms, and a conventional pump situated behind the cottage on the right, just beyond the "Bucks". Next to the latter was a huge storage tank supported by steel girders which towered above the trees and provided an adequate supply of water, of sufficient pressure, to satisfy the needs of all the hut dwellers. The only problem was that there was so much rust in the water. If there was a baby in the family, the water for washing the baby clothes had to be boiled and allowed to settle so that the rust dropped to the bottom. Then the clean water could be drained off to leave the rust in the container. It certainly was a chore, but if this wasn't done the baby clothes were ruined after two or three washes and became a dull shade of grey/fawn.

Fortunately for all concerned, the daily routine of the plumber who lived on the School Close site included the task of turning the pumps on and off, ensuring that they were working properly and that there was an adequate water supply. Heaven knows how much water was wasted the day the plumber took his family to Cromer and remembered with horror, as he sat on the beach, that he had forgotten to turn off the pumps before he left. Needless to say, the journey back to Blickling was made in record time.

Social life was good in the village. The "Bucks", the church, the school and the social hall behind the church were the main meeting places. Blickling Hall had not yet opened its doors to tourists as it was undergoing extensive renovation after the Air Force occupation. The Rectory was the venue for village fetes and other activities, and the Aylsham Silver Band could be heard all over the village on these occasions. Most of the families in Blickling turned up for annual outings, and the villagers and the hut-dwellers lived happily together. Mrs Donohue, the publican at the "Bucks" always kept a peaceful house and welcomed the influx of new customers from the Nissen huts (who helped to fill the gap left by the airmen who had been stationed in the village and in Oulton).

The Blickling Saints Football Team was formed soon after the huts became occupied and the team played in the Reepham and District League.

The Saints were a good team and proudly wore their royal blue shirts emblazoned with the white cross of Saint Andrew. The highlight of the year was the local Derby on Christmas morning when the team played against Itteringham before rushing home for Christmas dinner. The Derby was usually a rough game and no quarter was given on either side. Substitutes were not allowed and hugging and kissing after a goal was scored was unheard of. Kent's Buses, from Aldborough, were used to take the teams to away matches and the team's fans supported the players with loyalty and enthusiasm.

Many children were born in Blickling at that time and the parish registers will bear witness to the fact that most children were christened in the village church. The school was full to bursting point and flourished under the guidance of Miss Seater and her assistant. Open days were unheard of but the parents were happy as they trusted the system, and teachers were held in high esteem. Those who lived in the heart of the countryside were very aware of the changing seasons, and as the rain thundered on the corrugated tin roofs they were reminded of the fact that at least they had a roof over their heads.

2004

S J A HUDSON

SOCIETY NEWS

THE PLANTATION GARDEN, Norwich

a Talk by Sheila Adam on 23rd March followed by a Visit on 18th May

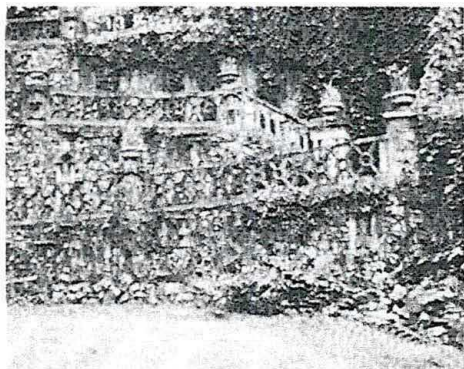
Sheila Adam gave us an a most interesting and stimulating evening on the history of the Plantation Garden in Norwich. It is notable for being one of a very few town gardens as opposed to country estates.

It was started in 1856 by Henry Trevor, a Norwich business man and a staunch Baptist, and it lasted for the remaining forty years of his life. The Garden was established out of a medieval chalk quarry comprising three acres in all and incorporated all the tastes and foibles of the Victorian age. Henry Trevor put "the beautiful and well-kept grounds to the most generous use . . . for charitable gatherings of all kind . . ."

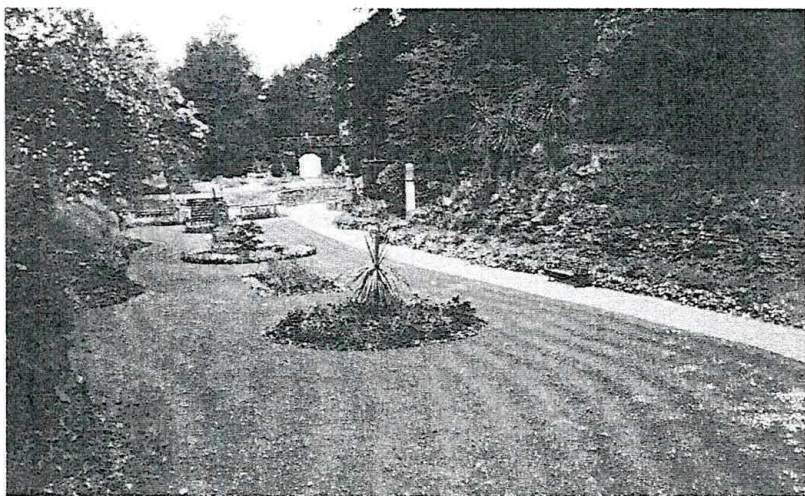
After his death the whole property was sold at the end of the century. The garden fell into disrepair and was rediscovered in 1980 completely overgrown. The Plantation Garden Preservation Trust was formed to save

and restore the Garden. The main house to which the garden belonged is now under separate ownership and used as an hotel.

The visit to the Garden arranged by Ann Dyball for the 18th May was a delight. It was a lovely sunny afternoon and Alayne Fenner, our guide, was able to show us around and explain how it had been put back (on going) with the magnificent Gothic fountain and the outline of the Palm House (which had been dismantled in 1912) marked out on the gravel and flower beds. Another Victorian feature was the medieval terrace wall built in 1871 from various types of bricks made from Gunton's brickworks at Costessey.



Medieval terrace wall built in 1871 from various types of bricks made from Gunton's brickworks at Costessey.



Volunteers tend the flower beds regularly.

Near the entrance to the Garden there had been a rustic bridge which was demolished in the 1920s. Thanks to the Norwich Society a new bridge had been built, from which we were able to enjoy an excellent view of the Garden. All in all it was a haven of tranquillity and peace.

GILLIAN FLETCHER

Note: The Garden is situated at 4 Earlham Road, west of the Roman Catholic Cathedral and is open from 9 am until 6 pm, fee £2. Tea may be obtained on Sunday afternoons. There are excellent notices giving the history of the family. Plants for sale, too. It is possible to park at the Black Horse pub further down the Earlham Road.

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VISIT to LITTLE WITCHINGHAM and WESTON LONGVILLE CHURCHES and HORSHAM ST FAITH PRIORY

Friday, 7th April, was the day of a new form of outing. It was new in that it was a joint outing of the WEA and the History Society – and also it was a morning only event.

A full coach left the Market Place on the dot of nine in the morning, heading for the small church of Little Witchingham which is two miles south east of Reepham – and hard to find! So we went by quiet lanes and then suddenly the little church of St Faith's was there in front of us – waif-like in empty country with only a farm or two for company. Where has its village gone? There it stands with its tall thin tower and uneven outline of southern aisle and pleasant pattern of windows.

We walked up the grassy path with swathes of miniature daffodils on each side and straight into the church – plain and empty with a few dusty chairs for seating.

Kate Weaver of the Churches Conservation Trust told us of how she had come into this work, and how in 1967 Mrs Eve Baker climbed in through a window (with the help of a ladder), and realised the wealth of 14th century wall paintings that lay hidden under whitewash. They are not easy to interpret partly because the strongest areas are those of brown pigment. Whoever did this work was no local villager! This artist knew his trade

and used some sophisticated tricks to make it easier for medieval people to interpret the scenes from the Bible.

For instance, in every scene Christ is shown with a forked beard which makes it easy to identify him from the other characters. When new, the church must have been very colourful. The clearest and brightest was the decoration in the south aisle where the arcade of three arches were picked out with a decoration of triangular shapes in brown paint with the vine scroll pattern repeated from the lower part of the main wall (perhaps done with a stencil?) The pattern is repeated in another nearby church and also includes the symbols of the evangelists. These are thought to be the best preserved in the country. Kate Weaver explained the various panels, and told us of her love for the place. As we examined the scenes carefully, many gradually became easier to understand.

But it was time to move on to the next church, and see the wall paintings in All Saints' Church at Weston Longville – linked to Parson Woodeford and his life-long diary covering many years. This church was a great contrast to Little Witchingham, being a well used parish church which benefits from many foreign visitors.

The wall painting consists of a remarkable Tree of Jesse which is a large convoluted design showing the ancestry of Christ within a vine plant. This is shown in two long vertical panels by the rood arch. Here we had no-one to explain the paintings to us, but helpful leaflets were soon found, and the interpretation of the tree was better understood.

Coffee was not available in the village so we set off on another cross country journey to Horsham St Faith – and the Black Swan – where we were well looked after in a pleasant village pub.

Back into the coach to take us down the length of the village to the Priory which gives the village its name. The Priory is tucked away in its own grounds and looked very un-ecclesiastical. Alighting from the coach there appeared to be no-one about to greet us, and we wandered into a grassy courtyard. A blue door was knocked upon with no response! After a while we heard a door being unlocked and we entered through French windows into a large area with paintings at several levels.

The story is told of how Robert and Sybil Fitzwalter were captured in the South of France by brigands, and then rescued by St Faith. To honour her they founded a Priory in her name. A scene depicting the building of the Priory shows a wheelbarrow – a Chinese invention!. One wall is devoted to an enormous crucifixion which includes several large figures. A balcony above allows one to see a remarkable portrait – probably of St Faith herself – tucked away in a corner. These wall paintings are of about 1250 AD and are the most impressive scheme of that date surviving in England.

We made our way out through the rest of the house which was in gloomy contrast to the display area (now much better than it used to be). And so the final trip back to Aylsham, arriving on time in the Market Place.

Sadly Ann Dyball was unable to join us, but her preparation of the visits was excellent and Gillian Fletcher who stood in for Ann managed it all very well without fuss. So a morning outing can work and the mixing of the two classes made for a pleasant event.

PETER HOLMAN
BH

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**NORWICH BRIDGES PAST AND PRESENT – a talk given by
Janet Smith on 27th April 2006**

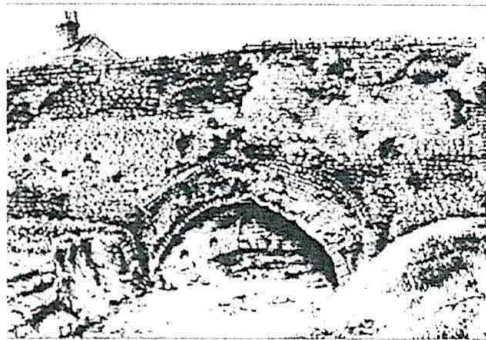
Peter Holman welcomed Janet to our meeting and recalled with pleasure Janet's previous visits to the Society and of one particular talk on the Drovers. This talk proved to be equally memorable, with many interesting slides and fascinating details about the changes in the city of Norwich. Janet said she had become interested in the history of Norwich bridges some time ago and after collecting old photographs and paintings of the Norwich School she started investigating and taking photos herself of the bridges.

She first showed us an excellent map of Norwich depicting the River Wensum flowing from the north west of the historic city and then turning eastward (passing north of the Castle and Cathedral); east of the Cathedral the river turns south and later merges with the River Yare. The Wensum is still tidal and also has several tributaries known as "cockeys";

the largest of these is the Great Cockey which flows northward to the river but is culverted. The largest on the north side of the Wensum was the Dalymond which flowed from Old Catton, and was said still to be flowing in 1985; there was also the Dallingfleet Cockey which flowed into the Wensum immediately south of the Cathedral Close.

In the early history of Norwich there were five crossing places of the river Wensum. The first bridges were Fye Bridge (which was pre-Norman), Bishop Bridge, Whitefriars Bridge (before 1100), St Georges (or New Bridge) and Coslany Bridge (which linked Oak St with Coslany St). Bishop Bridge should really be called Prior's Bridge as it was built by the Prior of Norwich in 1295. It was rebuilt and fortified by Richard Spynk in the 14th century and was connected to the nearby Cow Tower. The modern Bishops Bridge is a pedestrian bridge.

Early bridges were made of wood although it is thought waste materials were also used; in the 16th century stone was used. In the 18th and 19th centuries iron was the main material and in the 20th century concrete. More bridges were built after the Black Death but few survive. Of present-day bridges, Sir John Soan's bridge on St George's St has a stone arch and dates from 1783.



Drawing of stone bridge on the Horsefair. published in 1888. The bridge may still stand below ground.

Archaeological investigations have discovered early bridges, eg the Stone Bridge which was part of the Franciscan Friary and crossed the Dallingfleet Cockey; it may still stand below ground.

After the City recovered from the Black Death and the "great fires" of the early 16th century, the river continued to play an important part in the

growth of industry, not only in water transport but in the textiles, dyeing, leather and tanning industries. Whitefriars or St Martin's Bridge was rebuilt in 1590 and water mills were also built at the head of the river.

The coming of tramways and railways brought about great changes in the nineteenth century. New railway bridges were constructed (eg Trowse Bridge) and roads were widened. Iron bridges were a feature of nineteenth century Norwich; those constructed by Barnard Bishop Barnard include Foundry Bridge (1870), the Duke's Palace Bridge of 1822 (demolished in 1974 but with one span reused at Castle Mall) and a cast iron bridge of 1882 now carrying the Inner Ring Road.

Janet showed us photos or paintings of bridges in turn, moving from the east to the west of Norwich. Several paintings depicted very hilly backgrounds. There was a variety of shapes, some being quite high over the banks and other modern ones hardly discernible from the linking roads. There was one swing bridge (Carrow Bridge) where the Colman Company in 1920 managed to have the line of Carrow Road diverted away from their factory. With the growth of the Port of Yarmouth and the over-use of the Wensum by many smaller craft Norwich lost ocean-going vessels.

It was amazing to see photos of the crowded river from the early 20th century contrasting so much with the peaceful river Wensum and river Yare of modern photos. Many bridges had the coat of arms of the City on them and the name of the bridge in the stone. Flood marks also showed the height flood waters reached at the 1912 Flood and in earlier times. Our lecturer also pointed out the small holes for firemen's hoses used to combat fires.

Janet showed us a photo of the well-known Pulls Ferry which operated until the 1930s, punting pedestrians across the river. It was in fact a bridge and watergate, built of flint five hundred years ago to guard the river approach to the cathedral.

There are also one or two new pedestrian bridges, one being named the Novi Sad bridge in honour of Norwich's twin city Novi Sad in Serbia and linking King Street to Riverside; it is a foot and cycle bridge and has a swing mechanism which rotates about the central pier. It was built by May

Gurney, taking eight months to complete, and finished in 2001. It was interesting to hear that that at least two new bridges in the 20th century were constructed by unemployed people.

Diana Polhill gave a warm vote of thanks to Janet, expressing the feeling of the meeting for a most informative talk which had brought the history of Norwich bridges and of the City itself alive to us. **BETTY GEE**

KATHLEEN CONSTANCE STARLING by Margaret Keable

Kathleen Starling was born on July 30th 1890 in Aylsham, Norfolk, and was the youngest of four girls. Her father was William Frederick Starling (who left his *Memories of Aylsham* which was edited by Ron Peabody and published by the Society in 2000) and her mother was Katherine Annie Rees Starling, nee Corney.



Kathleen became an opera singer, her father paying for many singing lessons as she grew up. According to Murray Keable, Kathleen's nephew, some of these singing lessons were undertaken in France. She had a stage name; it was Kathleen Destournel



(French for Starling) and she kept that name for all her public performances, although she started her career using her real name. She became quite successful using the name of Kathleen Destournel.

Dame Nellie Melba (an Australian opera singer) brought Kathleen to Australia to sing. There are a number of autographs in Kathleen's autograph book indicating that she sang at 'Her Majesty's Theatre' in Melbourne during 1911. Kathleen sang in operas with Dame Nellie Melba. She appeared in a number of operas at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, including *La Boheme* in 1919 where she sang with Melba in front of the King and Queen. Dame Nellie Melba played Mimi and

Kathleen had the part of the musette in the second act. She also played Irma in *Louise*, La Sacerdotessa in *Aida* and Kate Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly* during her time at the Royal Opera House.

Kathleen also played in a number of benefits and Murray Keable (her nephew, my father) stated that she gave a performance in their farm "The Grove" at Horning for troops during World War 1. A variety of reviews and lists of her performances appeared in different newspapers and magazines. In *The Times* of May 19, 1919, Kathleen's performance in *La Boheme* at Covent Garden was commented on, "Mlle Destournel was as charmingly vulgar and warm-hearted as Musetta ought to be, and as she only too seldom is."



Another review appeared in *The Times* on June 4, 1923. I am able to reproduce these reviews with the kind permission of *The Times*. This review said:

"WEEKEND CONCERT Miss Destournel

The concert which Miss Kathleen Destournel gave at the Aeolian Hall on Friday got its distinction from her performance, not from The music performed. It was, indeed, an average song recital programme, with trimmings in the way of instrumental solos from Mr Frank Armstrong and Mr Cernikoff. Miss Destournel began her songs with Mozart, and included in a miscellaneous selection Lisz's *Lorelei*, the *Jewel Song* from *Faust* (accompaniment by Duo-Art pianola), and some songs by Maurice Besly. The distinction came in Miss Destournel's timbre, by no means the ordinary colour-

less soprano, a timbre which may occasionally become harsh or a little unpleasant on a sudden high note, such as one in the climax of Franco Faccip's *Dubita pur che brillino*, but which gains the power of contrast for the song and makes beauty of tone when it comes seem a more positive thing."

Kathleen continued to sing and perform in a range of theatres and eventually married an American, Robert Taylor. Robert or Bob as Kathleen called him was an American entertainer. In 1939 Bob joined the Entertainment National Services Association (ENSA) and he and Kathleen entertained British Forces in England.

In 1942 they were asked to organise a concert party to go overseas. They left London on the "Monarch of Bermuda" during an air raid. It was a ship that normally took 360 passengers but on this trip there were 5,000 personnel. They gave three concerts below deck. They stopped in Capetown, South Africa, for three days and then continued on their trip. They disembarked near Suez and took the train to Cairo. Altogether there were forty-two artistes. Kathleen and the other artistes performed at camps near Cairo and then went to Alexandria. From there they travelled throughout North Africa in very trying circumstances at times.

According to Kathleen, "My husband would always arrange to place the stage in a hollow so that the audience would be raised on the sand hills." Often the lights would fail and Kathleen would have to finish her songs in the dark. Every time the entourage would arrive at a camp, there would be a tremendous cheer when the women stopped out. It was the first time in years that some of the men had seen women from home.

Kathleen continued to travel around Egypt and experienced bombings, travelled on buses riddled with bullets and with no windows to get to the camps in order to perform. She stated that they usually zigzagged to avoid holes but on one occasion they couldn't avoid the holes and they felt everyone of them as they drove to the next camp. She thought it would be much better to be on a camel. At one stop Kathleen discovered their billet had originally been Rommel's headquarters during the German occupation. Kathleen's group also entertained the American troops as they travelled around as part of an arrangement with the USA.

Eventually Kathleen's husband became ill and the doctors said he should return to Cairo. However, the troop carriers were congested and it was difficult to arrange. Not only did Kathleen get to take her husband back to Cairo but she bullied, pleaded and eventually managed to persuade the officials to transport all her costumes with them. It was whilst Bob was in hospital in Cairo that he read the book written by his sister-in-law Rosemary Taylor. It was called *Chicken every Sunday*, and he decided that he would retire to where his brother and sister-in-law lived in America. Incidentally, this book was made into a movie.

In 1946 Kathleen and Bob went to America via India and settled in Tucson, Arizona. Kathleen remained there until Bob's death and then she returned to England to Aylsham where she lived with her sisters until their deaths and then on her own until her death in the 1960s.

Margaret Keable

Sources

1. Kathleen Starling's autograph book
2. Kathleen Starling's broadcast from Tucson, Arizona USA
3. Mr William Murray Keable and Miss Irene Keable
4. Letters from Kathleen Starling and Rees Edwards
5. "WEEKEND CONCERT Miss Destournel" Copyright *The Times* 4th June 1923
6. "La Boheme" at Covent Garden. Copyright *The Times* 19th May 1919

Editor's Note: We are very grateful to Margaret for sending us this article. Kathleen Starling was her great-aunt. Her parents Ethel Agnes Keable nee Starling and William Keable emigrated to Australia in 1926 with their children. Margaret has been corresponding with Ron Peabody and Tom Mollard for some years.

I wonder if any of our older readers remember the Starling sisters in Aylsham in the early Sixties. I understand they lived in Burgh Road. Dr John Sapwell, author of *A History of Aylsham* published May 1960 acknowledges at the end the help of W F Starling's two daughters Mrs Parker and Miss Starling in making available their father's recollections. I would assume Kathleen would be known as Mrs Taylor. I have not been able to find any of them in the Churchyard burial list. **BG**

OBSERVATIONS ON AYLSHAM FAIR

Roger Crouch

I recently came across the following item in my tatty copy of *The Rural Economy of Norfolk* by Mr Marshall.

“March 25:1782 Observations on Aylsham Fair

This seems to be a fair appropriated to dealings between farmer and farmer, rather than to drovers and professional dealers. It is chiefly noted for plow-horses; which, at this season of the year, become valuable to the Norfolk farmer; every hand and hoof becoming busily employed against barley feed-time. It is, however, upon the whole, a small fair; and the fairstead uncommonly small and incommodius.

To-day the number of cattle were very few: not more than one hundred head in the fair; and these in general of a refuse kind.

It seems to be a fact, universally understood, that the quantity of stock in this country has of late years very much declined. There have, it is generally allowed, been fewer young cattle reared of late than there were formerly: owing, it is thought, to the lowness of price; arising probably from a scarcity of money, and from the failure of the turnep-crops for some years back.

The few which were in the fair to-day seemed principally to consist of such as had been at turneps; and had got a little fleshy; but still required a considerable time, and good keep, to finish them. There were also a few cows and calves, and a little young stock. The number of horses was considerable (perhaps a hundred) set up against rails, placed on rising ground, to shew their fore-hands to advantage. Ten to twelve pounds the highest prices; even for young horses.”

QUIZ TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF AYLSHAM!

Total 23 points – 1 point per question unless otherwise stated

1. What was the name of the first Chairman of our Society?
 2. What is considered to be the oldest house in Aylsham?
 3. What is the present name of the Anchor Inn?
 4. There is a well-known "History of Aylsham". Who wrote it and when was it published? 2pts
 5. Where is Humphry Repton buried?
 6. A well-known farming family gave the ground for the Aylsham Recreation Ground in memory of their sons. Name the family
 7. Holman Road was so-called from 1953. What was its name before then?
 8. The Town Hall was not built as a Town Hall. What was its first function? Name the person who bought it & paid for the extension to the west end. 2 pts
 9. Penfold Street is in the centre of Aylsham. What is its connection with cattle?
 10. Bank House, no 1 Market Place, was the residence of a number of attorneys. Name the one who was hung.
 11. Where did Aylsham men practise archery?
 12. Aylsham Hospital was built in the 19th century for another organization. Name it and say how many people it was meant to accommodate. 2 pts.....
 13. The Memorial Pump at Cawston Rd/Blickling Rd was erected in memory of a well-known Aylsham man. Name him
 14. The Old Tea Rooms is a newish establishment in Red Lion St: name the business which was there before and also the family which had the shop in the 19th century. 2 pts.....
 15. The 29th May was a red-letter day in Aylsham for working people before Bank Holidays. Friendly Societies went to church & paraded before dinners and sports. What was the day called?
 16. Bure Valley Station has been operative since 1990. Name the previous station on this spot.
 17. Name the public houses which were in Millgate (up to the Bridge) in the 20th century. (3 pts)
- For solutions see page 307* BG

ARCHIVES EXHIBITION (Aylsham Carnival) on July 8th



Many people visited the excellent exhibition of archive photographs and other material prepared by Derek Lyons in the Town Hall. As well as having many photos of Carnival Processions through the years, there were other interesting photos of changes in the different parts of the town.

Posters advertising particular events were very informative.

In particular the festivities planned to celebrate the Coronation of King George VI and Queen Elisabeth on 12th May 1937 were very varied. Starting with Reveille from the Church Tower at 7 am, it was followed by a Church Service with local organisations and notable townsmen processing into Church. There were all sorts of sports on the Recreation Ground in the afternoon with free teas and a souvenir mug for all Aylsham children of school age. The evening programme featured a procession of decorated wagons and horse and tumbrils open to Aylsham teamsmen, as well as a Dog Show, a Whist Drive, Dancing in the Town Hall followed by Fireworks and more dancing until 2 am. Tickets for some of these events were available by personal application by bon fide inhabitants of Aylsham over the age of 18 years from leading townsmen such as Capt R Beard and Dr Sapwell. .

The recent Aylsham Carnival over two days has been very successful. In particular the ancient Jingling Match attracted a number of teams and was deemed a huge success .

BG

This essay is the result of an interest in historic life expectancy, which has included reading a number of books on archaeology and history. The objective of the research was to review the perceived belief that the average age at death has significantly increased over time. The period used was the twentieth century (1900 to 1999), and the deaths researched were those where the remains were buried in Aylsham cemetery, situated on Norwich Road. Burials in the churchyard ceased in 1852, and for a period of 80 years (until 1932), Aylsham cemetery was the place where Aylsham people's remains were buried.

The procedure used was to transcribe the data in the burial records into a database, then analyse this by decade and age. Deaths entered without an age were excluded, but still births were included. From these, an average age at death was calculated, both excluding and including death before age 17 (16 and under). A number of compromises had to be made about the data. The original intention was to include all deaths in Aylsham, wherever they were interred. It was not found possible to obtain this data from the register of deaths. In 1932, St. Faiths crematorium was opened, and since then an increasing number of people have opted for cremation.

The data items available in the burial records are to be found in Annexe A. In terms of this research, the data required are burial date and age. To facilitate further research using this data, sex, initials, surname, rank / profession, and place of death (by town or hospital / workhouse only) were also recorded.

Of the data collected, the total number of burials was 2920, and twenty two of these had no age recorded. The number of deaths per decade varied from 384 in the 1940s, down to 178 in the 1990s.

Figure 1 is a bar chart showing all deaths in the cemetery during the 20th century. As can be seen, most deaths occur during the ages over 50, but there is a significant number below age 17. Until 1950, total number of deaths during the first year of life is greater than any subsequent year. During the second half of the century, deaths in early years decrease significantly until in the 1990s, there are only five deaths before age 50.

In figure 2, a table shows the number of burials and the average ages, both including and excluding the under 17s, against the population count for Aylsham. It is very noticeable that child deaths drop significantly when the Welfare State is established. Figure 3 is a line chart showing average ages at death for each decade, one line showing the age excluding under 17s, the other including. As the century progresses, it is apparent how the two lines converge.

We can compare Aylsham data with other records. Life expectancy tables for USA show that in 1900, life expectancy across ten states (which had full death registration) was 47, and in 1990 the life expectancy across all America was 75. Aylsham expectancy, at 51 in 1900, and in the 1990s 76, compares favourably with the American experience.

To sum up, life expectancy has increased over the twentieth century. If a person survived to adulthood in 1900, they could expect to live to over 60. When the old age pension was introduced in 1935, most men could expect to receive it for a very few years. Now, infant mortality is low, and the average person can expect to receive that state pension for over ten years. The objective of this research, to review the belief that average age at death has increased over time, has been met, and the conclusion is that it has increased, but not, perhaps, as significantly as imagined.

Figure 1 Deaths by age during the 20th Century

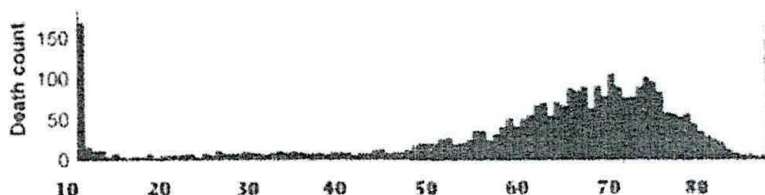
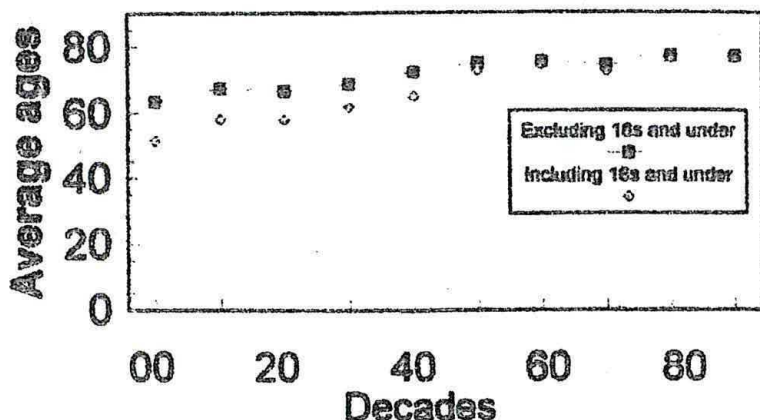


Figure 2

Decade	Burials	U17s	Average Age	Average age for over 16s	Population count	Pop count source and date
1900s	349	70	51.37	63.62	2,471	1901 Census (Sapwell 1960)
1910s	319	46	58.12	67.48	2,627	1911 Census (Sapwell 1960)
1920s	280	38	57.51	66.51	2,466	1921 Census (Sapwell 1960)
1930s	344	35	61.82	68.57	2,646	1931 Census (Sapwell 1960)
1940s	384	40	64.83	72.2	No Census	
1950s	341	10	72.65	74.78	2,526	1951 Census (Sapwell 1960)
1960s	267	3	74.39	75.23	2,635	1961 Census (Aylsham Guidebook)
1970s	222	6	72.26	74.26	3,722	1971 Census (Aylsham Guidebook)
1980s	214	2	76.29	77.01	4,584	1981 Census (Aylsham Guidebook)
1990s	178	1	76.58	77.02	5,330	1997 (Aylsham Guidebook 2001)

Figure 3

Average ages at death during decades for 20th Century



Annex A

Data available in Aylsham Cemetery Burial Books

Plot number

Always completed. Referenced to a map showing where in the cemetery the plot can be found.

Consecrated / Unconsecrated

Always completed. Most of the cemetery has been consecrated by an Anglican priest. A portion has been left unconsecrated, and can be used by other religions or sects, consecrating the plot s individually, or by non-believers.

Burial Date

Always completed, although not always including day of the month.

Forenames

Not always completed. Gender can be extrapolated from this in most cases.

Surname

Always completed.

Age

Not always completed. Recorded either in years or minutes / hours / days I weeks / months for under twos.

Rank / Profession

Use of this box has changed over the years, largely as registrars change. In the early years, adult male occupations were always entered, but women were mostly defined as wives I widows / daughters of a man, and his occupation. Over the century, more and more of both sexes were entered as retired, often with no previous occupation shown. Women had their occupations entered, although many were also defined as wives, widows, etc. Children were recorded as sons or daughters of a father, unless the child of an unmarried mother.

Place of Death

In the early years, this was recorded as Aylsham, with no address, unless death occurred in Aylsham Workhouse, or outside Aylsham, when the address was often also entered. In later years, addresses are recorded.

Registrar

Officiating priest or other designated person.

ooOoo

ANSWERS to AYLSHAM QUIZ

23 points in all

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. Canon Vyse | 2. The Manor House, Norwich Rd |
| 3. Bridge House | 4. Dr John Sapwell May 1960 |
| 5. St Michael's Churchyard | 6. Goulder |
| 7. Pound Road | 8. Corn Hall William Forster |
| 9. Penfold or pinfold means leading to cattle pound | 10. Christopher Layer |
| 11. Buttlands | 12. Aylm Union Workhouse 600 |
| 13. John Soame | 14. Greens Outfitters & Starling |
| 15. Oakapple day | 16. Aylsham South |
| 17. White Horse, Stonemason's Arms and The Anchor | |

2006/7 Season of Evening Lectures

5 th October	7 pm	AGM and 'Oulton at War'	Beryl Griffiths
26 th October	7.30	'Looking for the Pastons'	Peter Bradbury
23 rd November		'Norfolk in the First World War'	Neil Storey
2007			
26 th January		'Mediaeval Stained Glass at Salle Church'	David King
22 nd February		'East Anglian Painters'	Peter Baldwin
22 nd March		'Finding Norfolk's First Farmers'	Trevor Ashwin
26 th April		Social Event	

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

With this edition you will receive an early notice of the Society's Annual General Meeting to be held on Thursday 5th October 2006 at 7 pm in the Friendship Hall, Cawston Road, Aylsham. It will be followed by a talk on "*Oulton at War*" given by Beryl Griffiths.

VISIT

Since the visit to London to the Soane Museum had been cancelled through lack of interest, a visit to HOUGHTON HALL is now planned for THURSDAY, 7th SEPTEMBER and a circular is enclosed giving full details. Please reply AS SOON AS POSSIBLE to Ann Dyball so that the booking may be confirmed.

FEDERATION DIARY WEBSITE

For those members who have access to internet websites, details and dates of lectures of other history societies are given on the following:

www.poppylane.co.uk/federation