

# AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



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Chairman: Geoffrey Gale  
01263 734252

Secretary: Mrs Angela King  
01263 768655

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The first Society meeting of 2007 was notable for having on sale the second edition of *Millgate Aylsham* edited by Tom Mollard and Geoff Gale. It has been published by Poppyland Publishing, and is on sale to members at a discounted price of £9. An interview on Norfolk Radio of Tom Mollard, one of the editors, was arranged with Maggie Secker of *Maggie's Brew* for a Sunday afternoon in February. See page 350 for report.

**SPRING SOCIAL EVENT on THURSDAY 26<sup>th</sup> April 2007** This will be a visit to the new Henry Blogg Museum followed by dinner at the Rocket House Café in the same building. A bar will be open for drinks to be purchased. Cost £17.50. Members will have received the circular containing menu choices. There are still places available but contact with Angela King, our Secretary, (01263 768655) must be made by 11<sup>th</sup> April. The Meadow Road car park in Cromer is approximately 5-10 minutes walk from the venue. There is transport by coach leaving from Aylsham Market Place at 6 pm (@ £2.50 each) but places **MUST** be booked with Angela. The museum visit will take up to an hour. As this is a new venture by the Committee, it is hoped that Members will support it.

**VISITS** Ann Dyball and the Committee are making final arrangements for the following – see ENCLOSED NOTICES .

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May Full Day to GAINSBOROUGH HOUSE, SUDBURY and PAYCOCK'S, COGGESALL (National Trust) A guided tour of Sudbury is possible.

Thursday, 27<sup>th</sup> June Afternoon visit to VOEWOOD HOUSE, near Holt . Tea may be booked.

## THE GREAT FARMWORKERS' STRIKE

Alec Douet

The strike of Norfolk farmworkers in 1923 has an honoured place in the annals of agricultural trades' unionism and was a watershed in the union's history. For the strike's leaders it had an almost messianic significance: "Will the labourer win?" the National Union of Farmworkers' journal *The Land Worker* asked. "He must and he will. God is on his side". But when it ended it was not in victory nor yet was it a complete defeat.

Norfolk had been the heartland of unionism but following a quarter of a century of agricultural depression, in 1896 the National Union of Agricultural Workers, led by Joseph Arch, collapsed. Although at the turn of the century farming conditions improved, the respite was temporary. From 1903, unemployment again began to rise. Furthermore, when the Liberal Party, with the support of the farmworkers, swept to an overwhelming victory over the Tories in East Anglia in 1906, there was widespread victimisation. Many men lost their jobs and were evicted from their tied houses. Workers who had been members of Arch's union together with other activists turned for help to one of their own, George Edwards, who had been a tireless branch secretary of the old 'National'. Born in Marsham into grinding poverty, he was a dedicated Primitive Methodist who had devoted his life to "the uplifting of his fellow workers". On the 20th July 1906, in the Assembly Room of the Angel Hotel in North Walsham, Edwards gathered together a group of Liberal politicians and farm workers to form a Union to represent farmworkers' interests.

Much of the credit for the growth of the Eastern Counties Agricultural Labourers' and Small Holders' Union (more succinctly renamed the National Union of Agricultural Workers in 1920) must go to Edwards. This "small humpety-backed man", was dedicated, courageous, and shrewd, doggedly cycling hundreds of miles around mid and north Norfolk, recruiting members, addressing meetings, and setting up new branches. In a few years over 5000 had joined the Union. With increasing membership came a new spirit of independence and militancy. In the spring of 1909 men on 100 farms in St Faith's came out on strike for an extra shilling a week (which would have raised their pay to 14 shillings). The dispute was bitter and long for the farmers were able to carry on by

bringing in blackleg labour from outside the County. As the strike dragged on through the autumn and into winter, the Union's slender strike fund was drained and after eight months, the Union Executive called the strike off. It was a painful defeat but lessons were learnt from St Faith's and the Union was resolved never again to suffer a similar reverse.

In spite of the heady patriotism in the early years of the Great War, there were simmering disputes in the County on both wages and conditions but for our story we must move on to 1917 by which time the blockade by German U-boats was seriously threatening food supplies. Domestic production had to be raised substantially, and quickly. In the Corn Production Act of 1917, farmers were encouraged to increase their acreage under arable with guaranteed minimum prices, while wage boards were established to set statutory minimum wage rates to satisfy their farmworkers. Both sides were delighted. George Edwards welcomed the Act for creating "a new hope in the breast of workers" and the Secretary of the National Farmers Union described it as "the finest measure of security the British farmer ever had". In the Agriculture Act of 1920, the Government extended the guarantees for a further four-year period.

However no sooner was the Act on the statute book than imports of cheap grain and livestock began to flood the country. The index of agricultural prices reached a peak in the autumn of 1920; by the end of 1922 it had more than halved. Realising that price guarantees would place an impossible burden on the Exchequer, the Government in June 1921 repealed the Agriculture Act replacing the Wages Boards by quasi-statutory conciliation committees. The Boards' abolition was a body blow denounced by Edwards as "the basest betrayal any Government ever committed on any class ... a violation of the pledged word of the Government". The great strike was the direct legacy of the broken pledge.

Crippling losses were unavoidable. Farmers' recourse was to cut wages, which represented one third of their fixed costs (that is labour, rent or mortgage repayments, and equipment), and the only one over which they had any direct control. In August 1921, the Wages Board had set the rate at 46 shillings a week; by the summer of 1922 wages had fallen below 30 shillings. It was just as George Edwards had feared. At an open air meeting on the Buttlands at Aylsham in July, he made a typically impassioned plea to stand firm by the National Union of Agricultural Workers. 'The labourers



... claimed the right to obtain the highest value for the labour they gave ... But the farmer took the opposite view " ... He had to buy labour ... at the very cheapest rate he could. There must come a conflict ..."

The 1922 harvest was disastrous and prospects bleak. *The Times* agricultural correspondent, who visited the County in the autumn, reported that "evidences of coming trouble were clearly discernible ... the gross proceeds from the harvest of 1922 would be wholly insufficient to allow of a bare living wage to all, employed and employers, who had a right to expect such a reward for their part in a common enterprise". Although farmworkers' wages in Norfolk and the Eastern Counties generally were already lower than those of any other workers and lower than anywhere else in the country, farmers were nevertheless intent on securing a further reduction. In September they offered 25s for a fifty-hour week during the winter period. And the rate was widely applied. But by the spring of 1923 even that, in the opinion of the secretary of the Norfolk Farmers Union, "was impossible with the income of the industry" and farmers were advised to reduce wages to 22 shillings for a 54-hour week - with no guarantee that a full week's work would necessarily be available.

Nobody, not even the farmers, could believe the farmworkers were being offered a living wage, barely one half of that of industrial workers. One last desperate attempt was made to halt a strike. On 17 March 1923, a delegation of representatives from the farmers' and workers' unions called in person on the Prime Minister for help. Bonar Law's answer was unambiguous. Wages boards were for good times, "that was the difference", he told them, "and the country would not wear subsidies." He concluded, "I think it is only fair to say ... we cannot be of any help". "We have your answer, very clear and very plain", came the Norfolk delegates' reply, "and very unsatisfactory from our point of view". "It was", George Edwards said, "like giving us mustard without any beef."

When farmers posted notices of the new rates from the 16 March, some 1,500 men immediately came out in the Fakenham area where the Union was strongest, and in a militant area around Aylsham and North Walsham. On the 24 March, the organising committee called for a general stoppage but the initial response was patchy. First, as a result of the steady erosion of wages, support for the Union had fallen away. From nearly 17,000 in 1920, the membership in Norfolk had fallen by 1923 to about 10,000. Secondly,

many farmers chose not to reduce wages, either because they thought the new rates unfair, or simply because they could not afford to risk a strike with spring sowing already behind after six weeks of rain. And thirdly, men were not prepared to leave stock untended. Nevertheless, the strike call "struck the farmers like a blow in the face". B B Sapwell, who farmed at Sankence out on the Cawston Road (and was the *EDP*. agricultural correspondent) wrote that he had employed men for 62 years without ever having a strike and could not believe that men he was "under the impression (he) was on the most friendly terms with", should have joined.

The strike started quietly enough, but from 27 March the police reported that "gangs of youths on cycles began to invade farms to get men out". By the end of the month nearly 5,000 workers had come out and the strike was spreading south of Norwich. Up to that point, if a policeman was on a farm, pickets stayed clear but then, as the Chief Constable of Norfolk reported in a confidential memo to the Home Office, "They changed their methods. They arranged gangs of anything from 30 to 300 men (who) would collect at some point from the villages 5 to 10 miles away and then raid farms, taking no notice of a Constable who might be present, and fetched men out from work". The difficulty facing the police was that neither they, nor the farmers, nor even most of the farmworkers themselves, knew for sure who some of the cycling pickets were, and it was impossible for one or two village bobbies to stop such large numbers going on to the farms. Certainly many were younger men, among them disaffected ex-servicemen recognisable by their khaki greatcoats, and beyond the control of the organisers of the strike.

This introduced the possibility that the strikers were being manipulated for political ends. The Chief Constable was informed (although there was no proof) that all the "raids" around the Aylsham area were being organised from an office in Red Lion Street by a "communist" called William Pask. (Pask & Sons of Red Lion Street are listed in the Kelly's Aylsham Directory of 1925 as 'tailors') With disturbance on the Continent in mind, this raised fears of a Bolshevik uprising - a mass meeting of strikers at Norwich market at the beginning of April was improbably described as "the beginning of the end of the present order of society". But even if few farmers would have considered Norfolk a likely setting for revolution, they most certainly resented the interference within the County of "gentlemen from London" (the N U A W.'s headquarters), "town dwellers", described



by the Chief Constable as the "chief firebrands", who were thought to be manipulating the strike for their own ends and making "mere fools" of the local leaders.

Unrest spread, particularly in mid and north Norfolk; gangs finding a farm working would cut the horses' harness, turning them loose, and tipping over the carts. Farmers brought in men from outside the county, especially from the Cambridgeshire fens and they, with blacklegs, exacerbated an already tense situation. And if the accounts of a near civil war in the countryside were exaggerated, it is certainly true that many of cases of intimidation were brought before the courts at Aylsham and Docking. Such was the disruption that the Chief Constable found it necessary to draft in 600 police reinforcements from as far afield as the West Riding and Hertfordshire.

Although this gave the strike the appearance of assuming a wider dimension, it never spread outside the County and, for all the furore, support was patchy. Many areas were not affected for example in south Norfolk, where small farms predominated. And even on farms where some workers came out, others stayed to look after the stock; although 20,000 strike notices were sent out in the two weeks when the strike was most strongly supported, no more than about one in six of the regular work force was involved. And as farmers became increasingly anxious about spring sowing and agreed to pay the old rate, workers gradually drifted back. By the time the strike ended no more than about 10 per cent of the county workforce were still involved.

The end came suddenly. Most farmers had managed to carry on with their spring work and by the end of April, 70 per cent of the barley crop had been drilled. The Norfolk Farmers' Union was still showing no sign of coming to an agreement but meanwhile strike pay was rapidly emptying the Union's coffers; in just five weeks, two years' membership subscriptions had been exhausted. The Union had to acknowledge that their position was "perfectly hopeless". Help came from an unexpected quarter when Ramsey MacDonald, called the two sides together at the House of Commons. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, they hammered out an agreement settling on a rate of 30 shillings a week for a guaranteed 50 hour week, with special overtime rates above 54 hours.



The Norfolk farmworkers' strike of 1923 is prominent in the historiography of agricultural trades unionism, ranked alongside Kett, Arch and even, some have claimed, the Tolpuddle Martyrs. But although the strike has this heroic quality it must be considered a failure and indeed in the NUAW report on the strike, the settlement was described as a "humiliation". It had exposed the two essential weaknesses of the National Union of Agricultural Workers: the problem of rallying support for concerted action from small isolated groups of workers and the lack of funds to sustain a lengthy campaign. There was, however, one most important gain, farmers' acceptance of the principle of a guaranteed working week. And the Union could also fairly claim that it prevented further attacks on pay. But, for many years, the strike caused continued distrust both between master and men, and between those who had joined and those who worked on. As Arthur Amis, a cowman from Trunch and active trade unionist told me, "blacklegs were never forgotten".

The NUAW never called another strike.

Suggestions for further reading:

Armstrong, Alan, *Farmworkers: A Social and Economic History*, (1988)

Edwards, George, *From Crow Scaring to Westminster: an Autobiography*, (1922)

Groves, Reg, *Sharpen the Sickle*, (1949)

Howkins, Alun, *Poor Labouring Men, Rural Radicalism in Norfolk, 1870-1923* (1985)

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## **SOCIETY NEWS**

### **Society Visit with Aylsham WEA to the V & A Museum on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November**

When the information about this outing first arrived, it was very difficult to decide which exhibition NOT to go on. I finally decided that I should visit the Renaissance House and the Leonardo Da Vinci Exhibitions, because these are temporary, and the Islam Exhibition, the other option, is a permanent one. A report on the Islam Exhibition follows this article.

We were unlucky on the bus journey. The A11 was blocked between Thetford and Barton Mills, so we arrived a little after 1 pm, rather later than planned. We then went our separate ways to see different exhibitions.

Betty and I resolved to go immediately to our first exhibition, the Renaissance House. A lively exhibition, showing house plans, room functions, fixtures and fittings of the rooms, and including paintings showing how the people of Renaissance Italy lived.



Paolo Veronese  
*Livia da Porto Thiene and her  
Daughter Porzia*

Venice about 1551

It concentrated on two areas, Tuscany and the Veneto. Exhibits ranged from the grand – the fireplaces and fountains which graced the public rooms of the houses of the great and good, to the mundane, with kitchen buckets, knives, forks and spoons. Public rooms of the period were multipurpose, and furnishings were ideally capable of being folded and stored at the edge of the room. These included some of the most elegant folding chairs I have ever seen, a far cry from some of the modern ones.

It is a wonderful exhibition, a fascinating insight into the lives of people widely separated from us by time and space, and yet so similar to us in their needs, and their manner of living. A quote from a 15<sup>th</sup> century book



still resonates "It is unbelievable how much trouble and expense accompany a move from place. Things are lost, misplaced and broken, and it is a long time before you are, once again, well settled".

The Leonardo Exhibition was very different. A quieter, more reflective view. Here was a man who was the painter of several of the world's greatest paintings such as the Mona Lisa and the Last Supper, but also was an engineer, musician, polymath. This exhibition concentrated on his work in science and technology. On cramped pieces of paper (a valuable commodity in his day) his thoughts, designs and drawings poured out. His vision covered anatomy, biology canals, dissections, and so on, through geometry and kinesiology\* to vortices, warfare and zoology. He was fascinated by water, its measurement, management use and movement, designing dams and pumps, and an elaborate water clock with a mechanical man as a bell ringer, for the French governor of Milan.

Again, he is separated from us by time and space and of course by genius. There are still echoes of our time in his work, where a design for a chariot armed with flails attached to the wheels was annotated "would tend to damage friend and foe alike". *La plus ça change, la plus c'est la même chose.*

Our thanks must go to Ann for organising a wonderful day out.

Daphne Davy

\* the study of the mechanics of body movements

### **Jamel Gallery of Islamic Art at the V & A MUSEUM**

The Victoria and Albert Museum is undergoing a huge redevelopment programme with galleries being refurbished and new exhibits installed. Part of this scheme has been the opening of the Jamel Gallery of Islamic Art. This beautiful room has at its centre a large sixteenth century Isjahan carpet. It has its glass enclosure lit only for ten minutes every half-hour which is time enough to walk round it and admire its delicate design and subtle colours. Then the eye is drawn away to the many displays of Islamic ceramics, textiles, carpets, tiles and calligraphy. These came from the Islamic Empire; from India through the Middle East, North Africa to

Spain. The artifacts date from ninth to eighteenth century including some very early ceramic ware. The most typical and striking displays are the glazed Iznik tiles which we associate with the great mosques and palaces of Islam. It was a pity that we had to miss the guided tour as it would have helped to absorb the information about the great number of beautiful and fascinating things on display.

**Riona Collins**

## **NORFOLK IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR - a Talk by Neil Storey**

**Jean McChesney**

On Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2006 our Society was pleased to welcome a "local lad", a graduate of the UEA, resident of North Walsham, a dialect coach, author of twenty-six books on social and local history, with a book in the pipeline on the Norfolk Regiment – Mr Neil Storey.

Our speaker fascinated and entertained us with an excellent selection of his local photographs, well-illustrating his introductory statement that "History belongs to everybody" so we were treated to pictures of kings, generals, the local nobility, "the ranks", munition workers, nurses, wives and sweethearts, purchasers of War Bonds, those with rotten teeth who failed the medical - all playing their part in the most traumatic of wars.

We learned that the Boer War, which ended in May 1902, had been a guerrilla war and near disastrous for our army, but some valuable lessons had been learned. The "poor bloomin' infantry" that returned were demoralised and in very poor physical shape – in 1904 a monument was erected to them in Norwich's Agricultural Hall Plain. The "Norfolk Veterans" predated the British Legion by twenty years and were formed "to save old soldiers from a pauper's grave".

As it became clear that Germany intended war and was expanding its army and navy, the British government felt that it must be prepared. Norfolk's coastline presented some possible invasion points, especially in the Weybourne area. In 1901 the Norfolk Yeomanry had been founded and commanded by Colonel Barclay. Such was government propaganda that



later "Old Pals" regiments were formed, often without uniforms or adequate weapons – fresh-faced youths eager to do their bit for the country and defeat Kaiser Bill.

In 1912 manoeuvres took place at Swaffham. The Prince of Wales, a frequent visitor to Sandringham and Norfolk rallied his friends, the gentry of the county – the Harbords and Suffields etc to get their estate workers to join the volunteers, even though many were in poor shape.

Throughout the County the volunteers came forward, but because of lack of equipment, poor food and accommodation, being local lads many were in danger of "drifting back home"; so the government moved in regiments from other Counties, including Essex and Yorkshire, until at the outbreak of war in August 1914 Norfolk had a kaleidoscope of regiments massing and waiting for instructions. Local lads assembled at Aylsham Railway Station – young and confident, on their way to East Dereham for medicals – (rotten teeth a definite no no!). Bicycles and horses and carts were requisitioned, the farmers protesting as it was "Harvest", and German waiters from the fashionable hotels of Cromer were arrested as spies. The Norwich City Specials were founded – an expansion of the police force, and were supplied with armbands and truncheons. A Voluntary Training Corps started and was later uniformed, with the Earl of Leicester in charge – to defend our shores and the civilian population. The Norfolk Regiment of Infantrymen had new barracks built at Mousehold Heath.

So these inexperienced countrymen set out for war with great camaraderie, believing that they would be home by Christmas. In reality, this punishing war, where more died from disease and malnutrition than by bullets and bombs, lasted four weary years, and many were to give their lives. At home in 1915 three Zeppelins appeared over the Norfolk coast, one over Cromer, and one got lost over the marshes near Yarmouth. Bombs were dropped along the coast from Yarmouth to King's Lynn. As the war intensified and the first casualties began to return from the front, emergency buildings were erected at the old Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, then tent wards at Thorpe Hospital. Stately homes converted their ballrooms; hospital blues were introduced, and young women flocked to nurse and join the St John's Brigade. Conscription came in 1916 and unfit men volunteered to drive ambulances and serve in the Red Cross.

Women volunteered to fill men's places in munition factories and some became known as the "Norwich Canaries", when their skin took on a yellow hue from the cordite in the explosives they made. There was huge support from the public for "War Bonds for £5", and the press declared "Tank Week a Great Success" – these were secret weapons disguised as water tanks.

Besides the thousands of men whose names are commemorated on village war memorials and books of condolence throughout the county, Norfolk had its famous heroes – the very first VC was presented to a Norfolk man, and of course there's Edith Cavell whose memorial now stands outside the Cathedral.

All these bald facts would have been near-meaningless without our speaker's rare photographs – sometimes funny, often poignant but always fascinating, especially when interpreted by someone with Neil's passion and knowledge. Betty Gee in a short vote of thanks expressed members' appreciation of the talk and slide show.

**Jean McChesney**

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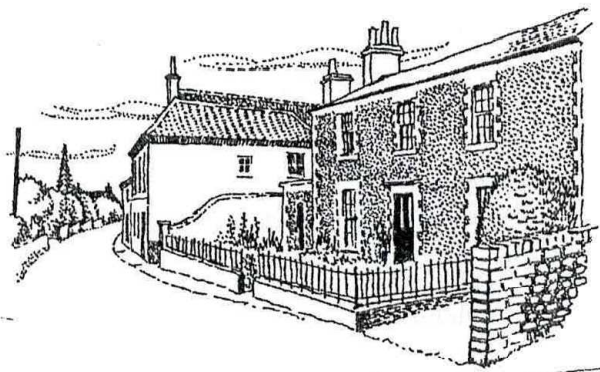
## **TOM MOLLARD'S CHAT WITH MAGGIE SECKER ON NORFOLK RADIO**

Maggie's programme contained some music and always started with short items of Norfolk events. She had obviously prepared well for the talk and had looked at pamphlets and books about Aylsham, as well as the new book *Millgate Aylsham*. Maggie first established that Tom, a librarian, had come to Norfolk in the sixties, although his wife was a Norfolk girl, and that they had lived since 1978 in the quiet village of Erpingham, some four miles from Aylsham. This now had no shops but still had a church, a school, a public house, a garage and a village hall and bowling green.

Turning to the market town of Aylsham, Maggie mentioned a visit she had made to the recent Antiques Fair. She liked the market place with its 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century buildings and they discussed the effect of the Cittaslow appointment. Tom made the point that Aylsham was a friendly



town and people spoke to one another. Maggie wondered why the Society had chosen to produce a book on Millgate when it was not the centre of the town. It was explained that Millgate was on the route to North Walsham and that Red Lion Street, the main commercial street, led to White Hart Street and Town Lane. Thus it linked the core of Aylsham with the mill on the River Bure  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile away.



*Stone House, looking down Millgate*

Millgate was a typical ancient way; “it was the way to the mill, as well as a way leading out of the town to manorial fields, villages beyond and eventually the coast”. It winds slightly, dropping gently downhill – “the whole effect is of unplanned pleasantness and informality”. A new community had developed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Tom explained that, although there had been a mill since Domesday, it had been rebuilt many times. The area had gained in importance in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the improvement to the Navigation meant that wherries could sail up from Yarmouth bringing heavy goods to Aylsham. There followed much 19<sup>th</sup> century building, including many cottages for the workers in malting, boatbuilding and wherrying trades. The arrival of the goods yard of the Midland railway in the 1880s created more work for local people but gradually took business away from the canal. The flood of 1912 severely damaged the Navigation which was never repaired. The Aylsham railways went in 1959 and 1980. However, the mills remained in production of animal food and fish food until well after the second War, closing finally in 1994.

Maggie congratulated the Society on the new book. Tom agreed that Poppyland Publishing had done a really professional job; this book had been thoroughly revised from the first edition and had three new chapters. Maggie also thought the Society's previous book *Aylsham Directories 1793-1937* was particularly useful for people wishing to trace their family history, containing as it did Kelly's Directories and other directories. *Aylsham Inns and Public Houses, a History* by Elizabeth Gale was also being reprinted.. I enjoyed listening to this talk and thought it gave a good impression of Aylsham and the Society.

Betty Gee

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**MEDIEVAL STAINED GLASS AT SALLE CHURCH – a Talk  
given by David King on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2007      Sheila Merriman**

David King, a Research Fellow in the School of History, at the University of East Anglia has been involved with stained glass all his life. Three generations of his family ran G King and Son of Norwich, specialists in stained glass restoration. His definitive book on the windows of St Peter Mancroft, Norwich, forms part of a major series of works on medieval stained glass from all over the world. He is currently working on a new volume, a comprehensive review of the medieval stained glass of Norfolk. This project is funded by the Leverhulme Trust.

St Peter and St Paul Church, Salle, described by Cautley as the finest church in Norfolk, is historically exceptional in that it can be fairly accurately dated. Blomefield records an inscription in the chancel implying that William Wode, rector, "built this building (i.e. the chancel) from the foundations and completed it in 1440". Wode was a well-educated man and was probably "head hunted" for the position of Rector to oversee the building work. He subsequently moved to oversee the building of St Peter Mancroft. The church at Salle was a replacement for an earlier building on the same site, broadly contemporary with neighbouring Cawston. While Cawston was largely the work of a single family, at Salle the building benefited from an accident of history; several very wealthy families owned manors and halls in the parish at the same time. Among them were the Boleyns, the Brewes, the Mautebys, the Briggs, the Morleys, the Luces and the Kerdistons.

Only fragments of medieval glass remain at St Peter and St Paul but there is enough remaining, with antiquarian description, to identify what's left. Many decorated church windows were, of course, victims of the iconoclasts of the Reformation and the 17th century parliamentary period.

The earliest glass is in the south aisle, where the tracery in one window has two figures of God the Father and, below, fragments of inscription, all from an Old Testament series datable to c 1411.

The figures in the east window are what remain of a sumptuous series of the Nine Orders of Angels, here represented in pairs with no sparing of, very expensive, coloured glass. The Orders now to be seen are Archangels, standing on a building (the head is an insertion), Principalities, with kneeling kings, red demons (part of a Fall of Rebel Angels) and Powers birching demons. The heraldry in this window indicates the involvement of the families of Delapoles, Bardolfs, Beauforts and also (but now lost) the Morleys and Brewes. Interestingly, two of the shields have the wife's quarters, first.

The figures of the prophets, patriarchs and cardinals in the side windows are of high quality in their facial drawing and of great interest because of the relationship between their subject matter and that of the lost glass of the main lights below, which had a series of Kings, Popes, Bishops and Archbishops.

The old glass in the north transept, also of the 1440's, is likewise of iconographical interest, although very restored. It is in the tracery of the modern Jesse window by Heasman and represents the Visitation accompanied by personifications of Mercy and Truth, Justice and Peace, following Psalm 85, verse 10, the text of which is on the scrolls they carry.

The tracery of the east window of the north aisle now has a very restored Annunciation. During restoration in 1912, Gabriel and a dove were painted onto the window, but it may have originally been a Coronation of the Virgin Mary, with other scenes from the life of Mary portrayed below. It was hypothesised that all the windows in the north aisle could, originally, have depicted the story of Mary's life.

The surviving panels of the south transept need some historical interpretation, for although the tracery of the east and south windows is clearly of the same period,



these windows contain glass in two different styles, and that in the east window appears to have been made originally for tracery of a different shape. It includes figures of Thomas Briggs, who built the transept about 1444, and his two wives also what is presumably his patron saint, St Thomas Beckett. The figures of St Margaret and St Catherine, in the chancel, also belong to this glass.

The glass in the south window — angels and saints — is later in style, probably from the last quarter of the fifteenth century. What must have happened is that, for some unknown reason, only a few decades after the transept was built it was remodelled and the east and south windows given new tracery forms. Of the original glazing, some was kept, notably that relating to the original founder, and was adapted to the new tracery shapes, and new glass was made for the remaining openings.

In summary, the remnants of medieval stained glass at Salle church are a splendid remainder of past glories.

**Sheila Merriman**

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## **EBAY SALES**

Ebay is the largest auction site on the internet. Millions of items are offered for sale here every week. I thought it might be interesting to see what articles relating to Aylsham are available. To this end I now have a permanent search on Ebay for anything containing the word 'Aylsham' in its title or description. Many items are offered which have no interest for us. However, I was surprised how many items are relevant for anybody interested in the history of Aylsham.

Between the 1st November 2006 and 31 January 2007 I recorded nearly one hundred different lots. Of these 42 sold. The most popular items to offer for sale were vintage postcards of the town. They were not however, necessarily the most popular with buyers! St. Michaels Church, The Market Place and Red Lion Street were the most common, with the Barnwell's series being the major publisher. One Real Photograph Post Card of the Market Place reached £5.95. A rather rarer Post Card of the Mill made slightly less. However, for every Post Card sold three remained unsold.

Other popular items are the legal documents such as wills and indentures. An item described as "Vellum Indenture, 1790" sold for £14.99, whilst most other documents usually reached about £2 for original copies of 19th century / early 20th century items.

A copy of Sapwell's History made £40 (slightly more than at the recent book sale at Keys where the vendor initially obtained it !). Also sold was a copy of The Man Who Missed the Massacre by Cyril Jolly. This realised £22. On a more three-dimensional note a Horse Brass Noseband made by White of Aylsham and Cawston around the beginning of the last century made £26.

Finally, Arcadian Crested china items seem to attract good money – a "black boy" sat in a bath and with the Aylsham crest made £280.

It may seem a shame to have to put a price to many of these objects but they are appearing on Ebay and I don't imagine they will stop in the near future. So, hoping I am not placing price above value I will continue to monitor the coming and goings of Aylsham items on Ebay and periodically report for the Journal.

Should you want to look for yourself : [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk).

**Lloyd Mills**

February 2007

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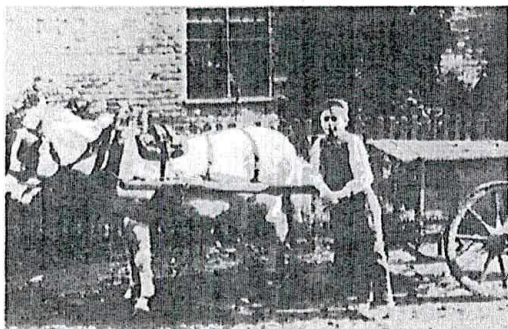
### **TALK BY NEIL STOREY at Aylsham Library on the "Good Old Days in Norfolk" on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

As part of the Library's bi-monthly series of talks on Wednesday mornings Neil showed an interesting number of slides to illustrate his talk. Neil said he would start on a light note although there would be darker aspects of Norfolk life in the past. He reminded his audience of the traditional greeting of a Norfolkman "Dew yer fa' keep a dickey, bor?" to which the

reply would be “Dew yew want a ful to ride it ?” (Dickey meant Donkey). He mentioned other examples of Norfolk dialect such as troshing (threshing) and dudderman (snail). Dialect had been handed down by word of mouth in a time when few poor people could read or write.

He then turned to the hard times experienced in the 1890s and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The mortality rate was very high, particularly for young children. Most families lost at least one small child due to infectious diseases. This led to an average age of 35. Some people lived past the age of 40; it was the survival of the fittest. There was little knowledge of medicine – the poor did not see doctors. There were no midwives then. The oldest women would deliver children. The Salvation Army was the first to offer help to parents in the form of baby classes after the 1st World War.

There was desperate poverty in the countryside. After the spring sewing, there was little work for agricultural labourers until the early harvest. Children were expected to help with the harvest and gather acorns and fruit. Although one may see photos of our great grandparents in embroidered dresses or pinafores and little suits, many children would only wear hand-me-downs – adult clothing cut down for them. Boys from about the age of 12 would be apprenticed to traders or farmers, girls would go into service. Many families would go in and out of the workhouse or be on outdoor relief. Boys could sing in the church choir and receive a penny per service and also go on the annual outing. Church and chapels also had annual outings for those who had excellent attendance at Sunday school. Some chapels were made of tin hence the term *tin tabernacles*. They were generally on the outskirts of villages not near the church.



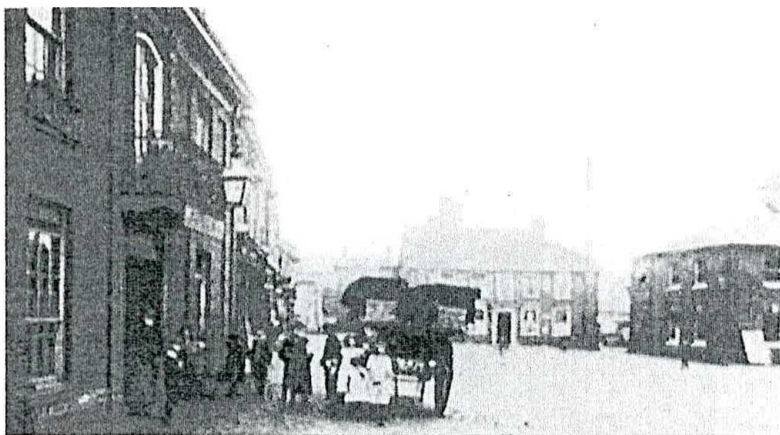
There was usually an area in each village set aside as a drying ground for sheets. Water was obtained from wells often shared by several cottages or else bought by the pail from the water cart.

Photo from  
*Victorian & Edwardian Norfolk*  
*from old photographs*



After a number of cases of typhoid in 1904 councillors made suggestions for improving the water supply but a meeting of ratepayers turned down a scheme; a piped supply of pure water was not provided in Aylsham until 1938.

Horse and carts were the usual means of delivering milk from churns, parcels, and bricks. Carrier's carts travelled between local towns delivering light goods and also conveyed people. The turnpike from Norwich was very dusty – roads were made of dirt. Until the 1912 Flood wherries could come up to Aylsham on the River Bure from Hoveton and Yarmouth bringing heavy goods such as corn, coal and timber. Many cottages in Millgate housed families of watermen. There was a regular service of coaches and horses between Norwich and Cromer, which changed horses in Aylsham.



A touring carriage in front of the Black Boys public house, Aylsham Market Place, in 1905 (from Neil Storey's NORFOLK A Photographic History 1860 – 1960)

The coming of the railway to Aylsham in 1880 brought about the end of this service. Cars were seen in Aylsham before the 1st World War but a motor omnibus service between Norwich and Aylsham did not start until 1919.

Gardens were very small – many families had an allotment to grow vegetables. Chickens were bred and most families would have a pig fed on scraps which would be killed to provide much food.

Mr Storey also showed photos of convalescent homes for TB patients; it was thought that continuous fresh air would prevent the patients getting worse. One was at Kelling. Building sites were very dusty, as sawing wood was done on site. There was an annual drover fair for drovers to obtain work, and a day for servants and farm labourers to get work. . Oakapple Day was a day's holiday when there would be a church service and games afterwards for the friendly societies. Bank holidays were introduced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Neil reminded his listeners that agricultural workers struck in 1923 when farming labourers' wages were reduced from 42s to 25s for 52 hours of work per week. Men returning from the 1st Great War found new machinery needed less labour. Police reserves were brought in to protect blackleg labour and machines on farms. Many men left the farming industry to go to towns to find other work to feed their families. Listening to Neil, one appreciated the great gap between those with a trade and a cottage and the average Norfolk farm worker. **BETTY GEE**

## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

Below is a selection of diary dates listed in the current Diary of the Federation of Norfolk Historical and Archaeological Organisations.

### **April**

24 Tues The Early History of Norfolk by Bryan Ayres **BAHS**

28 Sat Collectors & Collections of Norwich Castle DrT Pestel **NAHRG**

### **May**

2 Wed Ports in Decline – the Glaven in the 19th C Hooten **WLHG**

28 Mon HISTORY FAIR, GRESSENHALL WORKHOUSE

June 23 Sat Paston Pilgrimage by Ron Fiske **NHS**

July 30 Mon HMS Bounty Exhibition **WLHG**

### **KEY**

**BAHS** Blakeney Area Historical Soc, Methodist Chapel, High St,  
Blakeney at 7.30 pm

**NAHRG** Norfolk Archaeological & Hist Research Group CEAS, UEA  
at 2.30 pm

**NHS** Norfolk Heraldry Soc Meet at United Reform Church, Princes  
St, Norwich at 7.45 pm

**WLHG** Wells Local History Group. Meet at The Maltings, Community  
Centre, Staithe St, Wells next the Sea 7.30 pm

**FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY** Over the last few years I have often received enquiries (directed from the Library) from people whose family has originated from Aylsham and who seek specific information about them.

## *The Norfolk Ancestor*



The ALHS's book *Aylsham Directories 1793-1937* is useful for this. However, if you are interested in tracing your ancestors, the Family History Society HQ and Library at Kirby Hall, 70 St Giles St NR2 could be helpful. It publishes a quarterly journal entitled *The Norfolk Ancestor*: the UK membership fee is £10 pa.

The Library opening times are: Tues 10 - 1pm, Wed 10 - 4, Thurs 10 - 1 and Sunday 10 - 1 pm. Phone no: 01603 763718; enquiries may be made during the above times.

The Norwich branch meets at the above address on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday of each month at 7.30 pm. E-mail [nfhs@paston.co.uk](mailto:nfhs@paston.co.uk) Membership subs become due on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007. The Norwich Branch secretary is Barbara Walker, 41 Henby Rd, Norwich NR2 3NL.

*The Norfolk Ancestor* is published several times a year and contains interesting articles about tracing family trees. It states that articles for future editions are always required. There are also branches in East Norfolk, South Norfolk and West Norfolk. **BG**



## FAMILY BOOKS

Elizabeth Gale

I have two books which are from my father's family. The earliest one dates to 1767 and is entitled, "The Young Ladies School of Arts. Calculated for the Improvement of Female Education." It is dedicated 'To The Right Honourable The Countess of Northesk' by the author Hannah Robertson, who describes herself as her Ladyship's most obedient and most obliged humble servant. This book was printed in Edinburgh by WAL. Ruddiman junior for Mrs Robertson and sold by her to booksellers in Scotland and England.

In the preface, the author discloses that she is the mother of a number of children and has had the education of young girls under her care. She writes, "As soon as a girl has learned to read properly, she is commonly put to the knitting of stockings which is easily acquired. Then, the next thing is a piece of gauze put into her hands, called a sampler, on which she is to sew letters and different figures, in doing which she finds so much difficulty that she takes a real disgust at school."

The first part of this book gives advice on painting in various media, Japanning and gilding, mosiac work and much more. This is followed by a few pages on what is referred to as Cosmeticks and various recipes are given for such things as the improvement of the complexion, taking away pimples and removing freckles. Plants were used extensively at this time for cosmetics, medicines and in producing dyes for the dyeing of different types of fabrics and instructions are included in the book. It was no doubt important that young ladies of the 1700s were trained in household management and Mrs Robertson gives recipes for making jellies, preserves, cakes, pickles and wines. Her recipes do not however extend to the cooking of meat or fish. The washing of laundry is not neglected and some pages are devoted to this subject.

Reading this book is fascinating and presents many surprises; one which I had not anticipated was a detailed account on how to preserve fresh dead birds, in other words taxidermy. Other creatures of the natural world feature and a newly caught seagull, chopped into pieces and boiled to make a broth is a cure for asthma. There is information for an antidote

against the poison of toads and a cure for the bite of a mad dog. In addition there is a method of having white crows or ravens and is as follows:-

‘Rub with the fat of a white cat some crows or ravens eggs; those new laid are the best; let these eggs also be done over with the brains of the said cat; afterwards set them to be hatched by a very white pullet, that has never hatched before; during the whole time she must be kept in a place impervious to the sun, and this place must be hung with white linen cloths and the crows or ravens produced from these eggs will be white’.

A great deal more could be written about the contents of this book. On the inside cover are the words, “Anne Adie Menzies, her book” and the young Anne Adie would have been surprised that it has survived in her family for 238 years.

The second book, “How To Be A Man” by W Nicholson was awarded to my grandfather for good behaviour at his Sunday School in Dunfermline, Scotland in 1879 when he was twelve years old. He obviously thought it a worthwhile book as he kept it and gave it to my father when he was in his early teens and in turn it was passed on to my brother John in 1946 when he was thirteen years of age. John thanked my father, read the first few pages, placed it on a shelf in his bedroom and never opened it again!

The preface in the book gives a flavour of the contents and begins:-

“Dear Boys, I write for you. You will one day be called men; but will you be men? I ask this question, because some persons whom we see around us called men, are not men in the sense I mean. Many of them have grown up from boyhood, uneducated, undisciplined, unrestrained, and are in consequence, but mere animals, ignorant, brutish, intemperate, wreckless and poor as poor can be. And very young men are awfully degraded by loving alcoholic drinks; hotels, taverns, beershops, games, races, theatres, sensuality, and all kinds of wickedness”.

In the following chapters, the author gives the young reader advice on his behaviour at school, at table and family worship. He also writes of the education of the body, heart and mind, warns against indolence and stresses the importance of showing respect towards parents, brothers, sisters and other family members. On friendship W. Nicholson writes, “Everyone needs intimate friends and a bad friend may prove your ruin;

therefore be slow and cautious in the formation of intimacies and friendship. A pleasing exterior often conceals a corrupt heart". He advises boys to ask the opinion of his parents as to the suitability of those whom he wishes to have as friends.

Throughout this book the author gives many accounts of the awful fate that befell those who chose a life of sin and wickedness and warns against that path in life. In contrast he relates the rewards that came to those who were honest, hardworking, mindful of others and above all affectionate and respectful towards their parents. The book ends as follows:-

#### A Humble Home

Are you not surprised to find how independent of money peace of conscience is, and how much happiness can be condensed into the humblest home? A cottage will not hold the bulky furniture and sumptuous accommodations of a mansion; but if God be there, a cottage will hold as much happiness as might stock a palace.

These two books give an insight into what was considered a suitable education for girls and the moral Christian values expected of boys. Both the books are not only of interest to me as part of my family history, but are informative in the wider context of the literature given to the young so many years ago.

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**USEFUL WEBSITES** Members with computers may find the following WEBSITES useful:

**Norfolk Record Office** <http://archives.norfolk.gov.uk> updated in 2004. It is now possible to search the Record Office's electronic catalogue.

**Norfolk Transcription Archive** <http://www.genealogy.doun.org/transcriptions/index.php>  
Established by genealogists. Contains wide variety of Norfolk documents for family historians. Site has been expanded. Contains census returns and parish registers, subsidy returns, heath tax assessments. Can be researched by surname, individual parish, hundred or document type. Site is regularly updated with aid of volunteers.

**Virtual Norfolk** <http://virtualnorfolk.uea.ac.uk/welcome.htm>

Established by Department of History at UEA. Early documentary evidence re county's past, including Kett's rebellion, local heresy trials, print industry in 1700. Over 2000 documents. Will be fully searchable.



NOTE re Maria daughter of Sir Robert Walpole and Maria Skerret following article in Journal no 12 page 326

Beryl Freeman, a volunteer guide at Wolterton Hall, has kindly given us more information about Maria. She married the 'natural' son of General Sir Charles Churchill and a leading actress of the day - one Anne Oldfield. This marriage produced Sophia Churchill who then married Horatio Walpole who ultimately became Lord Orford, 2nd Earl of the second creation. Sophia was therefore related to her husband. Sir Robert Walpole was her grandfather whilst her husband was Sir Robert's great nephew.

Returning to Charles Churchill - he had another relationship which produced a natural daughter, Harriet. Harriet married Sir Everard Fawkener and their granddaughter, Mary, married Sophia Churchill & Horatio Walpole's son (another Horatio) - who became the 3rd Earl. It is a very complex relationship but Maria's and Sir Robert's line did continue.

Beryl Freeman added that at Wolterton there were some excellent portraits of the cast in this story and they really made their history come to life. **BG**

## **JOURNAL AND NEWSLETTER**

As I started my fifth year as Editor, I realised that I must consider finishing Volume 7. Volume 6 ran to 412 pages (including the index) and others to 400 pages. This edition brings the number of pages to 364 excluding the index. I therefore propose to finish Volume 7 with edition no 14 produced in August 2007. Edition 14 will bring it to 392 pages and an index to about 410. Three sets of editions are bound in blue binding for the Secretary, Editor and Archivist.

If any members wish to bind their own copies and would like an alphabetical index, please let the editor know. I think that the AGM 2007 would be a suitable time for me to finish as editor and hope that another member will come forward to become the editor.

I am pleased to have had several new contributors to this edition and thank them all, old and new and Peter, for their help. **Betty Gee**



# Easter Events in Norwich Museums



*Drop in to events (free with museum admission) anytime between 11am – 1pm & 2pm – 4pm unless otherwise stated.*

## Norwich Castle

*Monday 2 April – Saturday 14 April*

### **Easter Fun**

Make an Easter card and bonnet or take part in a bunny trail.

*Mondays 2 & 9, Wednesdays 4 & 11, Fridays 6 & 13 April*

### **The House of the King**

Join the Norman and Anglo-Saxon residents of the Keep and learn all about the chequered history of this fantastic Royal Palace.

*Tuesdays 3 & 10, Thursdays 5 & 12 April*

### **Rampaging Romans**

Meet the Romans – from a soldier to a housewife. Discover what life was like two thousand years ago and handle real Roman artefacts.

*Saturdays 7 & 14 April*

### **Heroes and Villains**

A day of talks, storytelling and fun focusing on the saints, sinners and unsung heroes of Norwich's colourful past.

*Sunday 8 April*

### **A Brush with Art**

Learn about the Norwich School of Art, its history and influences. Have a go at recreating your own masterpiece and uncover the world of Fine Art.