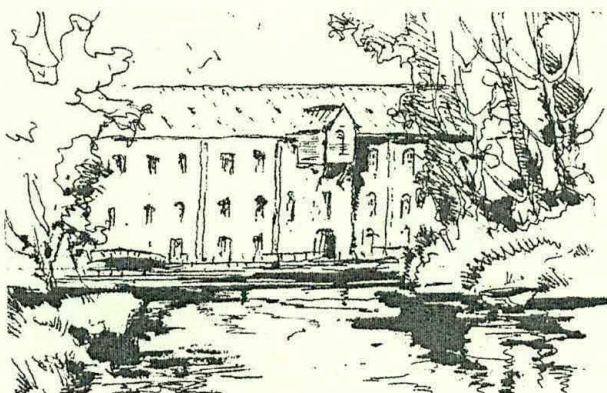


# AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



*Aylsham Mill*

Vol.7 No.2

August 2003

The **JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER** is the publication of the Aylsham Local History Society. It is published three times a year, in April, August and December, and is issued free to members. Contributions are welcomed from members and others. Contact:-

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## CONTENTS

The Annual School Treat by Geoffrey Nobbs .....	31
The Railway Children by Molly Long .....	32
Society News: .....	35
Annual General Meeting .....	36
Subscriptions .....	36
Archaeological Excavation 8-12 Red Lion St by Geoffrey Gale .....	36
Diagram of above .....	37
Expedition to see the Mills on the Aylsham Navigation by Betty Gee	39
Illustration of the Mills and River Bure .....	41
The Aylsham Navigation 1779-1928 by Betty Gee .....	43
Society Reports:	
George Sawyer of Cawston by Christopher Barringer - Peter Holman ..	45
Edith Cavell by Geoffrey Hodson - Felicity Cox .....	47
Visit to Thetford by John Harris .....	49
Photographs of Thetford visit by Tom Mollard .....	50,52
Derivations of Aylsham Road Names, part 2 – Betty Gee .....	53
Notes .....	56

COVER ILLUSTRATION - Aylsham Mill by permission of  
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AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY  
SOCIETY

**JOURNAL &  
NEWSLETTER**

Volume 7

No 2

The Tuesday afternoon course from January to March 2003 given by Adrian Vaughan introduced us to several interesting Norfolk engineers, including William Cubitt of Dilham, William Hase of Saxthorpe, John Youngs of Norwich and Frederick Savage of Hevingham; we were also reminded of, and fascinated by, the story of the building of the Aylsham Navigation. More of that later in this edition. The first report shows what an important place the Navigation had in the life of Aylsham.

Extract from Parish Magazine 1856

**THE ANNUAL SCHOOL TREAT**

**Geoffrey Nobbs**

"The Annual Treat was held on Thursday afternoon, August 6<sup>th</sup>. There had been a little rain in the morning, and fears about the weather were in the minds of most. The children, however, had no doubt, for they mustered in good force - 155 boys and 151 girls and 70 infants. A start was made from the Schools at 1.45. On reaching the Market Place the Procession was headed by the band, and marched through Red Lion and White Hart Streets, Gas House Hill and Millgate, to the Staithe, where three wherries, kindly lent by Messrs Bullock Brothers and Mr Shreeve, took the children, their teachers and a few helpers, down the river and through the lock to a meadow, the use of which, Mr W Case had given with his usual liberality, and where Mrs Case and some more helpers had already begun to prepare a good store of tea and eatables. Mr Stanley Bullock had set up a number of swings, roundabouts, see-saws etc on which the children disported themselves. These amusements, with races,

throwing for sweets, scrambling etc filled up the time until tea was ready, when the children sat down, mostly on some sail cloths spread on the grass and did ample justice to the fare provided.

After tea, the games were resumed, some joined in a dance, and others watched the sending off of balloons till the bugle sounded for their return at 7.30. The wherries were soon filled and moved amidst hearty cheers for Mr and Mrs Case. Coloured fires were burnt, and Roman Candles let off on each wherry. The staithe was safely reached by 8.30, and a crowd of parents and friends were ready to receive the returning children."

The mind boggles at the well intentioned scheme of burning coloured fires and letting off Roman Candles on the wherries, bearing in mind that each craft contained, on average, 125 children, and in addition, the crew, teachers and helpers. Modern safety standards would have been in jeopardy, and it is with relief that we learn that all returned safely. . . . Mr William Case, who provided the meadow, (probably Case's Ham) for the School Treat, lived at Tuttington Hall, and farmed there as well as at Burgh. He subsequently became a JP and no doubt supported Aylsham activities whenever he could. At this time the Bullock Brothers owned the water mill, as well as wherries.

The above extract is taken from "Aylsham River in the last Century" by Geoffrey Nobbs, Journal Volume 3, No 6 June 1992. This edition also contained an interesting article by Ben Rust entitled Aylsham Mills.

ooOoo

The last edition of the Journal reproduced a photograph of staff outside Aylsham South Railway station in 1919. I was interested to hear from Molly Long that one of the staff (the tallest man in the cap) was her uncle, Tom Chenery, a horse shunter. I remembered reading an article by Molly about railway children, and have obtained her permission to reproduce it below.

Editor



I have wonderful childhood memories of the old LNER railway, and indeed was brought up on stories told by the older generation. My grandfather, John Chenery, was a platelayer ganger at Thetford. My grandmother was the gatekeeper at the level crossing at Two Mile Bottom gatehouse. She worked there for 26 years, and in all that time never once had a relief keeper, which would have allowed her to have a day off. The house was rent free, and at one stage she had a wage of 2/6d per week. This was hard earned, as all the traffic to Fison's Fertilizer factory made it a very busy crossing, and on many an occasion granny had to lead nervous horses over the crossing with her apron over their heads to quieten them.

Their eldest son, Tom Chenery, was a horse shunter at Aylsham during the 1914 war, moving to Wymondham in 1923, and finishing there as foreman porter. I was pleased to see on a visit there that the foreman porter's room at Wymondham station has been preserved, as I well remember helping my cousins to take his tea in a frail basket and a blue enamel can.

My father, William Owen West, was a platelayer at Buxton Lammas and Aylsham from 1924 until he transferred to the Goods department in the 1950s. As a child I had a friend whose father was a signalman at Wroxham station. There was many a chat we had together, with her in the Wroxham box and me in the Aylsham box. We knew all the "train on" signals and all the various codes used at that time. When travelling on the trains, all stations seemed to have their own individual sounds, made by the train going over the points on the station approaches. Even in the dark, we knew exactly where we were, especially going over Buxton pile bridge.

Railway cuttings were a special joy; all 'Railway Children' had closely guarded secrets of where wild strawberries could be found, and also early primroses and much treasured white violets. The station at Aylsham had two horses stabled in the yard - one for parcel delivery and one called William used for

shunting. I loved to hear the noise of trucks banging together as they were shunted into a siding.

Oh, the joy of having a penny to spend on a bar of Nestle's chocolate in its red wrapper, bought from the machine on the station platform. You could get a bigger bar for 2d but I was never that wealthy.

In the summer, on Saturday afternoons, my father used to 'walk the length' fire-watching, as trains sometimes set light to the banks and neighbouring fields in dry weather. I used to go with him. The only fire-fighting equipment we ever had was a couple of hessian sacks for beating out the flames. Then there were the foggy days when platelayers were required to put detonators on the track, close to the distant signal to let the train know where he was. Such a night was the first Christmas Eve of the war, as father could not come home until the last train had gone through. Mother and I spent the evening sitting in the platelayer's hut with him at Spratts Green.

The war brought its own particular problems. I remember coming home by train, in the dark, and getting off on to a blacked-out station at Aylsham. As I saw the train pulling away, I realised I had left my handbag on the train. My first thought was that if I ran to the signal box, I could get them to hold the train at Cawston whilst someone retrieved my handbag.. What I had forgotten was that the signal box was under armed guard, this being wartime. I was stopped by the challenge "*Halt, who goes there?*" My brain froze, and I felt such a fool at the thought of having to reply "*friend*" that I said nothing. The challenge came again, this time to the sound of a rifle bolt being cocked. "*It's me*," I cried, as if he could have had the faintest idea who 'me' was. Luckily father could hear my voice and recognised it, and quickly resolved the situation. I never did know who was the more frightened, me, or the young soldier on guard duty. The handbag was rescued and found its way back to Aylsham. It should have been deposited in the Lost Luggage department, where I would have had to pay 2/- to recover it. Fortunately father intercepted it before it got there, which was a good job,

because it only contained nine pence.

Snowy days were a trial. Men worked hard to clear frozen points, only to have the wind blow all the snow back in again. My brother, Tom West, also became a 'steam man' firing trains out of Norwich Thorpe, and sometimes coming along 'our' patch.

Looking back, it was a wonderful childhood, and I enjoy travelling along the old track again, but it now costs a little more than 3½d to go to Wroxham and return!

## **SOCIETY NEWS**

### **ALHS AUTUMN AFTERNOON COURSE**

This year's course entitled "Roman East Anglia" will be given by Mike Hardy. There will be ten weekly sessions, on Tuesdays at 2 pm starting in September at the Friends' Meeting House, Pegg's Yard, Aylsham.

*Further information from Peter Holman, Class Secretary,  
3 Forster Close, Aylsham NR11 6BD 01263 733434*

### **NEXT SEASON'S EVENING PROGRAMME**

The following lecturers have been booked for Thursday evenings at 7.30 pm at the Friendship Hall, Cawston Rd, Aylsham.

- 2 October at 7 pm ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed  
by a talk by Gilbert Burton on "The Impact of the  
Twentieth Century on Norwich"  
30 Oct "Norwich Industries" a Still Life Talk by Peter Salt  
27 Nov "Kett's Rebellion" a talk by Barbara Miller  
22 Jan 2004 Winter Party  
26 Feb "The Great Hospital of Norwich - the first 750  
years" by Keith Leesmith  
25 Mar "Thomas Paine - Is he still relevant today?" by  
Chad Goodwin  
22 Apr "Aldborough - the story of a village" by Keith  
Entwhistle



## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

With this Journal you will receive an early notice of the Society's Annual General Meeting on Thursday, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2003. All the Officers are willing to stand again. Last October we were pleased to welcome two new elected Members to our Committee, Felicity Cox and Thelma Lloyd; and Gillian Fletcher became Membership Secretary and Diana Polhill Minuting Secretary. This year two Committee members, Rosemarie Powell and Ursula Warren, retire, but are eligible and willing to be re-elected. Nominations should, as usual, be sent to the Secretary. There is one important change detailed below.

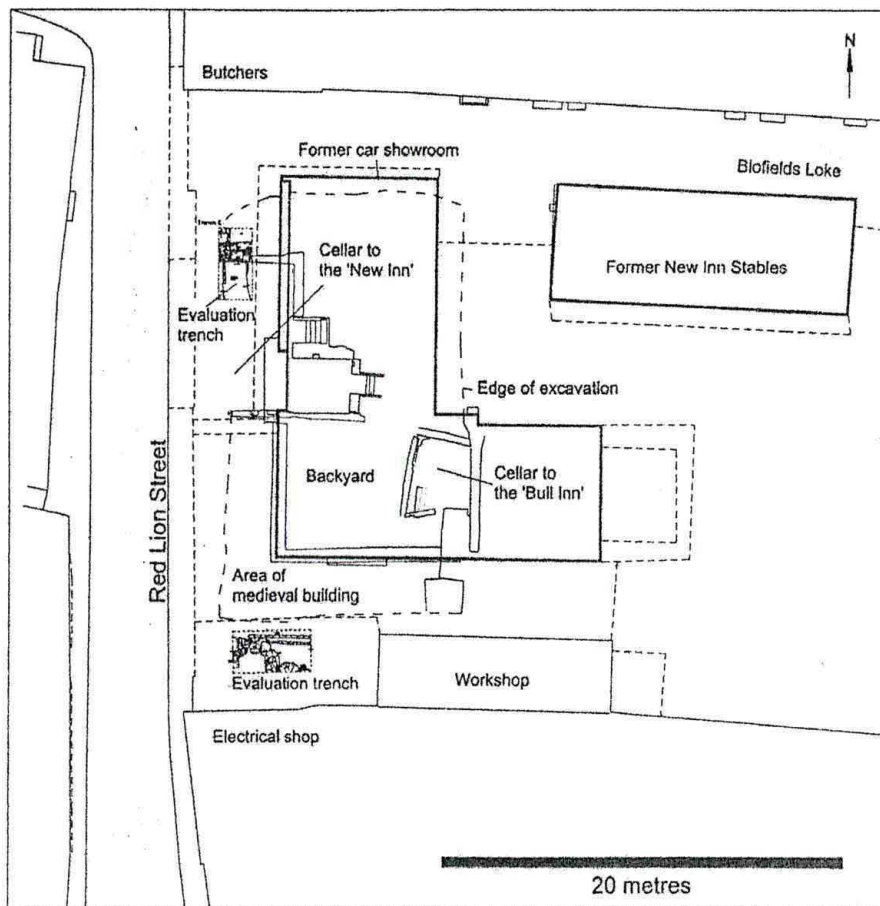
**SUBSCRIPTIONS** become due at the AGM on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2003. The Committee have reluctantly decided that they should be increased to £8 per person and £13 per couple. Subscriptions were last increased in 1996. Please, if possible, use the attached slip to pay your subscriptions before the AGM in order to assist the Treasurer and Membership Secretary. Programme cards and receipts will then be available for collection at the AGM.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION      Geoffrey Gale 8-12 RED LION STREET AYLSHAM**

This area in Red Lion Street colloquially known as the 'Coopers Garage Site' has recently been investigated by the Norfolk Archaeological Unit for the developer, Anglia Secure Homes Ltd. The investigation was expected to take around four weeks. Consequently time was very limited and the archaeologists even appealed to the public to be left undisturbed so they could finish in time. Once this has been completed, it will be turned into a small complex of cottages, flats and three shops. Then all memory of the undistinguished 1960s car showroom that was on the site will have finally vanished from the town, apart from just a few photographs in the Town's archives. Although there has been some inevitable delay in the development, which was partly due to the archaeological dig, some clearance of the site



has started and I understand that the construction of the buildings will soon be under way.



Survey of the site, showing the position of the cellars and the outline of the former car showroom.

Little is known of the prehistory of Aylsham. A brick barrelled vault beneath 18 Market Place possibly 14<sup>th</sup> century, the discovery of a skull in a trench behind 36 Red Lion Street and some bronze age metalwork in the Sir William's Lane development seem to have been the cream of the discoveries. There are well known references to derivations of the town's name, and a study of the market place (in the book 'Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century') speculates about the market's original site. The two buildings that are most referred to in connection with the site are the 'New Inn' which had earlier been known as the 'King's Head'. It dates back to 1689, although there is a belief it may have been earlier. The other was the smaller 'Bull Inn' which also dates from the 1600s and curiously existed beside the 'New Inn', and continued in this close relationship until it closed in 1907. The larger 'New Inn' finally closed in 1953 and both inns were demolished in 1955, only to be replaced with the uniquely awful car showroom.

The opportunity and reasons to investigate a site which is so central to the town were clearly set out in the first report by the Archaeological Unit in June 2002. The Unit originally proposed to dig five trenches at various points across the site, but later they were increased by another two. In the report by Andy Shelley, the senior project manager, each of the trenches are identified, details of the digging described and the results discussed and then summarised.

The final conclusion in the final report divides the various finds into five different periods - Prehistoric, Roman, Medieval, Post-medieval and Modern. There seems to have been little evidence of prehistoric activity at the site, although there may have been an Iron Age ditch running beside Red Lion Street near the front of the site. Later periods seem to have been represented by pottery sherds, pots, fragments of pottery, bricks, roof tiles, evidence of metal working and pieces of those seemingly inevitable clay tobacco pipes.

Perhaps the most interesting areas are those of the late Post-medieval period which has been linked in the report to the Modern period. In this section it discusses the remains of the 'New Inn' and the 'Bull Inn' and there is a separate drawing which indicates where the cellars of the New Inn and the Bull Inn were located. Most of these finds are of course below ground level and now only show the cellars' steps and the positions of the walls of the inns. When the inns were demolished, the cellars were filled with the rubble from the buildings and the walls taken down to the ground level. However, all of these remains help to confirm the interior drawing in the book "Aylsham Inns and Public Houses" (1).

The two reports by the Archaeological Unit are now both housed in the Town's Archives where they can be read during the Archives' opening hours. It is interesting that the reports also cite two of the Society's publications in the large informative bibliography and that the work of Society Members are both useful and recognised.

*Reference 1: "Aylsham Inns and Public Houses - a History" by Elizabeth Gale published in 2001.*

## **EXPEDITION TO SEE THE MILLS ON THE AYLSHAM NAVIGATION OF THE RIVER BURE**

Our Chairman organized a small bus for course members and others interested and we set off from Aylsham Market Place on a sunny March afternoon. We first arrived at Horstead Mill and Coltishall Lock, by taking the small road opposite the Horstead pub, the Recruiting Sergeant. There are now only ruined walls left of the Horstead Mill, built in 1789 and burnt down in 1963. It had been modernised in 1960 and produced cattle food until the end. There is one small modern brick building next to the river called the Horstead River Gauging Station, operated by Anglia Water. It is still a picturesque site, helped by the Horstead Mill and Coltishall Lock Enhancement Restoration Project and lottery money. We walked across the river by a footbridge and looked at the old lock and the new paths and seats; we were not the only ones enjoying the river views.

There was a good flow of water through the mill to the pool, helped by the existence of various springs. The river is open for canoeing, but no launches come from down river due to the growth of weeds.

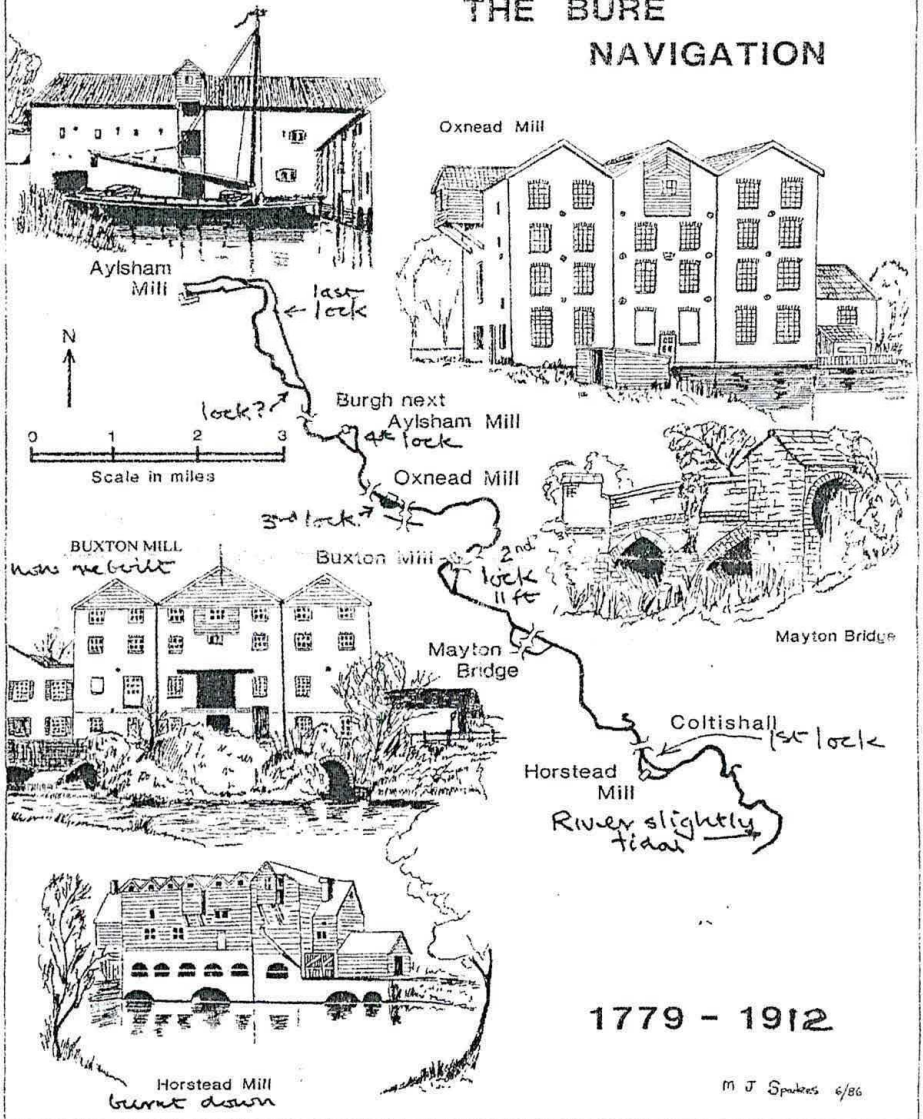
We then went via Hautbois, where there is a peaceful stretch of river, to look at Mayton Bridge. We alighted from the bus at the crossroads and walked across the mediaeval low bridge over the river. Some 50 yards further on we found the 16<sup>th</sup> century Mayton Bridge, a bridge with two arches and two culverts, which was originally over the Old River. A cut was dug to straighten the river at this point and the Old River filled in, so the old bridge is now just over grass and bushes. When the Navigation was first constructed in 1774, bridges were built to provide enough height for wherries, which had a shallow draught of 3 ½ ft, to pass underneath with their large sails lowered. Wherries were quanted (ie propelled with a special punting-pole) or used wind-power. There was no continuous towing path.

We then proceeded in our little bus to the more familiar Buxton, where the rebuilt Buxton Mill has been at various times a hotel, restaurant, inn and shop over the last thirty years. There was a vital lock here because the difference in water level was 11 ft. There had been water-mills along the River Bure before the Navigation was considered and each had a weir across the river, which was used to build a lock. These early locks (except the brick one at Burgh) were built of wood which later required replacement. Cuts were made to avoid sharp bends. A German engineer, Henry Biedermann had prepared the plan for the Navigation in 1773 and by 1774 had staked it out and contracted Mr James Frost of Norwich to complete the project for £4,200. By February 1776 the project was only half-completed and had cost more than £4,500. Work recommenced under John Smith in March 1778, once another £3,000 had been borrowed.

The final figure for the cost of the Navigation, including legal fees, was less than £8,000 - a very reasonable amount for a transport route which served many industries for 133 years.



# THE BURE NAVIGATION



Local labour was used for the construction of the bridges and canals, and it has been calculated that the Navigation in operation directly employed about 24 people, as well as many day labourers. Essential staff were a Clerk, a Superintendent of Works, toll collectors, men issuing tickets and measuring and weighing cargoes and dydlers (or didlers) who worked from a boat to keep the river and canals clear of weeds. Many millers and maltsters became wherry owners, but there were also free lance wherry operators willing to hire out their wherries and undertake smaller carrying tasks.

From Buxton Mill, we drove in late winter sunshine past Oxnead Mill, a pleasing sight; this is now a private residence. We continued to Burgh and took the turning to the Church. One can get a glimpse of Burgh Mill from the Swanton Abbot/Burgh road. After alighting, we walked through the churchyard to the river and walked over the footbridge known as Cradle Bridge. This had been built over the new canal. Peter pointed out the bed of the Mermaid stream which had been re-routed downstream of the Mill. Another cut and lock had been dug to avoid a big loop in the river. Much work was done by the Navigation to accommodate the needs of the millers and landowners. There is a pleasant walk along the riverbank, from which one has a better view of Burgh Mill.

We then drove to Mill Row, Aylsham. The view of Aylsham Mill from the Great Bridge in Millgate is much admired, although a closer inspection revealed it to be rather neglected. Less well-known is the view of the Mill Pool at the back which shows the feeder canal which enabled wherries to unload at the Corn Mill. There was a good flow of water through the Mill. The Mill has in recent times been used as holiday apartments, and there is no access for walkers beyond the Mill. We did not have time to walk along Dunkirk to see the 1 ¼ mile canal where boatbuilders, bone millers, maltsters, wherry owners, coal and timber merchants and others did very good business in the 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This canal joins the River Bure beyond the bypass.

We were very grateful to Peter Holman for organizing this enjoyable expedition which made one of us attempt to find out more about the rise and fall of Aylsham Navigation! **Betty Gee**  
An illustration of the Mills on the Navigation is appended on page 41, by courtesy of Peter Holman.

*Sources:*

*"Millgate, Aylsham" published by ALHS chapters 3 and 5.*

*Desmond Best's 1976 Keswick Hall THESIS on the Aylsham Navigation is in Norwich Local Studies Library, but part of it is reproduced, edited by Peter Brown, in NIAS Journal, Volume 7 No 1 of 2001. A copy of this Journal is in Aylsham Archives and it makes fascinating reading.*

## **THE AYLSHAM NAVIGATION 1779-1928 by Betty Gee**

**THE BEGINNING:** After early efforts to invoke an Act of Parliament to make the River Bure (commonly called the North River) navigable from Coltishall to Aylsham had failed, a group of landowners came together in 1771/2 to further this project.

The driving force was Mr Robert Marsham of Stratton Strawless Hall. Others included Mr Thomas Durrant, Mr Robert Parmeter, Sir Harbord Harbord of Gunton Hall, Mr W W Bulwer and Edward Wiggim of Horstead Hall. Their petition to Parliament was granted in 1773 and these gentlemen and several others became Commissioners of the Aylsham Navigation. Lord Walpole, James Curtiss, Humphrey Repton and his brother John and brother-in-law John Adey were among them, as was John Smith, a builder, who later became contractor to the Navigation.

They were allowed to raise the sum of £5,000, but this was not reached initially in spite of the high level of interest (5%) offered to subscribers. Mr Biedermann, the German engineer, proceeded with his plan and operations started on Horstead Lock in June 1774, delayed by negotiations with landowners over the price of their land. The Commissioners had to borrow more money in 1776 and, after further setbacks and changes of contractors, the work was reported completed in October 1779, despite the Canal Basin at Aylsham still being under construction.



In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the heyday of the Navigation, income from tolls approached £1,000 a year. It proved a great asset to millers. It is estimated that sixteen wherries were then based on the Navigation, in addition to those sailing to Aylsham from other bases. There was a great variety of commodities brought to Aylsham by wherry; much was transhipped from sea-going vessels at Yarmouth. Many corn merchants also dealt in coal ensuring a full hold for wherries. The Aylsham Gas Works was built in 1849, benefiting from the coal. The population of Aylsham rose from 1,853 in 1821 to 2,741 in 1851 but had declined to 2,674 in 1881.

#### THE DECLINE OF THE NAVIGATION:

The Commissioners of the Navigation were conscious of the need to keep the waterway in first-class condition and new cuts were dug in 1851 and repairs made to lock gates. By the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were concerns about the level of water; wherries went on the North River half-laden (reducing the toll income). Wherryman were blamed for not shutting the lock gates. In 1895 a steam dredger was bought, but sank; only part of the £300 cost was recouped. There were many complaints about the condition of the towpaths, staithes and roadways, which had heavy horse-drawn traffic. A key figure at this period was Commissioner Peter Forster, a leading Aylsham citizen who had a great belief in the value of the Navigation to Aylsham. Wherry and mill owners resisted the call for higher tolls but finally in 1908 a system of annual tolls for wherry owners was agreed. The completion of the two railways serving Aylsham in 1880 (Aylsham South) and 1883 (Aylsham Town) undercut the Navigation charges, although the millers continued to use the waterway for many years. Pleasure yachts started to be used on the waterway.

The continuing problem with the Navigation was the lack of a reserve fund to deal with events such as severe weather or bad harvests. The total capital was almost all used up in the purchase of land, construction of cuts, legal fees etc. The number of employees was reduced leading to a less efficient



operation in all respects. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the Commissioners struggled on and asked the Board of Trade for assistance, to no avail.

THE FLOOD of 26 August 1912, after 6 ½ inches of rain in twelve hours, severely damaged bridges, locks, river banks, and warehouses, and has been well-documented. Although the Navigation could have been restored to first class condition for an estimated sum of £4,000, the Commissioners were unable to get assistance from the County Council, Great Yarmouth Port & Haven Commissioners, or the Government's Development Commission and, after seeking legal advice, reluctantly decided to abandon the Navigation. The Act had made the Commissioners responsible for maintaining the four bridges over the canal over which there were public rights of way ie Burgh, Oxnead, Buxton and Mayton, as well as canal banks, drainage channels, injury to persons and damage to property caused by the Navigation, the cost being charged against tolls received. There were some assets, eg warehouses, granaries, land on staithes and a lock cottage, but these properties were not really saleable being adjacent to the canal and almost worthless once it was closed. After much negotiation, a Warrant of Abandonment was sought in 1927 from the Board of Trade and obtained in 1928. The Aylsham Commissioners had to agree to sell the lock cottage and other property and hand the proceeds to the Norfolk County Council to transform Coltishall lock into a permanent barrier.

The final certificate was signed by Major H S Marsham, Chairman of the Aylsham Navigation Company, on 21 Sept 1928. His direct ancestor, Robert, had been present at the conception of the Navigation, 155 years earlier. The Commissioners served Aylsham very well for 133 years.

## **SOCIETY REPORTS**

**George Sawyer of Cawston, a Tudor Surveyor, Churchwarden and many other things** – On the evening of Thursday, 27 March about seventy members and visitors met at

the Friendship Club to hear Christopher Barringer talk about George Sawyer of Cawston.

Chris Barringer has a long connection with our Society which sprang from one of his early WEA classes in the town. Chris is also well known for his love of maps, and the first part of his talk was illustrated by slides of a remarkable series of early maps – many surveyed by George Sawyer in remarkable detail. Cawston is, like Aylsham, a large parish – a good indication of poor soil – with a large amount of forest for swine at the time of Domesday and much of this still existed along with commons and warrens on the poorest soil in Tudor times. The maps were probably surveyed because of encroachment by the villagers into the manorial lands.

Cawston was, like Aylsham, a Royal holding and of much the same size until it began to decline after the 1550s perhaps with the falling off of the textile trade. At its height Cawston had several communal open fields. There was a water mill on the little stream by the bad corner on the road to Reepham, and a windmill, but the parish was bounded by several large estates. Several outlying hamlets (eg Eastgate) seemed to act as overflow from the village centre and straggled along the outer roads, but the main Norwich to Holt road missed the village as it went across the heathland and warrens to the east.

George Sawyer's dates are uncertain but he lived in the large house with its corner on to the road by the village centre. He was an intelligent and literate man who played a full part in his village at a time when relief of the poor was necessary. He was in charge of the poor box. How he became a trained surveyor is not known but it was at a time when the profession was emerging. Certainly his maps are amazingly detailed and accurate. He was a literate man who rose to higher yeoman status with considerable amounts of land leased from the Hobarts and stock to match the acreage.

His son Edmund (born in 1671), who died at the age of 51 years, became a lawyer and rose up the legal scale to become a high

figure in the land, amongst a surprising number of similar men from Norfolk. The letters from him to his father have survived and throw an interesting light on his wedding. He writes to his father to say that he intends to bring his bride back to the family home in Cawston. Has his father improved the house up to the right standard? The fourposter bed can be cut down if it is too tall, but have the ceilings been done? The goods will come by sea and will include seven parcels. He and his bride will arrive at Bartholomew's tide.

At the end of his life George Sawyer left Cawston and went to live with his son. He must have been a loss to Cawston. This was a fascinating talk by Chris Barringer, and it is good that he still has links with the Society which is still going well after almost 20 years.

**Peter Holman**

**“Patriotism is not enough” – an account of the trial and execution of Edith Cavell, June 1915** – a Talk given by Geoffrey Hodson on 24 April 2003. Edith Cavell was executed by a firing squad of the German army on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1915. She was 49.

Geoffrey Hodson began his talk with a verbatim account of questions and answers from Edith Cavell's “show” court martial. This gave a very dramatic and authentic start to what was an informative and thought-provoking talk on the life of Edith Cavell, Norfolk's heroine. At the time of her imprisonment, she was the Matron of a medical institute in Brussels where, during her show trial with over 33 other prisoners, she was accused of helping English, French and Belgian soldiers to escape. Over nine months she helped over one thousand allied soldiers and others across the Dutch frontier. To some she gave her own money.

Edith Cavell was born in December 1865 to the Rev and Mrs Frederick Cavell at Swardston. She had a gift for water colour painting. Some of her work may be seen in Swardston Church. She also had an aptitude for French. Aged 21 she became a governess, working in Austria and Bavaria. She was called



home to nurse her sick father and so discovered her nursing vocation. Edith Cavell trained and nursed at the London Hospital, Whitechapel, and left aged 37 as a Staff Nurse. She then worked in poor law institutes until in 1907, aged 41, she returned to Brussels. After working for a notable Belgian family, she was appointed matron of a teaching hospital with probationers of different nationalities. She gained a reputation for discipline, punctuality and the success of her graduate nurses working all over Belgium.

While on holiday in her cottage in West Runton in July 1914, she was requested to return to Brussels due to the serious situation. After the German occupation of Belgium and the Battle of Mons, many British wounded soldiers came to her hospital, among them many from Norfolk. At this time a new military Governor was appointed – a Prussian officer who established a reign of terror. German secret police were keeping observation. They became suspicious of her Clinique, and in August 1915 she was arrested and interrogated. At all times during her interrogations and at her Court Martial, Edith Cavell spoke only the truth as she saw it, which was that yes, she had helped in the escapes. She never saw herself as a heroine or martyr but “as a Nurse who tried to do her duty”. When the death penalty was passed on her, with a denial by the military Governor for any plea for clemency, she was found to be calm. Death was not strange or fearful for her.

She wrote to her nurses that she was sad to say goodbye. She encouraged them to continue with their studies, with exams coming up, and wrote that if any had a grievance against her, to forgive her. She knew she could be severe. She said she loved them all. Despite the efforts of US and Spanish ministers to secure a reprieve, she was shot on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1915. Her words, spoken to the chaplain just before she faced the firing squad, later became famous: “Standing, as I do, in the view of God and eternity, I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone.”



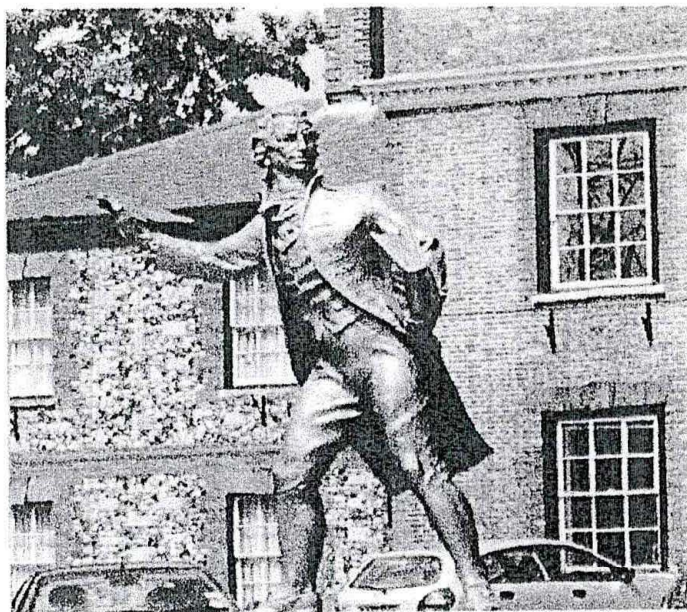
When Edith Cavell's body was exhumed after the War, she was found to be in an amazing state of preservation. She had four bullet wounds, three to her heart, and a wound to her forehead. In 1919 Edith Cavell was posthumously honoured by a State Funeral. Her body was brought back to England in a destroyer, carried through London on a gun carriage drawn by 6 horses through silent spectators and then taken to Norwich. Her bearers in Norwich were her escapees; her escort from Norwich Station to the Cathedral, the Norfolk Regiment. The nurses marched, carrying little bunches of lilies of the valley tied with red, white and blue ribbon. Edith Cavell became not only a Norfolk heroine for her courage and sense of duty, she also became a national and international heroine. She was decorated by the French with the Legion d'honneur.

Geoffrey Hodson has collated his extensive research on the life and court martial of Edith Cavell into a Drama which was produced some four years ago. Tom Mollard, in thanking Geoffrey for his most inspiring presentation, referred to the section in the Norwich Cathedral Library devoted to Edith Cavell. Many visitors to the Cathedral asked to see her grave, which is outside the Cathedral.

**Felicity Cox**

**Visit to Thetford on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2003.** John Timpson has, rather unkindly designated Thetford as "East Anglia's answer to Hemel Hempstead", whereas another John, John Seymour, in his Companion Guide to East Anglia calls Thetford "a most fascinating small town". I rather think the 34 members and friends of the Society who came on the visit on Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> May, would be inclined to agree with the latter sentiment after a memorable day exploring old Thetford

Thetford has a long and turbulent history, reaching back to the times of the Iceni and surviving several Viking invasions and disastrous fires along the way. The town developed rapidly in the 10<sup>th</sup> century but by about 1100 was in serious decline. It was interesting to note that it was not until after the second World War that once again major development took place. However, not until the mid 60s did the population reach that of 1066 when Thetford was the 6<sup>th</sup> largest town in England.



Tom Paine -born in Thetford



Statue of Prince Duleep Singh

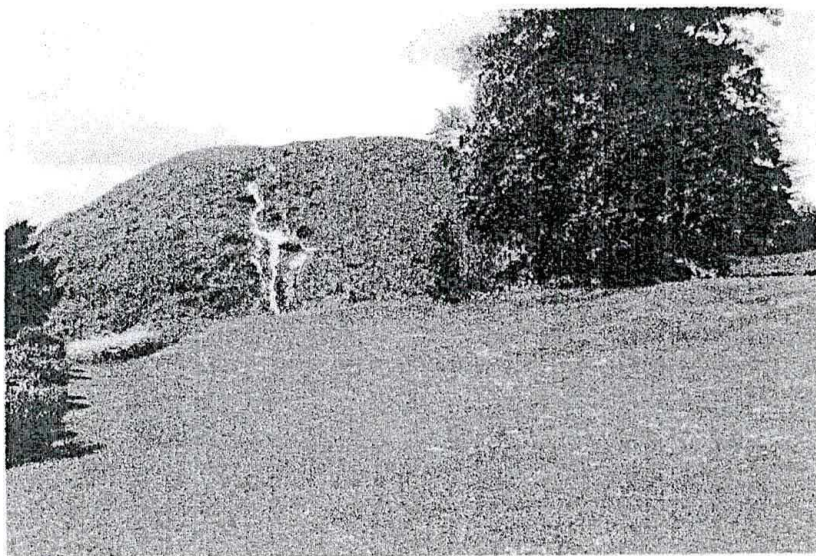
Many famous people have been associated with the town. Notably, Thomas Paine, who was born in White Hart Street in 1737; Joseph Burrell of steam traction fame (unfortunately, the Burrell Museum was closed on the day of our visit); and James Fison who developed into the major fertiliser manufacturer we all know. In the centre of town there is a recently erected statue to the Maharajah Duleep Singh, whose son Prince Frederick founded the Ancient House Museum (an absolute must for any visitor).

Our coach arrived a little earlier than scheduled, which allowed us to take coffee before meeting our Town Guides for the Town Tour Jean had kindly booked. We were divided into two roughly equal groups and set off from the Bell Inn for a one-hour walk round the ancient town centre. In fact, the walk took more than one and a half hours to complete and proved invaluable to our understanding of the buildings we were shown and their relationship to the history and growth of the town. For part of the time our Guides had to battle against almost constant traffic noise, but did their best to enliven the proceedings with anecdotes about characters who had walked these streets in days gone by! Some amusing facts also emerged; for example, that the town could at one time boast of 21 religious houses and 31 pubs for a population of 6,300 people.

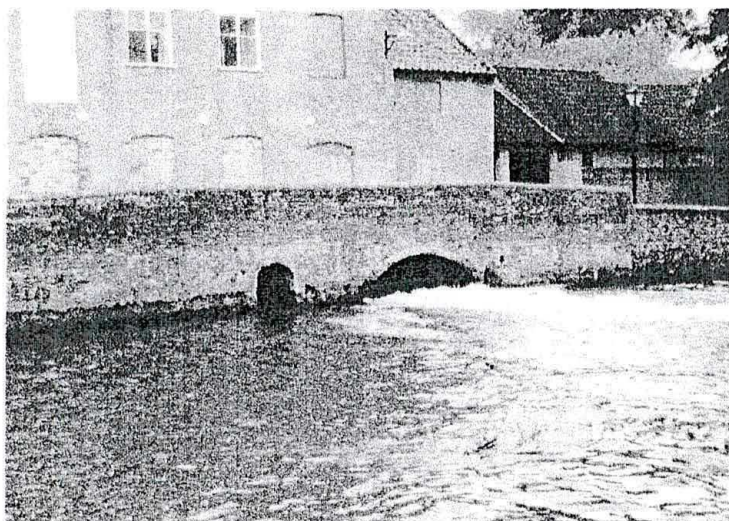
We were pleased to note the high quality of much of the restoration that important buildings had undergone, along with changes in use, as well as sympathetic new buildings in these central areas. Only the 60s shopping developments, which now serve a population of some 22,000, seemed to strike a discordant note.

As Thetford has grown up around the meeting point of two rivers, the Little Ouse and the Thet, there are pleasant riverside walks which are accessible to all and looked most inviting on a fine and sunny morning in May. Not to be missed is a walk round the Castle Mound standing over eighty feet high; partly Iron Age and partly Norman, it is said to be the tallest medieval





Castle Mound



The old watermill - now the Masonic Lodge

*Photographs by Tom Mollard*



earthworks in Britain. The Thetford Corporation bought this site for £25 in 1921. Behind the King's House where the Town Council now meets lies the King's Garden, which I found to be a most delightful place of tranquillity and peace, the ideal spot to eat a picnic or rest after a town tour. To bring us back to the present era, our Guide directed our attention to several areas and buildings associated with the TV series "Dad's Army" which was usually shot in and around the town. Having made our own arrangements for lunch, we were free to follow our own interests for the remaining time, such as visiting the Ancient House Museum or the remains of the Cluniac Priory or simply to stroll by the river and feed the water fowl.

We left Thetford feeling our day had been well spent, having discovered something of the rich history that lay just beneath the surface of one of the oldest settlements in the County. Our sincere thanks are due to Jean McChesney for organising such an excellent day. For one person a drive down the A11 will never be quite the same again.

**John Harris**

**VISITS** As this edition goes to the printer, we are eagerly anticipating a Society visit to the archaeological 'dig' at Sedgeford, North Norfolk, on 23<sup>th</sup> July, organised by Jean McChesney. It is also hoped to arrange a visit in September.

## **DERIVATIONS OF AYLSHAM ROAD NAMES**

### **Part 2 Corrections and Additions**

**Betty Gee**

On page 17 of the last edition I gave a list of derivations of Aylsham road names. I intended to leave out roads where the derivation was obvious, eg Norwich Road and Old Banningham Road, and also those which are now merely tracks. However, one or two have been suggested by members as being worthy of mention, even though they were not on the maps I originally used. One map (undated) was called an "Official Map" of Aylsham & Wroxham produced by Codair Design Ltd for

Broadland District Council; I think this is the one on Aylsham Library door. I also consulted the one in the Aylsham & District Guide 2002/3, which does not have a street index. Since going into print with the list, another map has appeared in 2003 in the library (costing 50p) entitled Street Map of GT YARMOUTH /AYLSHAM GORLESTON-ON-SEA, CAISTER-ON-SEA, WROXHAM, MUNDESLEY, NORTH WALSHAM & STALHAM; these maps are also by Codair Design & Publicity Ltd but the cover gives NORFOLK Constabulary and Norfolk County Council [www.library.norfolk.gov.uk](http://www.library.norfolk.gov.uk) as responsible for the publication. Although the map is small, more streets, lanes, yards and buildings are included; apostrophes are included, too.

### Corrections

BURE VALLEY LANE: this Lane went from Buxton Road to the River Bure according to Wright's Map of 1839; due to the Aylsham By-pass bisecting the lane in 1981, it is now in two parts, the second part being from the By-pass beyond the railway tunnel to Burgh Road. From Burgh Road there is a track leading to the Bure.

HOLMAN ROAD: until 1953 it was called Pound Road after the animal pound (1) on the corner of the present Sandy Lane and Holman Road. On Wright's map it was called Green Lane. Dr Alec Holman was a doctor who was a magistrate and Chairman of the Parish Council until retirement to Devon in 1952.

MALTINGS, THE: off Millgate (the word 'street' not now being used). Some houses have been converted from a malting barn built by Robert Parmeter in 1771; other houses were built at the time of the barn conversion.

MILLGATE: on older maps the word Street was added, which is unnecessary since Millgate means 'road to the mill'

POUND LANE: leading to the pound (1). On Wright's map it is called Sandy Lane.

RED LION STREET: the name comes from the former Red Lion Inn on the west side of the street, now a pet food shop. It dated from 1700 until 1972. At first an inn, by the late 1800s it was known as an hotel. In Red Lion Yard

there were stables and sheds and also a separate function room for clubs.

ST MICHAEL'S CLOSE: built on glebeland ie land belonging to St Michael's Church, off Rawlinson's Lane.

### Additions

BRINDY LANE: This lane now slopes down from the Roundabout to Coltishall Road ( Buxton Road ) and is rather overgrown. It is suggested that it formed part of an ancient east-west cross country route (2). Perhaps a member can give an explanation for the name 'Brindy'.

MASH'S ROW: beyond the two bridges in Millgate, the Row was built by William Mash in 1845 (firstly the cottages) and in 1848 (the houses). They are Grade II listed buildings.

ORCHARD LANE: part of this lane is on the western side of the Roundabout. The remainder of it was obliterated by the building of the Bypass in 1981 but the name is also shown on the 2003 map at the beginning of Bure Valley Lane.

SHEPHEARDS CLOSE: off Dunkirk. Philip C Shepherd was a surgeon, magistrate and farmer and bought Abbot's Hall in 1881. His two sisters, Charlotte and Elizabeth, lived in Abbot's House, White Hart Street, and were responsible for the building of the small Roman Catholic chapel there.

STONEGATE: a lane now off Henry Page Road (previously Cawston Road) which joins Spa Lane. A lake adjoins it. In 1821 there were 5 houses there. There is a farm now of the same name. Perhaps there was a quarry there.

### References

1 Dr Sapwell in his "History of Aylsham" states that there was a small walled-in enclosure standing in the angle between Sandy Lane and Holman Road. In 1846 two men were appointed Parish Pinders and allowed a fee of sixpence for every animal impounded by them. Owners could claim them on payment of a fine. In 1882 the need for a pound appeared to have ceased and it was given to the owner of the adjoining land.

2 Peter Holman in his article in the Journal Vol 5 page 214.



## NOTES

An enquiry has been received for information about the following family: WILLIAM HANNANT SALMON and SOPHIA SALMON said to be a blacksmith at Blickling in 1861; and BEN COBB and his wife LILY NEE SALMON, thought to be the landlord of the Buckinghamshire Arms at Blickling, probably around 1900. Tom Mollard tells me that a John Salmon is listed as blacksmith at Blickling in White's 1864 directory; Eli Cobb is listed in the 1916 Kelly's Directory as landlord. The web-site reference for the Buckinghamshire Arms lists Eli Cobb (& Elizabeth Cobb 1905) as licensees from 1904 - 1916. Should any readers have information about the Salmons and Cobbs, Mr Claude Webb, 1 Elborough Gdns, Elborough, nr HUTTON, WESTON-SUPER-MARE, NSom, BS24 8PL, would be very grateful to receive it. His phone number is 01934 820938.

NAIOMI The National Index of Memorial Inscriptions, in partnership with the Norfolk Family History Society, is anxious to preserve memorial inscriptions and to widen access to that information by putting it on a database at De Montfort University Bedford (Tel 01234 793321). The Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting this project. Aylsham Parish records have already been recorded, but there are parishes in our area which await surveying. Should any readers wish to assist NAIOMI in this project, I have a pamphlet which gives further information or you may wish to telephone NAIOMI yourself. Editor

CROMER MUSEUM has arranged 2 interesting Geological Walks in August for which advance booking (FEE £3) at the Museum is essential. It is next to Cromer Church (tel 01263 513543) email: [cromer.museum.@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:cromer.museum.@norfolk.gov.uk)

FRIDAY 15 August West Runton Geological Walk with Martin Warren 1.30-4 pm. Meet 1.15, Geology Stand W Runton Beach.  
FRIDAY 29 August Trimingham & Sidestrand Geological Walk 1.30-4pm. Meet 1.15 in layby immed. West of Trimingham, grid ref TG 274388. Involves steep climb. Free parking.