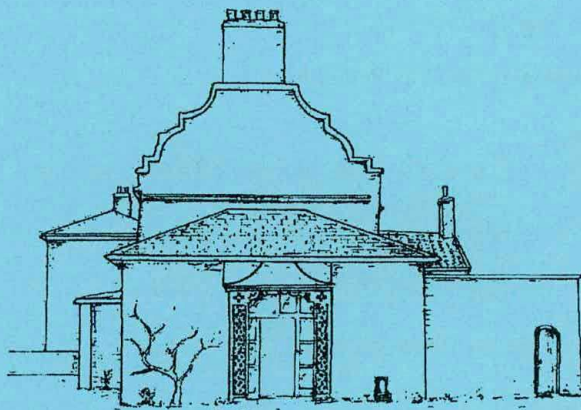


# AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



Parmeters

Volume 7 No. 7

April 2005

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: EDITOR: Mrs Betty Gee, Oakfield End, Oakfield Rd, AYLSHAM NR11 6AL Phone 01263 734834 E-mail [bettygee@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:bettygee@tiscali.co.uk)

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COVER ILLUSTRATION is a sketch by Roger Polhill of "Parmeters". See Page 172 for his article.



## AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

### JOURNAL & NEWSLETTER

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Once again the February Meeting had to be cancelled due to the severe weather warning. It has been decided that the programme planned for this evening will be rescheduled for Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> MAY at 7.30 pm in the Friendship Hall. The talks will be "The Rev Benjamin John Armstrong, Vicar of E Dereham 1850-1888" by Peter Pink; "The Building of St Michael's Church, Aylsham" by Daphne Davy; and "The 1844 Wooden Herb Labee Press" by Geoff Gale. Mr & Mrs Bunting of The Old Tea Rooms (Greens) will display items found during recent renovations. It is hoped that members and friends will support this extra meeting.

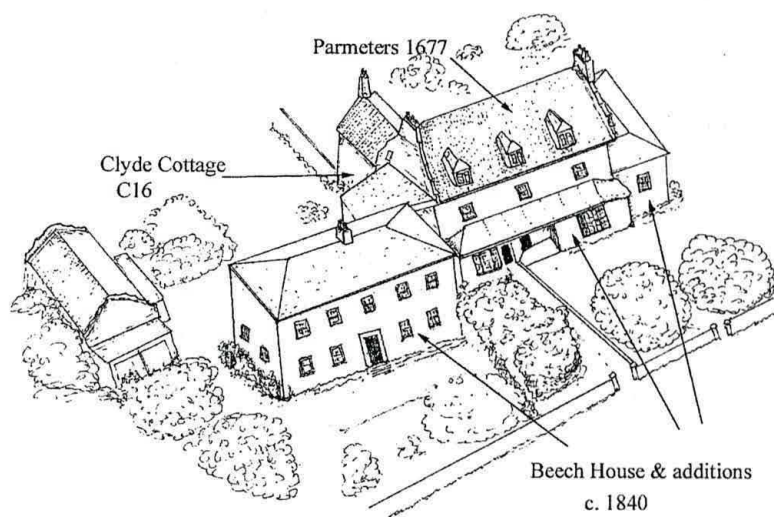
**Severe Weather Procedure** The recent cancellation of the February Meeting highlighted the difficulty of how best to contact members when a decision has to be made at short notice. After some discussion the Committee has decided that the best course of action is as follows:-

1. All Committee Members will be contacted before 10.0 am.
2. Members should ring a member of the Committee to determine if the Meeting is/is not to go ahead as planned. Names and telephone numbers are on the back of the membership card.
3. Radio Norfolk will be contacted with a request to broadcast a cancellation notice.
4. If any member wishes to be contacted by e-mail we will attempt to do this. Please ensure that the Membership Secretary has your correct details.

### **Winter Party**

Members who attended the March meeting were given a short questionnaire to complete. If you were not at that meeting, attended the Party in 2004 or 2005, and would like your views to be taken into consideration, please contact Angela King (01263 768655) for a copy of the form.



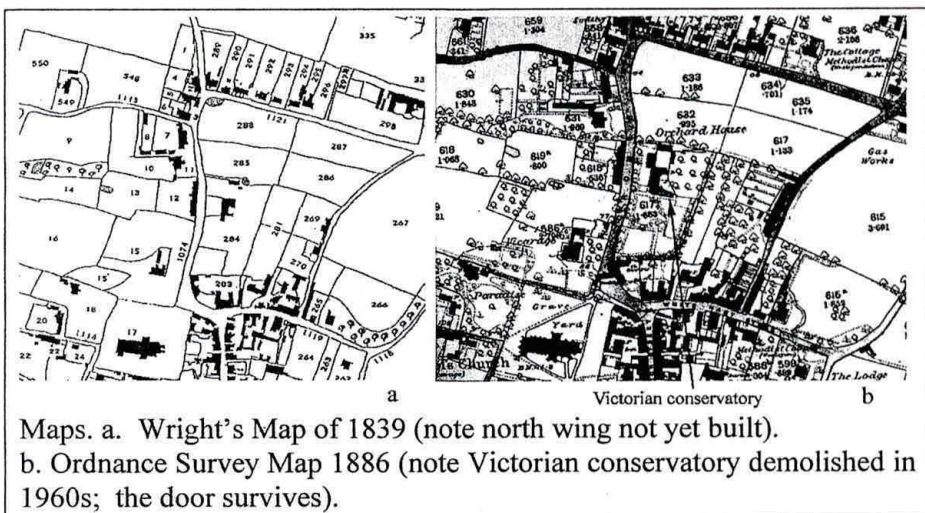


“Parmeters”, Cromer Road, Aylsham, is named for Robert William Parmeter (1794–1880), solicitor and J.P., and his wife Sofia (1797–1881). He took up the copyhold in 1823, when he was 29, and they lived there for the rest of their lives. He was responsible for the Georgian façade and the north wing used as an office. Before that the house had been in the possession of the Barker family (including the female line) since the sixteenth century. Researches by the Society mention some details of the family. The earliest, in ‘Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century’<sup>1</sup> says that John Barker took up a messuage with appurtenances called Bans, comprising 2 acres, lying in Churchgate street, on 1 August 1598. The house, set east-west, is now the wing of Clyde Cottage. He also had 13 acres of meadowland and pasture in Woodgate. He and others had purchased land from the Blickling Estate in the early seventeenth century and it was these incursions that Sir Henry Hobart was keen to retrieve when he bought the estate in 1616.<sup>2</sup> Blomefield (1807)<sup>3</sup> mentions Barker as a family of note in Aylsham, with a grant for a coat of arms. John Barker was a churchwarden in 1608<sup>4</sup> and the family was also involved with other notables in supporting the almshouses.<sup>1,5</sup> His son John took up the lease from his father in 1638<sup>6, 7</sup> but died soon after, the property passing to his son Joseph in 1643, then to Joseph’s brother Thomas (churchwarden in 1665<sup>4</sup>) in 1646 and then to his son Edward in 1673.

# Summary of occupancy

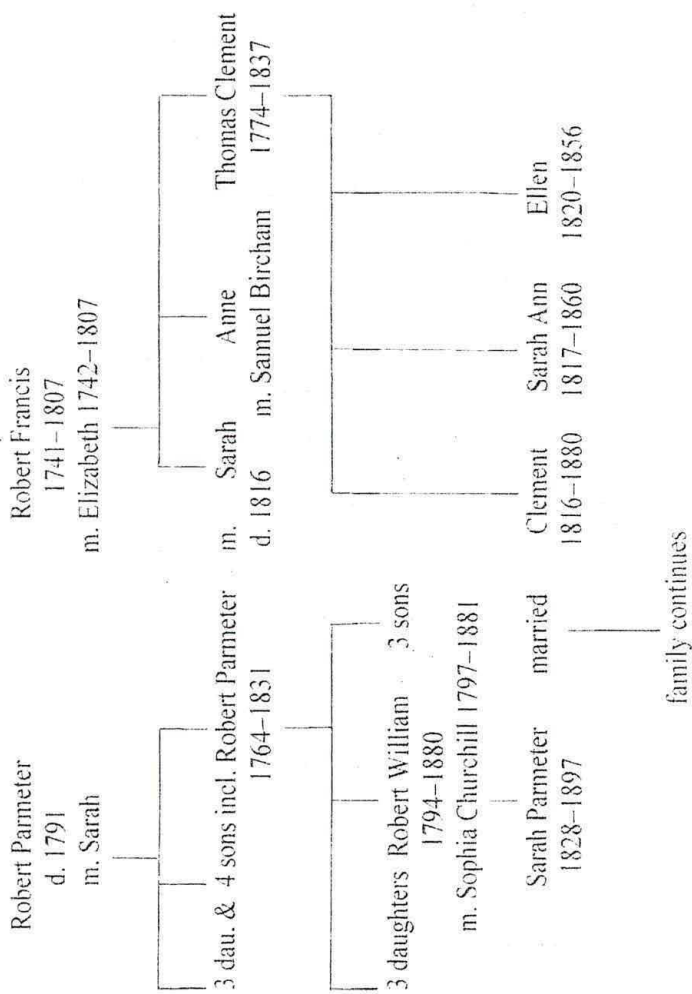
1598	Bans	John Barker	1955	Beech House	Mr C.C.H. Marshall (tenant earlier)
1638		John Barker			Mr G.G. Loynes
1643		Joseph Barker	1955	Clyde Cottage	Rev. Frank Evans
1646		Thomas Barker	1957	Clyde House	Mr R.J. Jenny
1673		Edward Barker	1961	Clyde Cottage	Mrs E.S. Chalmers
1688		John Barker	1962	Clyde Cottage	Mr & Mrs C.W. Bizley
1696		John Barker	1960s	Beech House	Mr & Mrs C. Van der Kwaak
1731		Isabella Jeffery	1976	Vicarage	
1789		Sarah Shaw		[Clyde House]	
1796		Charles Jeffery Shaw	1977	Clyde Cottage	Mr & Mrs A. Dean, Miss Jennifer Dean
1823	Orchard House	Robert William Parmeter			Mr & Mrs D. Heaven
1880		Sophia Parmeter	1977	Beech House	Mr & Mrs F.R. Bozeat
1882		Agnes Katherine Gilbert	1978	Parmeters	
1900s		Katherine Maria Gilbert		[Vicarage]	
1923	632*	J.W. Palmer	1996	Parmeters	Dr & Mrs R.M. Polhill
	617a	Katherine Maria Gilbert	2000	Beech House	Dr & Mrs P.R. Lawson
1950	617a, 632	J.W. Palmer			
1951	Clyde House	J.R. Warren (agent for J.S. Townshend)			

\*See plot numbers on map b.



Edward, described as a grazier,<sup>7</sup> built the new house, with its fashionable dutch gables, in 1677. The date is inscribed on the rafters in Clyde Cottage. The house is set north-south from the end of the old house, with a south facing parlour, two storied with a loft above from which small domestic items have been retrieved in the attic of Clyde Cottage, together with evidence of stored grain.

Two further generations named John Barker took possession in 1688 and 1696 before it passed to John Barker's daughter Isabella Jeffery in 1731. She was responsible for converting the loft into living space, the side beam of one of the dormer windows in Clyde Cottage with the date 1734 inscribed. Surprisingly there is no record of John Barker or Isabella Jeffery paying window tax in 1698 or 1739, nor of regular payments of rates<sup>8,9</sup>. She must have lived to a good age because her lease extended to 1784, over 50 years, by which time she seems to have lost contact with her relatives because the tenancy was then vacant for five years. The General Court Baron put out yearly calls and finally "directed Ralph Spurrell Bailiff thereof by which he was commanded that he should provide the Lord a new Tenant...and therefore came Alice the Wife of Cook Watson of King's Lynn Collector of Excise and Sarah Shaw Widow by Philip Smyth Gentleman in this Behalf their Attorney and inform the Court that the said Alice Watson has a good equitable Title to one third Part and the said Sarah Shaw a good equitable two thirds Part of the said Premises as forfeited".







Sarah Francis (née Parmeter) (photo. Courtesy Mrs Peggy Day)

Charles Jeffery Shaw (1764–1820), Sarah's son, was admitted tenant to the part surrendered by Alice in 1796 and to the residue when Sarah died in 1808. At that time he was Deputy Steward of Aylsham Manor.<sup>7</sup> He married Sarah Cook of Aylsham in 1795 and later Ann Baldwin of Reepham.<sup>10</sup> Some objects from his residency were found in Clyde Cottage including a signed letter. He died in 1820 and has a plaque in the lady chapel of St Michael's. His two sons, Charles, a midshipman in the Royal Navy, and John, a grocer in Norwich, sold the copyhold to Robert William Parmeter for £395 in 1823.

Robert William was the fourth child and eldest son of Robert Parmeter the younger (1764–1831) and Sarah née Francis (1765–1816). His father and grandfather had businesses emanating from the local mills (details in "Millgate"<sup>5</sup>) and Sarah's father, Robert Francis (1742–1807) was a grocer and draper in Aylsham. In 1822 Robert William joined Robert Copeman as a solicitor and was his deputy as Justice of the Peace and Steward of the Manor. He acquired copyhold in 1823, took up residence early in 1824<sup>9</sup>



and was married at Blickling in May 1826 to Sophia Churchill, daughter of Joseph Dixie Churchill, Rector of Blickling with Erpingham.<sup>11, 12</sup> The firm of Copeman & Parmeter continued until 1842, when Robert Copeman became more involved with banking and Robert William took over as J.P.<sup>13, 14</sup>, assisted by Charles Forster. It seems to be about this time that the single storey extensions to the two living rooms were added and also the north wing, used as an office. They are in Georgian style but are not shown on Wright's map of 1839 (map a)<sup>15</sup>.

Their only daughter Sarah (1827–1897)<sup>16</sup>, was married in 1848 to Clement Francis (1818–1880), grandson of Robert Francis and a solicitor in Cambridge.<sup>17</sup> In 1855 Clement Francis bought Quy Hall, near Cambridge,<sup>17</sup> and the family lived there until 2000.

Robert William retired in 1868 and was succeeded as J.P. by Charles Forster.<sup>18</sup> He died in 1880 and provided amply for his family, his servants and local charities. The obituary in the *Norfolk Chronicle & Norwich Gazette* is fulsome in praise of his abilities. He was buried in the churchyard of St Michael's, where he had been churchwarden 1854–1864<sup>4</sup> and many came to his funeral, the shops closed as a mark of respect<sup>14</sup>. His wife Sofia died the next year and Sarah (recorded as with her at the house in the 1881 Census) organised a memorial plaque in the choir stalls of the church and a memorial bench at Millgate (on the small riverside green just beyond the bridges), as well as the very practical gift of a central heating system for the church at a cost of £200.<sup>19</sup>

The house was next leased by Agnes Katherine Gilbert (1826–c. 1912). Her husband, Rev. Clement Gilbert (b. 1822), incumbent at Strumpshaw and living in the Old Hall, had recently died. They were friends of the Copeman family and may thereby have had an introduction to Sarah Francis. Agnes was born in Hemsby, Clement was a curate there, and Clement's brother was recorded as staying with Robert Copeman at Hemsby Hall in the 1841 Census.<sup>20, 21</sup> White's Directory records Mrs Clement Gilbert at Orchard House, Station Road, Aylsham in 1883, but this is clearly a mistake. Parmeters was also known as Orchard House that time, as shown on the Ordnance Survey Map (map b). The grounds extended down to Bure Way (Commercial Road) and east to the lower part of Town Lane. The map also shows the Victorian Conservatory at the south-east corner, the door to which still exists in the back wall (see cover).

Agnes Gilbert had a son, Cecil (b. 1856), and two daughters, Constance (b. 1857) and Katherine Maria (1860–1950) still living with her in 1901<sup>20</sup>. The youngest son, Brig. Gen. Arthur Robert Gilbert (b. 1863) came to live at Spratt's Green c. 1922.<sup>13</sup> By then Agnes had died, but "Miss Katy" lived on until 1950. Recently the North Norfolk News recorded the affectionate memories of George Chamberlain, Dina Pitcher and Vera Jones who worked for her in the 1930s.<sup>22</sup> She obtained the freehold of 3 acres around the house (plots 617 and 632 on map b) from the Francis family in 1923 (enfranchised from copyhold in 1919), the rest sold to John William Palmer, a developer. When Miss Gilbert died in 1950 the house was sold to him and he sold it on to a speculator, John Sommerville Townshend of Clyde Cottage, Strawberry Vale, Twickenham, and builder, James Roland Warren, who resided at Parmeters (Clyde House) and undertook the conversion into three houses.<sup>23</sup> The subsequent occupants are shown in the table at the beginning of the article. Charles Bizley, General Cleaning Contractor, living at Beech House, bought up parts of the gardens of Clyde Cottage in 1962 and of Parmeters (the Vicarage at that time) in 1964. Since then all the properties have been considerably modernised – no carrying hot water in cans from the scullery to hip baths in the bedrooms – but it is nice to remember that Miss Katy would arouse her servants at 8 a.m. by rapping on their floor with her stick from the floor below, don her wellington boots and go out to feed the pigs after breakfast, and if she was given a box of chocolates she shared them with her servants.

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## **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to Miss Jennifer Dean, Mr and Mrs Geoffrey Loynes, Mr George Chamberlain, Mrs Diana Pitcher and Mrs Vera Jones for information on the house, Mrs Peggy Day and Mrs Susan Macfarlane for information on the Francis family, and Mrs Alison Brown for information on the Churchill family. My thanks to the staff of the Record Offices and Family History Societies of Norwich and Cambridge for help and access to original documents, and special thanks also to Diana Polhill for helping with the research.



Aylsham is a prime site for a town, a small market town but nevertheless a town. The site is a high point in a river valley. When Aylsham is approached from any direction, the first signal which indicates the town is near the church steeple, and the church is built on the highest point of the high point of the site. Because of this siting a major road from north to south, linking Cromer to Norwich, originally formed one side of the Market place itself. There, it met lesser roads linking east to west, to and from small towns such as North Walsham, Reepham and Cawston. Though there have been many adjustments to the lay-out of roads over several centuries, the fundamental logic of the town as a meeting point of the ways persists to this day.

The market grew up originally and precisely because of the site of the town. Markets in places such as Aylsham were very local, a place for sale of mainly small surpluses and a place for travelling merchants to visit with products not available locally. Other purchases would come to the market to buy products not available to them in their locality, though these "visitors" would not usually come from very far afield.

In some ways this is the position today, though it is not an exact match. The possibility to acquire goods not offered for sale in Aylsham by other means – a bus trip to Norwich, a telephone call, a purchase by mail order, or by the Internet, plugs many gaps not available to our ancestors. The recent establishment of a Farmers' Market in our town is a welcome addition to the usefulness of Aylsham as a market for day to day provisions for local people.

However, Aylsham market has been much more than a locally limited affair in the past. "One of the earliest and certainly the most famous of Aylsham's industries was the manufacture of linen for which the town was an important centre in the fourteenth century. The quality of the cloth made in the town was such that it was known and esteemed all over England and even in France under the names of Aylsham web, Cloth of Aylsham, Aylsham linens, Aylsham canvas, etc and was ordered for use in such exalted quarters as the Royal Palaces of Edward II, and Edward III, and the household of the Bishop of Hereford." Sapwell<sup>1</sup>



Sapwell continues: "By the beginning of the sixteenth century the linen industry had declined and been largely superseded by woollen manufacture." Presumably this would have been worsted.

It is impossible to imagine that this manufacturing background of the town had no impact on the market. Merchants no doubt flocked to the town to buy these highly desirable goods. Aylsham had a Market Cross, though when and why it finally ceased to exist is not obvious. Sapwell writes that the Market Cross disappeared during the eighteenth century.

We know it certainly stood in the Market Place from a number of sources. The main information contained in *Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century*<sup>2</sup> is the data from a Rental of Aylsham Lancaster Manor. There are numerous references to Aylsham Market. A stall (described as "now built up") is situated as being "next to Market Cross". There is also a "shop called Le Woolcrosse, 9yds x 9yds" in the Market. This shop appears in a will of Thomas Empson, grocer of Aylsham, made 10 Dec 1687(ANW1687 No180 (MF/RO 466/8)). The will leaves a shop called the Wool-Crosse standing in the Market Place in Aylsham to Empson's daughter Anne "after wife's decease".

There was a history of disagreement over the Market Cross between tenants and the Lord of the Manor. Sapwell writes: "In a long and extremely verbose legal manuscript dated 1646, which appears to be a proposed agreement between the Lord of the Manor of Aylsham, Lancaster, and the manorial tenants, it was proposed among other things that: The hayward for the tyme being should yearly and every year for ever then afterwards Maintain the Market Crosse of Aylsham in good repaire and that towards the mainteyance Thereof he should have been the profits of the faire and markett of Aylsham." (Sapwell gives "Complaints of the customary tenants of Aylsham 1646. Norwich Public Library MSS 12942, 27F1 as his reference.)

There is also a document detailed in *Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century* which shows that the question of maintenance of the Market Cross was raised in 1641. In that year one of the "Demandes of the Tenants of Aylesham" was that "Sir John Hobart will be pleased to ... keepe the Market Cross in repaire, seeing he take the profitt of the fayre & market".

Was the Market Cross the Wool Cross? Aylsham was, after all, a wool town when documents which mention the Wool Cross were prepared. Then there is the Woolcross shop. Was this a shop? Was it a shop built into a large market cross? It looks too much of a likelihood to be a coincidence.

The importance of the market to the town of Aylsham has obviously diminished. Most towns the size of Aylsham did constitute centres for trade in all sorts of goods and materials gathered in from the surrounding countryside and smaller centres of population. They provided a hub for a circle of influence. Nowadays circles of influence have grown larger and larger. The growth of easier transport for both goods and people in Norfolk also undermined the importance of small market towns. In the middle of the nineteenth century the building which is now Aylsham's Town Hall was built as a Corn Exchange. But this was the last shot in the locker, as it were, and the railways destroyed its usefulness.

The biggest industry in the immediate vicinity of Aylsham today is agriculture. The modern organisation of this activity does not require small local markets. Those engaged in the agribusinesses around Aylsham show very little interest in using Aylsham Market as an outlet for their produce. They mainly produce on a large scale, and they want customers who will make large bulk purchases, not small outlets.

The other question deserving consideration is the lack of development of institutions in the town. The type of institutions which appeared in larger towns was probably a direct result of the way the Market was established in them and the markets which had themselves relied on many town citizens. But Aylsham's market was always a Manorial market, with no organic link to the town as a distinct entity of its own, no connection with the Church since Aylsham Church is not connected to the manor of Aylsham Lancaster. There were other manors in Aylsham; Vicarage Manor, Sexton's (or Aylsham Wood) and Bolwick. These three manors had no connection with the market. Indeed to this day, the Market Place is owned by the Lords of the Manor of Aylsham, the National Trust.

- 1 *A History of Aylsham* by John Sapwell MA MB (Cantab) 1960
- 2 *Aylsham in the Seventeenth Century* Aylsham Local History Society and Poppyland Publishing 1988

## SOCIETY NEWS

### CLEMENT SCOTT AND POPPYLAND      Talk by Peter Stibbons

On 25<sup>th</sup> November 2004 Peter Stibbons returned to the Friendship Hall to give us an most interesting talk and video on Clement Scott and Poppyland. He explained that he would first of all tell us about Clement Scott, who originally thought up the name *Poppyland* in an article appearing in the *Daily Telegraph* on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1883, and then show us a recent video on the subject. This had the advantage of depicting the area and also showing interviews with local historians about leading figures in the story. He said that listeners might have seen the film *Poppyland* transmitted by the BBC in 1985 following the centenary in 1983 of Scott's first visit. The interest aroused by the centenary helped to bring about the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the booklet *Poppyland* by David Cleveland and Peter Stibbons in 1985. The 3<sup>rd</sup> edition followed in 1990 and the 4<sup>th</sup> in 2001.

Clement Scott was born the son of a London Vicar and educated for seven years at Marlborough College. He developed in his youth a liking for the dramatic arts. His father contributed to journals. Clement first became a clerk in the War Office and, through friends, started writing drama criticisms. He obtained a post as drama critic with the *Sunday Times*. He wrote longer reviews than had previous critics, and was firm in his opinions; he insisted on first night reviews and was against booing and hissing from the audiences. After dismissal from the *Sunday Times*, he wrote for other journals including the *Daily Telegraph* while working at the War Office. In 1879 he became a full-time writer, writing theatrical and travel articles for the *Daily Telegraph*, but also contributing verses and short stories.

#### Scott's First Visit

The Great Eastern Railway extended its railway to Cromer in 1882 and Clement Scott was given an assignment to write about the North Norfolk coast. Once arrived at Cromer, a 'pretty little watering place', he found it very busy with families playing on the sands, donkey-riding, a band playing; worse, 'not a bed was to be had for love or money'. He strolled along the cliffs for a mile or two and then cut inland, attracted by the ruin of an old church tower and the distant view of a tiny village. The tower stood surrounded by tombstones on the edge of crumbling cliffs. A few



years earlier the church had been dismantled and re-erected further inland. He was entranced by the peaceful country view - blue skies, wild flowers in profusion, poppies predominating. Scott continued his walk through the near-deserted village and beyond it he came to an old windmill with a miller's house beyond it.

In the cottage garden was the miller's bright-eyed nineteen-year old daughter Louie Jermy. When Scott asked if he could find lodgings there for a few days, she cheerfully agreed. The miller, Alfred Jermy, drove to Cromer in his pony and trap with the writer to pick up his luggage. Scott found the Old Mill House a most charming, clean and sweet-smelling place to stay, with Louie providing excellent plain-cooked meals. He was amazed by the peace and quiet he found so near to the sea and he wrote in his despatch to the *Daily Telegraph* of the beautiful place he had found calling it *Poppyland* but misnaming the village *Beckhythe*, in order not to reveal the exact location.

### **The Growth in Public Interest**

Two weeks later the Victorian poet Algernon Charles Swinburne and his friend Theodore Watts-Dunton set out from Cromer to find the place so euphorically described in the *Telegraph*. They found the Old Mill House, met the miller and Louie and stayed with them in the simple cottage. Clement Scott continued to write about *Poppyland*, to compose short stories and verses about *The Tower* and its garden. His poem *The Garden of Sleep*, published in *The Theatre* (a publication he edited) became very popular and later became a song with music by Isadore de Lara, entitled "The Hush of the Corn". This increased the popularity of the area.

Gilbert Scott had many friends in the theatrical and literary world of London and it soon became fashionable for them to go and stay at the Old Mill House or at other villagers' cottages. George R Sims, in particular, an author and dramatist, often mentioned Poppyland Cottage in his column in *The Sunday Referee*. Sir Henry Irving, Dame Ellen Terry and Sir Herbert Beerbohm Tree were among the famous actors who visited the cottage in the next few summers. The place was identified as Sidestrand, a hamlet beyond the main village of Overstrand.

Many famous people bought land nearby and built magnificent homes - the place later becoming known as "the village of millionaires". Clement Scott remained a faithful visitor for five years in summer but also in



midwinter. His articles were produced in a book entitled *Poppy-land Papers* in 1885 and he later published *Blossom Land and Fallen Leaves*. Other writers and artists wrote about the peaceful Norfolk countryside.

### **Commercial Development**

The Great Eastern Railway then started to display posters showing idyllic cottages, with the invitation "Welcome to Poppyland". Soon tour organizers brought visitors from Cromer in the new charabancs which were just beginning to appear. Cream teas were served in the garden and "Bed and Breakfast" signs appeared on the surrounding cottages. Many coloured postcards and souvenirs were sold. The famous Tower, originally the tower of St Michael's Church, Sidestrand, was often inserted on postcards advertising other villages and towns along the coast (eg Mundesley and Yarmouth). The name of Poppyland was also used to sell special china, perfume and soap. As the public came to Overstrand, the wealthier visitors stopped coming. However, a number of big houses (eg The Pleasance designed by Edwin Lutyens) and hotels had been built in Overstrand, Cromer and Mundesley, all attracted by the beautiful wild flowers and peaceful fields of Poppyland. Clement Scott lived just over twenty years after his first article, dying in 1904, and was said to be dismayed at what publicity had done to his rural paradise turning it into Bungalow-land.

Clement Scott was already a well-known London reviewer, but his chance visit to Cromer and his stroll along the cliffs to Sidestrand where he met the pleasant Louie at the miller's comfortable cottage made him more famous; his writing and that of other literary figures seemed to strike a chord with the readers of the time and made Cromer a popular resort and Overstrand a growing village. It seems evident from all we heard that the newspaper and journal articles combined with the easier access by rail and other factors to account for the increase in building in the Cromer area in the late Victorian period. The increase in popularity in 'taking the waters' also played a part.

### **Decline of 'Poppyland'**

During the Great War Army officers were billeted at Mill House where they enjoyed the hospitality of Louie and her father. In 1916 the Tower slipped over the cliffs and gradually the headstones fell on to the beach. After the War visitors to the Mill House became rather noisy and in 1919

Louie was given notice to quit (her father having died). Louie moved into a terraced house in Tower Lane and continued to be seen in the district, sometimes pushing an old pram containing some of her possessions. She continued to give recitations of poetry wearing her picture hat trimmed with poppies. She died in 1934 at the age of 70 and is buried in the family grave in Sidestrand's churchyard.

A memorial to Clement Scott (erected in 1909) in the form of a water-trough is to be found at the entrance to *Poppyland* at the junction of Overstrand and Northrepps Road. Towards Sidestrand there is also a seat to the memory of Louie Jermy.

By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War many of the large hotels had gone. Military occupation and the wartime mining of the beach and cliffs took their toll. *Poppyland* was only remembered in the names of cafes and houses in the area. However 1983 was celebrated as the centenary of Scott's visit and many visitors joined local people for a walk from the site of Cromer High Station (now demolished) to Mill House. Holkham Pottery created a special mug for the centenary.

In 1985 the BBC transmitted the film *Poppyland*, which received much praise. Cromer Museum has had a section about the Poppyland era and about Clement Scott and Louie Jermy. The video which we saw gave interesting details about the leading people of the era. Louie Jermy never married; her vivid personality, it would appear, was part of the attraction of Mill House. Louie occasionally visited London to see theatrical performances and was for a while in service with the Scotts, but preferred to return to her home in Norfolk. George R Sims, a well-known columnist, thought that Louie should write her reminiscences as "she had been the guardian home from home angel of famous men". Possibly her dreams became more dear to her than the life of a country girl.

**Betty Gee**

**Notes** Cromer Museum is at present closed to visitors, but should be opened later this year.

Poppyland Publishing, 4 Alfred Rd, Cromer NR27 9AN publishes *Poppyland in Pictures* and *Poppyland* and also sells the Video.



Louie Jermy



Clement Scott



Mill House



The Pleasaunce West Front 1904



## **WINTER PARTY 2005**

The evening of 20<sup>th</sup> January proved to be damp but fortunately mild for the time of year, so that many members were able to walk to a new venue for our Winter Party, the historic 'Black Boys Hotel' in the Market Place at Aylsham. Flyers on the tables reminded us that many famous people including Daniel Defoe, Horatio Nelson and Princess Victoria have enjoyed its hospitality.

From 7 o'clock the forty-six members and guests assembled in the bar before being invited to take their places by our Chairman Geoff Gale, for the excellent dinner that followed. Peter Holman provided each table with copies of a quiz about Aylsham past and present which we attempted between courses. The buzz of conversation changed to an exclamation of surprise as the first course arrived.

The 'Black Boys' has a reputation for serving an interesting menu with dishes served in generous portions and, although negotiations had taken place to reduce these, the delicious food was still substantial. Matthew, the manager, and his young staff at the hotel gave us efficient and cheerful service and coped well despite the rather limited space between the tables. During coffee we had time to mark our efforts in the quiz against the answer sheets provided. Several members scored 9 out of the possible 15 points but Sheila Mollard was the first to indicate this and so won the box of chocolates.

Geoffrey Gale was pleased to present Peter and Biddy Holman with Life Membership in recognition of the many years that Peter has served as Chairman of the Society. The members were pleased to endorse this with a round of applause. The evening concluded with a further chance to chat before coats were collected and farewells said.

**Angela King**

Angela King became Secretary of our Society at the AGM last October. Members much appreciated her work in organizing this successful event.

**BG**





Biddy and Peter Holman

**QUIZ first presented by Peter Holman at the WINTER PARTY in January 2005 at the Black Boys Hotel**

**What do you know of Aylsham?**

1. What was the original purpose of the Town Hall?
2. How many ways into the Market Place?
3. How many clock faces on the Church Tower?
4. How many ways into the churchyard?
5. What was the purpose of the lynch-gate?
6. How many shops and places of business are there in the Market Place?
7. Who was Marriot of The Marriots Way?
8. Where is the telephone exchange?
9. Who is the owner of the Market Place?
10. Who was the most famous person to dine at The Black Boys?
11. Who from Weston Longville did not think much of the food at The Black Boys in 1781?
12. Where is there a line of trees whose first letters spell out the name of the town?
13. How many watermills are mentioned in Aylsham Parish in Domesday?
14. When was the Aylsham Friendship Club started?
15. What is the present population of Aylsham?

On February 27 I went to the Snowdrop Walk at Morton Hall. Not only did I enjoy the snowdrops, I enjoyed learning the history of the place. The Domesday Survey mentions Morton but only as part of Helmingham. The Helmingham church and village has now disappeared completely but was situated at the foot of Morton Hall's front drive. Thomas Southwell built an Elizabethan manor house at Morton around 1600. He died unmarried in 1609. A Georgian wing was added to the house in 1820 by Thomas Berney, which still remains today, and occupied by the Prince-Smith family. The Elizabethan part was subsequently demolished in the 1950s.

Hidden amongst some rare trees near the Hall I came across the sweet little church of St. Margaret's. Regular worship was conducted here up to and including Easter Sunday in 1959. That night the round Saxon tower collapsed. This badly damaged the nave and porch roofs, and so it was left unrepaired for twenty years. Then with close co-operation with Lady Prince-Smith and the Norfolk Churches Trust, assisted by voluntary helpers, it was possible to restore the church, and it is now used for special services by the Rector of Weston Longville.

The nave walls near the tower contain conglomerate stone, and are partly Saxon. The north-west corner in particular is constructed of these stones. The tower has a double splayed window in its east face, indicating that it was added to an already existing church, and the tower arch is constructed without any dressed stone. The tower once contained three bells which are still in use today at nearby Attlebridge Church. A bell was found in the coach house of Morton Hall and is now set up in the ruined part of the nave. The bell's previous history is unknown, but the date is 1793.

The nave and porch walls have now been capped with Norfolk pantiles. The South porch has a 15<sup>th</sup> century perpendicular entrance with knapped flints. The inner door is of fine old oak with decorative carvings possibly as old as the porch itself. There was no external difference between the nave and chancel walls and roof. The nave has a square headed window though and the chancel a lancet window. A tombstone set in the nave wall is in memory of a baby who died in 1729. The skull and crossbones along with the hourglass are symbols of our mortality.

The window in the east wall is very high up, and has intersected tracery of c1300. The elaborate buttresses with gabled tops and panelling with the base course are all Victorian works of 1865, along with the chapel's east window in decorated style. The stained glass from this window was moved to Costessey church a long time ago. There are no windows on the north side, but a small north door into the chapel is used, and was part of the 1865 restoration.

Inside the church there is now a new timber framed and glass west wall which brings plenty of light into the church. The 15<sup>th</sup> century font is in excellent condition and features shields on the panels around the base. There are fleurons underneath, and it was carved from Normandy Caen stone. There are fine 17<sup>th</sup> century sturdy baluster-type communion rails. Commandment boards with the Creed and Lord's Prayer fill all the east wall. On either side are the base panels of a former rood screen set against the walls. They have been thoroughly cleaned, but traces of medieval paint have been detected in the crevices.

A brass plaque on the chancel wall is the parish war memorial erected after the Great War 1914-18. Opposite is another brass plaque bearing the Berney family arms with their crest of five ostrich feathers. The principal monument here is the Southwell tomb in the north chapel. It is a tomb chest with a slab that features fine lettering on top with an arched wall tablet on pilasters above. The brass inscription plaque on the tomb is missing but the shield at the lower left contains a crescent to signify that this was the second son of Sir Thomas Southwell of Woodrising, and the crest at the top is a talbot. The famous poet, Robert Southwell, was Sir Thomas Southwell's nephew who became a Jesuit martyr. He was caught at Hampstead leaving an illegal Mass, and was imprisoned for two years. Later Robert was hung, drawn and quartered in February 1595.

The north chapel is very early. The cascading is 14<sup>th</sup> century or possibly even earlier with octagonal piers, along with double chamfered arches. A piscina is believed to be hidden behind the plaster of the wall. A stone coffin lid could be the tomb of the original donor of this chapel. Following the Victorian restoration it contained a family pew which was entered by the special chapel door. There were originally five old benches



with poppy heads in the nave, but they went to Reedham Church, and were sadly lost in the Church's disastrous fire of 1980.

It made my day visiting this lovely peaceful church. A key is kept at Morton Hall if you wish to visit the church. The next open day to Morton-on-the Hill grounds and church is during the first weekend in September this year. Check local press for details nearer the time.

### **ANSWERS to Aylsham Quiz set by Peter Holman**

- |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Corn Exchange               | 8. Next to Manor Court and<br>The Paddocks        |
| 2. Seven ways in               | 9. The National Trust                             |
| 3. One clock face              | 10. Nelson  |
| 4. Three ways into churchyard  | 11. Parson Woodforde                              |
| 5. For resting coffins         | 12.* Sir Williams Lane next<br>to the High School |
| 6. Eighteen shops & businesses | 13. Two watermills: Aylsham<br>and Bolwick        |
| 7. The Engineer of the railway | 14. 1946  |
|                                | 15. 6,000 approx                                  |

**Note:** \* Sapwell's *History of Aylsham* states on page 111 that seven trees (ash, yew, lime, sycamore, hornbeam, acacia and mountain ash) the initial letters of which spell the name of the town, were planted by the pupils along the edge of the playing field adjoining Sir William's Lane in the year the school was opened (1957).

Sheila Mollard won the Quiz.



## JOHN PETERSON of AYLSHAM and his family

Betty Gee

The Wood family held the manor of Sexton Wood or Aylsham Wood until 1750. By 1763 the lord was John Peterson and his family continued to hold it until about 1812 according to Sapwell's *History of Aylsham*. The manorial lands lay to the north of the town in Millgate and Drabblegate. Sapwell also states that a residence known as Abbot's Hall was built by John Peterson early in the eighteenth century near to a farm house built in 1610 by Robert Wood which was also known as Abbot's Hall.

In May 1782 the death of John Peterson was reported in the Norfolk Chronicle. According to the list of burials and memorials kept in the archives, he is buried at Aylsham and was 78 years old (therefore born 1704). Elizabeth, his wife died 12<sup>th</sup> May 1783 aged 88 years old (born 1695). In 1776 John Peterson was Churchwarden and also in 1739 (he would have been aged 35 years then). Since I noted that a Robert Peterson was Churchwarden in 1728, 1729, and 1737, a further look at the burial list led me to:

Memorial to Robert Peterson Senr died 19.12. 1742, aged 63 and his wife  
Frances Peterson died 4.2 1727 aged 43. And  
Robert Peterson Jnr died 9.1.1742 aged 36 born 1706

The Aylsham Window Tax 1739 lists John Peterson as having a property with 19 windows and Robert Peterson, Gent was also on this list with 18 windows. It is possible that Robert Peterson was the father of John as well as Robert Jnr. I noticed that Benjamin Peterson, Gentleman is listed in several directories, the last being 1839. He died in 1841 according to the burial list and his wife Ann in 1852 (aged 65 yrs). Peterson's Lane was formerly named Benjamin Peterson's Lane.

I received recently several newspaper extracts taken from the internet which were relevant to Aylsham and Norfolk. Here are two:

### **EXTRACT from the NORFOLK CHRONICLE of 30 March 1782**

"To be Lett or Sold, in Aylsham, between this Time and Michaelmas next, 1782, inquire of Mr John PETERSON, in Aylsham, an old established Baking Office, of an hundred years standing, with all Conveniences, a large Oven, Back-house, and Granary over it, . . . . . There is a very good Stable which will hold three Horses, and a Hay-house . . . The tenant may have two, four, or six Acres of Land. . . . .

At the same Place is to be Lett, or Sold, at any time, a capital House, almost new built, fit for a Gentleman. Inquire as above. . . . . ”

The term “Baking Office” was new to me, although I have since found it in a book about Water Mills. I assume people without ovens made bread from flour and then took the loaves to the “Baking Office” to be baked.

**EXTRACT from the NORWICH CHRONICLE of 13 JUNE 1782**

“To be Sold A new-built capital Messuage, agreeably situated in Aylsham, . . . late in the Occupation of Mr John PETERSON, deceased; consisting of a Hall, two Parlours . . . Kitchen, Store-room, five chambers. Small Tea-room . . . 2 cellars with a Brew-house, Coach-house etc etc.

Also a neat Messuage adjoining in the Occupation of Mr John LING, Baker, who quits the same at Michaelmas next) consisting of a Kitchen, Parlour, . . . with an old-estab Baking-office and all conveniences . . . For further Particulars enquire of Mr John ADEY, Attorney, at Aylsham, . Note. All Persons to whom the said Mr John PETERSON, deceased was indebted, are desired to send an Account of their demands to Mr John PETERSON, of Aylsham, his Executor, on or before the fifth July next. And all those who were indebted to the said Mr PETERSON, deceased, are desired to pay their respective Debts to the said Mr John PETERSON, his Executor, on or before the fifth day of July.”

THE EXECUTOR Mr JOHN PETERSON would appear to be John Bayfield PETERSON who is buried in a vault at St Michael’s Church and who died 7.3.1835 aged 72 years (born 1763). His wife Elizabeth died in 1827. He would have been 19 in 1782 and might be the son (or the grandson) of the deceased John who was selling the baking-office, although not the son of his wife who would have been 68 when the executor John was born in 1763. In *Aylsham in 1821* Jno Peterson is listed in Drabblegate, in agriculture and with 8 persons in his home.

On his death in 1835 John Bayfield Peterson’s estates in Aysham were left to his niece Elizabeth Mary Anne Peterson who had become the 2<sup>nd</sup> wife of John Wright Clover. Later they lived at Aylsham Wood House. In Wright’s Map 1839 the Clover family owned 71 plots. Her two sons, John Peterson Clover and Joseph Thomas Clover became respectively a barrister and a famous anaesthetist (see Journal Vol 4 No 5). Mr & Mrs John Wright Clover left Aylsham after 1853 (their daughter Frances having died) and lived near their anaesthetist son and Joseph Clover the



portrait painter (brother to John Wright). Mrs Clover was still listed as an Aylsham landowner in 1883.

There was one more newspaper extract of June 1782 from the Internet.

“ Mr Peterson’s Connections in Norwich obliging him to discontinue his School in Yarmouth, he returns his sincere thanks to his Friends . . . he intends opening a School in . . . London Lane for the instruction of 30 young Gentlemen in English Language, Writing & Arithmetic in all its parts, . . . the Italian Method of Bookkeeping etc”

Could this Mr Peterson be the John Peterson, executor, who was to inherit the Aylsham estates? Are the two extracts in June 1782 just a coincidence? See *Millgate* by ALHS for information about the Clover family.

## OLD SKATING RINK GALLERY

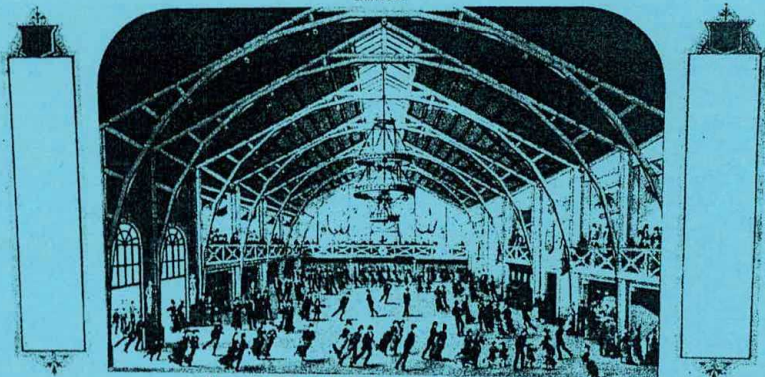
Gillian Fletcher

If you have time to spare while next visiting Norwich, I do recommend a visit to this *Old Skating Rink Gallery*. It is now a shop “County & Eastern” displaying a large range of furniture and rugs etc (a treasure trove in itself) but the roof and gallery are intact and exactly as the postcard shows - a magnificent sight with only the skaters missing!

Entrance is now in Bethel Street 35/36 (near The Forum) with plenty of parking space. The shop is open daily from 10 am to 5 pm except Sundays.

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## VISITS

Plans for visits this summer have been discussed by the Committee and are being organised by Ann Dyball. I understand that three visits are planned and that there will be three circulars giving details of the visits with this Journal. There is great variety in the plans.

“SEARCHING FOR ANGELS” A full day’s visit to Suffolk and Norfolk churches on THURSDAY 26<sup>th</sup> May visiting Woolpit, Bury St Edmunds (St Mary’s), Mildenhall and Necton - a large coach will be booked so there will be room for friends. It is hoped a church expert will accompany us to at least one of the churches.

WALK ROUND NORWICH LOOKING AT GEORGE SKIPPER’S BUILDINGS with David Summers on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> JUNE from 5 - 6.30 pm David Summers gave us an excellent lecture last year and mentioned that he conducted these walks. The Surrey Street marble hall is closed for building works until December, so the walk cannot go there. It is suggested that we combine once replies are in and travel by car. There would be a small fee.

PROPOSED VISIT TO YARMOUTH TO CELEBRATE NELSON’S BICENTENARY on THURSDAY 21<sup>st</sup> JULY afternoon/evening There is a talk at the Nelson Museum on South Quay at 7.30 pm given by Colin White of the National Maritime Museum on *Trafalgar* for which numbers are limited to 60. Special rate of £5 for talk and museum entry at 5 pm to include cup of tea or coffee (or talk alone at £3). The museum usually shuts at 5 pm. On a previous visit members had tea at the Star Hotel. Presumably one could arrive about 4.30 pm and view the exhibition and then have a meal before the lecture if so desired. As it would be July, it might be glorious weather! The newest Yarmouth museum *Time and Tide*, like other museums, shuts at 5 pm.

You will find final dates for reply on the circulars. Please help us by replying in time.

Editor’s Note: My thanks to contributors. Would members please consider writing a review of a talk or visit for the Journal and discuss it with me.

Betty Gee