



AYLSHAM LOCAL HISTORY
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Front cover: Aylsham Old Hall. Photo.: William Vaughan-Lewis.

Back cover: St Edmund with the Virgin and Child. Reconstruction of
Medieval Wall Paintings at St Mary the Virgin, Lakenheath, courtesy
Lakenheath Wall Painting Project.

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We have had an exceptionally good attendance at the series of evening lectures this season and we are most grateful to all our lecturers. Ann Dyball has again been very kindly arranging three tempting excursions for the summer. Details of the May visit to East Barsham is given on p. 36 and Ann is hoping to fix a date to visit Long Melford in June or July. A coach will be provided for the day outing to Long Melford but for the two local afternoon trips it seems now more economic to share cars.

The small group of dedicated enthusiasts continues to meet each Tuesday morning at the Aylsham Town Archives to document materials for the projected book on the Aylsham Navigation under the guidance of Dr Sarah Spooner from the History School of UEA. The first joint field excursion to Burgh was made on Monday 28 March, where Michael Grix kindly provided a most informative introduction to Burgh Mill.

These matters bring to mind Riona Collins, who so enjoyed participating in our activities and very sadly came to the end of her life in February this year. She was a member from 2005 and contributed several perceptive articles to the Journal.

We are most grateful for all contributions to the Journal. Particular admiration on this occasion for the immense amount of erudite research by Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis unravelling the early history of Aylsham Old Hall and the Old Market, with two further articles on the later history still to come.

1. Aylsham Old Hall at Old Market: The Early History

Maggie and William Vaughan-Lewis

Like many of our fellow members, we have always enjoyed the elegant frontage of Aylsham Old Hall on the Blickling Road and often wondered about its history. When our chairman, Roger Polhill, mentioned that for some years the Blickling steward Robert Copeman, of a family well-known in both Itteringham and Aylsham, had lived there, we determined to find out more.¹

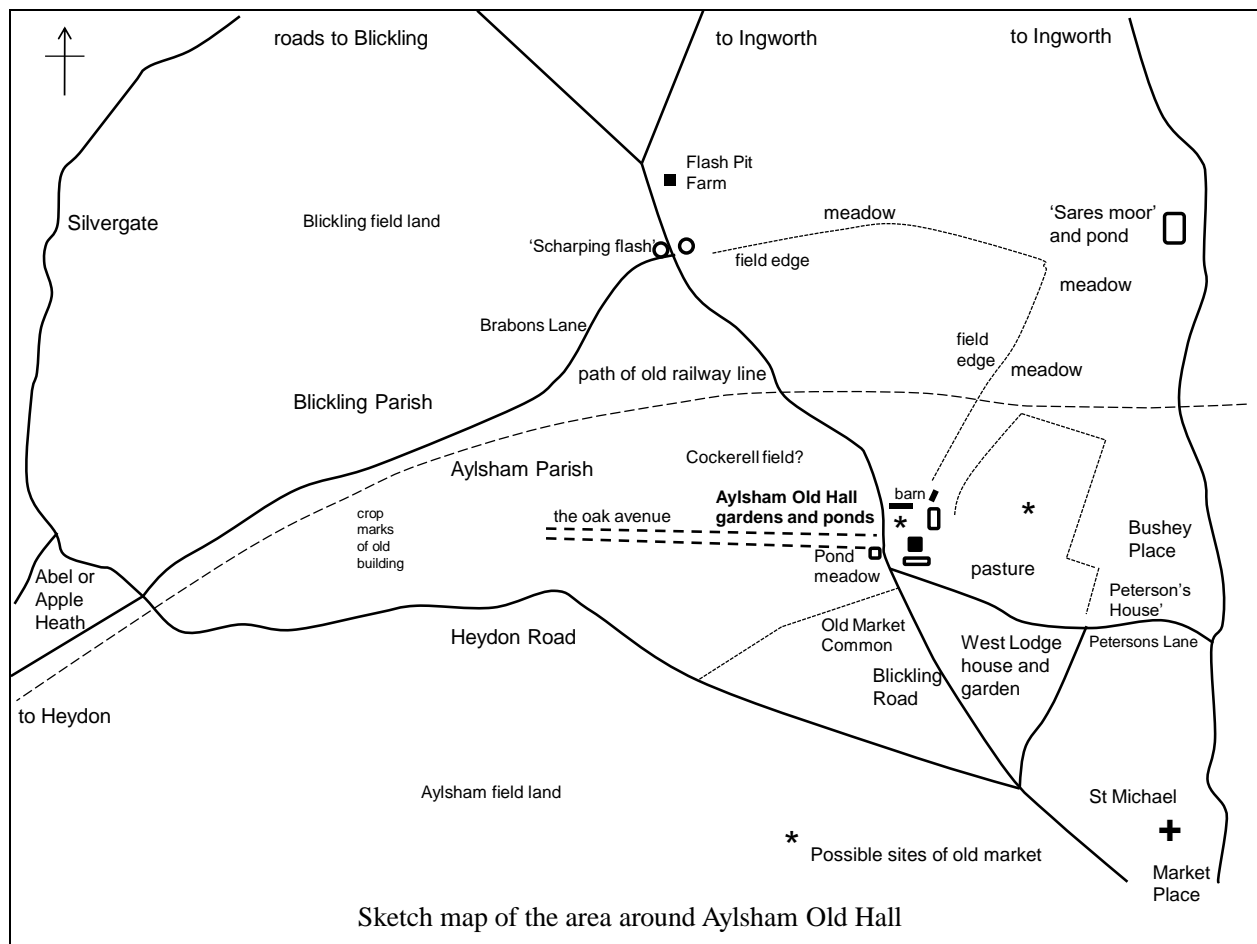


The west face of Aylsham Old Hall today

Writers from Pevsner to The National Trust have loaded plaudits on the house and garden design, shown in a contemporaneous painting on a panel in the house, and its sympathetic alterations in the late 18th or early 19th century.² It was well known that the Hobarts of Blickling had acquired the house and its estate in 1751 from the Wyndham family of Cromer. But rather surprisingly, little else was known about the origins of the house; even the date of building, despite being displayed on a

chimney, appears as both 1686 and 1689 in print and on the internet. The idea that it had been built by the Wyndhams and was a dower house for that family or for the Hobarts of Blickling took root a long time ago and has since been repeated without question. Sapwell, Aylsham's historian, had nothing to say on its origins.³ As we explored early manorial documents and chancery materials a very interesting story came to light. This is the first of three articles for the Journal, starting with the early history of the site. The second will cover the building of the Old Hall and its sale to Blickling, and the third the later history up to the 20th century.⁴

For the various places around the Blickling side of Aylsham discussed here see the sketch map below (accurate to scale and orientation).



Sketch map of Aylsham Old Market and the immediate area

The medieval origins of the property

The site of the house and its lands were held copyhold of Aylsham Lancaster manor from the late medieval period through to the 18th

century and beyond. As a result it has been possible to identify its owners and its occupiers in a continuous run from 1461 through to 1900. The core land lay in the fields behind the Old Hall, visible in the 1680s painting, with the far zigzag boundary still recognisable today. To these 15 or so acres were added another 15 or so around the house and in the meadows leading towards the River Bure. Unfortunately, at no stage (until 1751) were the lands in this estate precisely described – it was sufficient that everyone knew where they were. The property was initially largely animal pasture and only later did the holders gradually acquire arable land and even heath land on the other side of the Blickling Road and up towards Abel Heath.

By 1461 John Bettes held at least the core lands of the property.⁵ John was a leading tenant of the manor by 1449 and although his occupation is not stated in the court rolls, it seems likely that he was a butcher like his son and heir Robert. The Bettes family may have been in the property for some time. A number of other Bettes family lines lived in Aylsham, particularly that of another major tenant, Simon and his son Richard, a fuller. In the court rolls from 1461 the Blickling Road property was always described as a number of acres (around 30 was typical) with a messuage or house at ‘le old market’ (‘vetero mercato’). As butchers the Bettes family would have been affluent men, rearing cattle and sheep as well as butchering them and marketing the meat and hides. In 1474 Robert was taken to task for overburdening the field of Aylsham with his sheep. It is clear that they had at least one butcher’s stall in Aylsham’s central market place, usually referred to as the ‘forum’ to distinguish it clearly from the ‘old’ market. From a later extent of Sexton’s manor it is clear that the Bettes family had a major holding in that manor as well as their lands in Aylsham Lancaster.⁶ It seems likely, given their status, that the Bettes family may well have been a junior line of the Bettes family who held both the manors in Irmingland in the 15th and 16th centuries and who had senior family members operating as wealthy mercers in London.⁷ Unfortunately these Bettes left few wills and Simon’s of 1483 only refers to his son Richard, so the link remains unproven.⁸ Although not of manorial status, they would have been among the comfortably-off senior citizens of Aylsham. John Bettes’s name often headed the list of jurors attending court and frequently surrenders of land were made through him. His son Robert was already economically active in the early

1460s, suggesting that his father reached a good age before he died. They had sufficient funds to lend on security of a mortgage in 1473. We must therefore assume that the Bettes family lived in a good quality house, presumably a late medieval hall house of reasonable scale.

When John Bettes died in the summer of 1474, Robert succeeded to the Old Market property then described as one ‘built messuage’ and 36 acres of arable land, feeding lands (pascuis), and pasture in Aylsham. The Bettes family would have found the old market site ideal for major butchery activities, being out at the edge of town, with space to pen animals and with a good water supply from the tiny beck draining the slopes opposite the Old Hall.

The old market of Aylsham

What is known of the history of Aylsham’s markets? The old market is mentioned in the 1620s rental published by the Society but its exact location was unknown.⁹ Sapwell gives the earliest reference to the market at Aylsham, that of 1296 when John Holmgey was the King’s reeve of the ‘mercate’. The market could well date back much earlier; Cawston was granted its Tuesday market in 1263. After the creation of the Duchy of Lancaster, into which Aylsham came in 1372, the King’s officers were excluded from collecting fees from the markets. The Duchy could appoint its own Clerk of the Market and run its own affairs. This may help to explain the lack of references in the crown archives. It may also explain the fact that early in its history the market moved to a new site. Perhaps by the 1460s the Blickling Road site had been the ‘old market’ for nearly a century.

Where exactly was this old market? The Old Hall sits within an area of wet lands restricting the likely places to establish a market. The only dry sites are the Hall itself, the garden between the hall and its barns and the field to the east/north-east (now grass). A 1946 aerial photograph shows linear markings on the field which seemed at first to suggest some older usage. However the expert view is that it shows a broad-leaved crop, albeit growing early in the year.¹⁰ On the 1840 tithe map, the area between the Hall (540) and the present barns (539) presents a more likely site and would offer a market square of similar size to that of today.¹¹



Tithe map of 1840

If correct, there are also clues as to why the market was moved. The natural ditches and field drains act as boundaries, limiting any expansion of the site. The access is not ideal and it was not at a confluence of major routes. Perhaps after the Black Death, in the later 14th century, a better location with space to grow was available in the centre of the town. Empty older properties could be cleared and roads, such as the old main through route of Hungate Street, altered. Red Lion Street would then be created to lead out of the square to the north.

The early site is supported by looking at the properties (other than the Bettes's house) which were described as being at the Old Market. In the late 15th century two further dwellings appear in the court rolls; a house with 3½ acres of land of the widow Margaret Browne, and a house with 3 acres belonging to William Wright who was 'of Old Market'. John and

Robert Bettes were involved in both transactions as trustees, indicating that they were respected senior men and possibly relations of the property holders. These entries show that there was a small community living at Old Market. By the 1620s rental there are six properties still retaining the locality name, several of which are substantial buildings.¹²

A house of 6 bays and a barn (with an 'atrium', or large hall) in 'Old Market Street' was then held by Edmund Reve, the appropriately named steward of Aylsham Lancaster. The hall would have been useful for his manorial duties. He also held an empty, decayed cottage and toft of 2 ½ acres at Old Market once held by Elizabeth Brackley. The decayed cottage in Pye's Toft, was presumably of some age. Reve's own house had 4 acres, including a pightle named Stones Howse which was next to Thomas Doughty's land on the east. Thomas Norgate had two houses, one known as Hill's of 4 bays with a 3 bay barn and 3 bay stable, with homestalls (probably farm buildings) and 4 acres in 'Old Market Street'. The other was a 6 bay house with a garden in Old Market. Johanna Haund (widow of Gregory Haund), 'wife of Robert Bettes', held a cottage, and half a rood of land at Old Market. Along with the main house (the old Bettes house) – now 'a messuage of 4 spaces or bays' – were a barn of 5 bays, other buildings totalling 11 bays (probably farm buildings but maybe including small cottages), a large granary of 9 bays, a wood house (firewood) of 2 bays, 'le backside' (kitchen/service wing of the house) and an orchard.¹³

If the main buildings were on the site of the present Old Hall, the other five properties or their predecessors may be imagined lining the other side of the Market square, from the Blickling Road and leading off in 'Market Street' to the north east along a way known as 'the way from Old Market to Sales [Sares/Searles] more'.¹⁴ The orientation of the building shown in the Old hall painting and on the 1840 map, gives the alignment of the route of this old street with 4 or 5 houses or cottages on it, set out on a reasonably dry route through the old market.

In addition a house with 1 rood stood in the northern part of Old Market, described as in the furlong called Justler's Close (named for John Jostehus). Curiously it also had a thin strip of land 110 feet by 1 foot which connected the house to the Blickling Road. The thin strip, later described as enclosed by pales, would seem to be an access route for a house or cottage. Perhaps this was behind the market square buildings, where the farmyard stands today.¹⁵

Thomas and Margaret Wymer

Robert Bettes ‘of Old Market’ continued in the property until his death (probably early in 1492), when his five sons came into his two houses and 36 acres of land.¹⁶ One of the houses was certainly at Old Market and the second may have been there too. The custom of the manor of Aylsham Lancaster was copyhold inheritance by gavelkind – real estate passed to all sons equally rather than to the eldest. Presumably it was not practical for Robert, William, John, Edward and Thomas to continue to share the property so at Michaelmas 1498 they conveyed the Old Market property out of the family. William Bettes, a scrivener very active in Aylsham for years, was involved as trustee when the property was acquired by Thomas Wymer and his then wife Margaret. The property was described as ‘one built messuage lying in the place called the old market in Aylsham’ with 29 acres of land in various pieces and a further 12 acres enclosed. The Wymers also gained 6 acres of arable in Cockerell field (possibly across the road from the Old Market on the right hand side of the avenue) and a stall in the market place, apparently then a fish stall, but later referred to as a butcher’s stall. Both appear to have been Bettes property.



Thomas Wymer's screen and brass in St Michael.

Thomas Wymer was a wealthy worsted weaver originally of Scottow where he was living when he and his second wife Margaret acquired the Old Market site.¹⁷ He is best known for being one of those who paid for the beautiful paintings of the saints on the wooden screen in St Michael's church and for his fine brass noting his two wives and depicting himself naked in his burial cloth. Margaret was born Margaret Oliver of a family active in both Aylsham and Scottow. She had first married Geoffrey Aleyns of Aylsham who died in 1492 leaving her with two sons under 21 to bring up.¹⁸ Geoffrey left Richard and Henry very modest bequests but son Henry had a little extra money to encourage him to become a priest. Aleyns was not particularly affluent, although he did refer to the houses belonging to his shop and was presumably a tradesman in Aylsham market place, quite probably also in the cloth business.¹⁹ His widow Margaret would have brought her money to her next marriage.

Wymer's first wife Joan had borne him a son John, who became an affluent farmer and worsted weaver in Scottow inheriting his father's house called Bowches and land at Hylgate; on his death in 1517 he left two looms to his wife and family.²⁰ Thomas and Margaret moved into their property in Aylsham, which implies a house of suitably good quality. Part of it may still exist in the massively thick section of wall near the foot of the grand staircase in the present Old Hall. In his will, made and proved in early summer 1507, Thomas described himself as 'of Aylsham' and when he died on 4th June, he was buried in St Michael's as he wished.²¹ He asked Henry Aleyns priest (his step-son) to sing for his soul and that of his previous wife Joan and Sir John Mylesham knight (who may have been Joan's father). As Thomas had no children by Margaret, he left her all his houses and lands in Aylsham, above any claim she had already as jointure. His two looms went to Thomas Lely (or Lily) of Scottow (his grandson by daughter Isabel and husband John) and Richard Aleyns, Margaret's other son. John Wymer's children were left sums of money. His will which was to be executed with the help of two Aylsham men, Thomas Orwell and Adam Sparrowhawk, was witnessed by Thomas Tilson the Vicar of Aylsham and priest Thomas Aleyns.

Widow Margaret Wymer was to have a long life in Aylsham, almost certainly living at the Old Market house throughout. Her wealth enabled her to acquire other property in town, including Bolwick manor which she is said to have acquired from Thomas Aleyns in 1537 and then soon

afterwards sold to the Wood family who around this time, post-dissolution, acquired the manor of Sexton's which became known as Aylsham Wood.²² Margaret also held lands of Sexton's manor in 1542 which included 7 acres of arable once held by Robert Bettes, 2 acres in Cockerell field, an 8 acre enclosure at Cropp's Toft, 2 acres in North Croft; unspecified lands once John Bettes (perhaps 15 or 16 acres); 45 acres of arable, 5 of pasture and 10 of meadow and 3 roods enclosed at Hall Toft.²³ Some of this was held jointly with her son Henry Aleyns and he held a further 43 acres on his own. There is no doubt that Margaret was a significant force in Aylsham.

Back in the Aylsham Lancaster court rolls, Margaret, on her deathbed in December 1547, had surrendered the Old Market estate to Henry to perform her will.²⁴ It was described as one house with marginally under 67 acres of land and a butcher's stall in Aylsham. Henry also gained other houses and extensive lands that he and his mother had held jointly for a number of years. Unfortunately the Lancaster court roll that would explain their acquisition of these lands in August 1523 and at other dates during the reign of Henry VIII is presently unfit for production.²⁵ As a result of this and the poor survival of records for Vicarage and Sexton's manors we are not able to show fully Margaret's undoubted great wealth. Yet with all this property, including Coldham Hall (or Vergeons) which she and Henry held together, and at least one other large estate in Sexton's and possibly Bolwick manor, she chose to live her long life in the house at Old Market.²⁶

Margaret's will, made in January 1547, made her son Henry Aleyns clerk her sole executor who was to sing for the souls of the family for a stipend of £6 per year.²⁷ She asked to be buried in the chapel of St Peter, one of the guild chapels in St Michael's, and left the normal array of godly bequests to churches and the poor. Her Wymer and Lely kin were left small legacies as were her grandchildren, the son and daughter of Richard Aleyns. Her brother John Oliver was to have 40s. Her will particularly concerned arrangements for her Old Market property. She left the very large sum of £8 to the parish to repair the 'ways at old market' where most needed; no doubt at this damp spot the road was frequently muddy and difficult to use. She left the house 'where I live', her 80 acres of land, meadow, pasture and heath ground to Henry if he thought it 'convenient to inhabit and maintain it'. If he did not want to live there he was to sell it to her nephew John Oliver for £80, with £10 to

be paid initially and then 10 marks per year until the whole sum was paid. But she specified that John must live there and could not sell off any parts of this estate. If he refused these terms her executor was to sell the whole property to someone else, but again with the requirement that the purchaser live in it. This demand in a will that the beneficiary should live in the house is very unusual and demonstrates Margaret's love for the house at Old Market.

Henry only outlived his mother by a few years, dying on 3rd October 1554.²⁸ He asked to be buried in the chapel of Our Lady in Aylsham church beside his uncle William Aleyns clerk.

Henry Aleyns and John Oliver

Henry's long and detailed will confirmed various of his mother's bequests and added some of his own.²⁹ He mentioned many other local people, particularly members of the Aleyns and Oliver families. John Oliver was to have, for £80 in the specified staged payments, his aunt's place with its 80 acres of arable and pasture mostly 'lying by a way from Old Market to Apell Heath'. From this and court roll entries it is clear that Abel Heath was originally Apple Heath – a far more understandable name. The way referred to seems to match the line now taken by the avenue walk leading straight up the slope towards the heath. The core lands of the estate lay on either side of this way. Margaret Wymer had been taken to task in 1508 by the manor court for branches obstructing another way from Scheppys or Scharping Flasshe towards Apple Heath. 'Scharping' is used elsewhere in the early court rolls and probably means gravel, with 'flash' meaning pit.³⁰ The present farm name of Flash Pit, immediately by this same location on the Blickling Road, is therefore tautological. An old lane known as Brabon's Ride or Lane ran across the land here more or less demarcating the Aylsham/Blickling parish boundary. It was still similarly named in 1729 on the estate plan hanging in Blickling Hall. Some of the Old Market estate fields ran right along this lane.

Henry instructed that some minor lands in Cockerell field (no doubt the earlier 6 acres) were to be sold separately. He also noted that he had surrendered lands in Sexton's and the Vicar's manors – it seems likely that the Old Market estate also held copyhold in Vicarage manor. All in all Henry was quite a worldly cleric.



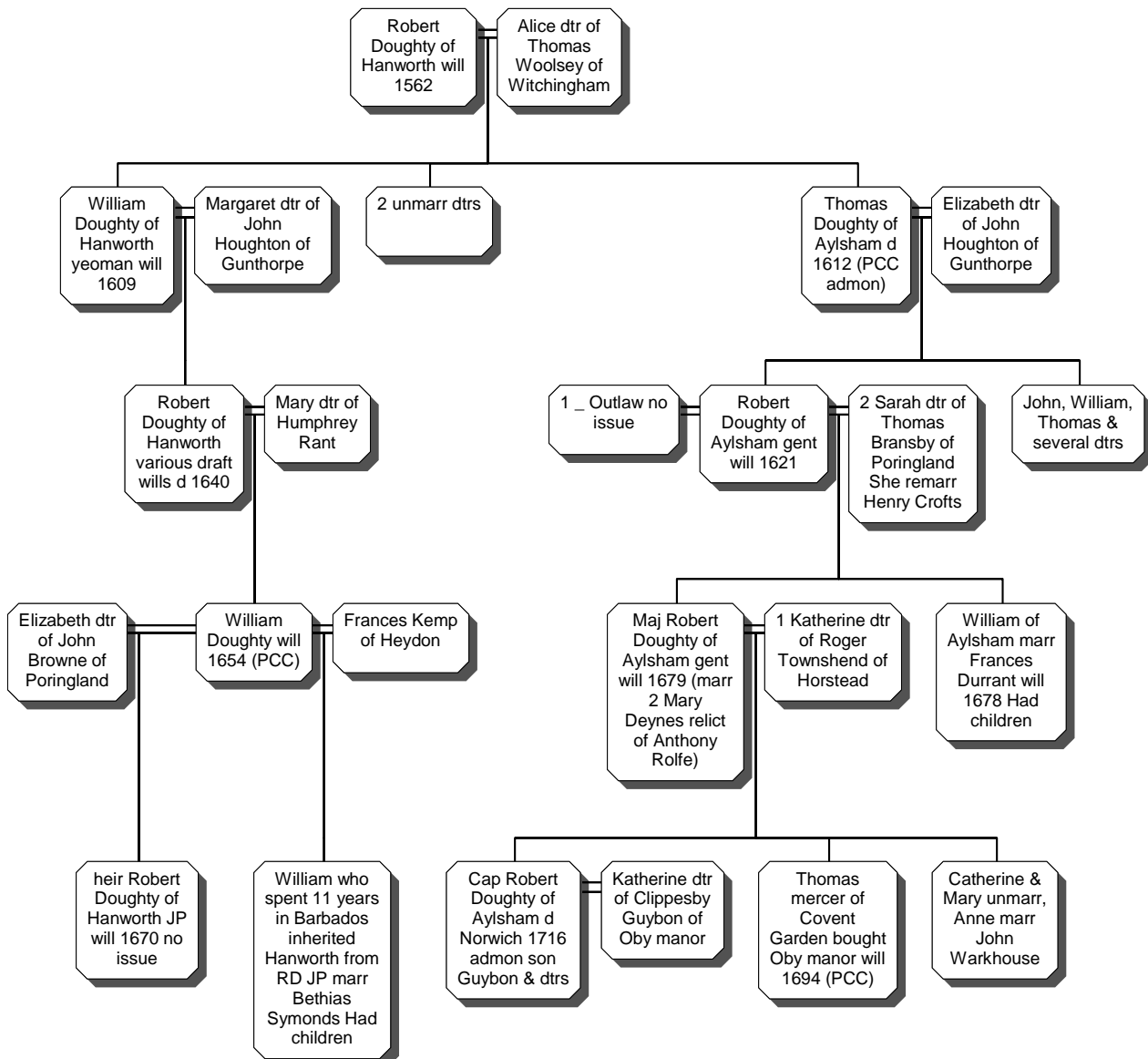
Blickling estate map of 1729 showing Brabon's Lane along the parish boundary

At Michaelmas 1555 Henry's executors conveyed the Old Market property to his cousin John Oliver. The house now had only 40¼ acres and it was noted that John had already bought from the executors a further 3¼ acres in the same manor – probably some of the small pieces in Cockerell field. It is quite likely that he also held land from the other manors, making a total of perhaps about 80 acres. Within a few years, John Oliver and his wife Agnes used the property as security for a mortgage loan from the Gryme family of Suffield and shortly afterwards sold it on.³¹

The Doughty family era

In August 1565 the manor court ratified the Olivers' sale of the Old Market house and just over 40 acres to Thomas Doughty and his trustees William Doughty and John Plaford – probably his brother and a cousin. This was the start of a 119 year era of ownership by the Doughty family of Aylsham.

The Doughty family had its origins in Hanworth where the senior line continued, often with the same first name, in parallel to the Aylsham line. The family relationships are complicated and have not to date been fully unravelled so a summary family tree is given here.³²



Summary Doughty family tree

When the long-lived Thomas Doughty died on 11th June 1612, his four sons were admitted to the house and just over 45 acres of land in August that year.³³ During his tenure Thomas had also acquired 4 acres in Cockerell field and about 7 acres in Felys or Fayles toft or croft near Brampton Bridge. The younger sons, Thomas, William and John, at this time released their legal gavelkind stake in the premises to the new head of the family Robert, the first of three of that name.

In 1617, through the will of Robert Clare senior, the first Robert Doughty added another 7 acres of pasture in the close called Pye's Close lying in the old market – which probably included the old Pye's Toft – and added more meadow land on the northern side of the farmyard.³⁴ So

at the time of the early 1620s rental of the Aylsham Lancaster manor, the total of the Doughty holding at Old Market was a fraction over 60 acres. The rental's description of his house having '4 bays' would be consistent with a classic late-medieval single range hall house: a pantry or buttery, a cross passage between front and back doors, a 2 bay hall and a parlour. The mention of the 'backside' or back house shows that this was a 'T' or 'L' shaped building.

The first Robert Doughty died in August 1621. Through his widow's remarriage the other Old Market properties were added to the Doughty estate. Sarah married to Henry Crofts who had acquired the Norgate houses in August 1622.³⁵ At the same court Edmund Reve had surrendered the old Brackley property to Robert Gurney, who sold it on to Henry Crofts in March 1627. In October 1633 Henry passed this property to his wife Sarah for her life after which it was to go to her son Robert Doughty as long as he reached 21. In July 1629 Henry Crofts acquired the other Reve property. The Haund cottage has not been traced through the court books but may have been the house, part of which Robert Doughty later bought from the Smyth family.

Along with Robert Doughty senior's estate which passed to his eldest son Robert after his mother's death, most of Crofts's additional properties stayed in the Doughty family though Henry's 1638 will and the court books do not show exactly how and when this was achieved.³⁶

The middle Robert, or Major Doughty as he was known, and his son Captain Robert Doughty, both still lived in the old house at Old Market. They added three more pieces of Old Market property: the 3 acre close called Lambe's on the other side of the road, bought from Thomas Leman in 1651; the messuage with 1 rood in the northern part of Old Market from Henry Smyth in 1661; and part of a messuage and 1 rood from Richard Smyth in 1676. So it seems that Sarah, her second husband and her son Robert Doughty were the driving force behind the final consolidation of all the lands and houses in the Old Market vicinity, forming, by the Major's middle years, the eventual estate of a single house with 145 acres almost all contiguous around it. Additionally in Aylsham Lancaster alone, the Doughty family added a messuage called Edrick's, various closes, pieces of field land in Cockerell field and 3 houses with land in Millgate Street – the latter no doubt to house workers for the two Aylsham mills which they held of Aylsham Lancaster.³⁷ A

rental for Aylsham Wood late Sexton's of 1662–63 tells us that Major Doughty held a total of just over 57 acres copyhold in this manor, having given a further 13¾ acres to his son Robert in the late 1650s.³⁸ These houses and lands were not the only money making ventures of the Doughty family. By 1670 Robert Doughty was leasing from the Dean and Chapter of Canterbury the rectory of Aylsham, valuable for its power to collect corn tithes in the parish.³⁹

Captain Robert Doughty, the third one of that name, was active in Aylsham throughout his life, taking on the management of the mills in 1648. The mills were settled on him by his father in 1673 when he married Katherine the daughter of Clippesby Guybon esq of Oby.⁴⁰ His father married again and surviving letters show that this marriage to Mary Deynes, widow of Anthony Rolfe, was not happy.⁴¹ He and Mary ended up estranged and living apart. The letters refer to a chancery suit over an unpaid annuity that rumbled on for three years following Major Robert's death. Mary died at around the same time as her husband and John Warkhouse, an Aylsham lawyer who had married Major Doughty's daughter Anne, tried to protect the interests of those that should have benefited by her will – the Rolfe children and the family of Peter Elwin of Tuttington.⁴² Warkhouse was also a cousin of Captain Doughty's wife Katherine Guybon. It seems likely that Major Doughty left significant debts and that Captain Robert was eventually forced to sell his Aylsham interests to settle matters.

In the next article we shall see how the Doughty shortage of money affected the Old Hall site and how the new house came to be built.

Sources

Note: all January to March dates given in the text have been corrected to the modern calendar year.

1. Copeman family articles in the Aylsham Local History Society Journal 2010 and on www.itteringham.com
2. Pevsner & Wilson, *The Buildings of England, Norfolk*, 1962 & 1997; E Griffiths, *The Management of two East Norfolk Estates in the seventeenth century: Blickling and Felbrigg 1596–1717*, Unpublished Ph D thesis, UEA, 1987; J Maddison ed, *Blickling Hall*, National Trust, 1987; John Maddison's notes on the house and later

- alterations in Aylsham Town Archive used in T Mollard, Aylsham Old Hall, Aylsham Local History Society Journal, 2001, 6: 186–89
3. J Sapwell, A History of Aylsham, 1960
 4. The material will also form part of a book the authors are working on covering some North Norfolk manors and old halls.
 5. NRO, NRS 19247a, 33F4; NRS 19561, 42D3
 6. NRO, NRS 12403, 27D1 Rental for Sexton's manor of 1542–43 listing every holding in the manor and prior holders
 7. W & M Vaughan-Lewis, See You in Court: The Potts Family of Mannington 1584–1737, 2009
 8. NRO, NCC will 1483, Caston 160
 9. TNA, E 315/360; Aylsham in the 17th Century, Aylsham Local History Society, 1988 who suggested an area to the north-west of the church around School Lane.
 10. NHER, E-map Explorer
 11. 1840 tithe map and apportionment, TNA, IR 30/23/22 & IR 29/23/22
 12. The Old Market area was always described with 'old'. Small strips of land in 'le market field' may have been adjacent to Hungate Street, perhaps the remains of an old open field.
 13. In the published version the word granary was mistakenly read as chantry.
 14. TNA, C9/122/50
 15. NRO, NRS 16616, 36G
 16. NRO, NRS 19247b, 33F5
 17. His father was probably John Wymer who died in Scottow in 1465. NRO, NCC will 1465, Cobald 72
 18. NRO, NCC will 1492, Woolman 153. Geoffrey also had connections to Antingham.
 19. The William Aleyns clerk who was to supervise the execution of the will was Geoffrey's brother and references to him appear in other documents, with Margaret and her son Henry acting later as his executors. TNA, C 1/936/13; and see Henry's will below.
 20. NRO, NCC will 1517, Gylys 45
 21. NRO, NCC will 507, Spyltymber 5; F Blomefield on Aylsham in History of Norfolk
 22. Blomefield. The source of this comment has not been found, but it is credible. Bolwick and Sexton's were sub-manors of Aylsham Lancaster. A Thomas Aleyn (d 1528) had held Aylsham Lancaster for 10 years having acquired it from Agnes Multon widow in 1519. TNA, C 142/50/13. He had no son called Thomas but perhaps this sub-manor passed to another Thomas, of the same family.
 23. NRO, NRS 12403, 27D1
 24. NRO, NRS 12131, 27B4

25. NRO, NRS 13434, 28B2
26. Vergeon's was also called Coldham Hall and is still identifiable on the Tuttington side of the parish. This hall and its lands had been held from Robert Wood's Sexton's manor by William Vergeon esq who appears in the early Aylsham Lancaster rolls.
27. NRO, NCC will 1547, Wymer 1; NRO, NRS 12131, 27B4
28. TNA, C 142/103/51; NCC will 1554, Walpoole 122
29. His tenement at 'Kippes pit' was to be used for charity. He left to the town the chapel in the east field where a priest should sing mass and a school should be kept to teach grace, with books and primers for writing. A large sum was left for highway repairs in Aylsham and for repairs to Cromer pier.
30. J Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary*, 1904
31. NRO, NRS 13683, 28D3. John Oliver seems to have been the worsted weaver of Swanton Abbott who died in 1572 – NRO, NCC will 1572, Brygge 446
32. The authors would be happy to provide details of the sources used – Visitations, all Norfolk and PCC wills for the family over three centuries plus extensive trawling through parish registers and the Aylsham Collection at NRO.
33. NRO, NRS 16614, 36G; TNA, PROB 6, PCC Administration 1612 p 64
34. TNA, E 315/360. The rental is undated but probably made in about 1624 just after the death of the first Robert Doughty.
35. NRO, NRS 16614-17, 36G
36. NRO, ANW will 1621, 320/438; NRO, NRS 16616, 36G; TNA, PCC will 1638, PROB 11/178
37. Mason, *History of Norfolk* vol 2
38. TNA, E 178/6362 The rental survives in the 1668 case between Robert Wood, lord of Aylsham Wood, and Doughty re rents due to Wood from the 20 tofts or crofts in Aylsham. In evidence Doughty listed all his lands held of this manor. The Doughty copyhold total was approximately 60 acres in Lancaster, 57 plus 14 acres in Wood/Sexton's and 2 acres in Vicarage.
39. Canterbury Cathedral archives, Dean & Chapter records, CCA-U63/70768-74
40. See the authors' Potts book for his involvement with the family at Mannington and loans countersigned by Aylsham people including Robert Doughty in the 1670s.
41. NRO, MC 2495/1/8-12, 978x8. These letters also refer to 'Mr Wyndham', of the Felbrigg line of the family, having links to the Aylsham area to whom Doughty owed rent on land in Burgh and Tuttington in 1681. TNA Chancery actions (C9, C10) in the late 1670s and 1680s involving Doughty, Warkhouse, Elwyn and others have not been examined. They might shed further light on Major Doughty's affairs and Capt Doughty's decision to sell up and leave Aylsham.
42. TNA, PCC will John Warkhouse 1706, PROB 11/491

The Fox Public House

by Geoffrey Gale

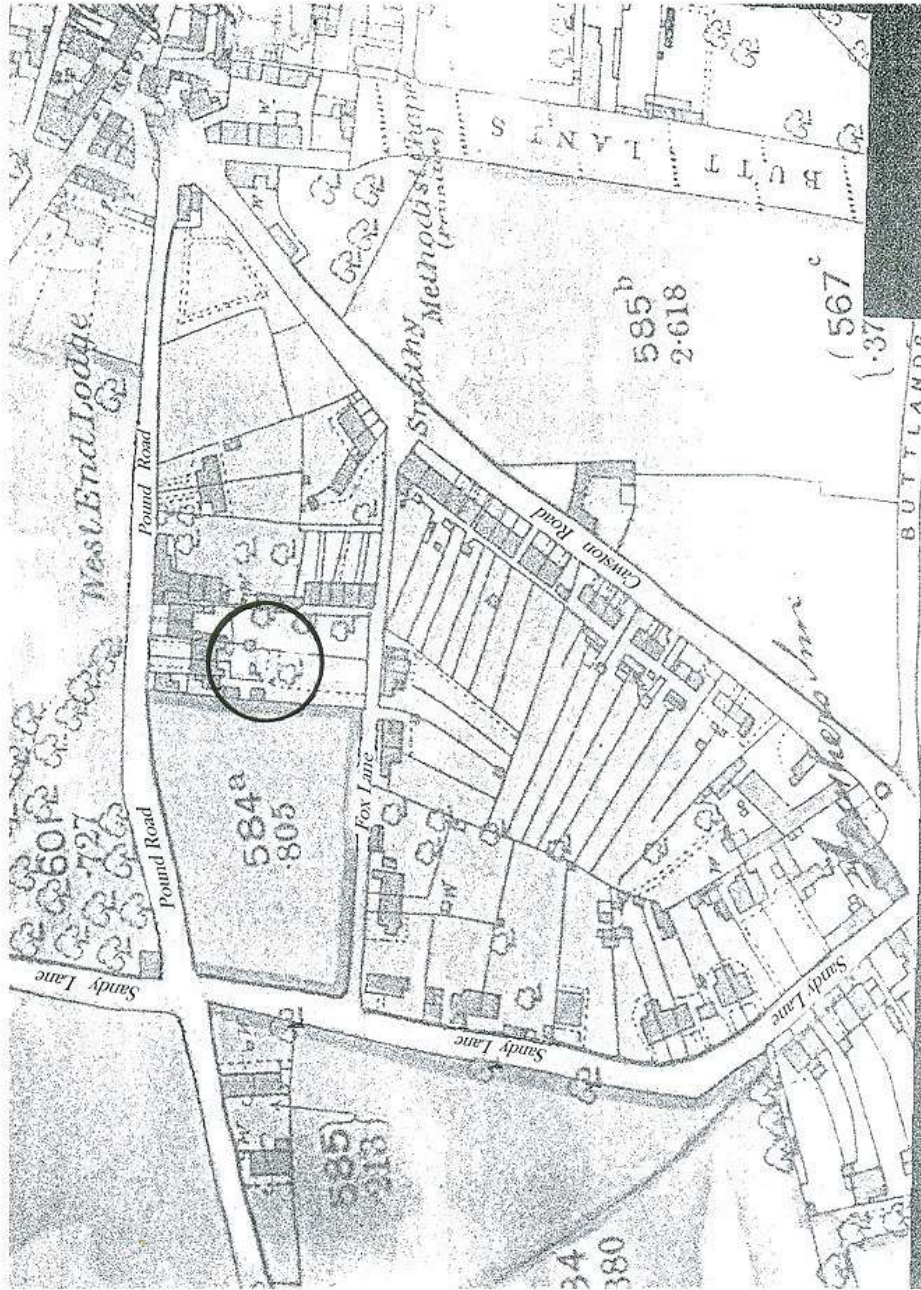
When Aylsham Inns and Public Houses had first been published there seemed little to add to the sad tale of decline amongst the local drinking houses. The destruction of some and the conversion of others into private homes seemed to be an inevitable end for the majority of inns and public houses in Aylsham. The unfortunate coincidence of the Stonemasons closing in 2001, during the year the book was published, was just another illustration of a pattern of closure which began with the White Hart in 1864.

Some years after the first edition of Aylsham Inns and Public Houses had been published I read a report from the Public Health Committee of the St. Faith's and Aylsham Rural District Council dated September 1935. My reason for looking through these minutes was connected with some other research I was engaged in. It therefore came as some surprise to discover a reference to Fox Loke Public House and the clearance of slum property in the area. The clearance was part of the Housing Act 1935 and was coupled with another clearance order of seven houses in the yard of the White Hart public house.

The Fox had been a small public house in Fox Lane, a narrow lane leading off the Cawston Road by the side of the Smithy. At the other end, Fox Lane joined Sandy Lane, a long lane which crossed Pound Lane and continued around until it rejoins Cawston Road. The Feathers public house is also at this junction .

The layout of these roads has not changed over a hundred and seventy years and remains the same as it was in 1840. However the names have not remained static – during that period they have been moved around. The original Pound Lane has been renamed Holman Road and as a consequence now divides Sandy Lane into two parts. The shortest part is still called Sandy Lane but the longest part has been renamed Pound Lane; as a result Fox Lane now connects Cawston Road with Pound Lane. Puzzlingly Fox Lane although left in the same position has changed its name three times over the same period, in 1839 it was simply Fox Lane but ninety years later when the clearance had begun it had become Fox Loke and today it is Fox's Loke which implies it had been named after a person called fox, but that seems very unlikely.

A possible explanation lies in the history of the area. Before any of the cottages had been built the area was farming land, mostly owned by John Warnes and his son also named John Warnes. In those circumstances one can speculate that as farm land it may have been the haunt of foxes or they were frequently seen in the area. Once the cottages and the small public house had been built and the lane then required a name, 'Fox'



Location of the Fox Public House

seemed the most appropriate.

Apart from the name there is little known about the Fox Public House. The first publican and owner of the Fox was John Porrett who was also a shoemaker. He died at the age of sixty in October 1840, four years after his wife Susan had died and both John and Susan Porrett are buried in St. Michael's churchyard.

Following Porrett's death the next publican was Robert Herring, who stayed from 1840 until 1846. He was listed as a licensed victualler so he could still sell alcohol, but the Fox was now classed as a beer house. Herring was followed by John Moy who went on to run a beerhouse in the Cawston Road and a little later became the publican at the Feathers Public House. The last name connected with the Fox was John Butler. He was also a harness maker and continued to run the pub and his leather business from the same address. During the period from 1840 the Fox was bought by Bircham & Son, the Reepham Brewers. How long this small public house remained in their ownership and continued to sell beer is unknown, but it probably closed around 1850. The three bungalows adjoining the Fox had by 1935 become a collection of deteriorating buildings that were recommended for clearance "by reason of their disrepair and sanitary defects".

There is no clear trace on the ground where the Fox was located although maps of that period indicate where it was most probably located. Nor are there any photographs of the buildings or the site, except for one photograph now in the Aylsham Archives which was believed to have been taken in the early 1900's. It was probably taken from the air and shows the Cawston Road, the Buttlands and in the distance the Market Place, the photograph is unusual because Aylsham is rarely photographed from that side of the town. Unfortunately the area where the Fox should be is just on the edge of the picture and shrouded by trees in the lane.

The Public Health Committee acting for the District Council were responsible for initiating both clearances. They had sent an inspector to report on the condition of the White Hart yard property five years earlier in 1930 and he recommended the property should be cleared. Five years later the situation had further declined and the seven houses in the White Hart yard, although they were occupied they were again recommended for clearance. The District Council still delayed and offered to cancel the White Hart Clearance Order providing the owner carried out the improvements required by the Council. A little later the owner wrote to the Council and "declared he was unable to carry out the work required by the Council" and accordingly on the 24th August 1935 they resolved to make out a clearance order on the dwellings in White Hart Yard.

MEDIEVAL WALL PAINTINGS – a talk by Matthew Champion



Detail of St Edmund from a wall painting in St Mary the Virgin at Lakenheath, with a reconstruction to show how the fragment might have looked originally, with St Edmund looking out towards the south door, his hand raised in blessing to the entrants.

On the 28th October 2010 Matthew Champion gave ALHS a talk on Medieval Wall Painting. At a breakneck pace, he took us through the history, function, and interpretation of medieval paintings, with over 50 images. These were mostly of wall paintings, but there were also illuminated manuscripts and tomb statuary as comparisons.

Our speaker has project managed the conservation of church wall paintings, including those at Lakenheath, Suffolk; edited an award winning book; and is part of the Norfolk medieval graffiti survey. He lives in Norfolk.

History

Wall paintings are known to have been used in churches at least since Anglo Saxon times, continuing to be applied, it is believed, to 99.8% of pre-reformation church walls. We were shown how Kempsey church would have looked in the 12th century – a riot of colour. In modern times, most English churches are entirely white-washed – often with lime wash. Only about 10% retain even vestiges of paint. Wall paintings that have survived are almost invariably less bright than they were originally. The most durable colour is red, and many paintings now are either black and white or black, white, and red. Other pigments have proved less durable.

The earliest wall paintings shown in the talk are in Winchester museum, and are tenth century. Anglo Saxon iconography included oval faces and eyes and Matthew Champion showed how this persisted in a Last Trump from Houghton on the Hill, Norfolk dated to 1080. In this painting the faces of the saved souls and the angels show Anglo Saxon facial features, whereas the damned souls have Norman faces.

The development of wall paintings was shown through a succession of slides, including a pre-Gothic Christ in Majesty at Clayton St John. Pre-Gothic churches had a great deal of wall space, and the paintings found in the churches show a hierarchy reflecting the social hierarchy. God and the angels are at the highest level of the church, and Kings, princes, etc below, and the common people are at the bottom, if at all. Chaldon St Peter in Surrey has a ladder of Salvation, Hell on the bottom level, with quite explicit displays of the sufferings, with Heaven above.

Gothic architecture (from about 1250) has much larger windows, and therefore less wall space. We were shown in quick succession:

North Walsham,

All Saints Little Wenham Suffolk, which has a painting of three female saints,

14th century Heydon Ss Peter and Paul, which has a painting described as the three magi, although this is possibly a misattribution. They may be the three living where opposite would have been the three dead.

1417AD St Anne's Coventry. A painting of soldiers at the foot of the cross, shortly after Agincourt, in contemporary armour,

1480AD Eton College Chapel. Several paintings of the miracles of the Virgin. These are 24' above the floor. Eton College was owned by royalty and the work is of very good quality. The colour scheme of the paintings is mostly grisaille (shades of grey) with faces picked out in flesh colour, and gold highlights, such as a neck/chest ornament on a knight.

After the Reformation (1534) Henry VIII was happy to leave churches and services as they were, other than acknowledging him as the head of the church, and thus the recipient of monies previously paid to the Papacy. His son and successor Edward VI (reigned 1547–1553) had received a very protestant upbringing, and banned popery. This led to some wall paintings being removed, and some painted over. Some had faces removed – a literal defacement. Some churches continued to have paint on the walls, moving to biblical texts. Wiveton had texts on the walls until late 19th century.

Function

Nowadays we tend to think of wall paintings as stories for the illiterate, but this is not the whole story. Certainly there are examples such as Sporle (in Norfolk) which has from the early 15th century a series of drawings, almost in cartoon form, showing the life of St Katherine of Alexandria. Functions can be categorised as narrative, cult images, interactive, and devotional.

Narrative images.

Brook in Kent has paintings of the infancy and passion of Christ, datable to 1250AD

Stoke Newington in Oxfordshire has a 14th century martyrdom of St Thomas a Beckett, with a great deal of brightly coloured blood and gore.

St Gregory's in Norwich has a huge 15th century St George, on his horse killing dragon – only one story from his life.

Cult Images – these give a focus for devotion. These are equatable to modern day icons.

Shelfhanger has a Virgin and Child from the late 13th century.

Belchamp St Walter has a 14th century lactating Virgin.

Cawston has the Blessed Virgin Mary (NOT St. Agnes as in the guidebook).

Interactive – where the image is seen as responding to the viewer, such a St Christopher conferring protection on worshippers.

Lakenheath (c 1350–1360) has a painting of St Edmund opposite the main door, blessing entrants

Images as acts of devotion – the donor receives grace for the gift

Ewelme has a 15th century tomb of Alice de la Pole, Duchess of Suffolk.

The topmost third has a recumbent figure of the duchess in life, the middle third is where the body is interred, the bottom third has a stone grill surrounding it, through which can be seen an alabaster effigy of the corpse. Above the corpse effigy, on the ‘ceiling’ are wall paintings of the annunciation. These are there *for the effigy*.

Interpretation

The interpretation of wall paintings has been revolutionised by new approaches that have grown out of new technology.

We were told of the Lakenheath project, which Matthew Champion project managed. St. Mary the Virgin is a wonderful church, where evidence of wall paintings was discovered serendipitously in the 1880s. The wonderfully named Septimus Horrocks found coloured paint whilst repairing the roof angels.

Lakenheath Pier 3 shows the remains of several layers. At first glance it is a mess. There are at least three schema. These were misinterpreted before, and it was believed that most of these were post Reformation, possibly even Victorian. This has now been shown to be incorrect, that in fact all schema pre-date 1500.

Lakenheath Pier 2 has visible what appears to be angels, with a disarticulated head in the middle. This was initially interpreted as part of the St. John the Baptist story, but more modern techniques have demonstrated that the head is actually part of a separate wall painting, of a later date from the angels, and that the head, having been seen by the workmen, was left in situ when the whitewash was scraped off.

The Lakenheath project has identified at least three schema:–

Scheme 1 c 1200–1230, shows angels. From the evidence available, it is just possible that this scheme is late 12th century, and thus may be

contemporary with the erection of that part of the church. 12th century work is very rare, and more compelling evidence would be needed to establish it as 12th century. The Crowland Chronicles (1170–1180) include pictures of angels in the illustrations that bear a striking resemblance to the Lakenheath angels. Master Hugo's work in Bury St Edmunds, including the Bury St Edmunds bible, also shows stylistic similarities to this scheme. Master Hugo is known to have produced for the Abbey not only the bible, but also gates for the Abbey entrance, no longer extant, but possibly acting as an inspiration to the Lakenheath workers. We were then shown a slide of a reconstruction of scheme 1. There were angels along the north wall above the aisle arches, spotted decorations on the arches, and figures on the pillars near the font. The figures around the font were not saints, since they have no nimbuses, and were possibly donors of the financing of the scheme, or patrons of the church, giving their blessing to baptisms.

Scheme 2, c 1250–1260, on Pier 3, shows a stylised tree, with a bird on the topmost branch, with a painted representation of a curtain beneath. Matthew Champion has been told that this resembles several designs in churches in Gottland, Sweden, but unfortunately nobody nowadays knows what the tree represents. It is not dissimilar to a tree shown in medieval bestiaries, called the peridexian, or perindens, tree. This is regarded as a metaphor for the Christian church.

Scheme 3, 1350–1360, on Pier 3, is on three levels. At the bottom is the Virgin Mary with her baby, and next to her St Edmund, with his hand raised in blessing. Above this on two levels, are the images of the Passion cycle. These images include the flagellation of Christ, the Crucifixion, the Harrowing of Hell, and the Resurrection.

The bottom image, that of the Virgin Mary, Christ and St Edmund, is very unusual, in that St. Edmund is facing outward, with his hand raised in blessing, rather than looking to the Virgin and Child. On the uppermost level, where Christ is leading the souls from Hell, amongst the people immediately behind him is another possible representation of St Edmund. It is now suggested that these two images, particularly given the date which is very soon after the Black Death (1348), may be a not so subtle way of cocking a snook at the Abbey of Ely. Ely was unhelpful after the Black Death and sought to return to the status quo ante, with

rents, fees, and tenancies taking no account of the reduction of the population. Ely owned the church lands in Lakenheath. Bury St. Edmunds abbey, on the other hand, was notably more charitable to its people, and took account of the changes in their dealing with their tenants. Bury owned the parish lands. The Black Death hit Lakenheath in 1348/9, and within 3 months, 50 % of the population was dead.

It was regrettable that Matthew Champion's equipment had to be substituted, so that the intensity of the colours on the laptop screen was not displayed on the main screen. It was explained that the red used in medieval frescos survives much better than the other pigments, and this was obvious on the laptop display. It was a shame that this could not be seen by all.

Throughout the talk, we were given some fascinating insights into the techniques of investigating and restoring wall paintings. It was explained how, at Houghton on the Hill, the conservator decided to record the uppermost paintings, then go through to earlier works. At Houghton on the Hill this approach exposed some stunning early paintings. This approach is, however, no longer considered acceptable, and the uppermost non lime-washed surface is preserved. New photographic techniques can show up lower levels of paint, particularly when the paint is applied to wet plaster, and soaks in to give a permanent bond.

The paintings inside the Duchess's tomb at Ewelme were recorded thanks to the inventiveness of a 'hoodie' who suggested using a mobile phone to record the more inaccessible images.

At various points it was indicated that several paint techniques were not pictures. Some were simple patterns, a speedy way of filling a space with colour. Others were more representational, with trompe l'oeil effects. At Lakenheath one such was a painting of patchwork, still made today, and known as cathedral window. Another was a painting of a curtain, cheaper and more durable than the real thing. The *pièce de résistance* was a painting of a capital at the top of a column, obviously very much cheaper than a stone-carved capital.

We were told of two websites for further information, wallpaintings.org and paintedchurch.org.

This was a great talk, giving us much to think about.

Daphne Davy

The Norfolk Wherry; Past, Present and Future – a talk by Peter Bower of the Wherry Yacht Charter Trust



Photo. of wherry c. 1900 on River Bure at St Andrew's Church, Lammas, courtesy of Norfolk County Council.

Over 70 people attended this lecture on 27th January 2011, which perhaps reflects the affection which we attach to this beautiful boat, so evocative of the Norfolk Broads.

Peter, ably supported by his projectionist Richard, began by explaining that the ancestry of the wherry can probably be traced to the Vikings. It is clinker built (i.e. with overlapping planks). Its predecessor was the keel, and these boats were probably influenced by the Dutch. The wherry, with its shallow draught and large single sail, can sail close to the wind and is ideally suited to The Broads. The wherry mast was counterbalanced by a one-ton weight. This enabled the crew to

‘shoot’ the bridges – to pass under without stopping or quanting (propelling with a pole), so saving time and energy.

The wherry sail would have been white when new, but then was tanned or treated with tar and herring oil, resulting in the black sail. The cargo had to be stored carefully, as it overlapped the deck, and the mate had to quant from on top of the load when necessary. The crew consisted of a skipper and a mate only, so the vessel had to be easy to handle. It could reach all the small staithe, and by the late nineteenth century there were hundreds of wherries on the Broads.

When the Aylsham Navigation opened in 1779, small wherries could get right in to the dykes at Coltishall to access the marl.

Peter gave us an account of the mills and locks on the Aylsham Navigation, an account interrupted by some discussion of the staithe and the lock at Aylsham. The lock is well downstream from the staithe, though there is a weir nearby. The staithe basin was filled in and, though the staithe still exists, it is partly covered by a small housing development. Peter explained that lock cuts were constructed to by-pass the various water-mills on the Upper Bure. The navigation was closed following the great flood of 1912 which destroyed locks and bridges. The wherry Zulu was stranded upstream of Buxton Mill and was hauled across the road and downstream to continue her trade.

The Broads became a popular holiday destination, and many wherries were converted to leisure craft for the short summer season. There are very few photos of wherry interiors, but they were well fitted out, and even offered a piano! The crew kept their accommodation at the rear. There were over 100 pleasure wherries at one time and they could be identified by their white sail. The wherry yacht appealed to those few who had the time and the money to spare, but there was still an affection for the working wherry. Wherry yachts had a proud stern which was helpful in providing space for holiday makers out of the way of the crew.

By the early 20th century, most places were within a few miles of a railway station, and so the wherries lost trade. For example, Wroxham to Norwich by river is 52 miles and took two or three days by wherry. By rail it was eight miles and took 30 minutes. The last trading wherry was built in 1912 at Coltishall. Many old wherries were abandoned, some to secure the banks of Wroxham Broad. The last cargo was sugar beet to Cantley.

After World War 1, few families could afford the hire of a wherry and crew, and so looked to self-crew a vessel. This was not possible with a wherry, and so the function of a wherry was largely gone.

There are eight remaining wherries, some of which are undergoing or awaiting repair. They are: Solace, Albion, Norada, Olive, Maud, Hartor, White Moth, and Ardir. These wherries are in various states of repair, and some are awaiting improvements necessary to meet modern exacting standards of health and safety. Where repairs have been made, the standards of workmanship in the restorations are commendable, and reflect the high quality of traditional workmanship at such yards as Halls of Reedham and Collins of Wroxham. All eight remaining wherries have been renovated to some extent, some to almost a complete rebuild.

The Wherry Yacht Charter Trust was boosted by a significant lottery fund award, but that money is now committed, and the Trust is determined to continue work, not only on the three wherries, but also on the slipway, the workshop and the office. The Trust is always looking for support, and members of the History Society showed their interest and support for Peter and the Trust in responding to his interesting lecture and wonderful collection of photographs in a very positive way.

Jim Pannell

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Metal detecting finds in Norfolk - a talk by Adrian Marsden



Caston horse barrel lock, 12th century, courtesy Norfolk Museums and Archaeology Service.

Adrian Marsden is a specialist in Roman coins, which he has collected for a number of years. He has completed a study on Roman Imperial Portraiture and Propaganda in the 3rd century at Oxford University. His particular interests include the contemporary imitations of Roman coins, particularly those of the 3rd century, and the coinage of the later 3rd century. However, his topic when speaking to the Aylsham Local History Society encompassed not just Roman coins, but fragments of Norfolk history from 800,000 BC onwards.

He explained that the Norfolk Landscape Archaeology's identification and recording service is based at Gressenhall and Shirehall. In 2009 more than 2000 finds, including metal objects, potsherds, lithics (flints) and other objects were brought in for identification. Many finds look unimpressive. At first glance they just look like broken bits of green metal but these are often copper alloy. For a find to be classed as 'treasure' it needs to be more than 300 years old, gold or silver and in quantity, i.e. a single coin isn't classed as 'treasure'.

Because East Anglia has changed shape, some areas have few finds. For example, areas that were saltmarsh or large estuaries in Roman times, don't yield Roman artefacts.

Bronze Age arrowheads are a common find in Norfolk. There are many Bronze Age hoards but, as these are usually damaged goods, it suggests

that they had been gathered to be recycled. The Iceni remains are usually iron horse furniture which suggests a tradition of horse breeding.

Roman finds are very varied. Perhaps the most interesting was the 'curse tablet' made of lead that was found at Caistor. Written on it was a plea to Neptune, invoking his help. The appellant had had pewter vessels and stockings stolen. He asks Neptune to return the pewter and, in return, Neptune can keep the stockings. Metal detecting equipment isn't always needed to find objects. For example, a schoolgirl found a Roman die in a car park at Caistor St Edmunds.

Saxon finds are often re-used Roman objects. For example, a loop added to a Roman coin turns it into a medallion. Where clusters of items, such as brooches, are found it suggests a burial ground. Mirrors are generally found where there's been a settlement.

Overall, this interesting lecture showed how metal detecting can contribute to mapping the history of a region. **Sheila Merriman**

The Heritage Centre and Education Officer.

At the February meeting of the Society, we were pleased to be introduced to Jayne Andrew. Jayne is the recently appointed Education Officer for the Heritage Centre. She is employed as Education Officer for three days per week, and is continuing her career as an advisory teacher with Norfolk County Council for the other two days.

Jayne explained that the Heritage Centre itself was not completed, but she was optimistic that she would be in occupation in May when there will be an opening occasion.

A condition of the funding is that she attempts to engage people not as familiar with their heritage, and therefore her involvement with the History Society will be limited. However, she is keen to engage with people and to learn about Aylsham and its community. She is also on the lookout for resources to help her stimulate learning sessions, and she would very much like to hear from anyone who could spare a little time as a volunteer helper.

A small group of people associated with the Community Partnership have worked hard over a long period to bring the Heritage Centre in to use, and to appoint an Education Officer. The History Society wishes this group and Jayne all the best with this new venture for Aylsham.

Jim Pannell

Book Review

Bill Bryson: 'At Home: A Short History of Private Life.'

We have a propensity to exaggerate, glorify, mystify, modify, falsify and even invent our history. We 'know' about Robin Hood, Saint George and King Arthur, but little about the electric light or the flushing toilet, despite such advances having profound influences on our daily lives, and on a global scale. 'I thought it might be interesting ... to consider the ordinary things in life ... and treat them as if they were important too' writes Bryson.

In Bill Bryson's 'At Home' we have a fresh perspective on our history. He writes: 'We are so used to having a lot of comfort in our lives – to being clean, warm and well fed – that we forget how recent most of that is.' He takes us through his house (a rectory near Wymondham in Norfolk built by Thomas Marsham in 1851), room by room. From the roof we visit the archaeology, from the hall we are drawn to our Anglo-Saxon ancestors, from the kitchen to Mrs. Beeton's 'Book of Household Management', in the scullery the lives of household servants, and so on. There is even a chapter devoted to the fuse box; indicative of the profound impact that electricity has on daily life. We are drawn in to detailed accounts of the age long struggle for light and warmth, and the removal of our waste ... 'when everyone stinks, no one stinks' writes Bryson.

Bryson has a terrific enthusiasm for the country house. He mourns the onset of inheritance tax as the cause of the mass destruction of English houses in the nineteenth century. Though his enthusiasm is understandable, he might have offered some balance by acknowledging the enormous, and mostly peaceful, social revolution that took place alongside that destruction.

The details reflect Bryson's curiosity, his research, and careful documentation, his prevailing interest in people and their motivations. He is not concerned with a traditional view of history, myth or legend, because the facts of recent history are even more surprising! People famed despite achieving very little, and others virtually unknown to us who have changed our lives.

‘..the history of household life isn’t just a history of beds and sofas and kitchen stoves ... but of scurvy and guano and the Eifel Tower and bedbugs and bodysnatching ... houses aren’t refuges from history. They are where history ends up.’ This summarises Bryson’s achievement well. To ensure that this is not just a comfortable read, Bryson ends with warnings to us about the danger of climate change, and of the condition of the six billion people on our planet who are less comfortable than us.

This is an eminently readable book as crammed with interest as a book can be. You can put it down, but you will want to pick it up again; a thoroughly enjoyable read unreservedly recommended. I can’t help but wonder why it has taken an American to achieve this on English territory!

Thomas Payne would be proud!

Jim Pannell

Bryson, Bill (2010). *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*, Doubleday. ISBN 978-0-385-60827-5 cost £20.00

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Letter to the Editor

Bricks in Aylsham



I found the article by Jim Pannell on ‘Bricks in Aylsham’ very interesting and hope that he will not mind me drawing to his attention the ‘Memories of Aylsham’ by William Frederick Starling in which mention is made of William Starling’s father making bricks in Aylsham. He provided bricks, possibly 120,000, on the railway line from Buxton to Foulsham and also bricks on the Lynn & Fakenham to Yarmouth line (later to form part of the Midland and Great Northern Railway). Apparently Mr. Starling had purchased what is now 20, Red Lion Street and a yard adjoining now known as Pegg’s Yard.

Brian Lowe. 111, Stuart Road, Aylsham NR11 6HN

NOTICES

 **Leading the Way: the Archive of
G. King and Son (Lead Glaziers) Ltd** 



An Exhibition
at the
Norfolk Record Office
The Archive Centre





from
12 January 2011
-
16 April 2011

**Admission
Free**

Norfolk Record Office
The Archive Centre
Martineau Lane
Norwich, NR1 2DQ
Tel: 01603 222599
E-mail: norrec@norfolk.gov.uk
Website: <http://archives.norfolk.gov.uk>

Opening Hours
Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9.00 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.
Tuesday 9.30 a.m. - 5.00 p.m.
Saturday 9.00 a.m. - noon

The Norfolk Archaeological and Historical Research Group.

This group is based in Norwich, and has produced some fine research over many years. As our Society has a corporate membership, our members are entitled to take part in any events and activities and to view the periodical Newsletter. Please contact Jim on 01263 731087 for further details on NAHRG, and information on other Journals received by our Society.

Visit to East Barsham Manor

Early Tudor Hall and Gatehouse, on the afternoon of Monday 16th May, courtesy of Sir John and Lady Guinness.

Please share or use your own car to meet at the Hall at 2 pm.

Contact: Ms Ann Dyball 01263 732637 or ajdyball@tiscali.co.uk

Visit to Long Melford

It is hoped to arrange a date in June or July and notice will be made later.

Contact: Ms Ann Dyball 01263 732637 or ajdyball@tiscali.co.uk

WEA AYLSHAM BRANCH

The City of Berlin: Past and Present by **Barbara Marshall**
Day School Saturday 14th May 2011, 10 am – 4 pm – £12 + £6 for lunch. Booking essential.

Contact: Ms Ann Dyball 01263 732637 or ajdyball@tiscali.co.uk

Autumn Course: East Anglia in The Eighteenth Century.

Developments in Agriculture, the East Anglian Country House and Its Landscape, The Landed Estate, Towns and Cities, Trade and Industry, and East Anglia at War, presented by the The School of History, UEA.

Fee c. £35, venue to be decided when clear about numbers.

Ten sessions starting Wednesday 21st September at 2.00.p.m., with a half-term break on 26th October.

Further details in the local press and on the Society notice-board, website: aylsham-history.co.uk and from Jim Pannell 01263 731087