

SOUTH ELMHAM AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 22

September 2009



OLD FLIXTON HALL IN 1844

A lithograph from Suckling's History and Antiquities of The County of Suffolk 1846

Notes from the Chairman

I could never expect to fill the shoes of our previous chairman, and not because I take size thirteen. Caroline has fulfilled the role with a professionalism that one such as me will probably never aspire to. However I shall do my best. Thank you Caroline for your time as chairman of the group, I must say though, that I'm pleased you have remained on the committee as your experience is invaluable.

The June meeting with Nick Sign telling the group about his course in delving into the past had many members interested. The committee is in consultation with Nick at the moment with regard to running a Spring course of ten weeks. This will probably be on a Wednesday afternoon starting on January the 20th with a half term break. More details to follow.

In July, Edward Martin's talk on the Celts was most interesting, from research using mitochondrial DNA and even how language has developed pointing the way for the origin of the Celts.

I unfortunately missed the St Margarets walk, but I'm led to believe that it was well attended and was rounded off with excellent refreshments back at Valley Farm.

Our meeting this month in Withersdale with Stuart Orr will I'm sure have us dusting off our crystal sets. Don't forget we have to try and share cars for this meeting.

Pip Wright and Sam Newton, two old friends of the group, will round off the final two months of the year.

Paul Watkin

Editorial

We welcome our new chairman, Paul Watkin, to the pages of the Newsletter, and thank Caroline Cardwell for her many years of work for the Group, her driving force in establishing and maintaining a high standard of speakers and discussion at our meetings, and for her many contributions to the Newsletter.

On the front page of this issue is a picture of what was probably the second great house on the Flixton Hall site. This was perhaps the loveliest mansion ever built in South Elmham. It was burnt down in 1846. (See page 4)

The last extract from Charles Bird's recollections is, from an agricultural point of view, one of the most interesting. I knew him as a wise old man, and his advice to me as a boy 'to get on top of your work' has helped me in both physical and intellectual work throughout my life.

One of the most eminent men to come from our district was William Sancroft a name derived from our own village of St. Cross (Sandcroft). A Robert de Sandcroft was lord of the manor of Sandcroft and patron of the church in 1319, and Francis Blomefield (the 18th c. Norfolk historian) has claimed that he was an ancestor of William Sancroft. We are fortunate to have a local expert in Roger Smith to write a short account of this man's extraordinary life.

Diana Fernando has redrawn some marginal illustrations from ancient Psalters and produced two pages of colourful artistry. We have an interesting insight into military preparations in South Elmham in the last years of Queen Elizabeth I from an inventory of the possessions of William Grudgfield of St. James. We know a great deal about this man; in this issue we describe his weaponry. Audrey McLaughlin has written another of her historical vignettes on local history, this one on medieval wind and water mills

Two visits have been made to historic sites. The first was to Blythburgh Priory. This is a majestic ruin, so far unseen by most of us, which was the subject of a Time Team Channel 4 programme in March this year. Our visit was with the Suffolk Institute of History and Archaeology. The second visit was to an ancient timber alignment adjacent to the Waveney at Beccles Yacht Club. This was an open day for a dig being carried out by a team from Birmingham University. (See reports on these in this issue)

Basil Harrold

The Seventh and Final extract from The Recollections of Charles Bird (1864-1950)

I started work as a boy. After I left school I was seeing after bullocks, feeding and so on, for three Winters, 6d a day I used to get. It was at Durrant's farm, which is now Hadingham's. Durrant had three or four farms. He had that place where Mrs. Maddie live. That was an off hand farm (a farm on which the farmer does not reside), and then he had Mill Farm where Newsome now live. There used to be a tower mill there. In 1879, that wet Summer, there was wind and wet and my father looked out of the window and he say "Why the old mill's blown down". The whole top come off and the whole four sails come on to the ground. There was a horse in the mill yard and that didn't hurt that. And he had the Willows Farm and that little place where Graham now live. After that I went to live at the Church Farm here, Robert Newsome had it then. In those days they used to live in, a good many people did at that time of day. I was looking after horses and all sorts of work except milking; I didn't used to do any milking. I got about 30/- a year, that was the first year, and then the next year I got 10/- raise. They didn't get much at that time of day, not same as they do nowadays. I was there three year.

Then I left one year and went to Rumburgh to live along of another man by the name of Calver. He was a shoemaker he was, and he had a farm as well. That was only a little place, about a two horse place. He had three cows as well. Then I came back to Newsome's and did another three year. We used to be hired by the year. They used to give you a bob. It was the same when they used to hire for the harvest, they used to give you a bob and you couldn't break that. When you had the shilling they are s'posed to have got you then you see. It is the same when you list in the army, or used to be. The Newsome's son got married and we couldn't hit it off, so I went back to Durrant's again. I don't know where I went after that as I can remember particular. 'Corse I come here for ten year and then went back to the Willows again. Howletts had it then. He was manager, do you see, for the lawyer Garrod, who lived at Diss. Then he parted all those farms. A man named Bishop hired the Willows and I was along of him for some time. The wages was rising a bit but not a great lot.

After I left Bishop I went to Pratt then for fifteen year. I lived in the meadow house there for ten year (this was the house illustrated on the front cover of Newsletter No. 16 three years ago), then when I worked for Pratt I went to where Mrs. Maddie now live. Then when I left Pratt I came down to work for Walpole and lived there in the cottage opposite. I worked for Walpole 15 year, then after I left there we got this house where I am now. The woman who lived there died and I went up and hired it. Walpole's cottage was dear then, about three shillings a week. Then I got this one for two and sixpence, but that's highened now, they put another bob on it. Then I worked Reader's for a year or two and then I came here, and that's where I am now for the present.

The farm work is very much the same but 'corse they have trackers now. They get through a lot more work. Where a man used to do an acre a day ploughing Summer time and three quarters of an acre Winter time, the tracker they reckon to do four acres. The country isn't changed much round here. There isn't so many horses and carts on the road now. Durrant used to send three wagons out on the road after he had thrashed to take the grain to market, to Bungay to a man by the name of Walker. They used to grind the grist corn for the cattle on the common. Aldrich there in St. Michael's, he do a lot of grinding now of grist corn, but he don't use the sails of the mill, he has got an oil engine. That round of the mill will hold a lot. They used to charge a shilling a coomb but they charge a lot more now.

There was no binders about in my young time, but I never see any reaping done, but I've heard old people talking about it. (I think here Charles is referring to the use of a reap hook for cutting the corn as opposed to the scythe). We used to do it with the scythe. Stetch

work they used to call it. They used to take a stetch about the length of this table. You used to mow a stetch and drop it into the furrow on one side. The stetch used to be 7 feet 10 inches wide and a furrow on each side all the way along. Somebody used to follow behind tying up. You used to mow onto the standing corn then it didn't fall down so much. Then when you stopped you used to shock it all up. Durrant, he had twelve men for harvest. He had a reaper and you used to have to follow and tie up behind. I have seen ten and twelve men in one field. One man was supposed to cut two acres of barley in one day, five hours in the morning and seven at night, half an hour for breakfast, one hour dinner, and half an hour for fourses. Barley and beans used to be let lie on the ground till it was ready to cart, and women used to heap it up. Throshing, there is no difference to what it is now.

I've been to work all my life time. (He really means all his life. He died in his 86th year still working for my father). *The house in the meadow was a very good house down stairs but upstairs was very bad. Walpole's, that wasn't a house at all. This one I've got now is best, most convenient.* (Number 38 The Green St Margaret)

Flixton Hall

On the front of this issue of the Newsletter is an illustration of the first Flixton Hall taken from Suckling's History of Suffolk written in 1846. In Newsletter No.2 of Spring 2003 (on page 8) is another engraving of the first Flixton Hall. With this there is an article from the Norfolk Chronicle of December 19th 1846 describing the fire that destroyed it a few days earlier. Suckling explains that in the early 1840's the house was undergoing an extensive survey made necessary by its age. Some alterations were being made to the façade by removing pediments and by the substitution of new windows, and window frames. He goes on to write that *'it may be a matter of doubt how far any ancient fabric, possessed of decided character, is improved by the alteration of any of its features.* These alterations were under the direction of the architect Anthony Salvin who also rebuilt Flixton Church. He had been responsible for work on many castles including Warwick castle, and the refacing of Norwich castle.

On January 5th 1445 one John Toll made over his manor house at St. Peter South Elmham to a John Tasburgh. By 1509 the third generation of John Tasburghs were living in the hall and took the opportunity of buying the recently suppressed Flixton Priory. In 1539 there is a record of employment of Norwich stone masons to transfer parts of the priory buildings to embellish St. Peters Hall. By 1607 a later Sir John Tasburgh bought much land and a mansion from his cousin Thomas Bateman.¹

It was this Sir John Tasburgh who built a new mansion at Flixton in about 1616. Suckling describes it as follows: *'Flixton Hall is the production of no tame or frigid genius; there is a lofty elevation, an intricacy and variety of outline, aided by deep bays and bold projections, which, with the tall pinnacles and clustered chimneys, give a picturesque effect to the whole pile, vainly sort for in modern mansions. It was originally surrounded by a moat, and approached by a drawbridge, which have long been removed and filled up; and is said to occupy the site of the very ancient manor house of the Batemans.'* (Perhaps this was Sir Bartholomew Bateman ?1298-1355 the father of William Bateman the bishop of Norwich 1344-55.)

In the Norfolk Chronicle account of the fire, reprinted in our Newsletter 6 years ago, it is clear that there was a great destruction of important artistic works including Raphael, Ruysdael, Canaletto, Teniers, Reynolds, and Romney, as well as a great library, and many other artefacts.

1. Thornham and the Waveney Valley, John Fairclough and Mike Hardy 2004 page 144

William Sancroft 1617-1693

Archbishop of Canterbury 1678-89

Tumult and disarray within and between church, parliament, and monarchy persisted throughout William's life. Born in 1617 as James I's reign was declining in chaos, Sancroft had been educated at, and become a fellow of, Emmanuel College before Charles I lost his head in 1649. Forced into exile by the Puritans in 1651, he furthered his learning in Holland and Italy. He was in Rome when Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660. Returning to England his many talents were put to full use during the (relatively) peaceful reign of Charles II.

To the surprise of many, including himself, Sancroft became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1678. He attempted, but failed, to modify the views of the heir to the throne, who was not for turning from his Roman Catholicism. Presiding at James II's coronation in 1685, Sancroft had had to modify the rite, excluding the Holy Communion. Sancroft's opposition to James's attempt to re-authorize Roman Catholicism resulted in imprisonment in the Tower of London and a trial for *seditious libel* at Westminster Hall in June 1688. When he and his six episcopal colleagues were found not guilty there was huge public acclaim. Sancroft was prepared to challenge the monarch, but always remembered that he had pledged allegiance to James. So when William of Orange landed at Torbay in November 1688, and James II fled in December, Sancroft was faced with another difficulty – he could not pledge allegiance to William. For his failure to do so he was suspended from office in 1689 and deprived from office the next year.



Ufford Hall Fressingfield

Taken from 'Suffolk Houses' by Eric Sandon

William Sancroft is the only Archbishop of Canterbury to have been born and to have died and been buried in the same village. Born at Ufford Hall in Fressingfield, close to the Laxfield/Stradbroke border, he retired there and died there – his brother’s home by then – and was buried just to the east of the south porch of Fressingfield Church.

National events overshadow the history of the time, and consequently significant contributions by individuals get overlooked. Two items that could be labelled *liturgical* come to mind when thinking of William Sancroft.

Firstly, on his return from exile Sancroft was summoned to be present at the Savoy Conference (Held in the Savoy Palace London 15th April – 24th July 1661). His role was that of secretary/ theologian. Twelve bishops and twelve Presbyterian divines were to review the Prayer Book (about which the Presbyterians had formulated many *Exceptions*). The end result was the 1662 Book of Common Prayer which survived until 1980 as the Church of England’s only official prayer book. What was being reviewed was essentially the second prayer book of Edward VI from 1552, the handiwork of Thomas Cranmer. Very few of the Presbyterian *exceptions* survived for insertion, but Sancroft was deeply involved in getting the 1662 book ready for the printer. We forget how new the English language was then; comparing the 1552 and 1662 books we see how much the language had developed in the 110 years. We could say that Sancroft’s English has influenced huge tracts of humanity, and much worship over the centuries.

Secondly, in 1664 Sancroft was appointed Dean of St Paul’s. He was no absentee landlord! Pastoral work he loved. However, no-one was reckoning on a great fire destroying the cathedral. Sancroft employed and worked with Christopher Wren on the rebuilding, plans spread out and many hand gesticulations every morning! Sancroft turned down the bishopric of Chester to work on the rebuilding. A cathedral built for the reformed liturgy rather than a former abbey converted to the modern use, as were most cathedrals. Wren is remembered, Sancroft forgotten.

Sancroft was not alone in refusing to swear allegiance to William & Mary, altogether eight bishops and about four hundred priests were deprived of their livings. They were known as *non-jurors*. For a while the non-jurors formed a loose confederation. Their prayer book was basically the 1662 Book of Common Prayer, but modified. For instance in the Eucharistic rite Sancroft would not have used the Ten Commandments but the Lord’s summary of the Law. This was not legalised until 1967! Strangely amusing for a central figure at the Savoy Conference.

Lastly, and locally, Withersdale Church was united with Fressingfield for many centuries, rather than with either Metfield or Mendham. Present day roads make this appear very odd – presumably Metfield Lane, Fressingfield was not a dead end then. Although there is no documentary evidence it would appear that the chalice and paten used regularly at Withersdale is Sancroft’s drinking cup and cover in its finely tooled leather case. Hall marks and the Latin inscription, which describes the church as being *in the fields*, would indicate that this is not a groundless assumption.

Very much more needs to be remembered about this north Suffolk worthy, of whom Charles II observed there is “no one more fit to succeed (to the archiepiscopate) than the Dean of St. Paul’s.”

Roger Smith

Arms and Armour in South Elmham at the beginning of the Seventeenth Century

In the late Elizabethan world of 1601, the great threat of the Spanish armadas of 1588, 1596 and 1597 had only recently been repelled by Drake and others and also by spells of extremely bad weather. Queen Elizabeth had only a year to live, dying in 1603 or 1602 in the Julian calendar which was still in use. In London the Globe Theatre had been completed in 1598 and Shakespeare was writing "As you like it" and "Twelfth Night" especially for its new productions. John Winthrop was fourteen years old and about to enter Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1602 Bartholomew Gosnold of Otley Hall, Suffolk was the first Englishman to land on the coast of New England. Further afield in China, the Ming dynasty was at its peak. In Russia, the people were enduring its worst famine ever recorded, 127,000 men, women, and children died. New research links this tragedy to the eruption of the volcano Huaynaputina in Peru in 1600, which made 1601 a cold and dark year bringing cold weather and crop failures around the globe.

Meanwhile in South Elmham, William Grudgfield, yeoman of St James, and Nicholas



This man is wearing a Stele Cap, and Corselet, and carries a Caliver, Powder Flask, Cords, and Sword.

Corbold, yeoman of St Peters, had died and their neighbours were assessing their goods and chattels and making inventories for probate as the law required. These inventories have been transcribed and have revealed how South Elmham was prepared for the possible invasion by the Spanish.

The probate inventory was a document which was required by the ecclesiastical court in connection with the granting of probate. Locally this was in Norwich. Its object was to safeguard the deceased's estate from excessive claims, and to protect the next of kin from fraud. These inventories listed only the moveable goods and chattels of the deceased. The cost of the legal fees was recovered from the value of goods in the inventory.

Two inventories from South Elmham are of interest with regard to arms and armour found in the village in 1601. These were a surprise to the transcribers and also to the curator of arms in Norwich Castle Museum.

The first was that of **Nicholas Corbold** yeoman of St Peter's who died in January 1601. His "goods and Chattles" were valued and *Prised* by William Goddard, *Clarke*, John Wilkinson, John Wrighton, and Nicholas Man *Clarke*.

Found among his goods:

In the old parlour

Item one posted beddsted & one Counter table

Item twoe old tables twoe formes

Item one spynning whele

ITEM ONE COSSLET FULL FURNISHED

ITEM ONE CALIV(ER) FULL FURNISHED

Item one old birdinge peece

ITEM ONE DRUME

Item ould neet called a dragge

Nicholas Corbold's goods were valued at £120-15-02

The second was that of **William Grudgfield** of St James who died in June 1601. His *Goods and Chattells* were appraised by Giles Spachett, William Rose, Thomas Flatt, Robert Lanter, and Loy Browne.

Found among his goods:

In the Hall

Imprimis the Table as yt stand wth the Forme thereunto belonging

The cubbard

Fyve Chayers small and great wth 3 buffet stooles

Two hales, one Fyerpanne, one payer of Tonges, 2 cobIrons

A CURALE OF A COSSLETT, A PISTALL A SWORD & DAGGARD

ONE STELE CAPP WTH A HORSEMAN'S COATE

A stayned Cloth wth 2 Cobb irons

A BARE MUSKETT

Parlor

Item A Table a frame wth a Liverye Table, Twelve buffet stooles

Three Chayers, Seaventene Cushings good and badd

THE BODYE OF A COSLETT WITH A HEAD PECE, AND A CALIBOIR

WITH ONE OTHER HEAD PECE AND A DAGGARD

A stayned Cloth wth 2 Cobb irons

A BARE MUSKETT

In the Hall chamber there was also a SOLDIERIN COATE, together with a woman's pillion, two Chayers, one ould Table.

William Grudgfield's goods were valued at £400 in total. He was a wealthy man

Glossary

Stele Capp Steel cap or helmet

Sword Sword

Caliver Caliboir Caliber The Caliver was the standard firearm for most of Elizabeth's reign. The word derives from (h)arquebus of calibre, that is, of a standard bore. The caliver used either a trigger lever or a conventional trigger to operate the matchlock. The English used the "swept" butt until 1590. It had a smaller bore than the musket and therefore had less accuracy and penetrating power. The caliver could fire three times a minute, the longbow six times per minute but the musket could fire only once per minute because its long barrel required a rest. Its advantage was in accuracy.

Pistall Pistol derives from the Italian pistolet or dagger or small sword made in the ironworks of Pistoia, west of Florence. The diminutive pistoletto became applied to a small arquebus or pistol

Daggard or Dagg Heavy handgun (not a dagger)

Corselet Cosslet Cosslyt. Armour covering the body. That shown in the illustration was probably of leather. A corselet “furnished” included collar, breast and back plates, gorgets tassets, arm plates and gauntlets of steel.

Powder Flask and Cords The cords were impregnated with saltpetre and lime to aid ignition of the gunpowder in the matchlock.

Musket Superseded the caliver. The barrel of the Elizabethan musket was about four and a half feet long; it required a Y shaped rest stuck in the ground for stability in firing.

Parish armour was normally kept in the room over the porch of the church, a local example being the armoury in Mendlesham church. The door has iron straps and strong locks. Among other things it still contains three powder flasks, a matchlock barrel, a sword scabbard and an Elizabethan longbow. In South Elmham only St Margaret’s has such a room known as the parvis or small room, otherwise it seems to have been kept in the local yeomen’s houses.

In 1573 the Crown created the Trained Bands citizen-soldiers, selected for training in the “Modern Art of War”. Training took place in small groups throughout the year and lasted ten days, usually at Easter, Whitsun and Michaelmas. It was supervised by Justices of the Peace and Commissioners of musters. The most affluent bore the cost, “*having regarde not to charge the pore sorte of howsholders nor specylye the cotagers*”. Training in the use of arms was the main focus; archers were excluded from trained bands out of concern for their safety and preservation.

Three years later in spring 1576 Suffolk had not yet complied with the law on musters! In 1577 there were 1,128 longbows but less than 1,000 firearms in use in the county. Although the increase in number of arquebuses remained a priority, the number of longbows equalled or exceeded the number of calivers and other firearms. In the early 1580’s training was to be enhanced by the assistance of ‘*corporalles*’ in marksmanship exercises, but still there was a chronic shortage of arms. The Northamptonshire muster in 1586 brought out only 88 calivers among 1,063 militiamen.

The newly trained bands were alerted against the Armada and were moved towards the major ports giving Queen Elizabeth a national army, enthusiastic if not experienced. The first National Army was mustered at Tilbury, where the Queen in her persona of Gloriana dramatically addressed 22,000 militiamen, telling them that although she was a weak woman, she had the heart of a King, and of a King of England too. There must have been men from South Elmham present on that famous day.

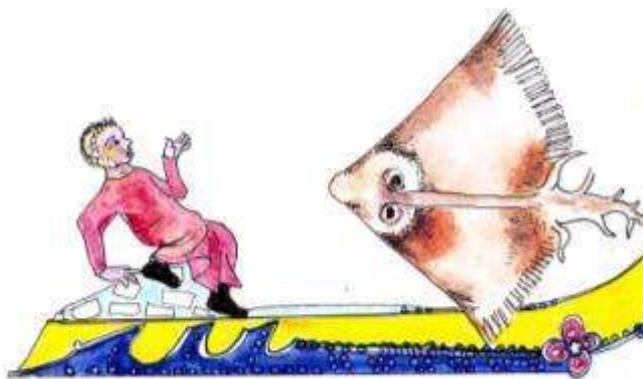


Musket and rest

With thanks to Audrey McLaughlin and her group of transcribers

Mediaeval Illuminated Manuscripts of East Anglia

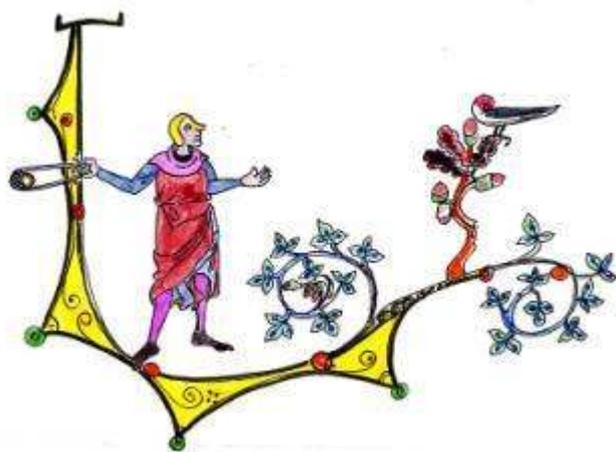
Norwich, Gorleston, Peterborough and Bury St Edmunds were the centres of the finest East Anglian limners or illuminators of manuscripts in the early 14th century. The psalters, calendars and other early prayerbooks are second to none in range of illustrations and letter-forms, and in skilled use of pigments, inks and gold leaf.



Macclesfield Psalter: Man surprised by giant skate



Macclesfield Psalter: Ape doctor with bear patient



Gorleston Psalter: Slinger about to stone a bird.

The most famous of these books is perhaps the Luttrell Psalter, but it is a little out of our range, having been commissioned by Geoffrey Luttrell of Irnham in Lincolnshire. In any case, it has been considered not the most beautiful manuscript of the group, reflecting as it does, the decadence of the period more than the exquisite quirkiness found in other manuscripts.

This article will be largely limited to the Ormesby, Gorleston, and Macclesfield Psalters, all of which represent the height of 14th century Gothic art in East Anglia. The illuminators worked in closely collaborating lay workshops, commissioned by rich benefactors of the monasteries and cathedrals such as Norwich.

What is recognizably East Anglian (whose influence is found also in French psalters) is firstly the liveliness of storytelling in the main pictures: Adam and Eve gloomily digging and spinning outside Paradise, Isaiah praying to a heavenly Hand, a skeletal Death bloodily lancing a youth, the Annunciation to obviously terrified Shepherds and sheep, the Baby Jesus holding a goldfinch while angels look on disapprovingly. Secondly, it's the intricate decorative details that are so arresting: the natural world of oaks, sycamores and the 'Suffolk daisy,' rabbits, squirrels, butterflies, Suffolk Punches, fish, robins. The Gorleston Psalter even breaks from its churchified Latin to show a duck crying 'queck' in English as a fox takes it off! Disasters are shown as often as triumphs: a horse throws its

English as a fox takes it off! Disasters are shown as often as triumphs: a horse throws its

rider, someone's blood is let, a priest is killed, a greying corpse lies in its coffin, the Three Kings are confronted by Three skeleton Dead Kings, and one of the live kings is saying 'Ich am aferd' (I am afraid).



Ormesby Psalter: Marginal satirical detail to main picture of Christ before Pilate

The central piece of these psalters was the commemoration of important feasts of the Christian calendar – Advent, Christmas, Epiphany etc., followed by prayers and psalms, and finally prayers of confession or penitence. But the mediaeval limners did not separate the grim from the godly, so their imaginations let loose in the margins! Censorship did not deface these grotesqueries until the Reformation.

It is in the marginalia, then, that we look for the mediaeval devotees' obsession with sin. Just as they were transfixed with haloes and angels' wings at the upper end of life, so they were with bottoms and grotesque monsters at the lower end. The Macclesfield Psalter (recently acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum) abounds in uninhibited parody.

Every type of sexual misdemeanour, greed and deceit is depicted in stock images of half-man, half beast, or fabled creatures, such as lurked in the popular bestiaries. These *grotesques* or *grottesques* remind us that they derive from the odd or fanciful paintings found in *grottoes*, or *crypts* (a word from the same origin).

Laughter was not forbidden; it was at the heart of religious experience, for saints and sinners alike.

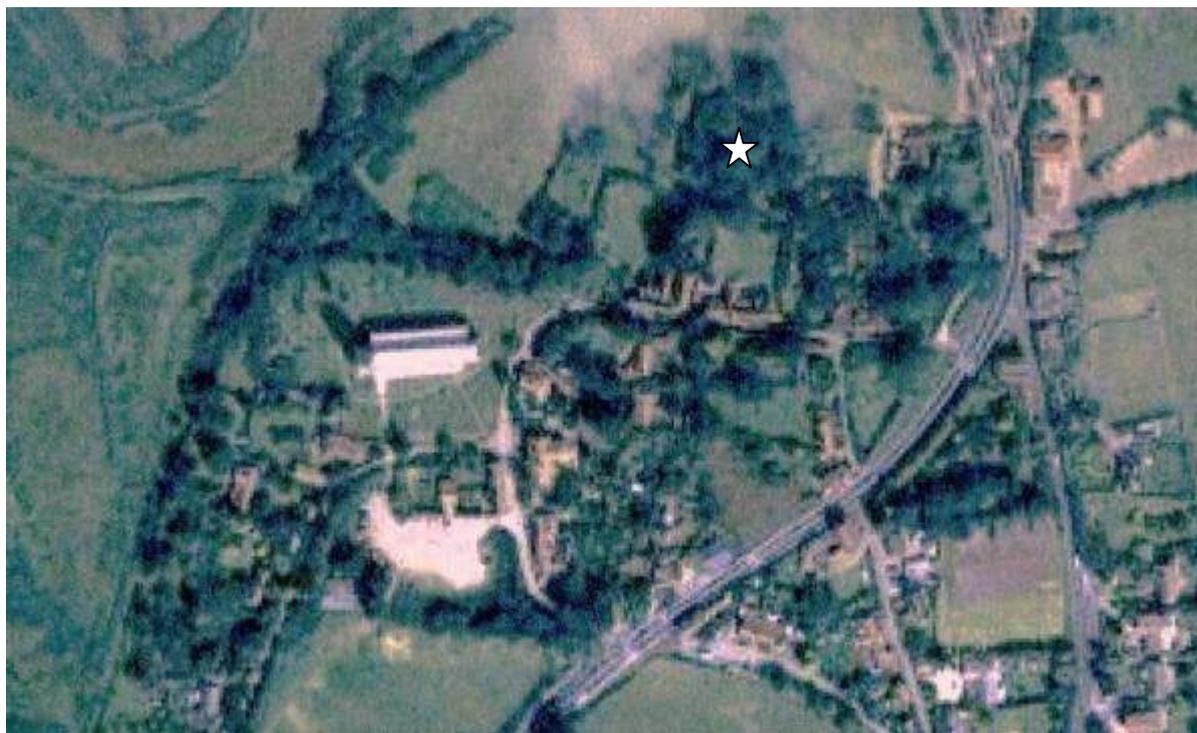


Ormesby Psalter: Swallow, and grotesque watching two wrestlers (not shown)

A visit to the Augustinian priory at Blythburgh

In March Tony Robinson and Time Team gave the difficult presentation of their finds at Blythburgh priory. On the 10th of June a few of us went to a less frenetic presentation on site at Blythburgh by Bob Carr for the Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History (SIAH).

The chance to see the ruins of this, so far unseen religious site, was one not to be missed. The site (shown by a star on the satellite photograph below) lies in the garden of the Arts and Crafts house called The Priory. It is completely hidden from view from the A12 and Priory Road, and from the air also. Access had been denied until new owners allowed Channel 4, and then, kindly, the SIAH, entry.



Satellite view of Blythburgh

Blythburgh's history as a religious site begins with the death of Anna, King of East Anglia, at the battle of Bulcamp. He lost this against Penda, the pagan King of the Mercians. The 12th century Book of Ely says that he was buried (in 654 AD) at Blythburgh. He was a Christian, like his cousin Sigeberht who in 630AD set up the first bishopric in this region. We would expect, therefore, that he had a Christian burial, and that this might be in one of the two church sites in Blythburgh. King Anna's uncle was king Raedwald of Sutton Hoo fame.

The priory has five standing remnants of its original structure, and a restored remnant of its gatehouse incorporated in the house called The Priory. The remnants are of the South nave wall, three of the piers supporting the central crossover, and a short length of the East wall of the North transept

1. The West end of Priory House is a much restored remnant of what is thought to be the old priory gatehouse. This is made of flint but has, on the rear, a window which seems to have retained some early brick mullions, and a doorway of similar construction. (See below)



The brick mullioned window and doorway in the back wall of Priory House.

2. The South nave wall is typical 12th century work with herring bone pattern of layered flintwork and courses of reclaimed Roman tiles. Though it stands perhaps 10 feet high there are no windows. (See below). At its West end is the freestone remnant of a doorway.



The South wall with its reclaimed Roman tiles and herring bone layered flintwork

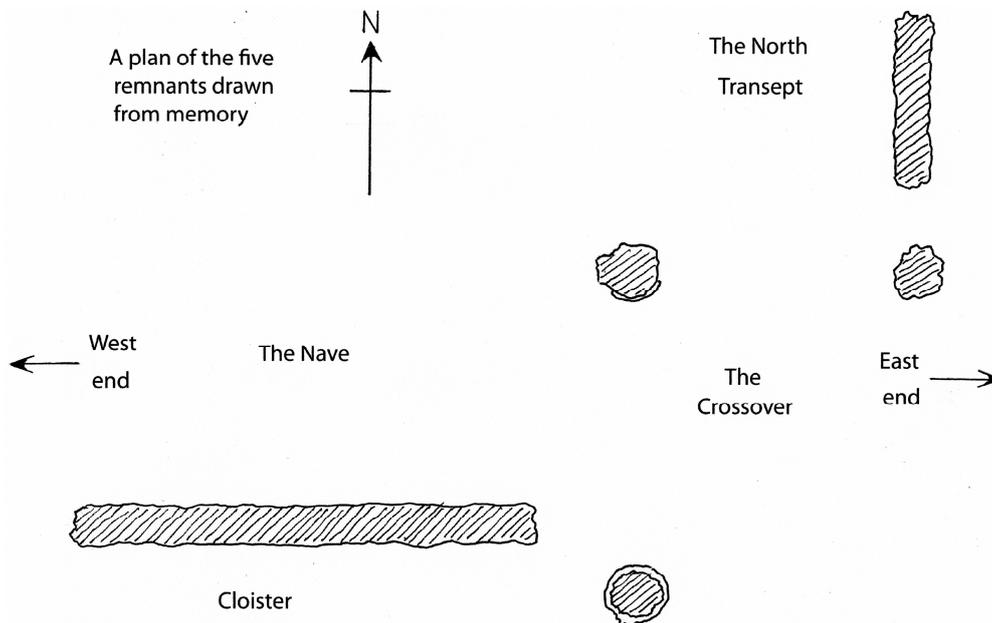
3 Three remnants of the piers supporting the crossover. The NW pier is tall, rising into the trees, and on its West side there are suggestions that the North nave wall was arcaded, and perhaps aisled. The SW pier still has an impressive lower portion of the freestone drum moulding, and is not in line with the nave wall to the west of it. The third pier is but a stump of flint and mortar rubble. These piers are a century later in style than the nave wall and are set wider apart suggesting a new building on a much grander scale making the chancel wider than the nave.



The Southwest pier with some of its drum moulding

4 The short length of the North transept wall. This has no helpful features left in it.

A ROUGH PLAN OF THE PRIORY REMAINS



Mr. Carr thought the cloister would have been to the South of the church. This would explain the windowless nave wall on this side. On the North side the land falls away without suggestion of a platform to accommodate a range of buildings. In a field below the site and nearer to the A12, 7th century Ipswich ware pottery sherds have been found. Scattered around the site there are many inhumations often oriented East-West that predate the Priory. At least one has been carbon dated to the mid 7th century contemporary with King Anna, but in spite of their careful searches, Time Team found no trace of King Anna's grave itself.

A visit to the Beccles Iron Age timber alignment on 4th July 2009

Flood prevention work adjacent to the Waveney at Beccles in 2006 revealed some ancient wooden stakes. A year later a team from Birmingham University, and the Suffolk County Council archaeological unit began excavation of the site. This work has revealed a 400 metre long triple line of stakes running across the marshes to the East of the river downstream from the A 146 road bridge, and beside the sailing club. (Shown in the satellite view below as a white line). In this unusual triple line, each oak stake is up to 1.5 metres long



Satellite view of The Waveney near Beccles

and 30cm diameter. Each is sharpened by iron tools to a point at its lower end. Dendrochronology dating shows that these were felled in the Spring of 75 BC. Iron Age stake alignments are extremely rare. This rarity makes the site one of international importance. The excavation has now been completed and work on the finds will continue, culminating, we must hope, in a description of the appearance and function of the structure.



The sharpened ends of two 2,084 year old stakes

Medieval Wind and Watermills

Of all the servile burdens inflicted on the peasant in the Middle Ages, one of the greatest was the lack of freedom to grind his own corn. His produce had to be taken to the mill owned by the lord of the manor to be ground; the lord, through the miller, kept a percentage as payment, known as multure. These rules were, of course, broken from time to time by people grinding grain, at home, on small hand querns. Pieces of broken lava stone from hand querns are often found on the sites of medieval tenements along with sherds of pottery: field-walking recently near the church of St Peter produced several large pieces. In 1352 Robert Cove was fined 3d (a day's wages) for failing to mill at the lord's mill and in 1360 four more men were each fined 3d for the same offence.

The base of a post mill was located during recent excavations at Flixton and the mound of one is clearly visible on St Margaret's Green. Documentary evidence survives both for the latter and for a windmill at St Nicholas (exact location unknown). A storm in 1360/61 damaged many buildings on the manor, especially the mills. Two carpenters were employed



A medieval Post Mill

for eight days making a new roof for the mill at St Nicholas with board that came from the Baltic; it was out of use for seven weeks. Both windmills were then leased. The manorial account of 1364/5 states that St Nicholas mill could not be leased that year because the stone was defective. In 1370 a new millstone costing 73s 4d was bought for St Margaret. It cost 12d to carry it from Yarmouth to Beccles but was brought from there by customary carrying works – part of the services that tenants owed to the lord in lieu of rent. In 1344 a millstone had been brought from Yarmouth for a mill at Homersfield and as the other repairs made included sail-yards, this was surely another windmill.

Two watermills are mentioned in Domesday; one at Homersfield and one at Limbourne. In 1361 Homersfield mill was leased for £4 pa. and the mill stream (a great source of fish) was leased to a blacksmith in return for the ironwork of two ploughs and the shoeing of nine horses and 10 oxen each year. The wheel of the watermill was repaired and iron ties were bought for tying the cog-wheel. The 1364/5 account states that eleven men were hired each for one day to remove the water and old timber at the mill and Reginald le Wrighte and Robert his son were hired for five weeks making a new sluice gate and other necessary parts. The mill costs that year were £4 17s 6d and included making a sawing pit in the new park; the wood for the repairs was felled and cut to size before being brought to the mill.

In 1361/2 a carpenter was hired to make a wooden mallet for the fulling mill. Until fulling mills were introduced, hemp was trodden or beaten by foot (very labour intensive). In 1767 the Ipswich Journal advertised for sale a watermill with a bunching mill for hemp in Homersfield called Limbourne Mill.

The names of the numerous mill parts found in the medieval documents are not to be found in my dictionary: if there is a mill expert amongst our members – please step forward!

Margaret Gelling 1924-2009

Margaret Gelling died in April this year. During her long and scholarly dedication to the study of English place names she altered our understanding of their meaning. She did this by seeking to understand medieval thoughts. How would they choose names for places, land, villages, and towns? Her view was that many names were derived from words describing local topography. She realised that there were many more words describing the local landscape in Anglo-Saxon times than there are now, single words that might now require a sentence to explain. *Hamm* was one of these, it meant enclosed by a river bend, or projecting into marshland, or the sea. The interpretation of these old words has come from studies of ancient charters, and by observation of the landscape in which these words have been used as place names. *Feld* as in Homersfield meant open country, but open country as opposed to what? She suggests woodland or marsh; either could have applied to Homersfield. Later *Feld* came to mean arable land, and this change may have come with Viking settlement in the 10th century.

Dr. Gelling, admired as a teacher was in constant demand as a lecturer. Among her several books on the subject were; ‘Signposts to the Past’ in 1978, and ‘Place-Names in the Landscape’ in 1984. The latter describes, as she puts it, ‘the geographical roots of Britain’s place names’. The nearest we can get now to her enthusiasm is by looking at these books, not easy reading, but good for gaining insight into our local history.

B.P.H.

End piece

Saint Peter’s Parish 1819

This extract from Alfred Suckling’s book on the ‘History and Antiquities of the County of Suffolk’ 1846, draws our attention to one of the reasons for the rarity of brasses in our local churches, and also the many years of work that went into the compilation of this essential reference work for anyone interested in the history of North Suffolk. Not all East Anglian churches are bereft of their brasses. Blickling in particular has a fine display, and must have been defended from such thieves. Other churches still have their brasses hidden under carpets.

‘In the year 1819, while the writer was visiting this parish, collecting the materials which form the matter of the present notice, a person of gentlemanly address drove up to St. Peter’s Hall, tenanted by the late Mr. Alden, the then churchwarden, inquiring if the church contained any brass effigies, as he was travelling through the country collecting such records of ancient families, with a view to their cleaning and restoration, promising to return them shortly to their original places. St. Peter’s church afforded nothing to add to his collection, having been already stripped by some earlier iconoclast. The writer remembers that the applicant’s gig-box was half full of brass effigies, which it is vain to hope ever found again their respective matrices. The observation is simply recorded to expose a system of plunder once recklessly pursued, and to warn all churchwardens to repulse applications of a like nature.’

B.P.H.

Programme for 2009

**Meetings will be held at St. Margaret Village Hall (unless otherwise stated)
on Thursdays at 7.30 p.m.**

24th September

‘A History of Recorded Sound’

By Stuart Orr

N.B. At Priors Croft Barn, Withersdale. 7.30 p.m.

8th October

Visit to Sutton Hoo

Those interested please contact Audrey McLaughlin on 01986 835999

22nd October

‘For The Term of His Natural Life’

By Pip Wright

26th November

‘Halls of The Wuffing Kings’

By Sam Newton

Other Meetings

Suffolk Institute of History and Archaeology

(Meetings held at Blackbourne Hall Elmswell Suffolk at 2.30 p.m.)

14th November

‘Medieval Mercers of London from Suffolk c1200-1550.

Benefactors, Pirates and Merchant Adventurers’

By Anne Sutton

12th December

‘Atomic Weapons Research Establishment, Orford Ness Suffolk’

By Wayne Cocroft

9th January 2010

‘Redgrave Hall, a window on the world: gentry families in Tudor and Stuart Suffolk.

By Diarmaid MacCulloch

Reminder

Renewal of membership.

The Annual subscription for membership was due on 31st May. Your membership will be deemed to have ended if payment is not received by the end of October. Would those who have not yet paid, and who want to remain members, please send a cheque, payable to South Elmham & District Local History Group, to Judith Ions (membership secretary) at the next meeting, or at Lanesborough House, Stone Street, Ilketshall St. Lawrence, Beccles NR348NH

Single membership £12 Joint membership £18

A banker’s order form can be obtained from Judith Ions