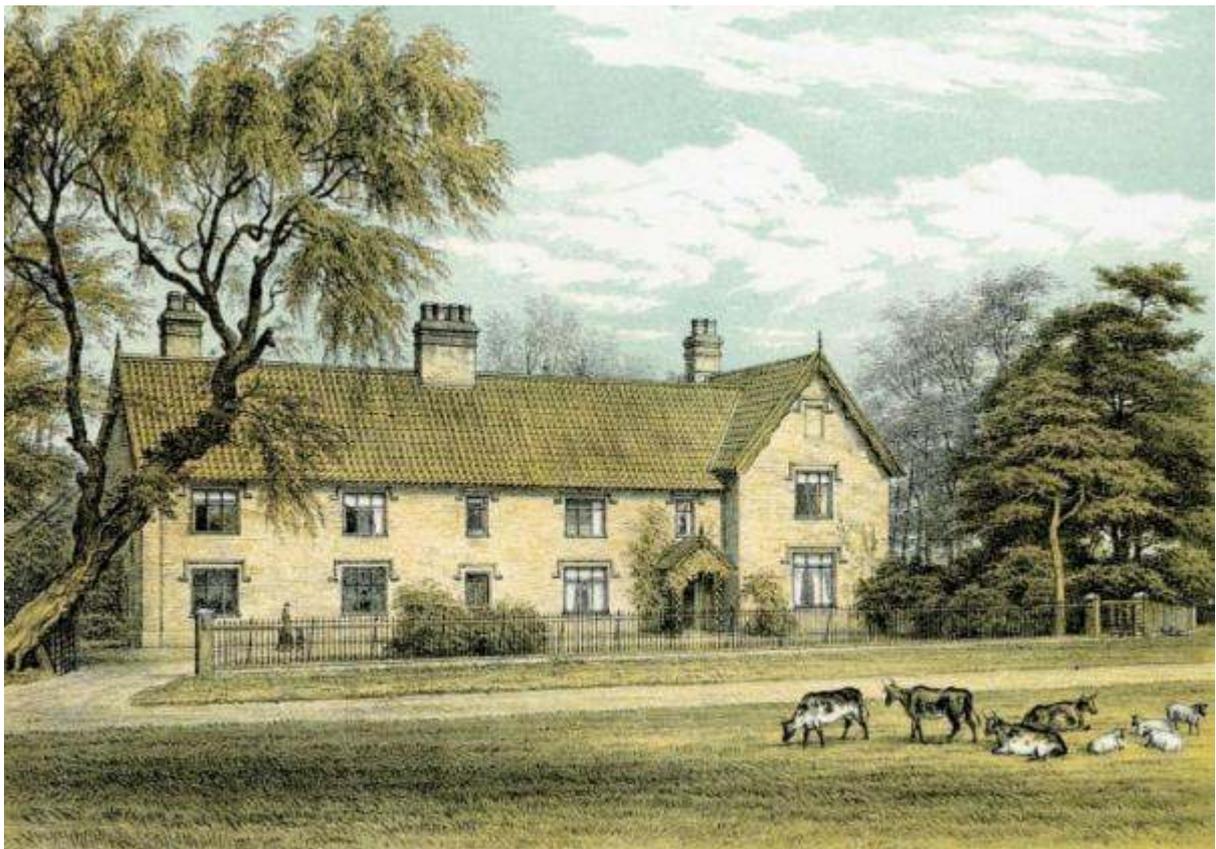


**SOUTH ELMHAM AND
DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY
GROUP**

NEWSLETTER

Issue No. 24

May 2010



THE WILLOWS ALL SAINTS

Chairman's Notes

I sometimes wonder why I'm interested in history, over the years I've thought about this and have come to the conclusion that maybe I'm just plain nose. I was once stopped in the street in Norwich by a person doing market research into newspapers. Once having established which papers I read, a question was asked, "which part of the paper do I turn to first"? My reply was the letters page. This was an answer that the researcher had not come across before. I like the letters page; I feel that those who take time to write to the editor of any paper, particularly local papers have something personal to say about what's going on in their and our world. This attracts my nose nature. History has the same attraction, what was going on in their world, those everyday people going about their everyday lives, their relationships, joys and woes?

Mark Mitchels' talk on the 25th February about the fifteenth century life of the Pastons just suited my nose, how interesting it was to hear of their life through the legacy of letters left behind.

On the 25th March Lisa Harris from the Stowmarket Museum of East Anglian Life brought with her a "memory" box that contained items from the more recent past, amongst the things were two identity cards from the war seventy years ago. Who were those people? My nose was wondering. My mind was wandering.

As I write this the Wednesday afternoon course is coming to an end, I managed to attend all but one and enjoyed most of what I learned. I hope that maybe a small group may go on to research a project such as education or public houses in our locality using the knowledge gained from attending the course. There seems to be no record of a pub in St Margaret South Elmham for instance.

Sue Riseborough deserves a special mention, she has provided tea, coffee and biscuits every week for the course, she also does this for the monthly meetings sometimes with homemade biscuits which are a real treat. I thank her on behalf of all of us for her sterling work.

The A.G.M. will at Bateman's Barn South Elmham Hall on the 27th May. After the official business Rick Lewis is going to talk to us about the repairing of timber framed buildings. June will see Stuart Boulter talking about the excavation at Flixton Park Quarry. July's meeting will see Chris Reeve from Bungay who will come and tell us all about his home town. Following on in August with a trip to Bungay where Chris will lead us around the town showing us all the hidden gems.

Paul Watkin

Editorial

Our cover picture is of 'The Willows' the large house that smiles out across All Saints common to all who pass by. I remember going there in the 1940s with my parents for a meal with the Watts family. The long dining table was piled high with more food than I had ever seen before, and certainly more than could have been eaten by those of us seated there. Caroline Cardwell has asked me to use this charming print of hers of the house, and has written about its sale particulars in 1885.

Paul Watkin was, like me, impressed by Mark Mitchel's dramatic presentation of the Paston family's letters. A masterful performance showing his well informed understanding of

15th century history and his ability to decipher the letters. He was able to hold our attention for an hour on a subject that might well have defeated other historians. His memorable talk has prompted me to include one of the letters he quoted in this issue on page 6.

Pertinax gives us his preliminary interpretation of the findings that he described in the last newsletter. This is a good first step in understanding the origins of this important site that he has been investigating over many years.

Diana Fernando has written another of her erudite papers, this one on Harold Godwinsson. We may feel that we know something of his life before we read it. Afterwards the realisation comes that some of what we thought we knew was not well founded. Nevertheless he will always be remembered for his heroism in the face of repeated adversity.

This spring has been full of flowers. Wild flowers may not seem to be historic markers of man's use of the land, but B.S.McG. argues in her short account on orchids, that they are, and that orchids indicate sites of old pastures and woodland. They are found in several sites in South Elmham rising like jewels in the grass at this time of year.

Oral history was one of the topics in the recent ten week course of lectures on 'Local History for Local Communities'. Earlier this year, Rosemary Mason pre-empted this by giving me a record of her memories of visiting her grandfather at Heath Farm Homersfield. Sometimes she did this in a pony and trap and sometimes on the Waveney valley railway train. These memories of hers are on page 14.

Please remember that if there is anything in this issue that you feel is wrong, or to which you can add more information, or an anecdote, please do write to me as Susan Riseborough has done on page 15.

Basil Harrold

“The Willows”

A Valuable Landed Estate – comprising a superior farmhouse

The house, shown on our front cover, was offered for sale in July 1885 by a London firm of auctioneers, Messrs. Lenny and Smith. Described as a landed estate, the elaborate sale particulars show what an amount of information can be gleaned from this type of resource. At the beginning of the agricultural depression, when prices were falling and land was a source of worry rather than profit, the agents' description of this farm of just over 384 acres is a masterpiece of temptation to the possible London investor.

The house is described as a gentleman's residence “situate in the picturesque parishes of All Saints with St. Nicholas and St. Michaels, Southelmham.....equi-distant from the excellent Market and Railway Towns of Halesworth, Bungay, and Harleston” The property was bounded by the Flixton Hall estates and various other landed proprietors, and consisted of several farms – “[the houses] conveniently dispersed and chiefly occupied by Labourers and Horsemen” – workforce at hand but no untidy cottages to detract from the setting of the main house!

Besides the main house with its “cheerful entrance hall and lofty and well proportioned rooms”, including seven bedrooms, there are all the trappings of a comfortable middle class establishment, with gardens full of ornamental trees and shrubs “in full and vigorous

growth”, and carriage gates and railings protecting the property from the livestock grazing on the common.

There was also the equivalent of a garage - two-stalled stable and harness room and a Chaise House with double doors, and Knife, Coal and Wood Houses. The farm buildings, which were very close to the main house [this is not at all clear in the description!] were the usual barn, stables, wagon lodge, horse and cattle yards, and piggeries.

The estate included all the houses and cottages round the Common, some of them have their tenants listed and they could be looked up in the census. One of the best was the gentleman’s residence [now called The Grange] which was lived in by the Rev. J.G.H. Ashe, a very similar establishment to the Willows with dining rooms, library and nine bedrooms. Other farms included the Mill Farm, with its tower mill and granary; the cottages included the village post office.

The agricultural land is described as “remarkably clean and well farmed” arable and pasture “intersected with and surrounded by good hard roads, thus adding greatly to the convenience and value of the occupation”. The tenure is “nearly equal to freehold and certain portions are Tithe Free and Land-tax Redeemed”.

The auctioneers present the whole estate in the best possible light. They describe a well-ordered countryside, good hunting country, and paint a picture of rural order and prosperity with churches and schools. “The Society is good, The Peasantry happy and contented [no union or tithe riots here is the unspoken comment], and the soil itself is grateful, easily farmed and in a high state of cultivation”. Furthermore, the whole estate could be divided up and “a more secure Investment for a Capitalist, or enjoyable Property for occupation, is seldom submitted to public competition”.

In 1871, the family living at the Willows consisted of George Durrant farmer and landowner of 330 acres employing 11 men, 2 boys and 2 women. His family included his wife Harriette, who had been born in Somerset, his 24 year old son, also George, and daughter Marion aged 11. On that census day his other two daughters, Ella, aged 20 and Alice, aged 19, were listed as visitors with the Rev. Samuel Turner who lived at All Saints rectory. This connection with the Turner family was kept up as Harriette, Ella and Marion were staying with the Turner family at the Rectory at Radlett in Hertfordshire in 1901.

However the reason for the sale of the farm, shows up in the 1891 census, where Harriette, now a widow was living at the Willows with only her daughter Marion and a general servant, Mary Lurkins, who came from Uggeshall near Beccles.

Tracing all these people through the census returns is fascinating and very side-tracking, and it is most surprising what one finds out. Another source of information would be the parish registers to find out what happened to the other daughters and also when George, born in 1825, actually died. Harriette appears to be his second wife as he is listed in 1871 with no wife, Marion aged one [did she die in childbirth?], daughter Alice aged 9 and a governess.

These very available resources, census and sale particulars are easy to read and provide a wealth of information about a family or a village, farming, social mobility, cottage tenants, land use and buildings as well as social conditions and attitudes. I must say that Messrs Lenny and Smith’s description gives us a marvellous insight into estate agents’ exaggerations. I haven’t come across another sale with “happy and contented Peasantry”!

Caroline Cardwell – April 2010.

A Paston Letter

This letter, which I have picked out from the hundreds of Paston family letters still extant, was mentioned by Mark Mitchels in his lecture to us on 25th February. Here, Margaret is writing to her husband John in London. In 1445 Margaret and her family were living in Gresham Manor House (just south of Sheringham) when, following a dispute over ownership of the manor, ‘a thousand’ of Lord Moline’s men appeared in armour bearing guns, bows and arrows, mining instruments ladders pickaxes and pans of fire. Margaret with a household of twelve stood no chance. She was forcibly carried out and the house ransacked and left in a ruinous state. They said that if John had been there they would have killed him. You will understand therefore how Margaret felt when she learnt that Partryche and his felaschep (Moline’s men) were again threatening her. It is not clear to me where she was living at this time but it seems that the house had low ceilings and was therefore unsuitable for the long bow. The family were anxious to get back to Gresham and returned there in October 1449.

This letter shows us the mid fifteenth century stage in the development of the English language. It was written 34 years after Agincourt from where Henry V had been the first post conquest monarch to use English in his letters back to England. (Alfred The Great had used it to rally the English against the Danes in 878)

B.P.H.

Margaret Paston to John Paston 1449

Ryt wurchipful hwsbond, I recomawnd me to zu, and prey zw to gete som crosse bowis, and wyndacs to bynd them with, and quarrels; for zour hwsis her ben so low that ther may non man schet owt with no long bowe, thow we hadde never so much need.

I sopose ze xuld have seche things of Ser Jon Fastolf, if ze wold send to hym; and also I wold ze xuld gete ij or iij schort pelleaxis to keep with doris, and als many jakkys, and ye may.

Partryche and his felaschep arn sor aferyd that ze wold entren azen up on them, and they have made grete ordiynawnce with inne the hwse, as it is told me. They have made barris to barre the dorys crosse weyse, and they have made wykets on every quarter of the hwse to schote owte ate, bothe with bowys and with hand gunnys; and the holys that ben made for hand gunnys, they ben scarce kne hey fro the plawncher, and of soche holis ben made five. There can no man schete owt at them with no hand bowys.

Purry felle in felaschepe with Willyum Hasard at Querles, and told hym that he wold com and drynk with Partryche and with hym, and he seyde he xuld ben welcome, and after none he went thedder for to aspye quat they dedyn, and quat felaschep they hadde with them; and quan he com thedder, the dors were fast sperid, and there wer non folks with hem but Maryoth, and Capron and hys wyf, and Querles wyf, and another man in ablac zede sum quate halting, I sopose be his words that it was Norfolk of Gemyngham; and the seyde Purry aspyde alle this forseyd things. And Marioth and his felschep had meche grette langage that xall ben told zw quen ze kom hom.

I pray zw that ze wyl vowche save to don bye for me j. li. (1 lb) of almands and j. li. of sugyr, and that ze wille do byen sume frees to maken of zour child is gwynys; ze xall have best chepe and best choyse of Hayis wyf, as it is told me. And that ze wyld bye a zerd of brode clothe of blac for an hode for me of xliiiij^d or iiiij^s a zerd, for ther is nether gode cloth ner god fryse in this twyn. As for the child is gwynys, and I have them, I wel do hem maken.

The Trynyte have zw in his keping, and send zw gode spede in alle zour materis.

An Ancient Settlement – South Elmham

By Pertinax

In the last Newsletter I said that I would suggest answers to some of the questions which will no doubt arise concerning the ancient settlement in South Elmham. After a lapse of 1600 years, which followed a period of settlement, which itself lasted 500 years, there is no documentary evidence of activities on the site during this period. My thoughts on this are therefore just that - my thoughts. I have no professional expertise in this respect.

The first evidence of settlement on this site is provided by the discovery of the Thurrock potins, which date back to the 2nd century BC. These coins were Trinovantian, a tribe which occupied what is now Kent, Essex, and south Suffolk. A number of suggestions about the location of the boundary between the Trinovantian and the Icenian territories have been made, and they all agree that the line would run roughly from the area of Bury St. Edmunds to the coast around Aldeburgh. This of course puts South Elmham well within Icenian territory. How then did the coins come to be in South Elmham? They could have been the result of trade, or perhaps the result of conquest. Factors which were considered in deciding the boundary line were the location of coins finds of the two tribes. However, these were the gold and silver standard Celtic coinage, which followed the potins in the first century BC. Within the period of about 100 years, it is possible that the boundary between the territories changed, through tribal aggression. Perhaps the boundary lay, not as suggested above, but along the river Waveney, which would have been a natural, and formidable barrier in those days? We shall never know.



Thurrock Potin with its charging bull

It is believed that the Iceni usually lived in discrete independent communities which were relatively small, each having a chieftain and supporting officers. No doubt the settlement in South Elmham was of this type. Although independent, tribes would come together in emergencies, such as the Boudiccan revolt, which would bring together all the fighting men, led by the local chieftain and officers with their chariots. Thus the South Elmham settlement was no doubt occupied only by non-combatants at the time of the revolt.

It is thought that coins during the Iron Age were used not as a means of trading but more as a store of wealth, rather as Fort Knox is today. It is unlikely therefore that the coins found in South Elmham were trading losses, and they were too widely dispersed to have been a hoard. The question then arises as to how the coins came to be scattered about the field. They were valuable and unlikely to have been casual losses. It is an established fact that the Romans dealt very harshly with enemies who were defeated in battle, and following the major Boudiccan revolt it is unlikely that the Romans would have shown much mercy to the defeated Icenians. It is likely therefore that following the revolt the Roman army descended on the undefended settlement in South Elmham and totally destroyed it, taking all the surviving inhabitants into slavery. The coins which would be in the houses would all be lost in the ashes, and hence scattered about the site. This would at the same time explain the presence of the large number of ancient nails which are scattered about the site, though of course these might be of Roman origin.

The large number of coins and artefacts found on the sites strongly suggest that manufacture and trading were being carried on throughout the Roman period. This being so, good communications would be required. The nearest Roman roads known about were the present A140, and the Stone Street Bungay to Halesworth road. However, the Romans used the rivers extensively, and so it is probable that the river Waveney was also used to communicate with the coast and places further inland. Loading and unloading facilities would of course be required, and the Romans built inland ports for this purpose. It is possible therefore that the millstream at



Homersfield started as just such an inland port. The stream itself is obviously man-made. There was a watermill at Homersfield in the 14th century, but digging this out (it is 400 yards long) would have been a colossal task at the time, or indeed at any earlier time. (See map showing the mill stream in red, arrowed) But this is an example of the type of work which was carried out by the Roman army. It is generally accepted that where a preponderance of early Roman coins are found, on a site, this is an indication of the presence of the Roman army. This is the case with the site in South Elmham. Many of the coins found date from the 1st and 2nd centuries. With the defeat of the Boudiccan revolt in AD 60 it is difficult to know what the Roman army would have to do in South Elmham, and civil engineering was within their range of skills. I suggest, therefore, that construction of the mill stream was done by the Romans and it was adopted as the mill stream in the 14th century. So far as I know no Roman items have been found in the stream, but then no one has looked. An archaeological investigation of the area might be revealing.

The site within which stands the Old Minster is considered to be of Roman origin. Unfortunately, and tantalisingly, very few tangible remains in verification of this belief have been found on the site. One of the paths that leads to the Minster, if extended, does pass close to the South Elmham site, but I have heard no suggestion that the path has any Roman features at all. There is no evidence of a connection between the two sites, and so it is possible that the Minster site was prepared by the Romans and then abandoned without being occupied. The mystery of the Minster continues I am afraid.

The large quantity of Roman pottery sherds suggest that pottery was being manufactured in the site, and of course there is plenty of clay in South Elmham. Water and fuel would be required, but water divining indicates the presence of water on the site today, and the area may have been well wooded 2000 years ago. The raw copper which has been recovered suggests that metal work was being carried out. Roman roofing tiles have been found, but no Roman bricks, this suggests that the buildings may have been of wooden construction. There is no indication of a high standard of living accommodation, and so the site was probably an industrial one, combined with a sales ground. No doubt crops would be grown in the surrounding agricultural land so perhaps farming came into the picture also.

Based upon the quantities of coins found and the date of their loss, activity on the site appears to have fluctuated. After a relatively slow start, as was to be expected, activity increased during the second half of the 1st century and remained relatively high for the following hundred years. During the next hundred years activity declines, but in the final years of the 2nd century activity fluctuated wildly from very high to very low. Thereafter it stabilised a little, but there was a brief blip to a high level at the end of the 4th century after which it declined to a low level and subsequently no Roman coins were identified, although some which were in poor condition were Roman but identification by emperor was not possible.

The reasons for the fluctuation are not clear but economics may have been at least partly responsible. From the end of the 1st century inflation was a problem, due largely to the high cost of military ambitions, and as a result the coinage became debased. Unrest within the Empire occurred during the latter half of the 2nd century, and this reached a peak towards the end of the century at which time Britain broke from the Empire and appointed its own Emperor. Normality was restored after a few years and the new Emperor then reorganised the entire monetary system. It was during this period of unrest that the use of coins on the South Elmham site fluctuated wildly. The blip in the fourth century was during the Constantian period, when the popular Emperor stabilised the Empire after a period of unrest.

The coinage itself is of interest. In the earlier years of Empire this was of a very high standard. The coins were well made well designed and aesthetically very pleasing. However as the years passed the standard declined progressively. It might be said that the decline of the Roman Empire was matched by a parallel decline in the standard of coinage. The economic situation resulted in the debasement of the coins with decreasing use of precious metal, and indeed of any metals at all. Political unrest too had its effect, and the overall result was smaller coins which by their very nature deteriorated with use much more quickly than the earlier imperial ones. Indeed by the end of 4th century some of the coins were little more than scrap metal, although this was not always the case. One of the coins found at South Elmham dated 350 AD was probably better preserved than any others found, and this was a base metal coin. In the "bad times" quite a lot of the coins were forgeries, and this may explain the poor quality of many of them.

The apparent closing down of the South Elmham site at the end of the 4th century is of interest. There appears to have been no activity at all in the Viking and Norman periods, and very little activity immediately following the Romans during the Saxon period. This seems strange because it was only the Roman army that decamped, so unless the army was directly involved with activities on the site either as managers or customers, it might have been expected that life would have continued without much change. The quantity of pottery sherds found suggest that pottery was being produced on quite a large scale, and this was all of the low standard "grey ware" such as might have been used by the army. With the departure of the army therefore I wonder if the *raison d'être* for the settlement ceased to exist. It certainly did not run out of material! Whatever the attraction of site to the Icenians and the Romans, this did not appeal to the succeeding races.

For several years now this site has yielded substantial numbers of coins and artefacts whenever the topsoil has been ploughed. Obviously the number of items to be retrieved is finite and it is likely that it will not go on for much longer. However there are likely to be appreciable numbers of similar items to be found in the subsoil. Their recovery however must wait until an archaeological "dig" is undertaken. Such an investigation can only be made by the County Archaeological service which is at present fully committed to keeping ahead of areas where development of the land is about to take place. Fortunately no such development is anticipated at the South Elmham site, and so no immediate investigation work of this nature can be anticipated. However, anticipation is said to be as good as realisation, and we can all anticipate so here's hoping!

Unearthing Harold Godwinsson

By Diana Fernando

Of the many extraordinary Haralds and Harolds spread across European history, this was the Harold who was made Earl of East Anglia and later of Wessex, became Harold II of England, killed at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. This much is certain.

What is uncertain, is where he was born, what happened to his first wife (if indeed she was his wife), whether he was betrothed to William of Normandy's daughter, whether he did actually go to Normandy in 1064/5 to confirm the ailing King Edward the Confessor's offer of the English crown to William, how he was killed, where and how he was buried.

Because documentation for the life and times of the Godwins is sparse, a maze of anecdotes, chronicles and eulogies grew up. Apart from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and *Domesday Book* which records the Godwins' remarkable landed wealth, most of the contemporary 'histories' were written with hindsight, and greatly biased towards William. The Battle of Hastings was largely recorded through the panegyrics of William of Poitiers, William of Jumieges and Guy of Amiens. Even the Bayeux Tapestry, embroidered about ten years after the Battle, cannot be entirely trusted, for it relied on earlier Norman sources as well as traditional Canterbury imagery.

There is one hagiography to counterbalance the writings against the English, although fancifully biased in the opposite direction: the *Vita Aedwardi Regis* (the Life of King Edward) commissioned by Edward the Confessor's queen, Eadgyth, who was Earl Godwin's daughter.

Harold was born about 1022 on one of his father's huge Wessex estates, perhaps at Bosham on the South coast, or Berkeley Manor in Gloucestershire. Godwin had been the protégé of Cnut. Having first stood up to this Danish ravager who became King of England in 1016, Godwin soon fell in with him, a fighting contemporary, and was rewarded with most of Wessex, and also with marriage to a close relative of Cnut's sister.

I read recently that Harold 'had no blood-based right to the throne.' Perhaps so, but the entanglement of royal blood across Northern Europe was such that Harold may indeed have had a blood-claim. His Danish mother Gytha's great grandfather, Harald Bluetooth, was also grandfather to Cnut. Gytha's brother Ulf was Cnut's brother-in-law.

Harold's father, Earl Godwin, could trace his lineage back to the King of the West Saxons, Aethelred, who fathered not only King Alfred but Aethelred I, Alfred's older brother and direct ancestor of Godwin. That is, if you believe the pro-Godwin encomiasts, for whom there is a fair amount of evidence.

The inter-marriages in the late Anglo-Saxon world were intricate and expedient: English, Norman, Danish, Flemish, Bavarian, even Russian houses were joined. Harold's sister Eadgyth was the one who married the English King Edward, whose mother Emma was descended from the Norwegian Rollo, first Count of Normandy. This same Emma, Aethelred the Unready's widow, eventually married Cnut. Harold himself, having perhaps lost track of his first 'wife' Edith Swan-neck of Norfolk, belatedly married Ealdgyth the Welsh Queen, widow of Gruffyth ap Llywelyn, Harold's Welsh enemy slain (possibly by treason) in 1063.

So the Anglo-Danish couple, Godwin and Gytha, brought up at least six sons and three daughters. The first four children were given Danish names: Eadgyth, Swegen, Harold, and Tostig, while the next batch had English ones: Gyrth, Leofwine, and Wulfnoth. The youngest two daughters were named Gunnhildr and Aelfgifu (Danish and English respectively).

The Godwin boys, growing up in a powerful family during dangerous times, troubled by Viking raids, were educated in the martial arts and military strategies. The five eldest sons became soldiers. Harold was described as having books, including one on falconry. Godwin was a good father, according to the *Vita*, and provided his daughter Eadgyth with an academic education in Wilton nunnery, where, to add to her Danish and Irish, she learnt Latin

and French, as well as embroidery and piety! None of the boys, however, entered the church, although Godwin bestowed favours on Wulfstan, Bishop of Worcester, and Harold, once he was king in early 1066 took Wulfstan on a tour of the north of England, probably to gain its allegiance. Such was the rough northerners' respect for Wulfstan's sanctity.

Swegen was the outsider. Having been created, by Edward the Confessor, Earl of several shires in Wessex and Mercia, he was up against the most powerful rival to the Godwins: Earl Leofric of the Mercians. Swegen rampaged through Wales, deflowered the Abbess of Leominster, was outlawed, fled to Flanders, then Denmark, where he took up the cause of his Danish cousin, King Swegen Estrithson. William of Malmesbury (12th century chronicler) writes that Swegen 'being of an obstinate disposition.....frequently revolted from his father and his brother Harold,' turned pirate, and having at last repented, went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but was killed by Saracens on his return!

As he had walked barefoot the whole way, it is more likely that Swegen died of cold somewhere near Constantinople, in 1052. Harold was now in line for promotion to Swegen's estates. Since being made Earl of East Anglia in 1042 on Edward's accession, he had remained loyal to his father's cause – subduing the Welsh, the Mercians, anyone who challenged the Godwins' power. He apparently never committed himself to a formal marriage with Edith Swan-neck, but had a long relationship with this Norfolk noblewoman. It is thought that it was a 'hand-fast' marriage, in the manner of Cnut's union with the Northampton Aelfifu (mother of Harold I, Harefoot). Such marriages did not preclude a later Christian blessing. If Swan-neck is the Edith of *Domesday Book*, she held considerable lands in Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire as well as Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire. She had at least six children by Harold.

Edward had an uneasy relationship with the Godwins, as he had with William of Normandy and with his archbishop, Robert of Jumièges. This archbishop, a favourite of Edward's, accused Godwin of murder and of stealing land round Canterbury. He slandered not only Godwin, but his daughter who was the Queen. He manipulated if not her divorce from Edward, at least her banishment. By 1051, not only she, but all the Godwins were outlawed. The next year, Godwin and his sons invaded England to recover their losses. This time they had the previously hostile public on their side, and on 15th September, Godwin and Harold with their guards attended a King's Council, declared their innocence, and won back their positions and respect. Godwin was pardoned in time to die prestigiously at Winchester, where he was spending Easter 1053 with the king. He had an unexpected stroke on Easter Monday, and was carried by his sons into the royal bedchamber. He died on the Thursday, and was buried in the Old Minster near his great patron, King Cnut.

Harold, 'the wisest of the brothers,' was then given Wessex, upon which 'the whole country rejoiced,' according to the *Vita*. East Anglia was given to Aelfgar son of Leofric the powerful Earl of Mercia. This gave Tostig Godwinsson, the next brother down, cause for discontent, while he waited for an earldom. Especially as Harold during the next five years accrued more and more land all over England, as far north as Northumbria, and as far south west as Cornwall. Later, when he married Ealdgyth the Welsh Queen, widow of Gruffydd ap Llewelyn (Harold's enemy, slain and decapitated by his own men in 1063) Harold acquired even more territory.

Tostig had the most difficult terrain to subdue when Edward granted him Northumbria in a great re-shuffling of the shires at a Council in 1055. The turbulent Aelfgar was outlawed from East Anglia and Gyrth Godwinsson, the next son down, was given Norfolk. Tostig in the North not only imposed huge, undeserved taxes, but was tough and oppressive, and sided with the Scots and Scandinavian raiders. Evidently this led to the rebellion against Tostig in 1065, when he was exiled with his Flemish wife and family. This in turn led to the showdown at Stamford Bridge in 1066, where Tostig returned, backed by his relative, Harald Hardrada, King of Norway. Harold Godwinsson, now King, defeated and killed his brother Tostig and Harald Hardrada at that decisive battle.

The rest is history. Or, as one writer describes it: ‘fair game for swots, letter-writers, anoraks and so on.’ Why Harold fought to the death at Hastings remains an enigma. He could have escaped, in order to fight again. That would not have been considered a disgrace in defeat. He could have starved William out on the Sussex beach-head over winter. It is not even sure that Harold was killed by an arrow, let alone a Norman one, any more that it is sure that Edward wanted either William or Harold to succeed him as king. Any monarch who has no blood-heirs can be fickle. Edward had been worritting for many years over his father Aethelred the Unready’s other possible surviving sons. The most likely was Edward’s older half-brother Edmund Ironside’s offspring. Edmund had briefly been king in 1016, squaring up to Cnut before dying mysteriously. Edmund’s son had married Agatha, a Germano-Hungarian princess, and *their* son, Edgar Atheling (‘throne-worthy’), was virtually adopted by King Edward and Queen Eadgyth . This was in 1057, when the boy was only five. But he was considered a boy of promise, and in fact, after Harold’s death, was even elected king by a City of London hierarchy and the Archbishop Ealdred of York. Perhaps wisely, there was no rush for a coronation.

It was left for William to start a new dynasty. Harold did not even have the dignity of an accurately-recorded burial. The chroniclers had a field-day. According to a monk at Waltham, Harold was not buried there. According to some French sources, a certain William Malet interred Harold on the cliff under a tombstone; according to others, William had the mutilated corpse put together again, wrapped in purple linen, then taken back to his base camp at Hastings, where he handed it over to Harold’s mother Gytha. That Gytha had the body buried at Waltham, which had been founded by Harold himself, was a claim only made by Waltham after its reform in 1177.

And so ends Harold, Anglo-Danish hero, but always remembered as the last Anglo-Saxon king.



The Picture:

A modern article on Harold states that ‘the only visual representation we have of Harold is the stylised Bayeux Tapestry.’ Not so. Harold’s issue of silver pennies (the only unit in circulation) coined at no fewer than forty-four provincial mints is impressive. I reproduce one here, enlarged, showing Harold’s left profile, crown and sceptre. On the reverse, the word PAX is imprinted. Although the portrait appears unflattering, pro-Godwin chroniclers attest to Harold’s good looks and honourable, sunny temperament.

Some Thoughts on Wild Orchids in South Elmham

“As a flower of the field so it flourisheth
For the wind passeth over it and it is gone;
And the place shall know it no more.” (Psalms)

Suffolk has lost most of its orchid-rich meadows and ancient woodland. The pleasure of finding the first Early Purple tucked away in a hidden corner of a shady hedgerow is now quite rare, one has to know where to look. In the 17th and 18th centuries mid-Suffolk was a dairying area with a long established management of grassland which had led to the creation of magnificent flower rich pastures. Grassland is the prime habitat for native orchids, but it will always tend to develop into scrub and then to woodland unless prevented by grazing or mowing. Although heavy and inclined to tread on the flowers cattle and horses do not eat orchids, leaving the bulbs and rhizomes intact, sheep (and goats) on the other hand eat everything! During the 19th century advances in agriculture led to much of the land being changed to arable use, the fields were annually ploughed and the flowers were lost. Orchids prefer a soil which is low in nutrients, undisturbed, stable and permanent.

The modern farming methods of the 20th and 21st centuries with its deep ploughing, use of fertilizer and herbicides have exterminated the “weeds” giving rise to the bountiful and uniform fields of grain that we see around us, beautiful in themselves but replacing that older tapestry of jewelled nature. The roadside verges which were once cut by hand, suffered in the 60s and 70s by flail mowing several times a year thus inflicting serious damage to flowering and setting of seed. Some verges were even sprayed with weed killer. Apart from managed grassland and preserved meadows, road verges, green lanes, churchyards and domestic lawns remain as sources of unimproved grassland, provided they are managed in the correct way.

In South Elmham I have identified eight different species and variations.

1. Early Purple *Orchis mascula*. A flower of ancient woodland but found in abundance in All Saints churchyard, forty or more spikes have been noted in some years. This one was photographed on 28.04.10 in All Saints churchyard.
2. Common Spotted *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*. Another flower of ancient woodland found in All Saints churchyard, it was mown during the flowering period a few years ago and has not been abundant since.
3. Bee Orchid *Ophrys apifera* This orchid is known and loved by everyone, three forms appear locally. On a lawn in St. James there are two; *O.apifera* and its colourless variety *chlorantha*. The latter is really a partial albino lacking the anthocyanin pigment which gives the pink colour to the three large upright sepals. The so-called Wasp orchid (*O.apifera var.trollii*) is also to be found on a roadside verge, this is a rarity.
4. Greenwinged *Orchis morio* Named for its green lines appearing on the outer sepals, these are rather inconspicuous but are present on all its colour forms, which can vary from deep purple through pink shades to pure white. Again they are to be seen in a meadow in St. James, together with cowslips their preferred companions. This was photographed in St. James on 30.04.10
5. Pyramidal *Anacamptis pyramidalis* Another well known favourite orchid, called so because of the shape of the flower spikes, the colour varies from rose pink to rarely a pure white. This grows mainly in the road verges but has been reported in St. Margaret’s churchyard.
6. Autumn Ladies Tresses *Spiranthes spirales* Unfortunately not recorded in the Elmhams since the 1880s where it grew together with the Fly orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*) in the Rectory meadow in All Saints.

All native British orchids are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

All these photographs were taken in South Elmham



Early Purple Orchid



Common Spotted Orchid



Green Winged Orchid



Bee Orchid



Bee Orchid (*Chlorantha*)



Pyramidal Orchid

Visiting Grandpa at Heath Farm

By Rosemary Mason



Heath Farm Homersfield in the 1940's

As we were frustrated with plans to have our New Year lunch at Heath Farm, Homersfield on January 17th I felt it was timely that I should invite you to visit the house with me, albeit in your imagination and seventy years ago.

My maternal grandfather farmed at Heath Farm Homersfield from the early part of the 20th century until his death in 1935. So my mother grew up at Heath Farm starting school in Bungay for a year or two at St Mary's School, now St. Mary's Residential Home at the end of Earsham Street. She made the journey daily on her pony, stabling it at Bungay, possibly at the Cherry Tree pub close by Outney Road which had stabling facilities. A quiet ride through Earsham, but a lonely one in the winter, which was ended by boarding school life in Norwich for the rest of her education.

Her mother had died during the first World War, so from then on grandfather and the house were in the care of a house keeper who I remember as cool- in the old sense of the word- and quite severe. Children must have been a disturbing invasion to her existence in this house well set back off the 'New Road' down a walnut tree lined drive. A few of these remain. Also separated from the main Bungay to Harleston road and the adjacent railway by the river and the marshes.

Mother liked to visit her father whenever possible from our house, a farm just east of Beccles, so a journey of a good twelve miles with the ups and downs through Barsham, Shipmeadow and Mettingham, and a stern test for the pony when we occasionally went in the trap. A days outing and a long sit for my brother John two years older than me. Or we would stay over night when I had a little bedroom looking out over the Waveney valley, as I do today. But more often, oh joy of joys, we went by train on the Waveney valley line.

Dr. Beeching ended that delightful route which provided easy access to Norwich from stations at Beccles, Geldeston, Ellingham, Bungay, Earsham, Homersfield, Harleston, and Tivetshall, with other stops on the way. Don't forget to count the red fire buckets at each station!

There were three platforms at Beccles station, and one train left from the siding, travelling over a level crossing in Northgate and a bridge over the river, now dismantled, and on by Dunburgh. Like so many other lines, it would have been a perfect cycle route or footpath had it survived with public access. Too costly to maintain, do I hear?

How we would love to have the chance to travel by pony power on a peaceful road now, or the Waveney rail line. But I digress.

The walk from Homersfield station took us up through the village past the Black Swan and alms houses, where mother often called to take something to a friend, and so on to Heath Farm, with Grandpa waiting at the front door to welcome us. His clothes had a warm, friendly smell I can still recall. On the light land there, he was mainly involved with sheep farming along with a few cattle on the marshes. There were ducks, hens, geese, and peacocks about the buildings and yard, and Suffolk horses for the arable land and general use, and John and I loved to play out there. Interestingly, Grandpa also had marshes at Trowse, just outside Norwich where sheep driven up would rest over night before going to 'The Hill' as the livestock market was generally known in Norwich, and was held on Saturdays.

Heath farm was an L shaped house with a back stable door into the kitchen with its stone sink and pump, Dutch oven and range, well scrubbed table and dairies off. The lavatory was outside of course. As a child it seemed warm and mysterious as I remember, with the biggest spiders in the world in the drawing room. On my last visit in the early 1950's they were still about, huge things which must have had a safe haven in the expansive Virginia creeper covering the front of the house. Are they still flourishing Mrs. Hunt?

Shortly after my grandfather died, other relatives from my father's family moved into Heath Farm, but motor cars had arrived by then, so did we also contribute to the demise of that magical railway line?

Happy reflections of a dear man written at the very desk at which he must have spent many hours and sitting on the very same chair.

Rosemary Mason January 2010

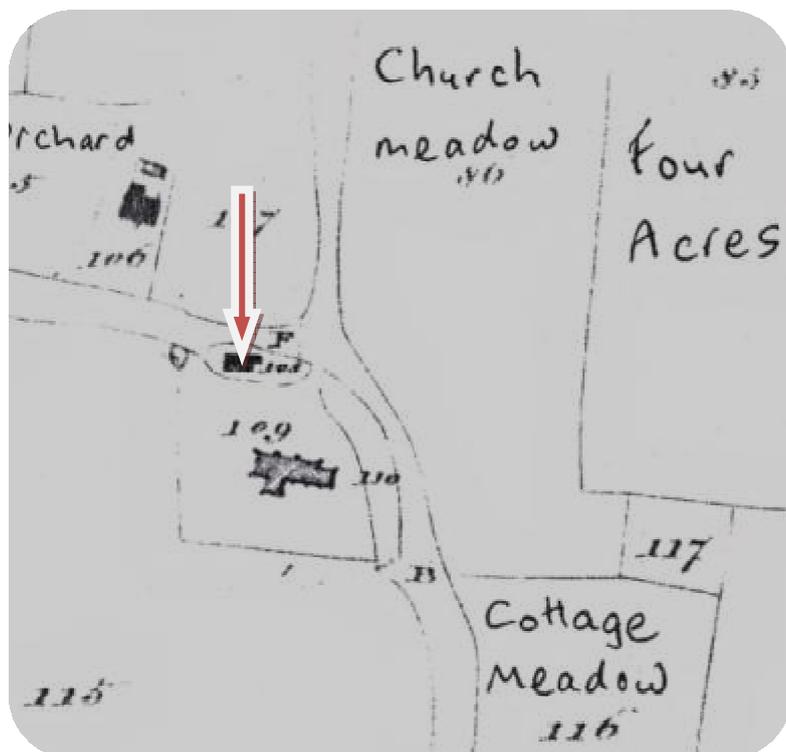
Letter

Town Cottage St. Margaret South
Elmham

Dear Editor,

Following our walk around the village of St Margaret South Elmham there was some uncertainty of the position of the Town Cottage by the Church. In this excerpt (taken from the Tithe map) the arrow shows the true position of the Town Cottage belonging to the Parish, which was situated north of the Church and numbered 108. William Hambling was the occupier at the time and the grounds amounted to 9 perches.

Susan Riseborough



Summer Programme for 2010

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

Thursday 27th May

In Bateman's Barn South Elmham Hall
The Annual General Meeting followed by
'Repairing Timber Framed Buildings'
By Rick Lewis

Thursday 24th June

Archaeology from Fifteen Years of Excavation at Flixton Park Quarry
By Stuart Boulter

Thursday 22nd July

'A History of Bungay' By Chris Reeve

Thursday 26th August

A Guided Walk Around Bungay with Chris Reeve
Meet at Bungay Museum 7.30 p.m.

Other Meetings

Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History

Saturday 5th June

Excursion to the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment at Orford Ness
Assemble at the Quay at 9.45 a.m. Tickets from Jane Carr by post at 116 Hardwick Lane
Bury St. Edmunds IP 33 2LE £13 for NT members £16.20 for others Please send SAE.
This visit involves a five mile walk

Saturday 19th June 10.30 a.m. at Redgrave Church

Redgrave, Rickinghall Superior and Inferior Churches Guided Tour
Clive Paine will lead the tour. Tickets at £13 include lunch and are available from
Jean Sheehan telephone 01379 890237

Some Recently Published Books

Medieval Church Window Tracery in England

By Stephen Hart

Boydell Press 2010 £45 ISBN 978 1 84383 533 2

Medieval Suffolk: An Economic and Social History

By Mark Bailey

Boydell Press 2010 £14.99 ISBN 978 1 84383 529 5 Paperback

REMINDER

**The annual subscription for membership of the group is due on 31st May
Single membership £12 Joint membership £18**