

Norfolk Historic Buildings Group

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Newsletter



Number Fifty

Autumn 2024

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CHAIR

As we start our twenty-fifth year, the group is in fine fettle. With a fairly constant two hundred and fifty members, we have almost completed another successful set of summer visits including visits to 7 houses with an excellent AGM in North Lopham. The winter programme is set to start soon with talks by two internationally-known Professors as well as talks on a range of topics. The next NHBG Journal is in the later stages of writing with the aim of publishing early next year (unless the research leads to other avenues). It is about the church lithographs of Robert and John Berney Ladbrooke. Over 700 churches were drawn in the innovative lithographic style in the early 19th century, at a time when churches were generally at a low ebb most were and in poor condition after three centuries of neglect since the Reformation and before the Victorian ecclesiologists started their restoration programme. Given the monumental size of the original exercise, little has been written about them and little is known about who did what. Almost 15 years has been spent researching almost a dozen collections of the images, each of which is slightly different. The Journal aims not only to make the images available for researchers but to analyse the whole corpus of work.

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August 2024
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Administration

Winter Meetings

At the AGM (reported elsewhere) there was a request for the committee to discuss having in-person winter meetings again, rather than having exclusively Zoom-held meetings.

As this winter's programme is already arranged, the suggestion was narrowed down to the annual Members' "Night". Could it be a test event as a trial run for a day-time meeting?

It was also suggested that a day-time meeting would get over the problems of night-time driving and enable more members to attend.

I am afraid that since the idyllic days of UEA's outreach programme allowing the free use of the lecture theatre in Elizabeth Fry building which ended in 2009, followed by the INTO Centre at UEA until 2018, we had to find an alternative venue. The Diamond Centre in Sprowston was tried before the pandemic, but numbers were considerably below those at UEA.

It would greatly help the discussions if committee members had an idea of where the majority of members would like to meet.

- In Norwich?
- anywhere but Norwich?
- a specific venue convenient to many?
- Weekday or weekend, or either?

Please let Lynne know if you have strong feelings about when and where - addresses to the left

Winter Lecture Programme

All meetings will be held over ZOOM @ 7.20 for 7.30pm.

The Eventbrite ticket-issuing process is set out below. It sounds complex, but once navigated, it is easy. If you register with Eventbrite, then when you Login afterwards for another event, the process is easier as your details are pre-filled in stage 3

1. **Go to the event listing.** (Via the link in the email from Lynne) all the event details - the location, date, time, and description.
2. **Select "Tickets" and choose which tickets to register for.** After selecting tickets, **click Checkout.**
3. **Fill out registration information.** Every order requires the name and email address of the buyer.
4. **Agree to Eventbrite's policy terms.** Eventbrite requires acceptance of its Terms of Service, Community Guidelines, and Privacy Policy
5. **Click "Place order".** This completes the order and shows a confirmation message.
6. **Find your tickets.** After completing an order, attendees will be sent a confirmation email containing the link to the event.
On the night: **click the link in the email, this takes you to the Event page**
- 7 **To join the Zoom talk** on the attendee event page **click the "join now" button at the bottom of the page** and this will take you directly to the zoom meeting.

Wednesday 16th October 2024

Prof. Chris Dyer

Carpenters in the Middle Ages

Professor Dyer is a social and economic historian with an interest in landscape history. He has published widely on medieval crafts, trade, poverty and conditions of the peasantry, including "Making a living in the Middle Ages". As far as timber-framed houses are concerned, carpenters were the most important people.

Thursday 16th January 2025

Jess Jenkinson

Fancy ware for fancy buildings - Cosseyware in Norwich

Previously working as a Conservation Office in Norwich, Jess is an Inspector of Historic Buildings for Historic England and has made a study of Cosseyware. Produced by Guntons brickworks, originally in Costessey, his ornamental bricks were widely used in Norwich, especially by George Skipper.

Wednesday 27th November 2024

Prof. Warwick Rodwell

Northwold Manor Reborn: Architecture, Archaeology and Restoration of a derelict Manor House

Northwold Manor is a multi-period listed building (grade II*), about which almost nothing was known. Uninhabited since 1955, it had fallen into a state of extreme dereliction, and was beyond economic repair when Professor Rodwell and his wife Diane purchased the property in 2014. He and his wife, Diane Gibbs, embarked on a major restoration that ran for nine years. The restoration was carried out as a quasi-archaeological operation,

Tuesday 25th February 2025

Amanda Bevan

The lost church of St. Olaves, Norwich

Amanda is Head of Legal Records at the National Archives. The possible remains of this Anglo-Scandinavian church have been discovered amongst flint warehouses near Anglia Square. Located in what became known as Norwich Over the Water, the church was no longer supported by the 14C and the parish amalgamated with St George Colegate. It is affected by the on-going saga of the development at Anglia Square.

Thursday 20th March 2025

Andrew Ferrara

New Insights into The Bishop's Palace at Norwich

Now Project Curator at Norwich Castle Museum, A Norwich native, his Doctoral research concerned the Bishops' Palace in Durham, but his research extended to The Bishop's Palace in his home city.

Tuesday 10th December 2024

Ian Hinton

Art Nouveau to Brutalism: Illustrated by London Tube Stations

The period between 1905 and 1935 saw an incredible expansion of the tube system. Corporate pride, brand identification and an investment in, and faith in, modern architecture saw an explosion of building, most of which has subsequently been recognised by Statutory listing. Ian lived in London for 50 years seeing and using the stations daily, realising now that he should have looked more closely then.

April 2025 (date and time t.b.c)

Members' meeting

A chance for members to outline their own research. The committee is considering arranging a day-time in-person meeting for this event. Arrangements will be circulated.

Early Stone in Norfolk's Churches (May 19th 2024)

Ian Hinton

A warm and sunny day amongst Norfolk's rural churches started with Peter showing the group examples of the various types of stone that we would be seeing and explaining how they were formed. He emphasised that earlier text books referred to carstone in a general sense and this encompassed the many forms of orange or dark brown conglomerates and breccia as well as genuine carr stone, which is much smoother in texture. The gritty and pebbly conglomerates formed at the base of a sandy layer that was rich in iron, usually sitting above an impervious layer that prevented the water draining away. The water leached iron from the layer and deposited it at the bottom forming the iron-bound conglomerate, which is known by several names (including iron pan, ferricrete and puddingstone). The types with rounded pebbles were frequently quarried from river beds which goes partway to explaining the hundreds of locations where it has been used across the county.



Examples of different forms of the iron-bound conglomerate used in Norfolk's churches

top: darker conglomerate above lighter-coloured smoother carstone at South Wootton



right: lighter-coloured conglomerate at Limpenhoe

Melton Constable

All three churches that we visited are now isolated. We began the tour at Melton Constable St Peter, one of the few central-towered churches in Norfolk which has two later "trancepts" and is sited in the park of Melton Constable Hall. The original conglomerate corners particularly in the lower parts of tower still exist. The church has been



altered over the centuries by the insertion of later windows, but the original Romanesque doorway is still in place at the west end of the nave. It is still possible to see the outside jambs of two windows defined by conglomerate on either side of the Y-tracery window above the door, possibly the outside two of a triple-lancet set. Many pieces of dark conglomerate can be seen in the walls.



Swanton Novers



Swanton Novers, St Edmund still has three of the four nave corners made entirely of large blocks of conglomerate up to where the walls were raised. The tower must have been built later as there is no conglomerate in it and the quoining consists of small limestone blocks. The chancel and porch were rebuilt in the nineteenth century using many pieces of conglomerate, presumably reused from the earlier parts of the church.



There is a blocked doorway in the centre of the south wall, dating from before the nave was lengthened westwards, the top part of which is defined by reused Roman tiles

Swanton Novers - blocked south doorway with an arch of reused Roman tiles defining its top



Little Snoring



Little Snoring St Andrew displays conglomerate in three different ways. Firstly in the remaining tower of the earlier church, both in its general construction amongst the flints, but secondly by using fine-grained conglomerate surrounding the tower arch with finely cut voissiors of both dark and light stone, with particularly large stones forming the jambs below the springing points.

The third use is in the thirteenth-century church built immediately to the north of the tower. Here the conglomerate has been built into the base of the west wall, the best pieces forming the western quoins of the nave. Much of this stone is fine-textured and shows evidence of diagonal tooling - an indication of Norman work when it was first used. The window dressings of this iteration of the church are in limestone.

The band of conglomerate seen in the tower is thought to have been covered in render so was probably not considered decorative.



above: The tower arch at Little Snoring

below: The quoins of the rebuilt church and the band of conglomerate in the tower



right: The hybrid Romanesque/Early English south door at Little Snoring, indicating a date in the late twelfth/early thirteenth century for the rebuilt church



Reuse of Roman material

Time prevented the group investigating Roman materials found in early churches more thoroughly. Although we had seen Roman tiles in the wall at Swanton Novers St Edmund, there are many examples of wider and more intensive use elsewhere in Norfolk.

right: The western quoins of Oxnead St Michael are composed entirely of Roman tiles, probably from Brampton sited just across the River Bure



right: A section through a Roman tegular showing its up-turned end which fitted beneath the curved imbrex. found amongst many in the north wall at Coltishall St John the Baptist



Peter was County Archaeologist from 1973 to 1999, then Director of the Norfolk Archaeological Trust until 2014. He has published widely on Norfolk History & Archaeology in the East Anglian Archaeology series and edited the two editions of Norfolk from the Air, and the first edition of the seminal Norfolk Atlas, as well as recent volumes about other aspects of Norfolk.

His latest book, based on this research is "In Search of Norfolk's First Stone Churches" published as BAR British Series 683

Great Hospital Visit (July 6th 2024)

Owen Warnock



The Great Hospital from the north west.

Photo: John Fielding - https://www.flickr.com/photos/john_fielding/499636730232

On 6th July 2024 members of the Group visited the Great Hospital in Norwich. We were given an excellent guided tour by John Humphreys, a Norwich City Guide. Unlike most of the sites visited by the Group, the fact that the Hospital was originally an ecclesiastical institution meant that our guide was able to give us many precise details about the date of construction of its various elements, the funders of the work and in some cases the designer or builder, all recorded by the church.

The institution was founded by Bishop Suffield in 1249 as the Hospital Church of St Giles to provide accommodation for derelict priests and other poor men. In medieval Norwich there were a number of such hospitals, but only the Great Hospital is still functioning as a home for older people of limited means and only one other such institution, the Lazar House on Sprowston Road, still has physical remains.

A fascinating aspect of our visit was to see buildings created for the Hospital's purposes from the fourteenth century to the current day. The earliest was the church, St Helen's, which was originally constructed in the thirteenth century but was rebuilt and significantly expanded, largely at the instigation of Bishop Dispenser, in the fourteenth century. After the Dissolution the Hospital became a secular institution: it passed to the King by Act of Parliament in 1535, and in 1547 Edward VI ceded it to the Mayor, Sheriffs and citizens of Norwich. Shortly afterwards, in the 1570s, the area of St Helen's used for worship shrank when the chancel was walled off and a floor inserted within it to accommodate women residents, and the western part of the nave was similarly treated in order to increase the capacity of the Hospital for men.

We enjoyed inspecting the rather square church which was left in the middle, with its off-centre altar and a vaulted ceiling in what is now the south transept and had been a chantry chapel.



The vaulted ceiling of the South Transept chantry chapel of the original church of St Helen's.

The ceiling is ornamented with lovely roof bosses which rival those in the cathedral (and were probably created by the same craftsmen after they had completed their work there). It appears that these bosses were funded by Bishop Goldwell, whose rebus was on show on some nearby column capitals. The wards created in the church were subdivided in the nineteenth century to create individual cells for residents and in later times these were rearranged to give each resident a bedroom and a living room.

One of these wards, Eagle Ward, is kept in the state in which it was last used in the 1980s. The ward's name comes from the ceiling panels painted with eagles which were installed, it is understood, because of an impending visit to the city by Anne of Bohemia in 1383.



*Above:
The painted ceiling
of Eagle ward*



*Left:
The fifteenth-century
cloister*

It was a treat to be able to walk around a charming 15th-century cloister and to enter the 15th-century refectory which has with no fewer than six dragon spandrels in its roof timbers.

However, for many of us the most impressive buildings were those constructed by the noted Norwich architect Thomas Ivory when he was the Hospital's Carpenter – in particular a house he created and then leased from the Hospital for his own occupation. This house contains beautifully restored and maintained plastered Georgian rooms with unrivalled views of the cathedral.



St Helens House, built by Thomas Ivory in 1746, the front dating to the 19th century when it was converted to a villa.

*below left:
The view of the cathedral through the bow window*

The 18th century rear of the house

Another noted Norwich architect was involved in building on the site – Edward Boardman who created the other dining hall, Birkbeck Hall, built in late Victorian times on the site of the Hospital's brewery.



Edward Boardman's Birkbeck Hall of 1901. Considered a classic example of Victorian Gothic Revival

There are also ranges of residents' accommodation dating from the nineteenth-, the early twentieth- and the twenty-first century (including a handsome building designed by Cowper Griffith of Cambridge). Throughout the site we were impressed by some beautifully designed and executed modern contributions and alterations to the Hospital's buildings. A new block is currently under constructions near to the Bishopsgate boundary where it will replace some 1970s buildings. One trusts this newest component will also add to and complement this lovely collection of buildings – all set in beautiful gardens.

Members who were unable to attend this group event are urged to sign up for the tours that are offered from time to time - or to book a party or reception in one of the rooms available for hire!



The Old Rectory, Fritton Visit (June 15th 2024)

Richard Ball

The owners of the Old Rectory, Glenn Floyd and Jeff Turnbull, themselves NHBG members, invited the wider NHBG membership to see their magnificent house last summer. As sometimes there has to be a limit on numbers and the trip last year was oversubscribed, we were invited back this year as well.
(Ed)

On a sunny and thundery afternoon, we visited this very interesting house. The group had to divide into two otherwise there were too many in the house at once. The 'second shift' were served a wonderful afternoon tea in their garden by Glen and Jeff, with splendid home-made scones and cakes, whilst the other half went round the house.



Arrival in the rain, a chance to look round the lovely garden

The Old Rectory is located at the north end of Fritton Green on its western side, aligned almost north-south and close to the common-edge ditch. It consists of two halves – the southern cell is of two storeys and is thatched and is built at a slight angle to the remainder which consists of two cells of one and a half storeys which is covered in pantiles, with a twentieth-century, flat-roofed extension at the rear.

The house was, apparently, divided into three cottages, presumably in the 19th century but, by 1952, judging from a sale document in the owners' hands, it was once again a single dwelling.

The house is small but with the most splendid ceiling beams and joists in the main living room, which is in the northern section. This northern section is effectively a single story with a room in the roof area lit by dormers. It is thought that this was originally an open hall, with a floor inserted later. The timbers supporting the inserted floor are elaborately decorated with roll mouldings, believed to be of about 1550 but whether originally made for this floor or re-used from an earlier house, it is not possible to say. This inserted floor makes a very low ceiling to the current hall. There is evidence in the ceiling of some of the temporary work done to divide the house into three - a partition and a narrow stairwell, all now removed.



*Above - The Old Rectory - two-storey parlour end and one-and-a-half storey open hall
Below - The inserted magnificent moulded ceiling timbers*



The second cell downstairs, once the service rooms, is now a library, and it retains the crossbeam with empty mortice sockets in which the studs of the dividing wall once sat and also contains the original staircase to the room above, now altered at the base to start in the library.

The two-storey end of the house, the parlour end, has a magnificent mantle beam across the fireplace which is similar in complexity to the ceiling joists in the living room in the style of its roll mouldings. Upstairs, much of the timber framing remains although some has been replaced, but large studs and braces are visible.

If this house was The Rectory (there is another house in the village with a similar name) it would obviously have been of some quality, so it is not unreasonable to suggest a date of around 1500 for the hall, with quality materials used for the subsequent insertion of the floor and the attached two-storey section, in keeping with its place in the establishment.

We were told that an attempt to get a dendro date for the timbers failed, as the growth rings were too wide, but a new technique which involved some chemical analysis produced a date from part of the original frame of sometime shortly after 1506.

With thanks to Glenn & Jeff for showing us their house (and the tea and cakes).

NHBG Journal 8 - Ladbroke's Church Lithographs

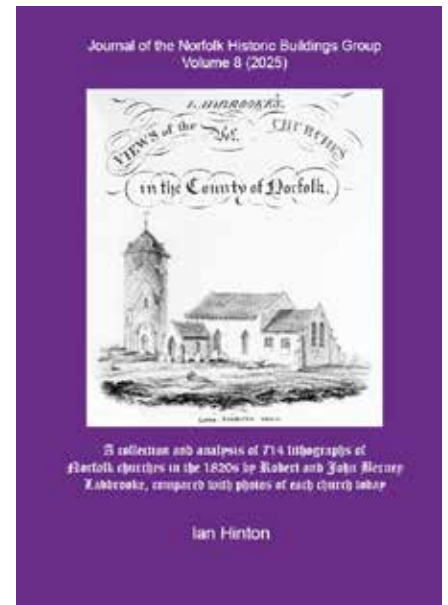
Ian Hinton Likely publication Date - Spring 2025

With the summer programme extending into September this year with two events still to come - St Mary's Farmhouse on the 8th and The Elizabethan House on the 22nd, the space reserved for their reports will be used to give some impressions of the forthcoming Journal about the lithographs of Robert and John Berney Ladbroke.

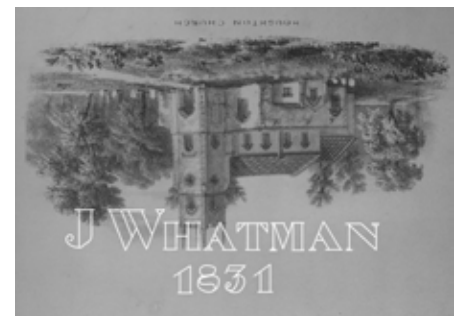
In 1821, they commenced the immense exercise of drawing and publishing an image of every church in Norfolk using the innovative process of lithography. Having only been in use for a few years it allowed for a more versatile representation.

The Journal will analyse the corpus of work and its details, address some of the issues of who did what and compare each image with a modern-day photo of the same church with a very brief commentary of the restoration.

Robin Forrest and I commenced the research in 2007 and since then I have studied almost a dozen collections highlighting several different drawing styles. Only the early images are dated, but investigation of the watermarks has added extra information



Two of the four Wigenhall churches, drawn in very different styles - artistic and architectural

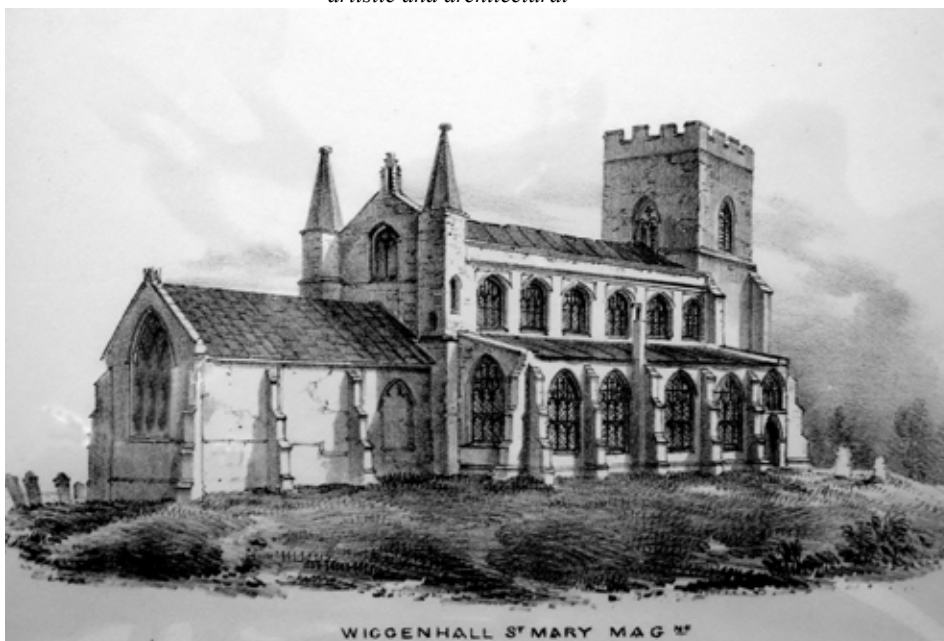


Watermark date (on approx 1 in 9 images has helped with dating (not shown on the gazetteer images!)



above: The original lithograph of Billockby church

below: the redrawn and corrected image released later



50 Mount Street Visit (July 20th 2024)

Based on notes by Andrea Kirkham



left:
the street
frontage of
number 50

right:
1884 OS
1/2500 scale
Norfolk -
map CX.2
(National Library
of Scotland)



Photos:
Andrea
Kirkham

below:
extract from the
Tithe Map of
c1840
- a farmhouse?

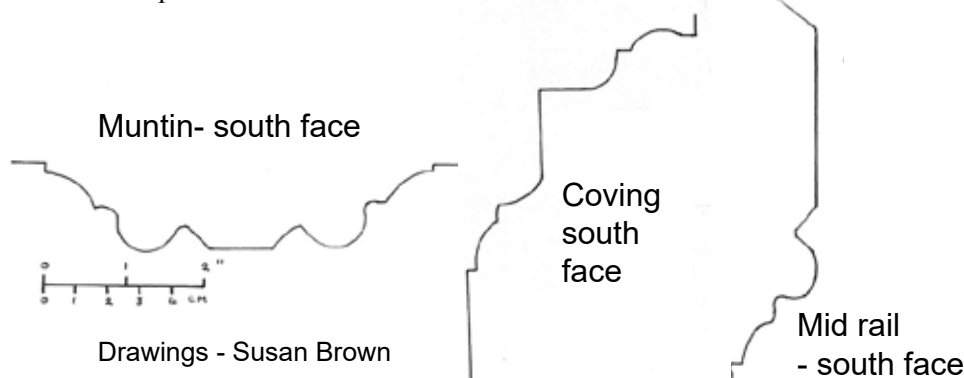


Long-term NHBG members Jacob & Margaret Ecclestone invited members to see their house in Mount Street in Diss, located in a prominent site on a road junction on one of the northerly routes out of Diss, up the hill from the Church and Market Place. The house was originally surveyed in 2005 and the interpretation has partially altered since then, with discussion about both the plan form and dating features.

The house appears on the Diss Manorial map of 1637, where it is the northernmost house in Diss and could be interpreted as being located in fields. A copy of the tithe map was viewed showing the house surrounded by outbuildings, suggesting it was a possible farm. Unfortunately the tithe map and apportionment are not available on-line for a more detailed examination.

Number 50 consists of the hall and service end of a tripartite house, No 49 forming the parlour to the south. A second pile sits on the west side of no. 50 forming an M roof. The house was originally interpreted as a cross-passge type, this has now been re-assessed as a lobby entry house, the current front door of No. 50 forming a new entrance. Discussion ensued about dating the various types and the regional differences in East Anglia, particularly between Essex and Norfolk.

Inside the front door is a screen or panelling of some quality, but it was agreed that it had been brought in from elsewhere and has altered the original ground-floor plan by dividing the old hall and services roughly equally, leaving the original transverse divider out of place in the northern room.



The reverse side of the screen/panelling is plain and could have been meant to be attached to a wall, but now displays a cartoonish drawing of a person with a frizzy hairdo and jaunty hat.



There was also some discussion about the hall ceiling. The common joists are plain and flat laid and very clean and it was thought that there may always have been a plastered ceiling, and the whole dating to around 1600.

The large transverse principal joist had a deep plain chamfer and remnants of red paint along much of its length, but particularly where it met the front wall. The paint obviously caught my eye - another example of something we frequently see in Norfolk.



left: the drawing on the back of the panelling



above: remnants of red paint

above left: the transverse principal in the hall with very clean common joists

Upstairs the roof had been raised, probably in softwood, with shaved purlins which could accord with the date of 1803 scribed into the plaster of the first-floor chimney breast.

With thanks to Jacob and Margaret for the opportunity and the lovely tea and scones.

Andrea is an independent wall paintings researcher and conservator who has written widely on the subject. Her thesis concerned Secular Wall Paintings of the 16th and 17th centuries.

NHBG Research

A particularly decorative use of bricks in flint walls

Lynne Hodge

On my travels around the county I have seen some flint walls with brick diaper work in the form of hearts. The first is on a farm outbuilding on the main road to Holt in Edgefield (bottom left).

The second Ian and I saw on the gable wall of the Manor House in Bessingham (far right).

After two I wondered if a trend was emerging and then I saw this house in Briningham (right) for sale on Rightmove which again has hearts alongside diamonds in the decoration.

The final example is a garden wall in Cley which has hearts, diamonds and a date of 1676. Here the flints inside the hearts and diamonds have been knapped.



Was there on builder who used hearts as his signature style? Can any member point me to other examples?

Please email me with a picture if possible, at buildings@nhbg.org



Some Houses of North Lopham (August 3rd 2024) Ruth Pearson (with additional building notes)

I was looking forward to joining the group of members for the AGM after a few years' absence from the Group, and the day more than lived up to expectations.

A friend who has lived in the village for over 50 years was able to tell me something of life in North Lopham that she, her family and friends greatly enjoy. North and South Lopham were associated with linen or hempen cloth and bear the hallmarks of a wealthy rural community – not all that far from Norwich. With many remarkable buildings, including the 14th century church of St Nicholas, thatched houses, a mere and surrounded by fields of ripening wheat it looks idyllic.

Sadly, as is true of so many villages nowadays, it has no post office or shops but it still clearly has a vibrant and close community centred now round the King's Head where we were welcomed at the start of the visit and later at the newly refurbished Village Hall for the AGM.

The King's Head, The Bull and Church Farm House were the places chosen for the visit and it was great to meet the owners/manager who were happy to talk to us and learn more about their homes.

North Lopham has a long straight street running through it - it turns out that this was along a long strip of common land that has gradually been encroached upon, with the older houses set back along its edge.



on the old common edge and that it had always been thatched. There was discussion about the likely date and layout of the original building and particularly the grand mantle beam in what would have been the parlour of the house. It was suggested that the fancy carved border which covered most of the deep mantle beam may once have been a frame for a picture and the holes in it may have been for a later mantle shelf.



The Kings Head

The first visit was to The Kings Head, a thatched timber-framed building that we were shown around and had the key features pointed out. There was the inevitable discussion about some aspects that you get when experts get together. It was agreed that it was one of the buildings was set back from the road

The Old Bull

We moved on to The Old Bull, another of the many public houses that once existed in the village and there was discussion about the need for a warm, light place to go on cold winter nights when these things were expensive, especially if the owner of the "public house" brewed good beer.

The Old Bull was also set back from the road, thatched and L-shaped. Although it has been changed over the centuries, there was discussion about the differences in the timbers of the two phases of the building, one from the sixteenth or seventeenth



above: the front of the house with 17C windows

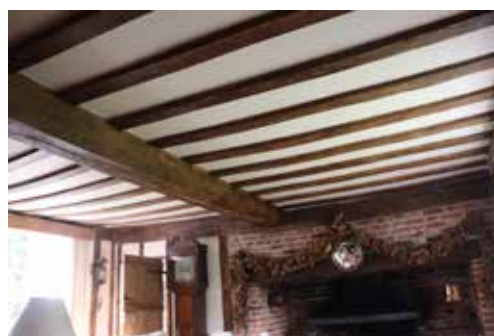
below left: the rear with outbuildings

century and one from the eighteenth with its thinner timbers. Some members thought that there were indications that the later part was a replacement for what may have been the original building built parallel with the street.

extended. The current 'front' door is in the rear wall next to the chimney in the shallow extension. There was lots of high quality timber in the ceilings and large fireplaces.



The Bull when it was a pub.



Upstairs we were shown an original corridor which was unusual in houses of this age and status, more common in elite houses, others had to make do without the privacy at this period, having to pass through room to room.

Ian tells me that there was some discussion afterwards about the construction of the ceiling upstairs. John Walker suggesting the possibility of "reverse assembly" where the tie beam is set below the wallplate rather than the usual position above it. Photos do seem to confirm this which is very unusual in East Anglia and is more typical of the Wealden houses of Kent and Sussex. Was this to provide a level floor for the attic above? Which raises the question of why is it not more commonly used?

A picnic lunch followed in the newly refurbished Village Hall which is shared with South Lopham, which was then followed by the short AGM (reported elsewhere).

Some of us visited the church and were impressed by the stained glass windows that I was told were dedicated to the memory of the Buckenham weavers' family.

Church Farmhouse

The final house we visited was directly opposite the church, our third thatched building of the day and occupying an important place in the village. Outbuildings at the rear hinted at its origin as a farm. The house now works as a beautiful B&B with a stunning garden full of flowers.

The layout inside was typical of the period although there was discussion about the likely original date which centred around over what period the use of opposed entrance doorways

It was a hugely enjoyable day, made lively as ever by the members' friendly banter, some described as "enthusiastic guesses", about the inside and outside of the buildings visited, regarding their history and changes made over the years.

Many thanks to the house owners and to all the team, especially Ian, Jess and Maggy, for a superbly organised and informative AGM and the NHBG year.



The Manor House, Oby Ian Hinton & Stephen Ward



Above:
1843 OS map with exact date for the
Manor House of 1622

Left:
Oby Manor House front wall
showing the brickwork joins and
blocked doorways

Photos: Ian Hinton
& Stephen Ward

The Manor House in Oby was one of the houses that the NHBG was invited to survey recently. As part of our programme of writing reports where owners have requested us to visit, it also provides an opportunity to increase the group's knowledge of Norfolk's architecture.

The construction of this house raised several issues, including the floorplan, the brickwork and the possible development sequence that resulted in the building that we see now. This is a precis of the report for the owner.

Introduction

The Manor House is located on the southern edge of the Isle of Flegg, in, or close to, the site of the deserted village of Oby, isolated now except for the farm buildings originally associated with the house. Certain sources say that material from the lost church of Oby is built into the farm barn.

The first series 1/2500 scale Ordnance Survey map of 1884 shows a precise date of 1622 for The Manor House. This, in itself, is unusual for the O.S.

Exterior

The house faces almost due north. It is brick built in Flemish bond of two full storeys which has had several different colourwashes. It has a narrow off-centre front door with a classical surround with fluted columns and a three-light oblong fanlight over. It sits between two replaced 10-over-10 sash windows beneath rubbed-brick skew-back arches with a modern doorway to the east. At first-floor level there are three similar 10-over-10 sash windows with a narrower round-arched window above the front door.

There are two full-height vertical joints in the front wall, where the courses do not match, approximately 2m either side of the front door (white lines on the photo above) – both of these joints are part of blocked doorways as they have another join approx. 90cm to their east, which rise some 24 courses, marked by the white outlines. One still has a soldier arch above it, but it is hard up against the current window opening, so the two cannot have existed at the same time.

The brickwork of the front wall continues into the western single storey addition, which contains a similar blocked doorway,

but not into the addition on the eastern side.

The roof has a shallow pitch, covered in smut pantiles with a central two-flued stack and a four-flued stack on the western gable end. The gable end has two semi-circular-topped windows, one each at ground and first floor levels and a small lean-to extension towards the rear. The rear wall is brick and is irregularly bonded, with extensive repairs to the central section, but does not have the same vertical joins as the front wall. The windows are a mixture of sashes similar to the front wall and two smaller horizontal casements, now in UPVC. The rear door is offset the same as the front door. The eastern gable end has a single flued stack in the centre and an additional single external stack and a larger single-storey modern extension the full width of the house with a similar castellated front parapet.

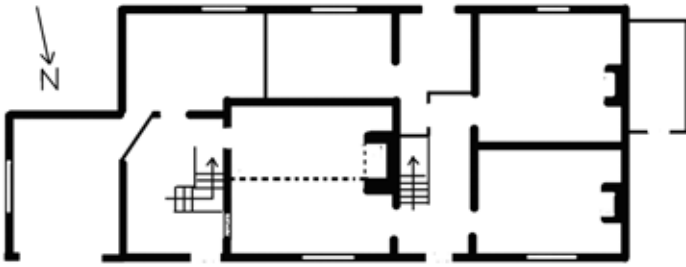


The rear
elevation
showing two
casement
windows as
well as four of
the same sash
windows as
the front

Interior

The house is undergoing a major renovation, some original construction was revealed. The house appears to have undergone a Georganisation with round-headed archways and alcoves, ornate reeded door casings with roundel corners and perhaps the sash windows. The original windows had been replaced with UPVC by the previous owners so it is not possible to estimate a date for them (now being re-replaced by timber sashes).

The front door opens into a hall containing a steep staircase. The ground floor ceilings throughout are very high, approximately 3 metres. To the east is the main room containing the deep chimney stack in the centre of the house and an axial principal joist which has been boxed-in. A pamment floor below the suspended wooden floor has been revealed. The owner



The apparently composite floorplan showing gable-end and central chimney stacks

stated that the suspended floor level had recently been removed and that most of the higher ground floor levels in the rest of the property were concrete. It is therefore likely that the front and rear entrance door thresholds were originally lower; possibly aligning with the evidence of bricked up openings on the facade.



The high ceilings (3m+) of the ground-floor rooms, and one of the many archways into rooms

Many of the passageways between rooms have simple plastered arches, approximately 8 feet at their apex; as can be seen on the image to the left, the walls and ceilings behind the arch into the dining room have previously been plastered, indicating the arches are possibly a later modification. Also revealed is a transverse principal joist framing the chimney stack, which appears to be pine. The brick fireplace in this room has an iron band supporting the arch.

The two rooms at the western end have deep stacks projecting into the rooms from the gable wall flanked by arch-headed alcoves and 20th-Century stone fireplaces. The flooring in the southerly of the two rooms is pine without tongue and groove. The majority of the ground floor walls and ceilings are plastered with no historical features visible. There was no evidence of any timber frame, even were parts of the underlying structure of the building was visible; for example, around the exposed newly installed window frames. Throughout the ground floor and first floor, doorways bricked up in the 1950s have been reopened.

Roof

The roof was constructed in sawn-square pine, with every 5th rafter acting as a principal rafter anchoring the shaved butt purlins, both morticed and pegged. The collars are jointed into the principal rafters using angled half-dovetailed lapped joints, which were nailed and appeared to be newer timbers than the rafters. Each Principal rafter also had a carpenter's mark on the south side just above the collar. There was no evidence of any wind-bracing timbers. A strut had been nailed between each collar and the tie beam.

The tie beams had mortices for diminished-haunch tenons cut in both sides, probably indicating the attic was once floored, explaining the gable-end windows at this level.

Discussion

Very little commonland remained in Oby, Thurne and Repps when Faden drew his map in 1794 (pub 1797), normally a sign of strong Lordship enclosing the commonland privately before Statutory enclosure. Research by the owner shows the manor was part of a larger manorial ownership, including Felbrigg Hall.

The Historic Building listing repeats the 1622 date that appears on the 1884 Ordnance Survey map, but dating this house is difficult and several questions arise.

Firstly, the layout of the house. It initially appears to be a mixture of the common tripartite plan of timber-framed houses of the 16th and early 17th century, with an offset front door opening into a lobby by the chimney stack; and the later 17th-century pattern of brick-built houses that had chimney stacks at either end and symmetrically laid out with a central front door and an unheated central bay. It is possible that this house is a form of interim layout between these two floorplans, with an off-centre door, gable end stacks but with a large central stack, that has not been seen before.

Secondly, the shape and size of the window spaces is contemporary with the brickwork in the front wall (correct closers around the openings and over-window arches well fitted) therefore the sash windows belong to the same period as the brickwork that surrounds them. The very earliest sash windows in urban elite houses date to the late 17th century, but in rural areas they were not really introduced until the mid - late 18th century.

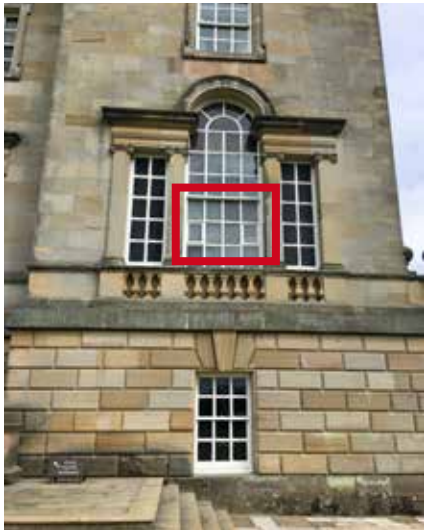
Thirdly, why is the front door so narrow? Doorways of this sort would be expected to be wider, although it does appear to be the same width as the arched window above it – are they of the same era?

However, the blocked door opening on the east of the current front door cannot have existed at the same time as the existing window openings, as the eastern jamb of the eastern door coincides with the window opening. The right (western) jamb of each of the blocked doors coincides with the full-height vertical join, with another blocked door located to the right of the arched opening through the castellated wall, which must originally have been part of a longer wall to contain the door.

If the two blocked doors were once doorways, what did they access? They cannot apply to the current internal layout. The multiple doors hint at a possible row of cottages. Could they be associated with the casement windows at the rear? Although there is no obvious horizontal break in the brickwork, there is a change in the colourwash above the arches of the ground floor windows - cottage eaves height perhaps?

Fourthly, the earlier, lower, floor levels of rough pammments would not relate to a house of this status, again raising the possibility that another building or buildings of lower status and quality existed here before the late 18th or early 19th century, when an episode of rebuilding and Georgianisation introduced the raised ceiling heights, the sash windows, the front door, the internal door architraving, the semi-circular arched openings inside and the pine roof?

None of the features seen in the house can be said to be from 1622. As renovation progresses, more may be revealed to help explain the unusual layout and front wall phasing.



More odd sash windows

Les Scott

In *Newsletter 49*, Les Scott reported finding two buildings in Lynn that had small opening lights within some of the panes in a sliding sash window.

Ian Mc Kechnie who has studied sash windows in detail thought that they were totally unnecessary, as sash windows were designed for ventilation and that they were likely to be just crass additions.

Since then Les has noticed other examples - the latest one at Houghton Hall in the central window of a Venetian window to the principal floor in the southern facade. It is obviously a vertical sliding sash window as it has overlapping window leaves, but it also has two top-hung opening lights at a convenient height for indoor operation.

Two iron fittings - used for?



Bugdon House, Bridge Street, Loddon



The Old Farmhouse, The Loke, Wymondham



It is located on the south face of the rear range of Bugdon House, on a wall of narrow bricks in English Bond. The house is opposite the Old Market Place and close to the river crossing.

The ironwork has a unique shape with a vertical semicircular form with an angled arm down from the top. At the bottom of the circle is a flat plate with two hooks suspended from the arm below it.

At first sight it could be a sundial (on the south wall) but would be expected to be closer to the wall with a scale behind it. The hooks look ready to carry some form of sign. If this is its original position, it is not at all prominent!

Any suggestions....?

The owners of this house are interested to find out if NHBG members have any suggestions for the possible use of this hook. It is set high up (about 10m above ground level) on the south-west gable just above the initials R M - probably applicable to Robert Martin who added the brick gable ends in 1745. Before the development of the houses around it, the house was approximately 150 metres from the nearest road - Harts Farm Road.

It does have the appearance of a support for a hanging sign, with a circle at the top end of the rod to prevent it slipping through the retaining eye and is approximately 45cm long. It does seem a long way from the road for a sign to attract attention.

Any suggestions...?



AGM Report Lynne Hodge

Thirty-five members stayed on at the North Lopham village Hall after lunch for the NHBG's AGM this year, perhaps lured by the prospect of visiting Church Farm afterwards.

Ian Hinton was in the chair for the meeting. All were happy with the minutes from 2023 and there were no matters arising.

In his Chairman's report, Ian said there had been a great increase in the numbers attending talks because they were held over Zoom and new members as a result. He reported that the Group had been holding training sessions for members on how to analyse the development of a building. This year the Group has written reports on 25 houses. Two committee members, Jackie Simpson and Dominic Summers, are retiring and were given a round of applause in thanks for their work. Ian thanked everyone who has helped with the running of the group, especially the officers and committee members, followed by more applause. The Group now has a new website which has much simpler access to the NHBG archive. The next Journal will be an analysis of and a compilation of J B Ladbrooke's 700+ drawings of Norfolk churches with a comparison of how they look today. Publication in the Spring if all goes well.

The Treasurer, Maggy Chatterley, reported that the Group was in a good financial position with about £14,000 in the bank which will be used for publications and dendrochronology. Ian gave talks through the year and he has donated his £365 fees to the Group. Peter Milne, the independent examiner of the accounts had given them the green light.

Membership numbers are stable at around 250.

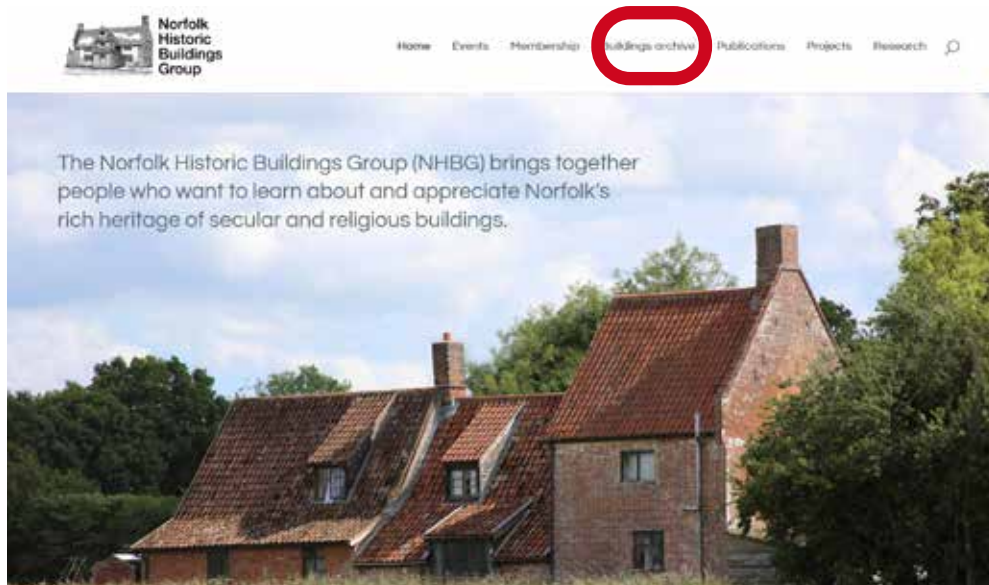
Ian Hinton was re-elected as Chairman. Mary Ash, Diane Barr, Lynne Hodge, Jess Johnson, Francesca Robinson and Anne Woollett were re-elected onto the committee together with additional members Les Scott and Christine Shippam.

It was agreed that the annual subscription would stay at the current rate and that Peter Milne should continue as independent examiner of the accounts. All agreed with the committee's recommendation that the quorum needed for an AGM should stay at 10% of fee-paying members.

In Any Other Business, Sue Brown asked if the Members' Evening could be held in person in the daytime. It was agreed that the committee would try and arrange this.

The meeting was closed at 2.00pm.

Access to the NHBG Research Archive



NHBG Buildings Archive

The Group has examined a wide range of historic buildings in Norfolk – 392 by the end of 2023. Brief reports of buildings visited are given in the Group's twice-yearly newsletters and full reports are added to the website.

In this way reports become available for others with an interest in the buildings and pursuing lines of research.

Reports usually include a plan, some photographs and a written report. The details of the reports vary depending on the amount of information owners are happy to share with the Group.

Accessing reports

The archive is only available to members of NHBG.

NHBG Members may email [NHBG here](mailto:membership@nhbg.org.uk) to create an account to give them access to the report. Reports are stored here alphabetically as PDFs.

If you wish to become a member of NHBG please visit our [membership section](#) and download a membership form, send the completed form to the Membership Secretary.

NHBG members are entitled to access the website archive of research done on behalf of the group which consists of all the reports that have been prepared at the request of owners. Brief summaries of these are always shown towards the back of each newsletter. The full reports are available to members here, but an access password is required. This can be obtained by emailing info@nhbg.org.uk and one will be sent to you. This can be done from the archive page on the website or direct.

The reports are in pdf format and they can all be searched for particular text, for example - crown post or dormer window. A list of reports that match the criterion will be shown and you can download any or all of them for your research.

A Digest of Buildings Visited Since March 2024

This is a digest of the Norfolk houses which the NHBG has been invited to look at and to prepare brief reports on. These are ALL private houses and NO contact may be made with the owners in any way except through the Committee.

These summaries of those reports are to inform members of the work undertaken on behalf of the Group.

Lynne Hodge



Church Farmhouse, North Lopham

A fully timber-framed house with a typical three-celled layout of two storeys plus attic located right opposite the church with the remainder

of the village abutting the narrow common to the north. The doors are in the opposed-entry position with the service room doors at either end of the wall, rather than together at the centre. The winder stairs are adjacent to the stack which comes right up to the front wall. The casement windows have fine wooden mullions. The first floor has an original corridor along the south wall. The attics are plastered, the roof has clasped purlins and the window in the east gable had a top-hung shutter. There are no shutter slides in the remaining windows so may always have been glazed. Probably built in the early seventeenth century as a house of some status.

Jess Johnston & Ian Hinton



Hill Farmhouse, Spooner Row

A three-celled gable-end-stack house with large casement windows under brick hoodmoulds. The west gable is in English bond. The common rafters are flat laid and the principal joist extends

into the central hallway. The original stairs are adjacent to the western gable-end stack. The roof of the western cell has double in-line purlins and clasping collars. The eastern cell was replaced in the 19th century and the house truncated. One purlin extends slightly into the eastern cell probably indicating that this mirrored the western one originally. Local examples of this sort of layout, with similar gables, staircase position and windows - Quaker Farm Wrampingham and Dairy Farm Tacolneston - are dated to around 1640.

Ian Hinton, Lynne Hodge & Ben Goodfellow



11 High Street, Lodden

Number 11 appears to be part of a two-storey brick terrace on the High Street, but there is a vertical join in the brickwork directly above the door aligning with the centre of the

chimney stack with a different number of courses either side. The room to the left of the lobby has an axial principal joist with stepped runout stock with a nick and the common joist in the other room are flat laid. The stack is built in narrow bricks, partly in English bond - the mantle beam has a single central burn mark. It was obviously part of a larger timber-framed house of the second quarter of the 17th century, but has been divided differently since. The sash windows and doorway appear to be contemporary with the brick frontage, but this does not explain the join in the centre of the brick wall.

Ian Hinton and Lynne & Adrian Hodge



Moneys Farmhouse, Aldeby

A gable-end-stack brick-built house sited close to the edge of the River Waveney marshes. The style is reminiscent of other early eighteenth-century farmhouses the group has seen,

with a partial platband, raised gables and a steep roof, now pantiled. The shape of the window openings indicate probable sash windows originally. Most of the interior is plastered out and the fittings such as cupboards and ironwork suit the period. The roof is of sawn-square pine but the purlin/rafter joists are of the earlier squared type, rather than the frequently seen shaved ends. Another older feature is the use of burnt headers in a decorative way in part of the north gable end

Ian Hinton & Christine Shipham



Frogs Abode, Scoulton

A one-and-a-half storey colourwashed timber-framed, thatched cottage with one stack on the left (northern) gable and another internal stack close to the south gable wall. Protruding timbers from the south gable

indicate that there was another cell here. This chimney has been rebuilt. The principal joists have scroll stops with a double bar and the common joist are flat laid. The southern cells have a staggered purlin roof with an additional internal purlin, probably of the late sixteenth century while the northern cell appears to be eighteenth century with shaved purlins, probably replacing an earlier cell.

Lynne Hodge, Ian Hinton & Ben Goodfellow



The Bishop's House, Fornsett St Peter

An intriguing house that was once in one ownership with the range at rightangles to the left (now known as The White House). This range is of two cells, of two full stories and

attic with a narrow central cell which contains a winder stair, but no chimney stack behind it. The two large stacks are attached to the rear wall. All the walls except the wall adjoining the other range are of brick, the eastern gable end having tile-capped crow steps. The western end of the roof is now hipped, but photos of the early 20th century show a narrower extension with a gable end. Two windows upstairs have Woodman latches with butterfly handle similar to those at Hapton House.

There may have been a central stack originally replaced by the rear stacks. In order to interpret this house properly, investigating the neighbouring range would help, as The Bishops House may form an early 17th century addition to it, similar to the many crosswings of the period.

Ian Hinton & Owen Warnock



Limetree Farmhouse, Shelfanger

The range parallel to the street facing north and has a white brick facade but an off-centre chimney stack of diamond-

set flues and a lobby entrance. High ceilings and sunk-quadrant mouldings with elaborate stops indicate a late seventeenth-century date. The attic once had two dormer windows. At the western end, where it joins the lower range, is a modern staircase apparently replacing the one that served both ranges. The northern range contains evidence of a medieval smoke bay or timber-framed chimney, the large-section, soot-covered mantle beam remaining. Originally consisting of a single room, this range has been extended northwards, so may have been either a low status common-edge house, or a detached kitchen for an earlier house on the site of the current main range.

Susan & Michael Brown and Christine Shippam



White House Farm Oxborough

A large, three-celled, house of two full storeys, plus attic the front clad in gault brick, with an off-set chimney. A fourth cell built to the south and a single storey extension at

the rear with a cat-slide roof are all covered in pantiles. Eight sash windows in the front facade have their sash boxes flush with the wall surface as they have been cut through the timber frame. The door is in the lobby entry position and has been moved back here after an early nineteenth-century replanning which was probably after the windows and brick facing. The timber frame consists of large-section timbers and two rooms upstairs with interesting cross-beam principal joists, not repeated in the ground floor rooms. The current roof appears to have been built outside an earlier roof, while at the northern end there seems to be another example of a simplified version of an inserted truncated truss like the ones found in Walsingham

Lynne Hodge, Ian Hinton, Les Scott, Mary Ash & Jan Bensley



Moneys Farm Cottage, Aldeby

This two-celled cottage is built behind Money's Farm along with other farm buildings. It has a single gable-end stack and has been extended recently,

but many of the original features are still present. The ceiling joists are a mixture of oak and pine, the oak all previously used with mortices and notches. The large fireplace has a filled-in arch probably for a bread oven. The roof is of similar construction to the farmhouse, except that the purlin ends are shaved. Presumably built at the same time as the house, but possibly using timbers from its predecessor.

Ian Hinton & Christine Shippam



Bugdon House, Loddon

Occupying an important position opposite the Market Place. The facade is now of brick in Flemish bond, with a central chimney

stack and slightly off-centre front door. Elements of timber

framing still exist in the rear wall. The southern room has a large transverse joist which appears to have been inserted to support the deeper chimney stack (by 50cm) at first floor level. It is not clear whether this is the original arrangement or part of later alterations. The ground-floor stack has only a single fireplace. It has a large mantle beam with large taper burns and a scribed circle. The northern room was unheated, perhaps, given its position, acting as a shop with direct access from the street. The neighbouring property to the north was once in the same ownership but is built at a



slight angle, following the line of the street.

Seventeenth-century wall paintings were photographed in the 1970s, now disappeared. The first cell of the rear range is built in English bond. This cell has a cellar and may well have replaced the open hall of the original house. Further cells of the rear range are later, perhaps coinciding with the rebuilding of the front range in brick.

Lynne & Adrian Hodge and Ian Hinton

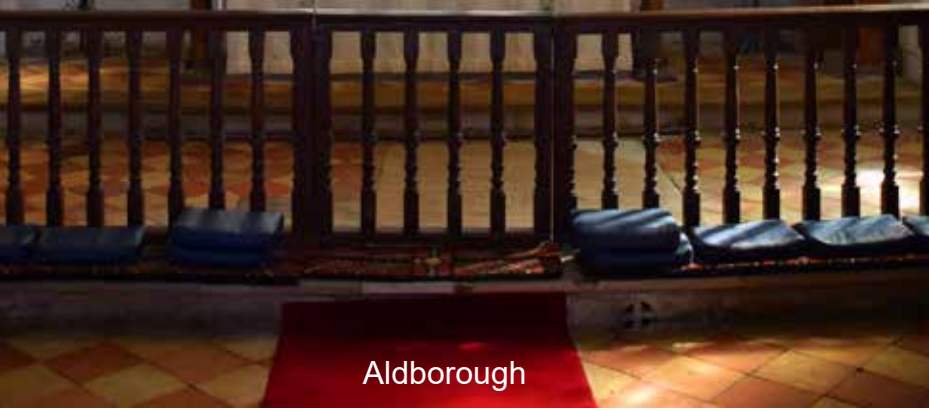


Heywood Hall, Diss

Set back on the edge of the linear common known as The Heywood. Two storey plus attic timber frame, all

pebbledashed, with brick gables in English bond. There is at least one elaborately roll-moulded joist in the ground floor ceiling, the other boxed in. There is evidence of an original first-floor corridor with some wide (45cm) floorboards. The roof is double in-line butt purlins and the wallplates show that the brick gables are original. The floorplan is unusual with four cells, an offset front door but with one gable-end stack and another on the rear wall. The roll-moulded joist may be reused in a building that appears to be of around 1600, with the rear extension added in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. Future major renovations may reveal more detail.

Lynne Hodge, Ian Hinton & Jasmine Philpot



Aldbrough



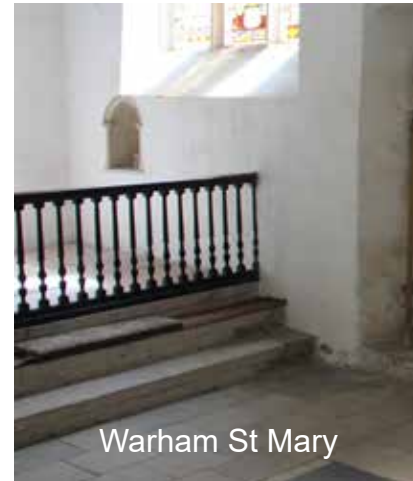
Bradwell



Bringham



Great Snoring



Warham St Mary



Saxthorpe

Some Norfolk Communion Rails

photos:
Ian Hinton



Kirby Kane



Thompson



Merton



Wickhampton



Carlton
St Peter



Didlington