Norfolk Historic Buildings Group

Newsletter

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Contents

Chair & Contact details 2
Summer Programme 2021 3
Photos from members' lockdown walks 3
Burnt Bricks: a different building material 4
Three surprising buildings in Hempnall 6
Norwich Merchant Houses 1350-1660 8
Church Porches and their mediaeval context 10
Caister to Cambridge: great houses of the reign of HenryVI 12
Hempnall Journal - VAG review 13
The Great Rebuilding: NHBG's results 14
Hemsby Hall Farm Barn 16
Houses visited since August 2020 17
Parsing the Architecture .... back cover

CHAIR

It is always said that it is an ill wind that blows no-one any good.

The pandemic cancelled the 2020 summer programme and has prevented our usual winter lecture series, but it has meant that we have been forced into using new technology, which has had the benefit of spreading our message considerably wider as a result. Our usual attendance for winter lectures at the Diamond Centre was about 25-35 per session, but since the new format can be enjoyed from your armchair, either "live" on the night via Zoom - or any time after that on our youtube channel - our talks now reach a much wider audience. The Zoom audience on the night has been around 45-50, and, at the time of writing, the recorded versions posted afterwards on youtube have been watched several hundred times. It has also meant that we can attract speakers from further afield without them having to disrupt their schedules by having to travel to meetings.

Our Facebrook Group now has almost 1000 members, forming a forum where information that is relevant to what we do is discussed, and ideas are floated. The NHBG twitter feed now has over 500 followers, although it is difficult to assess any overlap between these two groups. Spending time at home has also meant that our website has had more visits, which has resulted in many new members joining, despite the restrictions on live events.

All this has left the committee with a dilemma - after all this is over, should we revert to having only face-to-face winter meetings, with a reduction in participation; do we carry on with only on-line winter events; or do we have a combination of both on-line and live talks?

In the meantime, thank you all for your continued support.

Ian Hinton
Chair, Norfolk Historic Buildings Group
March 2021
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Administration

Subscriptions

This newsletter has been circulated ahead of its usual date at the beginning of April as a means of keeping in touch with our members who do not have access to emails or the internet.

It is also a reminder for those members who pay their subscriptions annually by cheque or BACS, that they are due by the end of March. If you are unsure how you pay, please contact the membership secretary (details lat the foot of the page).

The rates have not changed for 11 years - £15 single, £25 joint and £30 corporate. As the use of cheques is becoming rarer, if you wish to pay by BACS, the details are -

Nat West Bank - Norwich Gentlemens Walk (B) Branch
Account Name - Norfolk Historic Buildings Group
Sort Code - 54-21-06
Account No.- 93397364
Please use your name as the reference

Or a cheque (to NHBG) to:
The NHBG Treasurer,
134 Yarmouth Road,
Norwich NR7 0SB

The winter and summer programme usually provide a useful (if small) income, which goes towards our research and running costs. Whilst the running costs can be managed within a reduced budget, external costs such as speakers have remained the same, but printing costs (newsletters and journals) have risen slightly.

The committee appreciates your continued support in these strange times.

Maggy Chatterley (Membership)

Cover Photo
The Old Rectory, Fritton Common (see p19)
(Ian Hinton)

Summer Programme

At the time of going to the printers it has not been possible to arrange our usual summer programme of visits. Not surprisingly, owners are reluctant to commit to allowing a large group of people inside their houses until the virus situation has improved and the threat of infection has disappeared.

We will continue trying to organize formal internal visits as the climate improves, but in the meantime, we will be continuing with our successful winter programme of Zoom-based talks into to the Spring:

March 18th: Anna Forrest -Oxburgh Underfloor archaeology
April 20th : Ian Hinton - A photo-based tour of Meadow Farm, Hempnall
May 19th: James Wright - The myth of ships' timbers
June: tbc

We hope to be able to set up two mainly external visits towards the end of the summer along the usual lines -

- A Church Day - concentrating on large churches to lessen any risk to the particpants
- A possible town walk.

You will be kept informed by email (or letter for those off-line) of any developments and arrangements for additional visits, as well as the two noted above.

Mary Ash (Winter programme organizer)
Dominic Summers (Summer programme organizer)

Annual General Meeting

As we had to abandon plans for the AGM in 2020, the committee feel that it is important to hold one in 2021 as set out in our constitution, even if only virtually.

An external speaker will be arranged to tempt members to attend, as the usual cakes and scones cannot be used as a draw.

Date to be arranged.

Ian Hinton (Chair)

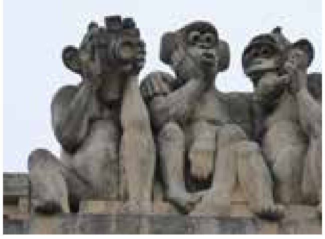
Your lockdown exercise photos

What is not really noticeable in a photo at this size, is that the pond is covered in ice!

Waterloo Park Pavilion

The current park has a Grade II listing with it's pavilion designed by Captain Arnold Sandys-Winsch. It was built by unemployed men with council funding and was re-opened in 1933. The park and pavilion have gone through several cycles of neglect and repair with the buildings having a £250,000 refurbishment in 2015-17. It then opened as a cafe run by low risk prisoners.

Interesting as a whole; but the bit that intrigued me was the central decoration atop the building. I can find no information on the three figures. If nothing else, it made me smile.



Terry Wooller

Mousehold Heath

This is a photo of the Pavilion on Mousehold Heath now used by Zak's American Diner.

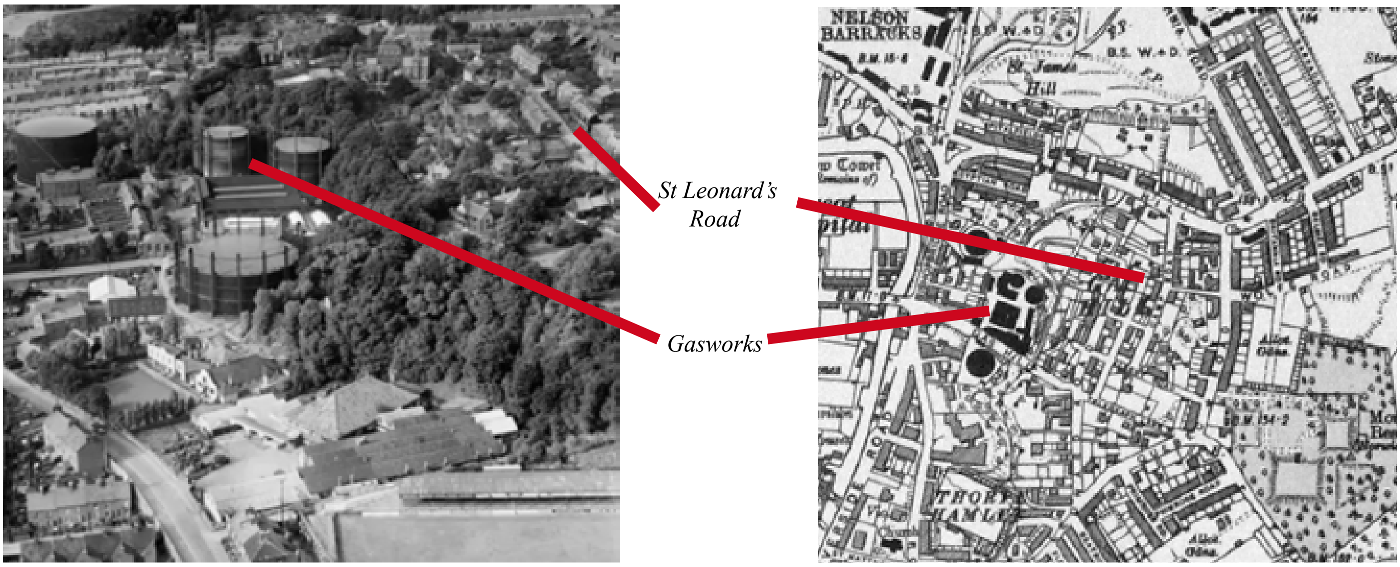
It features in the 1901 Boulton & Paul Catalogue and is suggested as "a convenient and picturesque pavilion contributing much to a golf course or recreation ground". The catalogue continues "when maintenance and depreciation are taken into account, no saving is effected over a cheaper alternative".

The building on Mousehold Heath appears to have had both the upstairs and downstairs original verandahs glazed-in since it was built 120 years ago.

Mary Ash

Burnt bricks: a different kind of building material (29th October 2020)

Mary Ash



This talk provides a look at how some of the waste materials from the production of coal gas locally have been given new purpose in Thorpe Hamlet on the east side of Norwich, for building retaining walls and even houses.

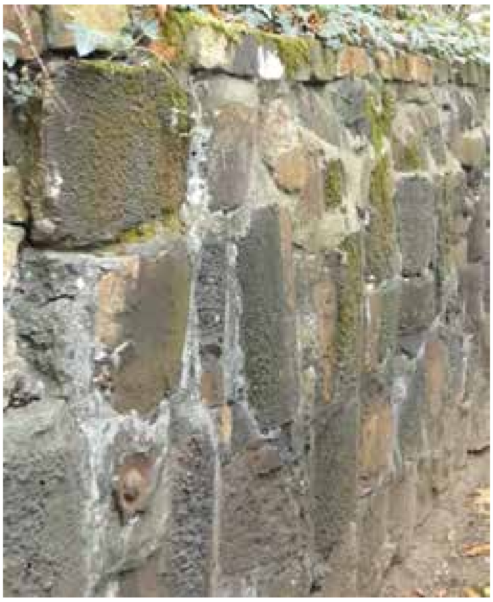
In the 1830s major gasworks were established in Norwich including the Bishop Bridge Gasworks just below the chalk escarpment east of the River Wensum.

The production of coal gas involved heating coal in an airtight container at high temperature, requiring them to be made of, or lined with, a form of clay bricks, which had to be replaced periodically. The furnaces reached 1300°F, hotter than in the making of both ordinary and engineering bricks. It is these bricks and other clay parts, which are stronger and less porous than ordinary bricks, which have been used in the local area, along with some waste tarry fluid which has been used to coat garden walls and the gable ends of buildings.

There are two main areas where they have been used - firstly at Kett's Heights and secondly at St Leonard's Road.

Kett's Heights was named after the camp made by the Kett brothers during their 'rebellion' in 1549. But this high corner of the escarpment, the very edge of the great Mousehold Heath, had been chosen by Norwich's first bishop, Losinga, as the site to which he would move the church of St Michael from Tombland to make way for the grand new cathedral. St Michael's chapel stood here, serving the monks of St Leonard's Priory, and a centre for pilgrimage for nigh on 500 years. Around the chapel ruins are steep sloping 'gardens' with paths and steps winding round and up to the top viewing point.

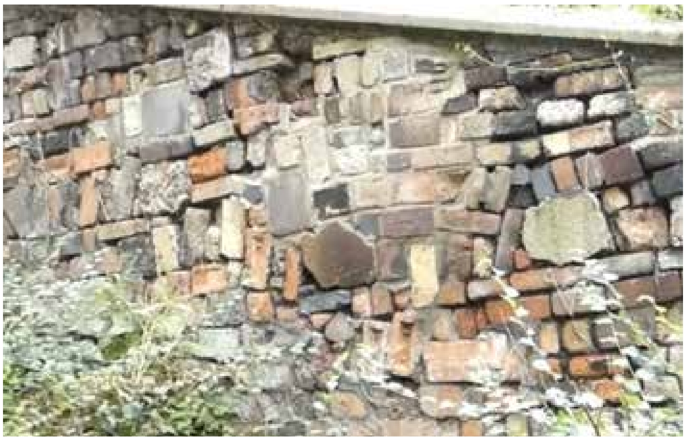
Shoring up the sides of these paths are peculiar-looking walls. They are built not only of burnt bricks and clinker chunks, but also pipe sections, curved to fit the retorts, and in some parts flint. It may be that the original gardens had flint walls like so many boundary walls in Norwich, and that these collapsed in places because of the pressure of the soil, trees and rain, and were repaired with the waste materials from the Bishop Bridge works. These walls are 'screwed' into the hillside with great iron bolts at strategic intervals, and they appear to have been built at different times in that the method and the materials differ from section to section. It is worth mentioning here that some of the stairways are made from beautiful slabs of stone, maybe the floors of the chapel.


Curved pieces of lining built into the wall up to Kett's Heights, including one of the anchoring bolts

*This is the date that the talk went out over Zoom. This talk is permanently available on the NHBG Youtube channel by typing or pasting https://youtu.be/IxKZ3efzXh0 into your browser, OR accessing youtube and typing "norfolk historic buildings group" into the search field, which will list all the recorded talks.

Mary is an NHBG Committee member and a past Chair of the Norwich Society

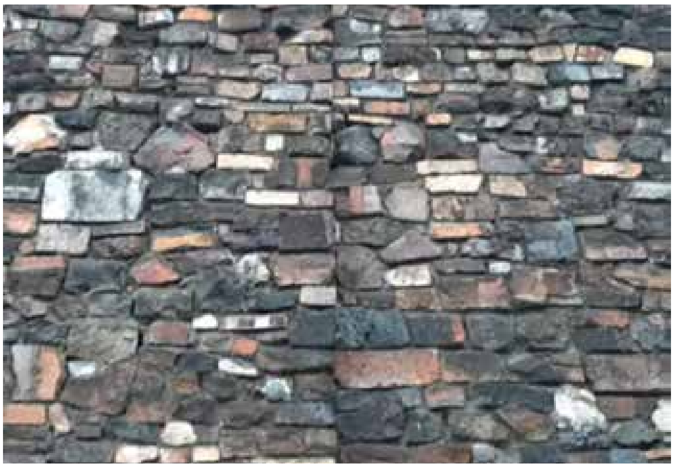
On the east side of the Heights a high boundary wall was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century when houses were being built along St Leonard's Road. This wall is much 'cleaner-looking'; it uses waste bricks but not necessarily ones that have been through the furnaces. There are quite a number of dark blue engineering bricks stamped 'Mobberley & Perry, Stourbridge'. There are also hunks of freestone which must have been taken from the ruined chapel (also cannibalised for the 'Gothick' follies of Kett's Castle Villa next door). It is altogether a cheerful, uncoursed sort of dry-stone wall, put together in a haphazard way, fitting in pieces like a jigsaw. The wall runs all the way through to Kett's Hill on the northern perimeter of Kett's Heights.



The boundary retaining wall, including robbed freestone

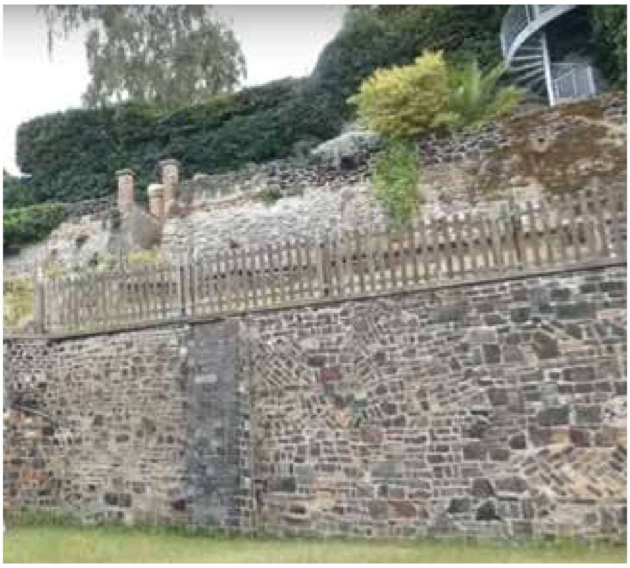
The second area is the back gardens of St Leonard's Road, and the unusual terraced cottages here. The houses along this ridge were built to take advantage of the view westwards, so they turn their backs on the road. The hillside almost immediately falls away, and so it had to be terraced and managed to ensure the houses stayed at the top, and the old gasworks below was not overwhelmed. The gardens all along St Leonard's Road are terraced, some in remarkably ambitious ways to give an Italianate impression. The terrace walls are built of the clinker and burnt bricks, some walls of ordinary brick given an extra coating of tarry clinker. Flights of steps have 'mosaics' of cut and shaped clinker pieces on the landings. The whole hillside drops fifty feet or so, with three particularly spectacular walls over ten feet high, and smaller ones between. The bricks are built into patterns of curves and swoops, reinforced with bolts and buttresses, with a couple of arched 'caves' leading six feet into the hillside – maybe remnants of old tunnels. The different colours and textures of the materials give the walls great visual life and interest. In reply to a query arising from this talk, I can report that I found only three 'drainage holes' in all the walls I examined.

Other cities with gasworks may well have used their waste materials in similar ways, but we think St Michael's and St Leonard's Terraces are unique. These are two rows of cottages, three above, two below, constructed in this remarkable reused brick. The overall patchwork effect of slightly uneven black, blue and brown, interspersed with cream, pink and terracotta bricks and clinker gives a delightful 'punky' appearance to these homes, built to house workers at the Gasworks in the early twentieth century.

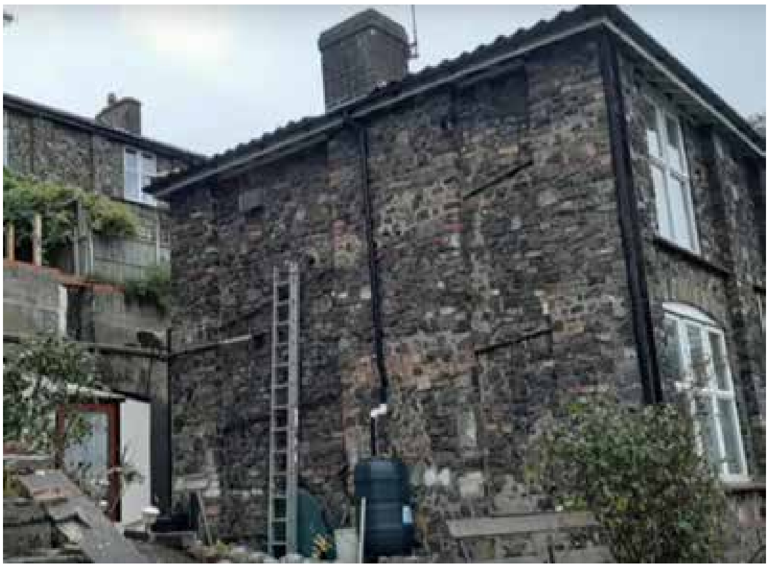


A punky-looking wall?

The whole length of this escarpment relies very heavily on the sturdy walls of burnt brick which shore up the chalky soil. The Gasworks brought light and heat to this city, and employment for hundreds of local citizens, but it also brought pollution of the air and the soil. By using these waste materials to ensure a safe hilltop settlement, the Gasworks company were building important and now historic buttressing walls into the community they had exploited.



Two of the terracing walls, one above the other, supporting the chalk escarpment



The end wall of St Leonard's Terrace built with the waste bricks, with St Michael's Terrace above

Winter Lecture Synopsis

Three Surprising Houses in Hempnall (29th October 2020)

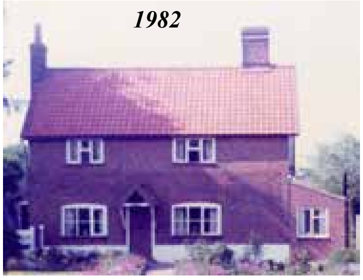
Ian Hinton

Cottleston

garage at Spring Mead

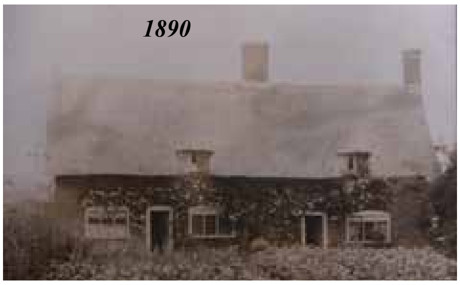
Wilfred's Cottage

Of the 40 or so houses we surveyed in Hempnall for Journal 7, a few produced surprising results in that they were earlier than was first thought, but these three buildings, which appear to be two Victorian cottages and a garage, produced the greatest surprises of all.



Cottleston

Cottleston appears to be a pair of brick-built cottages with a central stack and another at the left-hand side, but the right hand side of the current building did not exist until after 1982.

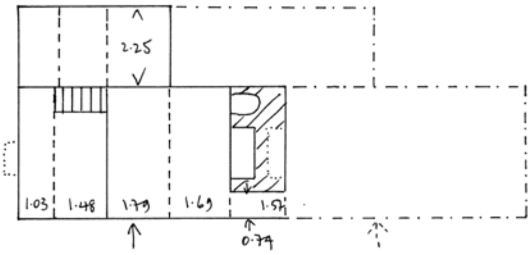


Prior to this, a photograph from the 1890s shows that the house was larger, thatched and of only one and a half storeys to the eaves. It also had a chimney stack at the right end.

But even this was not its original form. Internal investigation uncovered a house of the late sixteenth century with opposed entry doors adjacent to the service rooms, a steep straight stair in the service bay and an almost full-width stack containing a bread oven. At the rear, part of the lean-to extension may also have been original.

The early stack at the right end was the result of the division of the house into two units, like so many houses were in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The building changed from a small post-medieval house TO two cottages TO one cottage when one was demolished, extended back TO a single house again.

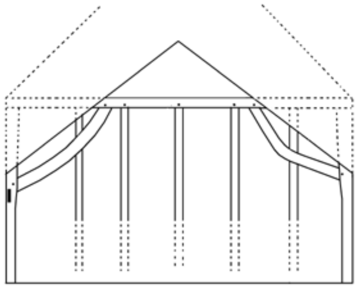


Spring Mead Garage

We only examined this building after the owner approached us at one of the interim village presentations during the project saying that it was full of old timbers.

This garage to a 1990s built house, started life as the house for three named tenements with 20 acres of land in the early seventeenth century. The tiled roof part was one room of the house and the white-walled section to the left was the stack bay of the house - whether it was originally a three-celled- or two-celled house is not known, but all the other Hempnall houses of the period we surveyed were of three cells.

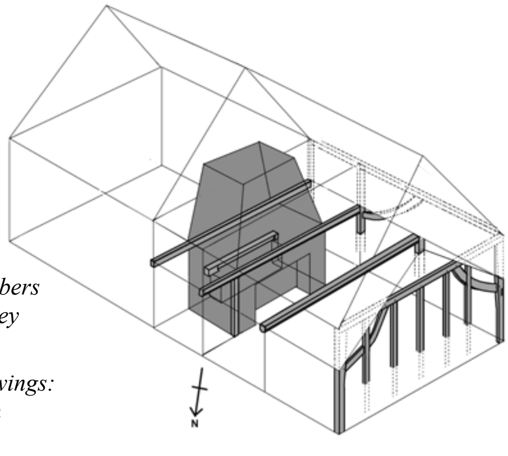
The western gable wall shows the size of the timbers involved and the length (1.2m - 4ft) of the gunstock jowls of the corner posts. The timbers throughout were of good size and of good quality. The transverse principal joist in this room was 28cm (11in) across with several mortices for diminished haunch tenons for the removed flat-laid joists.



western gable end

The left-hand face of the chimney stack is now the outside wall of the building and it provided an unusual view of the inside of the mantle beam with its deep chamfer to reduce fire risk. Also visible in the stack wall was part of the rounded shape of a bread oven.

Stored inside the house was an early sixteenth-century doorway with a one-piece spandrel, but with no provenance for this building.



Remaining timbers shown in grey

Photos and drawings: Ian Hinton

Winter Lecture Synopsis

Wilfred's Cottage

When Mo Cubitt was preparing her village history[1] for publication she was able to take some photographs inside this house whilst it was undergoing a complete refurbishment in the 1980s. We were unable to gain access to the house for our survey and without these photos, this house would probably have been assessed as a nineteenth-century cottage, the right-hand side of which was demolished in the 1970s to allow access to the commercial properties behind.

Photo 1 (both by Mo Cubitt)
The hall/service room frame and door in the front wall

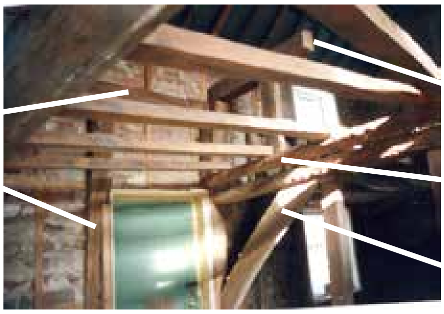
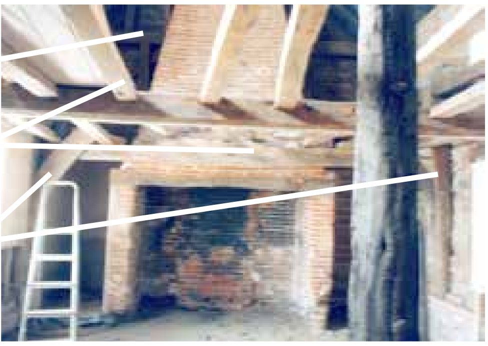


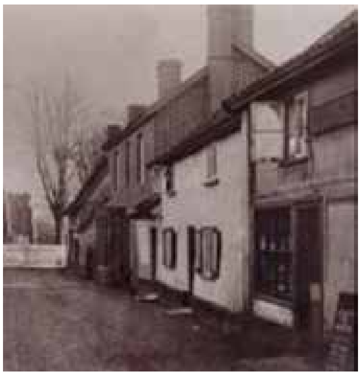
Photo 2
The hall and smoke bay with inserted brick stack


Eaves-level tie beam of frame at rear of smoke bay
Inserted floor in hall
Braces for support of smoke bay bressumer

The cill and remaining studs in the north side of the eastern gable are set on a flint plinth, the remainder of the wall replaced in brick. The front wall and rear walls are all brick except for the principal frame timbers. The storey post to the right of the door in the first photo defines the frame wall between the hall and service bay and the one the left-hand side of the door must have provided an anchor for some form of cross-passage screen as it serves no other function in the structure.

The original wallplate level shows that the eaves were raised at some time and the tie-beam cut off to allow access round the upper floor once the hall was floored over.

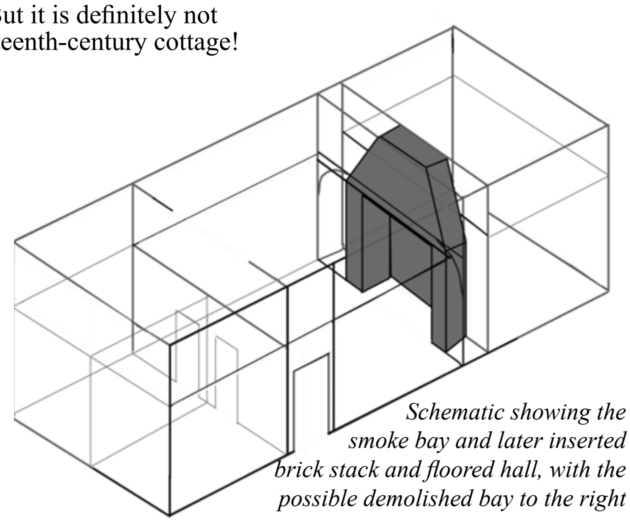
The eaves-level tie beam of the rear frame of the smoke bay, and studs both above and below it, still exist in what is now the 1970s brick gable end. The brick stack was built within the smoke bay, but does not fill it, probably at the same time as the hall was floored over.



This Victorian photo shows the house (still white), and the bay to the right, which was demolished in the 1970s

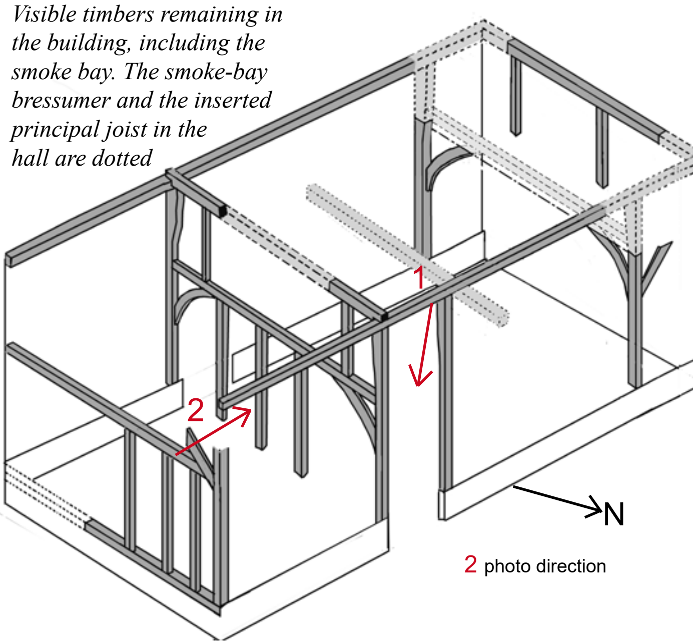
Without access to the house, none of the timber can be assessed for dendro, so we are left with stylistic dating - a small single-bay hall with a smoke bay - points to a late-fifteenth- or early sixteenth-century date, with an eaves raise and brick chimney perhaps 100 years or so later.

But it is definitely not nineteenth-century cottage!



Schematic showing the smoke bay and later inserted brick stack and floored hall, with the possible demolished bay to the right

Visible timbers remaining in the building, including the smoke bay. The smoke-bay bressumer and the inserted principal joist in the hall are dotted



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[1] Maureen Cubitt, 2008, Hempnall: A treasure trove of history, Halsgrove

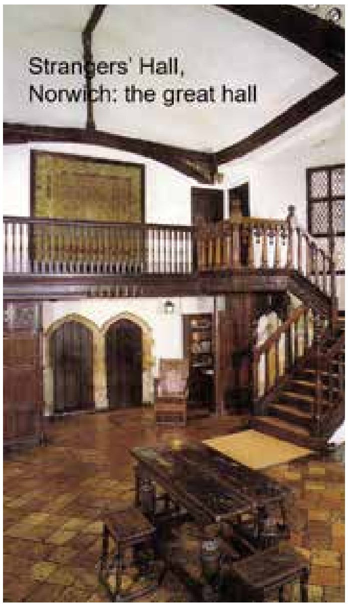
Winter Lecture Synopsis

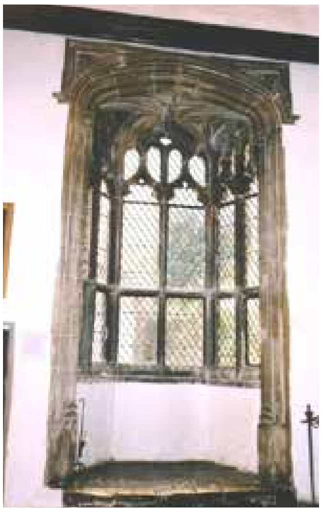
The Merchant Houses of Norwich 1350-1660 (17th November 2020)

Chris King

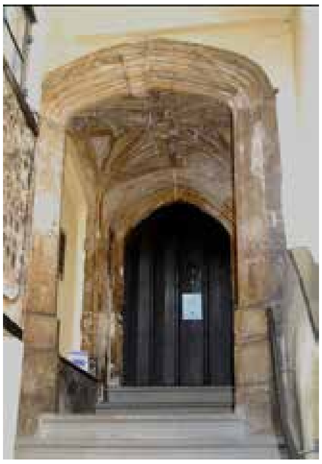
Norwich is well known for the important architectural inheritance of its many medieval churches and public buildings, but it also possesses a unique legacy of domestic buildings from the late medieval and early modern periods. This was a period of profound social, economic and religious transformation, and domestic space was an important context for the expression and negotiation of social and political identities. For the wealthy merchants of the city, who also served as mayors and aldermen in the city corporation, houses were intimately connected to ideas of power, authority and civic belonging.

Strangers' Hall is one of the best known examples, with its semi-subterranean undercrofts and first-floor hall, with various ranges arranged around a central courtyard dating from between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1539 the house's wealthy owner Nicholas Sotherton became mayor and rebuilt the great hall, inserting the bay window and crown-post roof decorated with his merchants' mark and the symbols of his guild and civic office.





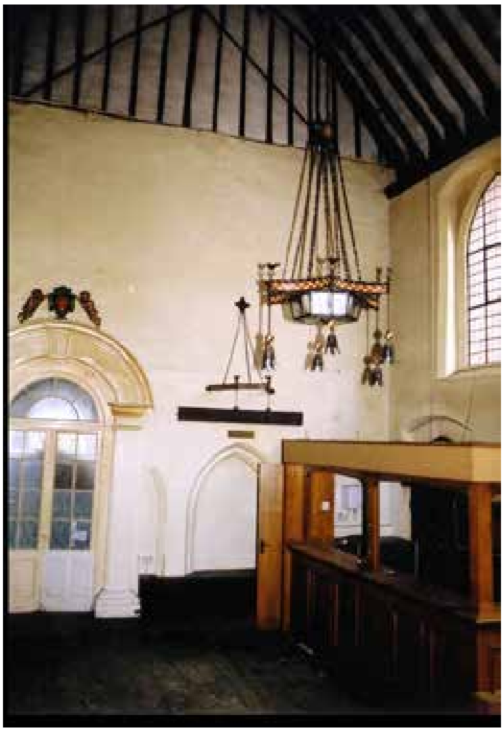
Above:
The great hall at Strangers' Hall with the 1539 bay window



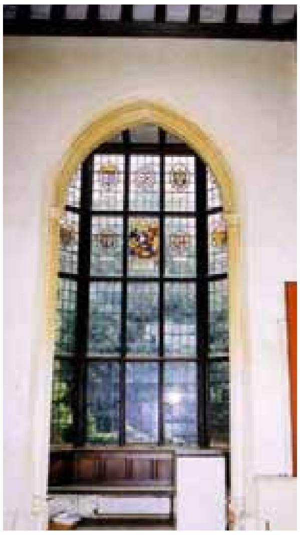
Left:
The porch with the stone boss in the ceiling of Agnes Sotherton in her widow's headdress

Sotherton died in 1540 and the rebuilding was completed by his widow Agnes, with a sculpture of a widow's head over the entrance porch proudly declaring her new position as head of the family and business.

Norwich retains more surviving examples of impressive medieval merchants' halls than any other English city, with examples such as Suckling House (Cinema City) and Pyckerell's House containing fine bay windows and scissor-braced and queen-post roof structures. These spaces provided a setting for the lavish entertainment of fellow civic office holders and wider business and family connections among the rural gentry. The medieval civic elite expressed its power in public buildings such as the guildhall and many parish churches, but houses – and the shared lifestyle and culture they express -were an equally important means of marking social status and authority.



Above:
The fine hall at Suckling's house dated to 1370

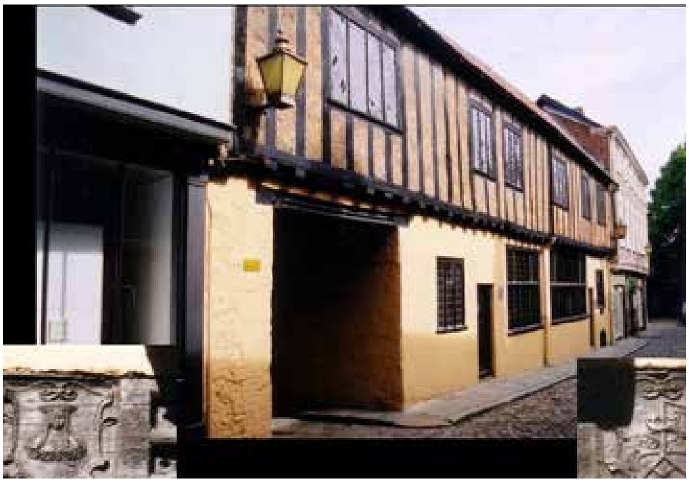


right:
the bay window dated 1450

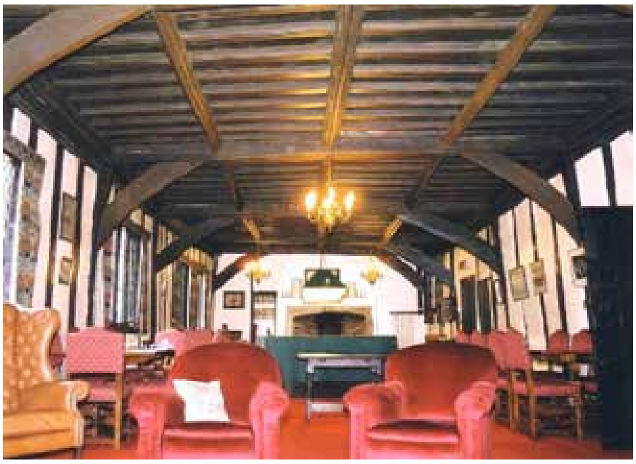
All images taken from Chris's PowerPoint

In the sixteenth century, many merchant families retained the medieval great hall unaltered at the heart of their property, while updating the more private parlours and chambers with mullioned windows, stone fireplaces and wooden panelling. This strategy was followed by the Sothertons at Strangers' Hall and the Sucklings at Suckling House, whose long-lived urban dynasties are commemorated by impressive funerary monuments in the neighbouring parish churches.

However, at the same period, many of the wealthiest citizens were abandoning the open hall in favour of fully two-storied houses with suites of first-floor reception rooms. These often include chambers with impressive moulded timber ceilings, such as the six-bay chamber running along the street frontage of Augustine Steward's house on Elm Hill, or the decorative timber ceilings in the ground floor parlour and first-floor chamber at the Wood family mansion on Fye Bridge Street.



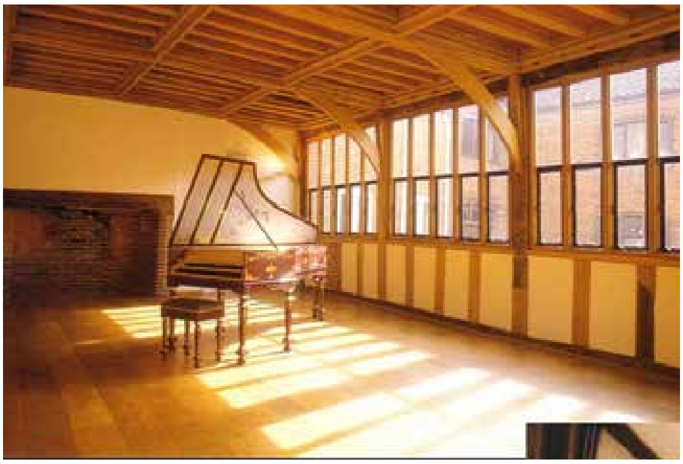
Augustine Steward's house on Elm Hill
with its first-floor chamber and decorative timber ceiling



Chris King is Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Arts at Nottingham University.

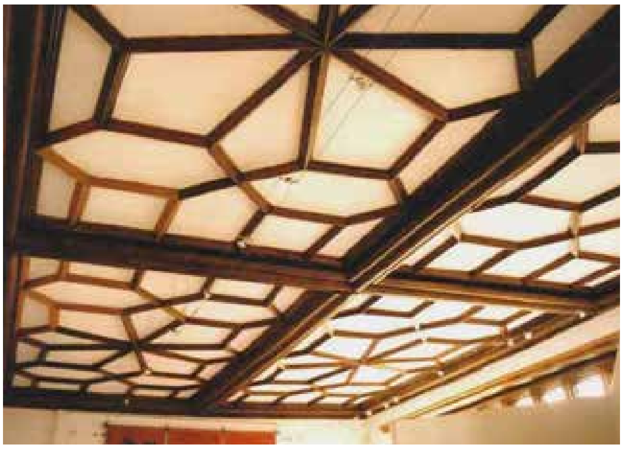
His book - *Houses and Society in Norwich 1350-1660: Urban Buildings in an Age of Transition* (October 2020) is published by Boydell and Brewer, ISBN 9781783275540.

*This is the date that the talk went out over Zoom. This talk is permanently available on the NHBG Youtube channel by typing or pasting https://youtu.be/8OLM8QnVpxE into your browser



Above:
Edmund Wood's mid-sixteenth century house on Fye Bridge Street showing its first-floor frieze window and decorative ceiling

Below:
The ground-floor parlour decorative battened timber ceiling



These changes have strong parallels with rural gentry houses, where the trend towards suites of first-floor reception rooms was already well established by the sixteenth century, with several local parallels for the ceiling over of the open hall. This is precisely the social milieu which was shared by urban and rural elites. The widespread re-building of the merchant houses of Norwich represents an investment by the civic oligarchy in a new language of social display and new forms of elite hospitality. It was also bound up with wider conflicts over the forms and meanings of public space in the wake of the Protestant reformation. Older medieval forms of civic ritual underpinned by the church were replaced by secular feasting and hospitality in both public and private spheres, as the corporation sought new ways to reinforce both social cohesion and their own political authority. We see an increasing investment in material culture related to corporate memory such as civic regalia and the portraits of former mayors and benefactors, and houses were equally significant and long-lasting monuments in the urban landscape, passing through generations of merchant families through inheritance, marriage and purchase.

Church porches and their mediaeval function (10th December 2020)

Helen Lunnon

This talk looked at aspects of the complex interactions that exist between people and buildings, using the medieval church porch as a case study. Rather than prioritising the often relatively short design/planning process it focused on the subsequent years, decades and centuries of social entanglement. Personal, human interactions are essential to understanding how built environments are used, attending to their cultural and historical specificity. If we seek to understand better the relationship between buildings and their users, we need to ask questions of greater potential than what is it for? Asking 'how was it used?' presents the opportunity to look across a long sweep of time and at the variation in human experience at a single moment.

Porch at Holy Trinity, Long Melford, Suffolk

(photo: Helen Lunnon)

A porch is a building, a door is not. The two are inextricable but not interchangeable. Giving attention only to the thing which a person stands before ignores their situation, the place they actually inhabit. Standing before the church door, for whatever reason and for however long, could find the individual either outside (where there was no porch) or inside (deep within a porch). There is a clear difference between a door and a porch and how each affects human experience. Doors and porches are both devices which mark the point where two different environments meet. Yet doors lack spatial volume (it is impossible to be inside a door) whilst porches provide habitable space within which the whole human body can be contained.

At the intersection of architecture and experience are people. Buildings are not neutral spaces, they are imbued with power and meaning of historic and contemporary making. Whilst many uses of church porches have long been recognised, at least since J.C. Wall was writing in the early 20th century, the function of porch architecture as an agent, shaping the significance of the events held therein, has been largely overlooked. Downplaying the importance of porches is commonplace, but I argue that all built structures alter human experience. As a type of canopy, porches are powerfully imbued with notions of both protective care and reverence. It is in this context that porches should be placed.

By looking at Palm Sunday processions, baptism, marriage, dispute and judgement, burial and commemoration, and alms-giving the talk investigated the nature and significance of how church porches functioned, and by doing so offered an understanding of their meaning in English medieval society. It explored porch function by seeing the ritual in the everyday, as well as the extraordinary or special. After all, the baptised child would come to attend Mass every week of their life from infancy to old age, in time they would make annual confession to their parish priest, partake in church ales and witness (perhaps contribute to) the inevitable periodic renewal of the church building.

The architectural function of the church porch was to construct an environment in which the earthly could practice and demonstrate their commitment to the reality of salvation. In the medieval parish this central tenet of the Christian faith was more than an intellectual theological certainty, it was lived experience in a world fraught with hardship, danger and uncertainty. In such circumstance no meaningful distinction could be drawn between the body, the mind and the architectural environment to suggest what porches were used for. As this talk demonstrated, the function of church porches in medieval England was multivalent, multi-layered and occasionally even ambiguous, an architectural constituent of a sophisticated and highly-ritualised society.

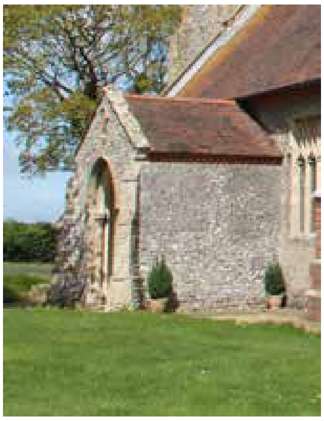
Helen is Head of Learning at Norwich Castle Museum & Art Gallery, and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London.

Her book - *East Anglian Church Porches and their Medieval Context,* (July 2020) is published by Boydell and Brewer ISBN: 9781783275267

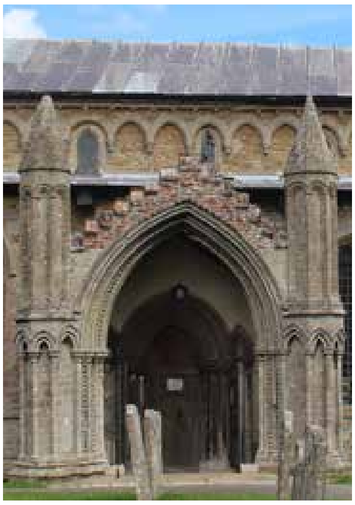
*This is the date that the talk went out over Zoom. This talk is permanently available on the NHBG Youtube channel for NHBG members only, by using the link code below. https://youtu.be/eAg310rO8oM

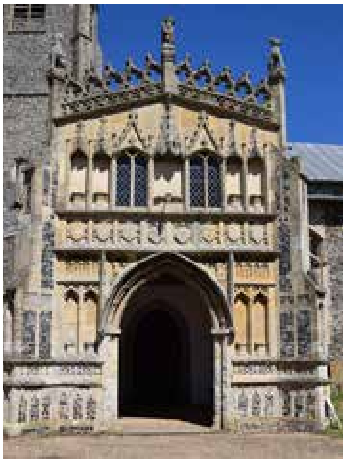
St Mary, West Somerton

St George, Shimpling


All Saints, Bodham

St Mary Magdalene, Beetley


St Mary, West Walton


Pulham St Mary

Walpole St Peter

Many churches coped without porches to provide a home for the start of some ceremonies, but of those porches that still exist in Norfolk, some are small and plain - like those above.

Many porches are large and highly decorated, despite some being in small villages.

Accounts often show that their building and embellishment were the subject of considerable pious donations.

photos: Ian Hinton

Vernacular Architecture Group -

Virtual Spring Conference - Saturday April 17th 2021

The planned visit for VAG members to Norfolk in April 2021 has been postponed until April 5th - 9th 2022.

It is to be replaced by a virtual conference on East Anglian buildings on Saturday April 17th.

Currently the following speakers have been arranged, although there may be some subsequent changes:

Edward Martin:	The landscape context for East Anglian Vernacular Buildings
Andrea Kirkham:	Norfolk Domestic Wall Paintings: Some Preliminary Comments on Survival, Style and Colour, 1550-1700
Ian Hinton:	Re-assessing The Great Rebuilding on the south Norfolk claylands
Elphin Watkin:	No-one looks at Harwich
Timothy Easton:	Some buildings of Debenham
Philip Aitken:	Meadow Cottage, Blacksmith's Green, Wetheringsett: a sub-medieval farmhouse in pastoral Mid-Suffolk
John Walker:	Aisled and raised-aisle halls of East Anglia

You don't have to be a member of the VAG to take part in the conference, but the attendance is limited to 300, with prioity given to members - just go to the VAG website for instructions.

If you wish to join the VAG, use the contact details below. A membership application form is available on the website. The current annual subscription, payable on 1st March, is £20 per year for individuals: members of the same household may elect to pay a joint subscription of £30. Student subscriptions are also available at £15.

VAG Membership Secretary
Tansy Collins, 84 Derby Rd, Spondon, Derby, DE21 7LX.
Email:- membership-secretary@vag.org.uk.
VAG website - https://www.vag.org.uk

From Caister to Cambridge:
Great Houses in the reign of Henry VI (January 20th 2021)

James Wright

Caister Castle

For much of the mediaeval period the architectural appearance of elite building in England was mostly directed by reference to the work of the king's master masons. However, during the early- to mid-fifteenth century that process seems to have been interrupted. By referring to known construction phases which survive in building accounts, or can be deduced through the forensic approach of archaeology, it now appears as if many royal projects made reference to the innovative ideas of courtiers such as Sir John Fastolf and Ralph Lord Cromwell.

The mid-fifteenth century saw an increased popularity for a style of architecture which incorporated brick with stone detailing, diaperwork, antiquated fenestration, chimneys projecting above crenellations and regular courtyards dominated by great towers with octagonal turrets. The origins of this style are usually noted to be Henry VI's patronage of Eton College and Margaret of Anjou's work at Queens' College Cambridge in the 1440s. However, structural analysis of buildings including Caister Castle (Norfolk) and Tattershall Castle (Lincolnshire) has shown that these ideas were all current in the decade before the monarchy instigated their projects at Eton and Cambridge.

Fastolf and Cromwell were ambitious men who had served Henry's father in the French wars and had risen to political prominence due to their capabilities as soldiers or administrators Their rise led to great wealth and status which was, in turn, poured into physical manifestations of their prestige through the construction of great houses. Fastolf had begun work at Caister by at least 1432 and Cromwell's project at Tattershall was underway by the following year.

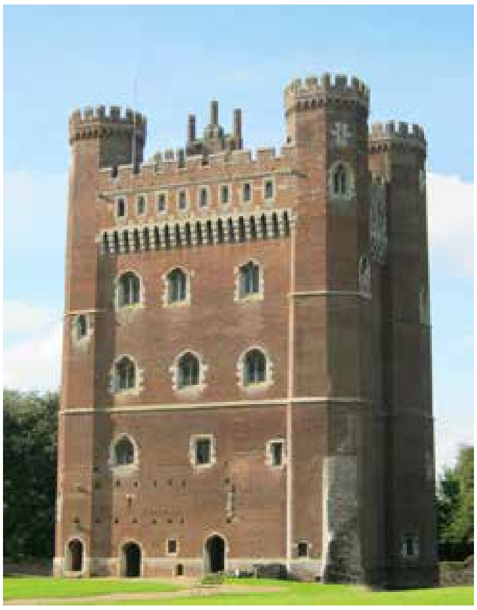
Caister itself was designed on the principles of a Northern European "water castle" with its walls and lofty great tower plunging directly into a complex system of moats. Fastolf probably saw such structures in his youth whilst accompanying the retinue of Henry of Bolingbroke on crusade in the Baltic states. Additionally, there was a significant trade in both goods and ideas between Europe and the east of England through the Hanseatic networks. Both Caister and Tattershall are built in brick with stone detailing that includes antiquated fenestration. More survives at the latter - where it is still possible to identify early diaperwork and chimneys rising high above the parapets of the great tower.

Fastolf and Cromwell were not alone in their patronage of such innovative architecture. Their peers Andrew Ogard, Roger Fiennes and John Montgomery were all active builders at the contemporary sites of Rye House, Herstmonceux Castle and Faulkbourne Hall respectively. Henry VI's uncles, Henry Beaufort and Humfrey, duke of Gloucester, were also busy at the Manor of the More and Greenwich Palace. This was a time of great energy in construction which forever reshaped the visual landscape of English building.

Although the monarchy did go on to commission important building projects, those projects did not commence until the 1440s and were left unfinished due to the commencement of the Wars of the Roses. Henry VI was a complex man who did not reach his majority until 1435 and struggled with both poor mental health and financial problems due to economic decline coupled with reduced royal income. He was simply not in a position to lead the way architecturally until the 1440s. This was then curtailed in the early 1450s as the country slipped into civil war.

Meanwhile, English magnates, vying for political power, used architecture to bolster their positions. During the Wars of the Roses construction continued at sites such as Knole, Minster Lovell Hall and Middleton Towers under Sir James Fiennes, Archbishop Thomas Bourchier, William Lord Lovell and Thomas Lord Scales. By the reign of Edward IV, the new architecture was the norm. At buildings including Farnham Castle, Kirby Muxloe Castle and Oxburgh Hall we can see a direct line of influence back to Caister and Tattershall via Eton and Cambridge. These ideas remained current into the sixteenth century when they were filtered through Renaissance forms at Layer Marney Hall, Hampton Court Palace, Kenilworth Castle and Burghley House.

Far from being the roguish comic of Shakespearean drama, Sir John Fastolf of Caister Castle was a serious man who patronised innovative architecture, to shore up his political position, which went on to have a significant effect on English architecture for a century and a half.

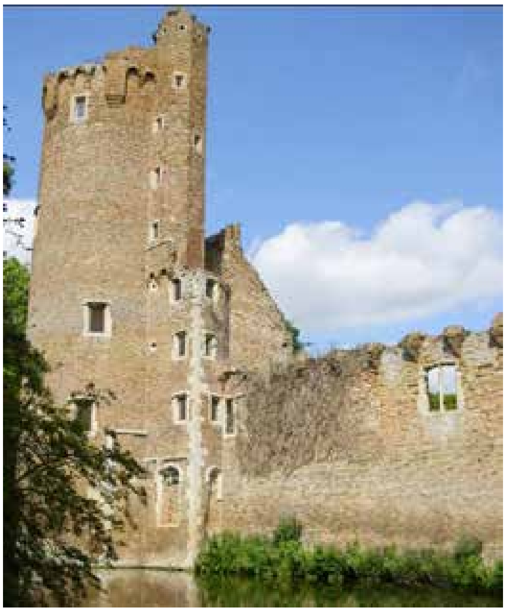


Left:
Tattershall Castle, Lincs, with machicolations and a form of cloister at the top of the wall

Right:
Caister Castle with what appear to be the remains of machicolations at the top of what remains of the wall

Images: previous page - James Wright
this page - Ian Hinton

James is a researcher from the University of Nottingham, an archaeologist and author, and he is also a qualified conservation stonemason



NHBG Research

VAG Review of NHBG Journal 7 - Hempnall

An extract of the review published in Vernacular Architecuture 51 (2020)

This is a welcome addition to the impressive series of journals — in reality, they are substantial monographs — from this enterprising regional group, now under the new editorship of Ian Hinton. (Adam Longcroft initiated the project and steered the first six issues through to publication.) ...

The Buildings of Hempnall is the fruit of eight years of research and survey work by a team of 25 volunteers and continues in the tradition established by the earlier volumes. The first part of the book looks at the history of the parish, its economy, tenurial structure, landscape and farming practices, with a well-organised section summarising key features such as plan, heating and smoke dispersal, circulation, construction, materials and decorative details. Three chapters (4, 5 and 8) address the central question raised in the book's title. More than half of the book is made up of descriptive reports on individual houses, together with documentary notes, each profusely illustrated with images, plans and maps (Appendix 7). Sometimes it is a little difficult to navigate around the various chapters and appendices, but the overall achievement is laudable: the maps, plans and sections are clear and the text accessible — an important consideration when aiming for a local as well as a specialist readership.

In the spring of 2020, the project timetable was derailed by the Covid-19 crisis, and sampling for dendrochronology could not take place as planned (the results will be published in due course): although disappointing, this setback may not be critical since three of the six houses assessed turned out to be too fast grown and contained elm as well as oak timbers. The parish of Hempnall is situated on the wood pasture/clayland plateau of south-east Norfolk. It had a relatively large area of common land and greens and remained comparatively well wooded into the early modern period. It had a weekly market from 1226 and an annual fair from 1387 and appears to have been relatively prosperous, judging from the subsidies of 1334, 1449 and (notably) 1581. The picture in the sixteenth century is one of weak manorial control with a large number of families of yeomen status holding their land by copyhold. Hempnall had fallen into a period of decline by the mid-seventeenth century: many houses recorded in the 1664 hearth tax (which is a partial and damaged document) were in poor condition, an impression confirmed from other sources — with copyhold houses allowed to fall down for want of 'tymly repairs' and many 'voyd' tenements. No reference is made to the market after 1656 (the majority of markets in Norfolk had fallen out of use by the seventeenth century) and the lack of any evidence for shops (and jetties) in the market area suggests that decline might have set in by the late fifteenth century. Perhaps not surprisingly in the light of this, but striking just the same, is that 30 out of the 39 surveyed houses were newly built in the period c. 1575 to 1625. Only four show evidence of adaptations of medieval hall houses with one other that might be early sixteenth century. There is considerable evidence of upgrading and modernisation from the later seventeenth century — inserted first-floor corridors, glazing and the cladding of external timber framing in brick, and so on — but very few new houses were built, a situation that continued through the eighteenth century.

It will be most interesting to see if the tree-ring dating results confirm these assessments, made on the basis of close fabric and stylistic analysis. The results may also help to throw more light on the connection between building activity and woodland management: on the basis of Rackham's Grundle House calculations (Vernacular Architecture 3 (1972): 3-8), the authors reckon that Hempnall had enough renewable woodland resources to provide sufficient timber to meet local demand during the period of its 'great rebuilding'. The summary dating results, if successful, will be published in Vernacular Architecture.

MARTIN CHERRY

Winter Lecture Synopsis

The Great Rebuilding: do NHBG survey results support the theory? (February 18th 2021)

Ian Hinton

Introduction

The title of the NHBG's latest Journal, "*The Houses of Hempnall: Part of the Great Rebuilding?*", was selected because, early on in the project, the similarity of the houses that were being surveyed was evident.

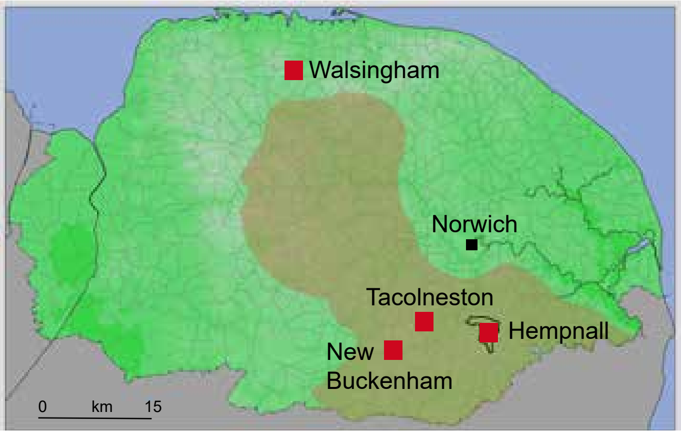
Exact dating of the houses via the dendrochronological part of the study is unlikely to provide an answer. Not only has the work of coring and assessment been delayed for obvious reasons, Ian Tyers noted many times during the initial inspection that much of the oak used, especially in the early parts of the buildings, was too fast grown to provide sufficient rings for dating, and that some of the remainder was elm. The parts of the buildings that provide the best possibility for arriving at a date are the later additions, such as the cross-wing at Krons Manor and the flooring over of parts of The Chequers and The Old Vicarage.

Hempnall is located on the flat claylands of south Norfolk, and two previous NHBG studies – at Tacolneston and New Buckenham – are no more than 15km away. Some good dendro results were obtained in those two studies, and in all, over 120 houses in this small area have been studied in detail. The aim of this article is to use this large sample to assess whether the theory of The Great Rebuilding (GR) applies to houses in this small area of the claylands of south Norfolk.

The Great Rebuilding

The Great Rebuilding was first proposed by WG Hoskins in an article in 1953. In it, he suggested that there was a concerted sweeping away of the medieval form of open-hall house with its full-height hall, central fire and communal living, by a new form of closed house with chimneys, two floors throughout and a private entrance into the small lobby by the chimney stack. He proposed that this happened between Elizabeth's accession to the throne in 1558 and the Restoration of the monarchy to Charles II in 1642, but was concentrated in the 50 or 60 years bridging the turn of the seventeenth century.

Since 1953 it has been discussed many times by different authors with greatly varying conclusions. Some say that it didn't happen at all; others that the dates vary by region or status; that it was part of a continuum; or it happened in a combination of these factors. Some of these comments and criticisms have been based on general theory and others have used the results of local-area surveys. Increases in fieldwork, and the rise of dendro, has enabled a closer examination to be made of the theory.



Norfolk clay plateau and NHBG study areas (digitised relief map by courtesy of Robin Forrest)

The development of house plan forms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (in Norfolk)

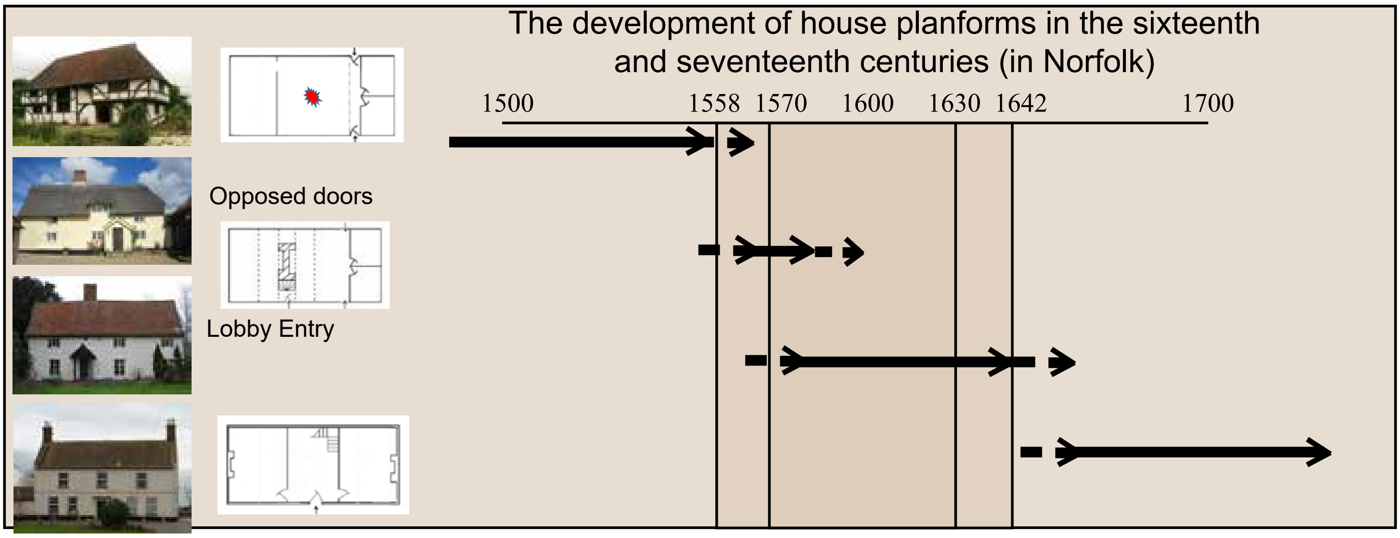
In the absence of dendro dates for every house surveyed, we have been able to use the dendro results in some of the houses to establish more accurate dates for the transition between the types of planform shown in the diagram below.

In Norfolk, new closed houses in the transititional form with opposed entry doors, started to be built in the mid-sixteenth century, instead of the medieval form of open-hall houses. This style continued for about 30 years, but began to be replaced by full lobby-entry houses around the beginning of the fourth quarter of the sixteenth century. By the middle of the seventeenth century, gable-end-stack houses with a central doorway started to be built and became become the norm later in the century. Inevitably there is some overlap between the styles.

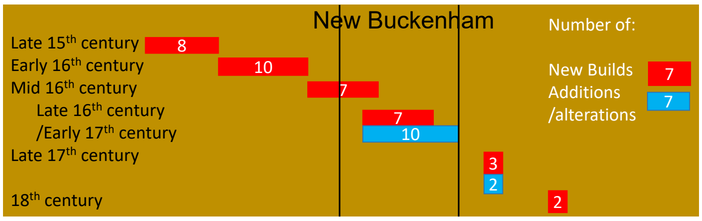
The Study Areas -
New Buckenham

A planned and planted Norman castle town on a specially diverted road between Thetford and Norwich. It had virtually no land and had an infrastructure predicated on commerce. The town never fully developed within its boundary ditch and the market square was being encroached upon in the later fifteenth century. The road was later diverted away from the town.

There was a late medieval building boom of both residential


The development of house planforms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (in Norfolk)
1500
1558
1570
1600
1630
1642
1700
Opposed doors
Lobby Entry

and civic buildings from the mid fifteenth century including innovative two-storey jettied houses encroaching on the marketplace. New building continued through the GR period at a slightly reduced pace as well as the updating of a considerable number of earlier houses with chimney stacks and inserted floors. Building slowed considerably in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

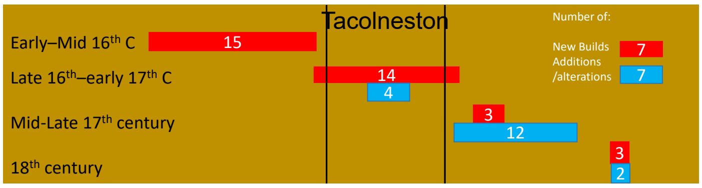


the vertical black lines define the Great Rebuilding period and the bars are approximately to scale in length

Tacolneston

The parish of Tacolneston and the surrounding hamlets were entirely rural with a dispersed arrangement of a mixture of small and larger farms and a small village centre. Despite this, Tacolneston was granted a market charter in 1304 but the market had disappeared by the sixteenth century

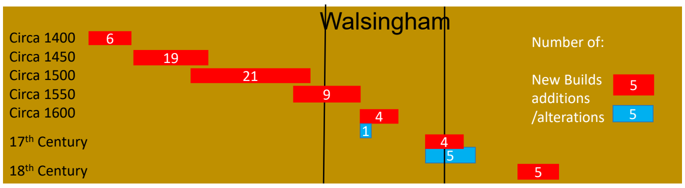
A substantial number of early- to mid-sixteenth century buildings still exist, and a considerable level of building continued during the GR period, including three dendro-dated crosswing additions. Little new building took place after the GR period, but this did include one new house with a timber-framed chimney, dendro-dated to 1645. Much of the adaptation of earlier open-hall houses also took place later, after the GR period, during the mid seventeenth century.



Walsingham

The town was dominated by the twelfth-century Priory and fourteenth-century Friary. Each institution operated a market in its own market square. Walsingham became the second most important pilgrimage centre in England with tens of thousands of visitors per year, including around 50 visits by various Kings. Many of the buildings in town were catering for the pilgrim trade as hostels, with almost continuous building and rebuilding right up to the Dissolution - parts of the town had to be rebuilt after a fire in 1431, possibly started by pilgrims.

Little building continued after the Dissolution during the GR period, one of which was a secular building to administer the market. During the eighteenth century, some building was associated with the town's growth as an administrative centre and the building of the grand house on the Priory site.

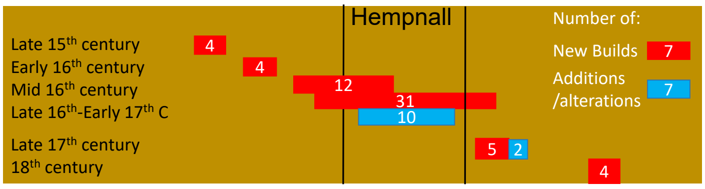


Hempnall

Hempnall was the core of an Anglo-Saxon estate retaining much of the unfree part of the population. It was particularly valuable at the time of Domesday and was one of the first non-castle and non-monastic towns to be granted a market and fair in 1226. The strength of Lordship fell away and Hempnall declined in value steadily, as evidenced in the results of the religious and secular taxations, and the market declined and disappeared during the sixteenth century. Hempnall retained large areas of woodland right through into the nineteenth century.

Half the buildings studied in the parish are located in the small town and the other half form the farmsteads clustered around the greens to the south of town, together with seven houses outside the parish.

Eight of the buildings we examined were originally open-hall houses which were either altered with stacks and floors or were extended during the GR period; but more than 40 houses, in and around Hempnall, were built new in the opposed-entry or later lobby-entry style. Very little building except for small cottages was undertaken in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with only three houses built in the gable-end-stack style.



Conclusions

That **A** great rebuilding occurred in these areas of Norfolk goes without saying. It occurred in all four study areas, but the differences in the periods involved, even between the three studies in the small area of south central Norfolk on the claylands, indicate that they were not all part of **THE** Great Rebuilding as proposed by WG Hoskins.

Walsingham is a definite outlier in every sense – not located on the claylands, consisting mostly of non-residential buildings under the close control of the Religious houses, the need for which ceased before the Great Rebuilding period started.

The results in Hempnall do fit neatly into Hoskins' period, but the earlier building boom in New Buckenham and the later extension of the rebuilding in Tacolneston, point to other, probably commercial, factors overriding the general replacement of the older style of medieval house. The prosperity of the market in fifteenth-century New Buckenham seems to have brought forward the building boom. Perhaps the lack of prosperity delayed it in Tacolneston, but even within Tacolneston there appear to have been opposing forces at work, with one early two-storeyed house of the 1540s, at least three innovative crosswings added to earlier houses around the end of the sixteenth century, but close by, another house in the village was built new in 1645 with a timber-framed chimney.

The manor records in Hempnall list more than 10 named tenements and messuages in the late fourteenth century, but none of these survived; the oldest we found could be mid-fifteenth century and three or four others were of the late-fifteenth century and these were all worth updating, or capable of being updated, into the new closed style. The remainder must have been demolished and replaced by the late-sixteenth- or early-seventeenth century houses seen today. These changes in Hempnall seems to have been completed over the shortest period - almost entirely within the middle part of Hoskins' Great Rebuilding period.

So, in conclusion, it can be said that it is not possible to generalise about the timing and pattern of replacement of the medieval form of housing in these parts of Norfolk as THE Great Rebuilding, but the results in one of the areas do fit entirely within Hoskins' parameters - in Hempnall - as we had suspected at the start of the project.

The Journals detailing the researches in Hempnall, Tacolneston and Walsingham are still available by emailing ian.hinton222@btinternet.com.
Tacolneston costs £8
Walsingham costs £8 for members (£12 for non-members).
Hempnall costs £8 for members (£15 for non-members)
They can be posted for £4 each.

Unfortunately, the New Buckenham volume is out of print, but is available as a large pdf file.

Member's contribution

Hall Farm Barn, Hemsby, Norfolk

John Walker

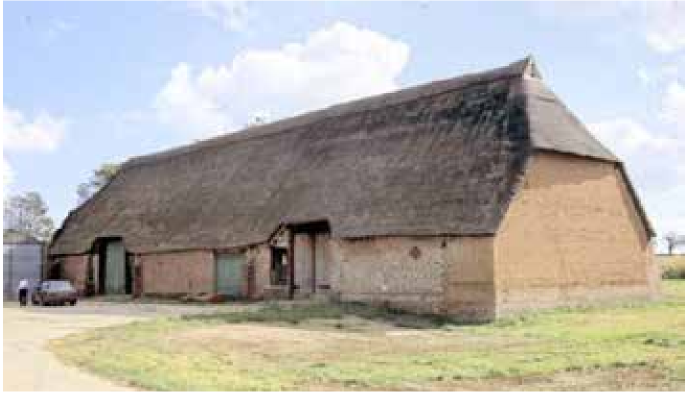


Plate 1 Hall Farm Barn north front

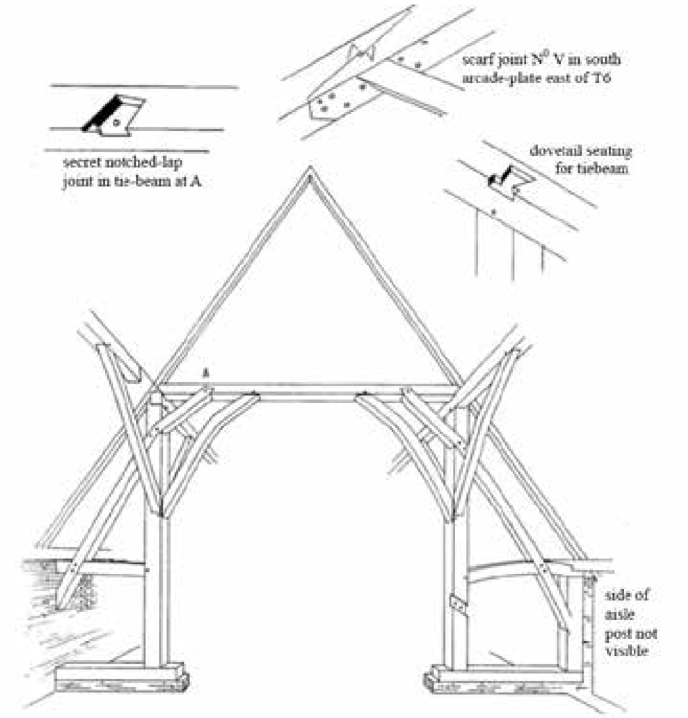

scarf joint N° V in south arcade-plate east of T6
secret notched-lap joint in tie-beam at A
dovetail seating for tiebeam
A
side of aisle post not visible

Fig. 1 Hall Farm Barn. Partial Reconstruction of Truss 6 (none of the original roof survives)

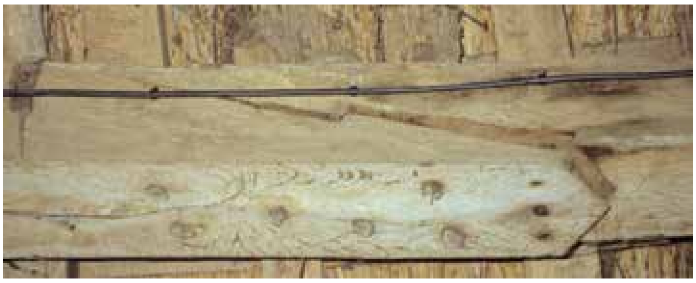


Plate 2 Splayed & tabled scarf with transverse key & sallied square abutments in north-arcade plate

The timbers of this aisled barn were felled in 1283 (VA47, 2016, 80), so is later than the Cressing Wheat Barn but, with its passing braces rising only to the tiebeam (Fig. 1), it is similar to the as yet undated Church Hall Farm Barn, Kelvedon, and the Abbess Warley Hall Barn, Great Warley, both in Essex and to Sandonbury Wheat Barn, Hertfordshire dated to 1266-68d (VA 44, 2013, 84).

The barn is now 145ft 10in (44.43m) long internally, of 6 full bays, but truncated at both ends when these were rebuilt in brick (Fig. 2). It may well have had return end aisles with cantilevered end tiebeams. The height to the underside of the arcade-plates is 20ft (6.1m).

The internal width was originally *c*.36½ft (11.1m); the north aisle has been shortened slightly. The south aisle retains its original size with most of the trusses' aisle wall-posts surviving. The south aisle wall plate may also be original; if so those parts of the plate fully visible suggest the original wall had very widely spaced studs. All the external walls have been rebuilt in brick in a mixture of bonds, broadly English bond on the south and west, and more or less Flemish bond on the other two sides facing the, now demolished, farmhouse (Fig. 2).

Passing braces are notched-lapped to the tiebeams - most with secret but some are open notched-laps. All braces from the arcade-posts to the arcade-plate and tiebeam are curved and mortised and tenoned and pegged. The scarf joints in the arcade-plates (both plates survive complete) are splayed and tabled with a transverse key, and most have sallied and square abutments (Fig. 1 & Plate 2), though some have just square abutments without the sallied ends. The tiebeams are jointed to the arcade-plates with a housed lap dovetail with entrance shoulders (Fig. 1). The arcade-posts are unjowled with a rear upstand and stood on timber sole-plates, many of which have been replaced with brick stylobates (Plate 3). Unlike the Sandonbury Wheat Barn there were no braces from the arcade-post to the sole-plate. Aisle-ties are in reverse assembly as with many of these early barns.

The direction of the scarf joints show the barn was built from west to east (Fig 1). The face orientation of the passing braces indicates there were two entrances, as at Sandonbury, between trusses 2 and 3 and between 5 and 6 where there are still entrances today in the north wall. The doors in the south wall have been blocked.

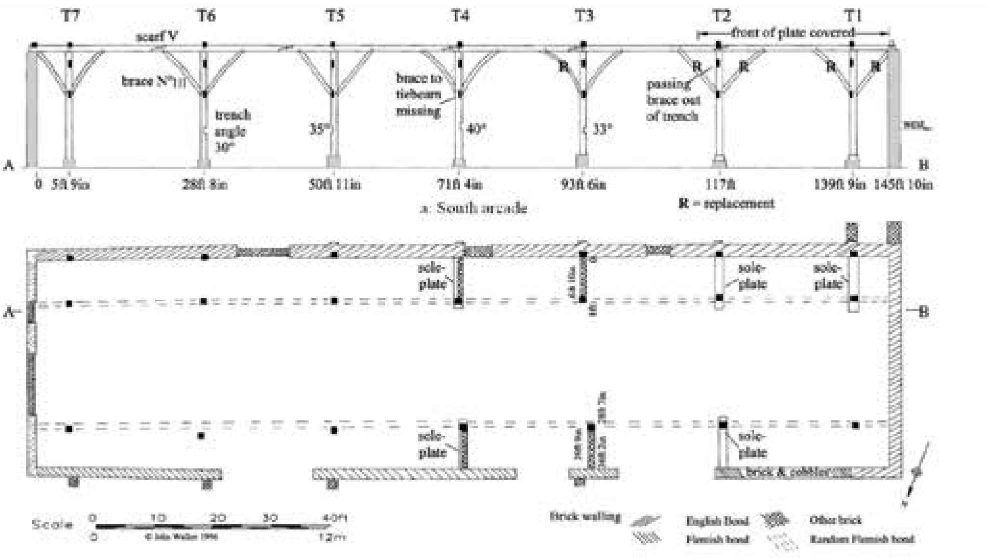

T7
T6
T5
T4
T3
T2
T1
scarf V
front of plate covered
brace N° 11
trench angle 30°
35°
brace to tiebeam missing
40°
33°
passing brace out of trench
R
A
B
0
5ft 9in
28ft 8in
50ft 11in
71ft 4in
93ft 6in
117ft
139ft 9in
145ft 10in
a: South arcade
R = replacement
sole-plate
brick & cobbles
Scale
0
10
20
30
40ft
12m
© John Walker 1996
Brick walling
English Bond
Flemish bond
Other brick
Random Flemish bond

Fig 2: Hall Farm Barn plan and south arcade

One unique feature is that the south arcade post of the four trusses 3 to 6 have trenches for a second lower passing brace rising at about 30 to 40^0 out into the nave (Fig 1 & Plate 4). There are no similar trenches on the north posts, nor any evidence that the braces rose to the tiebeams or reached across to the north arcade-post, so they may have supported some low partition down part of the barn. The trenches do not appear to later additions and they are double pegged (Fig. 1 & Plate 4).

The roof has been replaced and there is no evidence on the tiebeams for any form of original crown or queen-posts. The latest Pevsner (Pevsner & Wilson 1997, 546-7) says the present roof is 14th century as is implied by Historic England listing details, but it is 19th century or slightly earlier. It could even be early 20th century. It has two tiers of clasped side-purlins with plank collars and no principal rafters, the lower tier with skinny queen struts where the collars coincide with the tiebeams and occasional curving queen-posts where they do not (Plate 5).

Plate 3 Hall Farm Barn looking east with truss 3 in the foreground

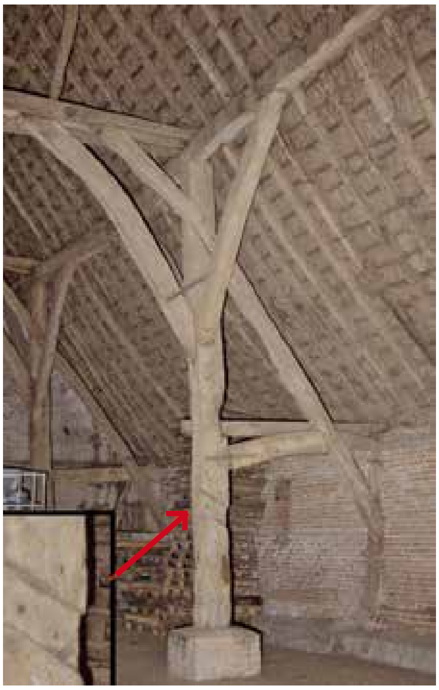


Plate 4 South arcade post of truss 6 with lower passing trench highlighted

Plate 5 Hall Farm Barn roof looking east from truss 5

NHBG Research

A Digest of Buildings Visited Since August 2020

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

Swallow Barn, Upton

Swallow Barn was originally a six-bay brick-built barn, some 31m (101ft) long and 5m (16ft) wide, with a later outshut under a catslide roof. It is located on the edge of the marsh on Back Lane, set roughly east-west, with the eastern half now converted to residential use.

This type of barn is known as a combination barn, providing pairs of large double doors for the through-draught for a threshing floor, as well as upper-floor storage for hay and grain, and smaller storage rooms for machinery and possibly animals.

It is 3.9m (12’6”) to the eaves and 6m (20ft) to the ridge. It was extended by a full height bay to the west with a nicely-rounded front corner, and a lean-to single-storey bay to the east, this under a half-hipped roof. Most of the outshut to the south appears to pre-date the two extensions.

Dating this building is difficult - there are few clues. The dentil strip would normally be taken to be late-eighteenth or early-nineteenth century, but the barn does not appear on the Tithe Map of 1839, whereas the building immediately to the south of it does.

Ian Hinton

The Red House, North Creake

The red house is a two-storey and two-storey-plus-attic house with a pantiled roof, on a site sloping down to the River Burn. A building appears on this site on an early seventeenth-century map and there is evidence of this within the much thicker brick walls of the two-storey brick range set back from the road. The two storey plus attic range at the front has a decorative brick, flint and clunch wall to its side and a shaped brick gable at the front. Confusingly, the gable also has a datestone with September 24 1778 painted on it, perhaps 50 years or more too late for such a feature.

Colourwashing of the street facade in the past appears to be absent from the edges of the shaping, so this may be part of a nineteenth-century update as the house was joined to the cottages to its north between 1815 and 1830. The initials TH on the front purlin irons do not help, as the owner found four men resident between the early eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries with the initials TH.

Lynne Hodge & Ian Hinton

Dickleburgh Hall

Encased in nineteenth century brick, the only clue to the original form of this house is the cluster of five rebuilt polygonal chimney stacks towards the west end, and the present front door (in a modern porch) seems to be in a cross-passage position. A large extension, of various builds, to the rear has a `catslide' roof.

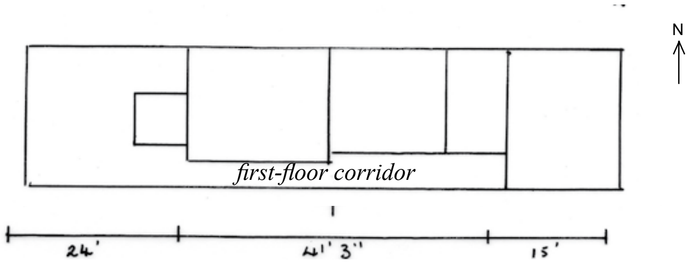
Inside, an off-set axial principal ceiling joist with sunk-quadrant mouldings and elaborate stops indicates a mid-seventeenth century date. The roof is also of mid-seventeenth century style with tenoned purlins and cambered tenoned collars. The end wall of the original house consists of large section, uniformly straight, studs rising to a high-set girt.

A dog-leg staircase, which is remarkably complete, has an octagonal stair mast with its corner chamfers stopped with shields at floor and ceiling level. The stair gives access to the attic, which is fully floored with evidently original boards, and to the first floor where it opens onto a corridor which serves to give access to the first floor chambers of the original house. All of the associated doorways have deep chamfers and four-centred door heads. Traditionally not believed to exist before their appearance in higher status houses of a much later period, the corridor contributes crucially to the development of general privacy giving access to rooms separately. The principal joists in the hall have elaborate chamfer mouldings of opposed ogees, which does not conflict with a possible mid- to later-sixteenth century date for the original house.

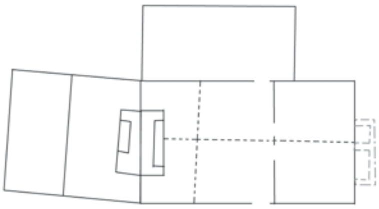
At the western end is a very well made tenoned purlin roof of the earlier seventeenth century, which matches the evidence of the room below that this parlour was added after the main house was built. Above the front door there is preserved, as a later insertion, a decorated oriel board. This could belong to the one of the house's oriel windows or it could be an import.

It seems that the original house of the mid to later sixteenth century comprised the centre section with hall, cross-passage and service room with chambers and attic above served by the end stair, and the first floor corridor, a revolutionary and novel design. To this was added the west room as a parlour, perhaps with the present stack being built to replace an earlier arrangement, apparently in the early seventeenth century. It should be seen as an innovative design incorporating an early first-floor corridor.

Susan & Michael Brown

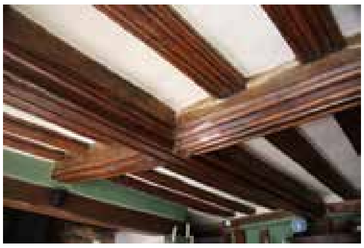


The Old Rectory Fritton Common



The Old Rectory is located at the north end of Fritton Common. The southern cell is thatched and of two storeys, the northern part consists of two cells of one and a half storeys covered in pantiles, with a twentieth-century, flat-roofed extension at the rear. Much of the inside has been altered as part of the division into three cottages, presumably in the nineteenth century, and reversed in the 1950s.

The two-storey cell forming the parlour is timber-framed and is set at an angle of about 5° to the remainder of the house. It has a large-section timbers throughout with a plain transverse principal joist in the ground floor room and a moulded mantle beam.



The tall, off-centre, three-flued, stack was inserted entirely within the bounds of the hall at the high end, suggesting that the house was two-celled at this time. The inserted floor of the hall has crossed, elaborately roll-moulded, principal joists of around 1550; the common joists are flat laid and also moulded.

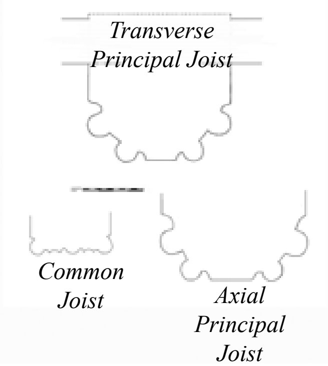
The hall/service room wall contains three doorways, two of which are now blocked. Two in the centre which accessed the two rooms and a third at the western end which allowed access to the staircase, since partially removed. All three doorways have chamfered jambs and head, similar to masons' mitres.

The service rooms were divided by a rustic axial principal joist, supported at both ends by agricultural knee braces. This joist contains four empty mortices in its soffit for the studs of a dividing wall.

In the parlour chamber, the ceiling has been covered, but has a single purlin either side at ceiling level. The central window in the south wall has four diamond-shaped unglazed mullions but no shutter-slide groove above it, similar to the window in the west wall below the wallplate.

In the chamber above the hall, the wall-plate is about 60cm above the floor and the roof consists of two lines of shaved purlins and appears to be eighteenth century.

The different alignments of the two halves confirm the fact that they are of different builds, with the two-storey part of the mid to late sixteenth century whilst the lower part of the building appears to have been an open hall with a later inserted floor of elaborately roll-moulded joists of around 1550. Whether the lower part of the house was always this height cannot be determined, as the front wall has been replaced in brick and the rear wall of the hall has had a clamp and reinforcing posts added, so the original construction is covered. In addition, the original height of the hall section is further complicated by the apparent



existence of an additional wall-plate and storey post in the rear wall of the service rooms, which points to a lower eaves level than currently, by about 30cm, rather than a higher one.

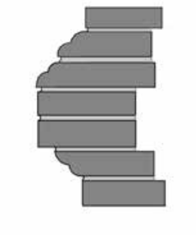
If this house was The Rectory (there is another house in the village with a similar name) it would obviously have been of some quality, so it is not unreasonable to suggest a date of around 1500 for the hall, with quality materials used for the subsequent insertion of the floor and the attached two-storey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

Ian Hinton & Jess Johnston

Allen's Farmhouse, Neatishead

Allen's Farmhouse is a brick-built, two-storey, symmetrically laid out house with two gable-end chimney stacks and a two-storey lean-to extension at the rear. The main range of the house is of three cells, the narrow central bay being unheated. It is listed Grade II together with the brick walls on the road edge.

The front wall has a pair of three-light casement windows on each side of a central doorway and a five-course platband extends from the doorway across the front façade and round the gable ends at ground-floor ceiling height. The brickwork is in Flemish bond and consists of bricks of variable colour.



Platband section

The doorway is surrounded by a portico with a rounded pediment of brick with a two-light window above. The pillars of the portico are of brick with small moulded-brick capitals, and the pediment is made of moulded-brick courses at the top and bottom which appear to be the same as the platband. The upper moulded-brick course of both has been flaunched in mortar. The whole is built on a six-course plinth of brick, which could be older than the house.

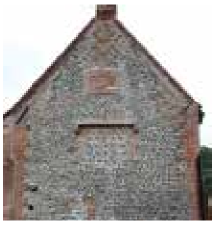
The northern room has what appears to be the remains of a bread oven between the rear wall and chimney stack. It is built of narrow bricks so could be part of an earlier building. The lean-to extension at the rear is now of two storeys, but changes in the brickwork indicate that it was once of just a single storey. It is covered in red pantiles.

The main part of this house appears to be entirely of the early eighteenth century, in the transitional period from Queen Anne to early Georgian, and is similar to, but smaller than, Robin's Manor in Itteringham, which is dated 1707.

Ian Hinton

Manor House Farm, Bessingham

Manor House Farm, Bessingham has 3 cells with a steep pantiled roof, with an outshut to the north with a catslide roof containing a large flat-roofed dormer window.



The house has a flint gable end to the west containing three blocked windows. The bricks in the quoins appear to be early and they also form the quoins of the three blocked windows, the middle one of which is centred in the gable with an elaborate brick hood-mould. Bricks have also been used to create decorative inset patterns of diamonds and hearts.

The south wall is of cobble flint and has been raised by 13 courses of regular Flemish bond brickwork plus a three-course dentil strip. This is reflected in the gable end with 4 steps of corbelling and a reshaping of the roof angle. The plinth from the gable continues for approximately half the southern wall, then disappears, close to the door near the centre.

The roof construction is of two rows of inline purlins shaved to fit into the principal rafters, with non-clasping collars removed and raised to gain headroom. There was a concerted building programme in the mid-eighteenth century by the Lord of the Manor, confirmed by 1746 and 1757 dates on tie-beams in one of the barns. Subsequent work has removed almost all of the diagnostic elements.

There is a comment by Edwin Rose in the HER that the gable-end-wall windows were false as they backed onto the chimney stack, and that the rebuilding of the front wall was from around 1850. We feel that the windows in the gable wall are original - because so much care was taken over the moulded brick drip-mould - and that the chimney was the later element. A good case can be made for this stack being part of a larger modernization programme in the 1750s, replacing an earlier offset stack, which, coupled with the eaves raise, made the house into a more fashionable symmetrical eighteenth-century layout with a chimney stack at each end.

The flint wall and its heart and diamond decoration in brick are likely to be mid-seventeenth century, providing a probable date for the house, as there are mid-seventeenth century examples of similar brick patterned decoration, one locally in Edgefield and another dated 1674, in Cley,.

Ian Hinton & Lynne Hodge

Hidden Cottage, Swafield

Hidden Cottage is the rear part of a long brick-built building, built east-west and gable-end-on to the road. It consists of two one-up and one-down cottages combined, attached to the east end of an ex-Public House and includes one bay of the pub (now known as Keadu House).

The main building is all of two storeys. The cottage part at the rear has a two-storey addition to its north side which now sits under a raised single plane of the roof. The western part (the ex-pub) has a lean-to single storey extension for half its length, with evidence of another section closer to the road, since removed.

Most of the building sits on mainly-flint plinth. The walls are of a modified form of Flemish-bond brickwork, much of which has been rendered. The render on Hidden Cottage has been faintly scribed in an ashlar pattern to represent stonework, as has the south wall of Keadu House, but in a deeper manner.

Each of the pair of cottages had a newel stair between the stack and the southern wall of the building. The stair in the left-hand cottage has been replaced by a straight stair running westwards since the inclusion of the additional bay to the west. Both downstairs rooms have a large fireplace with a hearth more than 1.2m (4ft) wide. Steps down lead into the northern lean-to and into the first bay of Keadu House. Below this room is a cellar with brick vaulting. The west wall of the cellar is built in English bond brickwork.

The rendering and ashlaring of the outside, if original, could point to a Georgian date, perhaps mid-eighteenth century. The most likely sequence is that the cottages were added to the rear of Keadu House. Without definitive evidence, particularly being able to examine the bricks, Keadu House could easily be early eighteenth century and the cottages mid- to late-eighteenth century.

Ian Hinton & Anne Woollett

Attleborough

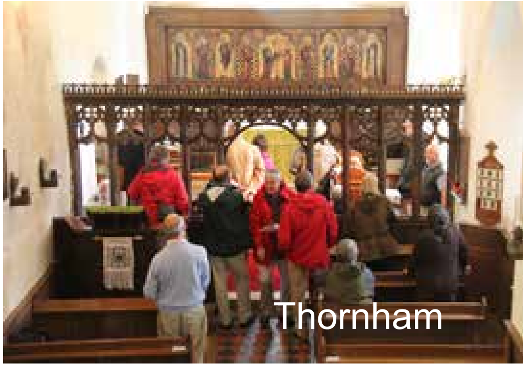
Walsingham

Walsingham

Looking up to parse the architecture on NHBG summer visits.

Photos: Ian Hinton & Rosemary Forrest

Ketteringham



Ketteringham