

Norfolk Historic Buildings Group

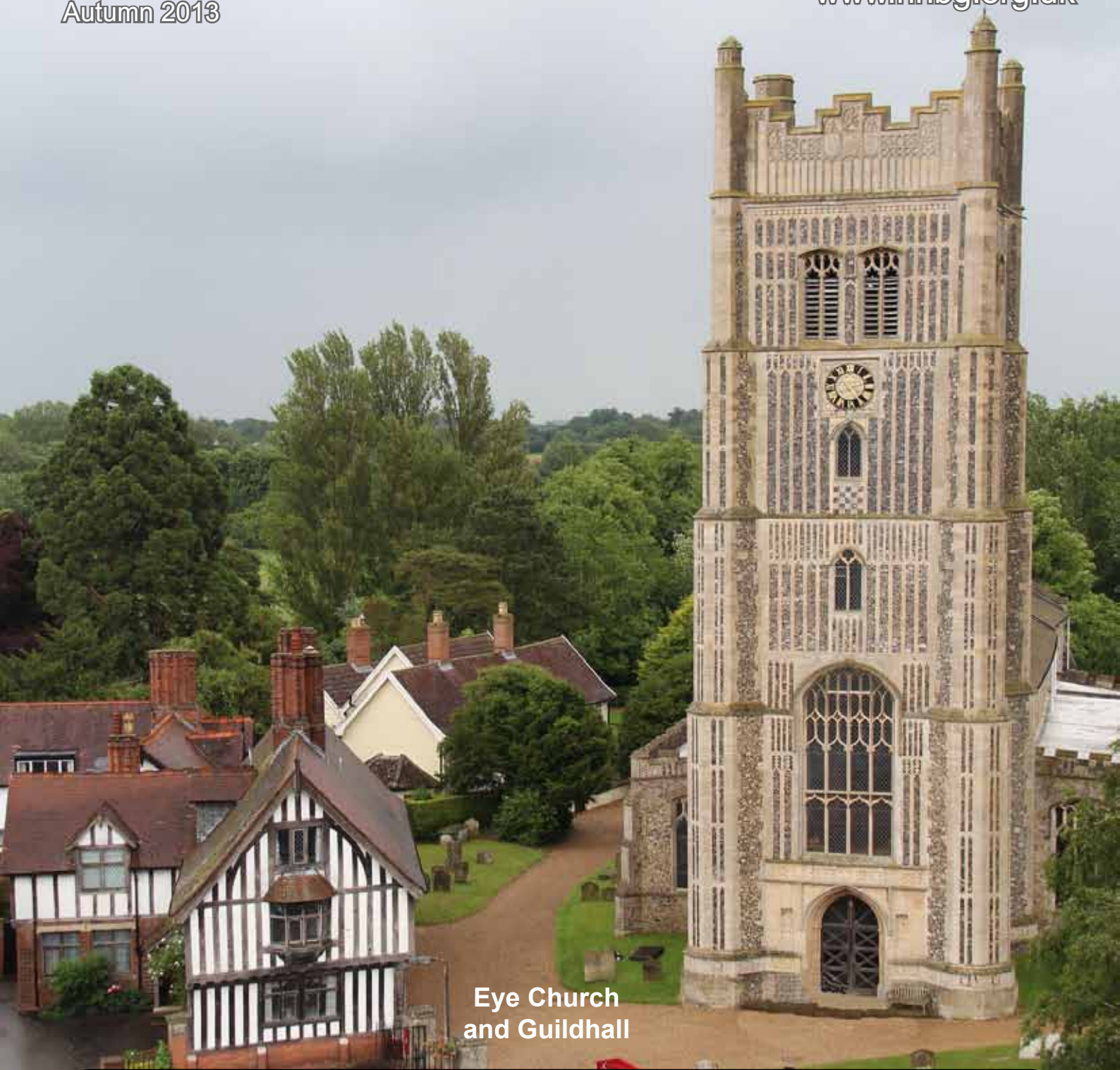
Non members
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Newsletter



Number twentysix
Autumn 2013

www.nhbg.org.uk



Eye Church
and Guildhall

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CHAIR

Welcome to issue 26 of the NHBG Newsletter. This issue continues the practice, begun in issue 25, of having a full-colour cover. And what a cover! I have never seen such a wonderful photograph of Eye Church and the accompanying Guildhall. The newsletter includes detailed summaries of each of our Summer events and group visits (except the one in September), and also, as a bonus, includes a detailed summary of John Minnis' Winter Lecture on 'Carscapes'. This was, I think, my favourite lecture in recent years, and provided a wonderful insight into the material culture and precious built evidence of the Golden Age of Motoring in Norfolk and beyond. The Group's broad interests are reflected in the terrific variety of this year's Winter Lecture series (see p.3), which covers everything from industrial buildings to medieval graffiti, and from asylums to angels! We very much hope that members will come along and enjoy our special Members' Evening on 15th January 2014 – this showcases some of the research carried out by individual members and promises to provide a fascinating series of insights into Norfolk buildings. Its not often, when talking about Norfolk, that the word 'cruck' features, so definitely one not to miss! Very soon, the Group's archive of recorded buildings will be accessible via the NHBG website. We are working with our website provider, Empresa, to tackle a series of technical issues, but we hope that members will be able to access, in due course, detailed reports for all of the buildings the Group has visited and recorded. More information about this will be provided to members as soon as possible.

Adam Longcroft
Chair, Norfolk Historic Buildings Group
August 2013
a.longcroft@uea.ac.uk

NHBG Committee Contact Details

Snippets

Adam Longcroft *Chair & Journal Editor*
School of Education, UEA, Norwich, NR4 7TJ
01603 592261 [w] e.mail: a.longcroft@uea.ac.uk

Alayne Fenner *Deputy Chair & Newsletter Editor*
24 Mount Pleasant, Norwich, NR2 2DG
01603 452204 [h] e.mail: alayne.fenner@btinternet.com

Lynne Hodge *Committee Secretary*
Tannery House Worthing, Dereham NR20 5RH
01362 668847 [h] e.mail: lynne@walknorfolk.co.uk

Maggy Chatterley *Treasurer*
The Old Rectory, Barnby, Beccles, NR34 7QN
01502 475287 [h] e.mail: maggy6@btinternet.com

Ian Hinton *Newsletter Production & Membership Sec.*
The Old Rectory, Barnby, Beccles, NR34 7QN
01502 475287 [h] e.mail: ian.hinton222@btinternet.com

Michael and Susan Brown *Buildings*
Woodlands, Bylaugh Park, Dereham NR20 4RL
01362 688362 [h]

Mary Ash *Winter Programme*
107 St Leonards Road, Norwich, NR1 4JF
01603 616285 [h] e.mail: mary.ash@ntlworld.com

Dominic Summers *Summer Events*
17 Alan Road, Norwich, NR1 2BX
01603 663554 [h] e.mail: d.summers1@btinternet.com

Jackie Simpson *Web Page*
The Chestnuts, Church Road, Neatishead NR12 8BT
01692 630639 [h] e.mail: jackie.g.simpson@btinternet.com

Diane Barr *Documentary Research*
24 The Shrublands, Horsford, NR10 3EL
01603 898928 [h] e.mail: dibarr@btinternet.com

Karen Mackie
44 Norwich Road, Tacolneston NR16 1BY
01508 488467 [h] e.mail: karen_mackie@btinternet.com

Anne Woollett *Web Page*
The Cardinal's Hat, Back Street, Reepham NR10 4SJ
01603 870452 [h] e.mail: anne.woollett@tiscali.co.uk

Cover photo - Eye Church from the castle mound (Ian Hinton)

Chris Barringer, 1931-2013

You may have heard that Chris Barringer passed away in June after a long illness. He and his wife Charlotte were members of the NHBG since its inception. Chris moved to Norfolk in the 1960s and made it his home and the centre of his later research; he took an active part in field work with many local research groups and was actively involved in Heritage preservation. He was resident tutor for the Cambridge Extra-Mural Board in Norfolk and the Director of the Centre of Continuing Education at UEA for five years, where he enthused thousands of people about local and regional history and the local landscape, inspiring them to go on and undertake their own research. He also wrote several books and articles on Norfolk villages and towns and edited volumes on Norwich history. He will be remembered fondly by everyone who came into contact with him.

Adam Longcroft

The NHBG has made a donation to Cancer Research UK in Chris's memory.

Correction

On page 5 of *Newsletter 25*, it was stated that Mo Cubitt's book about Hempnall was out of print. David Clarke, (an NHBG member) who runs City Bookshop in Norwich, has pointed out that he has it in stock at half the original cover price (now £9.99), rather than the £20+ secondhand price on the abebooks website.

A further reminder that we should consult local outlets first, rather than just relying on the web!

Apologies

To any members who received an email on 26th July saying that I was in Manila and in need of funds. Luckily one of the recipients was my wife, who knew where I was, so I was able to regain control of my email account within an hour of its being hacked into. (All this despite the fact that I change all my passwords regularly!)

Ian Hinton

Winter Programme 2013/14

All meetings will be held in the INTO Building at UEA at 7.00 for 7.30pm.

INTO is located at the Bluebell Road end of University Drive (see map at foot of page). Parking (limited) is available in front of the building, otherwise in the main carpark (for which there is normally a charge).

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, in order to try and offset rising costs, there will be a charge at winter lectures of £2 per member (£3 for couples) at the door, which will include a complementary glass of wine each, or soft drink, and nibbles. The rate for non-members will be £4. The charges do not apply to members' night in January.

Tuesday 15th October 2013

Mary Fewster

Norwich Industrial Buildings

Mary Fewster taught History and was head of History at Hewett School in Norwich for many years. Her MPhil research was into the Yarmouth herring industry and her subsequent Doctoral research in 2004 was into East Anglian Goldsmiths. She has taught in the School for Continuing Education at UEA and is the course leader for the Local History Research Course. Norwich's hidden industrial past is one of her research interests.

Tuesday 12th November 2013

Sarah Spooner

Eighteenth-century Suburban Villas

Sarah Spooner is a lecturer in Landscape History and Deputy Director of the Centre of East Anglian Studies. Her talk, Suburban Villas in Eighteenth Century Norwich, unusually, is on townscape rather than landscape, and will link to last month's talk on industrial history of the period and to some extent will parallel the early-nineteenth-century Parsonage-House talk from last winter.

Tuesday 10th December 2013

Matthew Champion

Medieval Graffiti in Churches

Matthew Champion is directing the Community Archaeology project that is researching the medieval graffiti that has been found in 80 per cent of the churches so far surveyed in Norfolk. Much of the history of the ordinary English craftsman/labourer is only recorded in scratched graffiti in the very fabric of the churches that they were building. Matthew's talk on the survey results should bring to light something of their everyday lives.

Wednesday 15th Jan 2014

Members' Night

A chance for members to present short sessions of their own research into subjects that include buildings, whether consisting of survey work or delving into documentary sources.

Speakers arranged so far:-

Di Maywhort - The recording of two houses in Rickinghall and Botesdale

Lynette Fawkes - The perils of organising an English-Heritage based survey into buildings at risk in Broadland

Ian Hinton - the restoration of a cruck-built house in Herefordshire (a style almost unknown in Norfolk).

If you would like the opportunity of presenting your own work in the future, please let Mary Ash know at:-

mary.ash@ntlworld.com

Wednesday 12th Feb 2014

Steve Cherry

St Andrew's Asylum

Steve Cherry is Director of the MA History Programme at UEA and is a specialist in Social History, especially health and medicine and madness and its treatment. This talk reflects that interest and will be a fascinating insight into the way Society dealt with 'lunatics'.

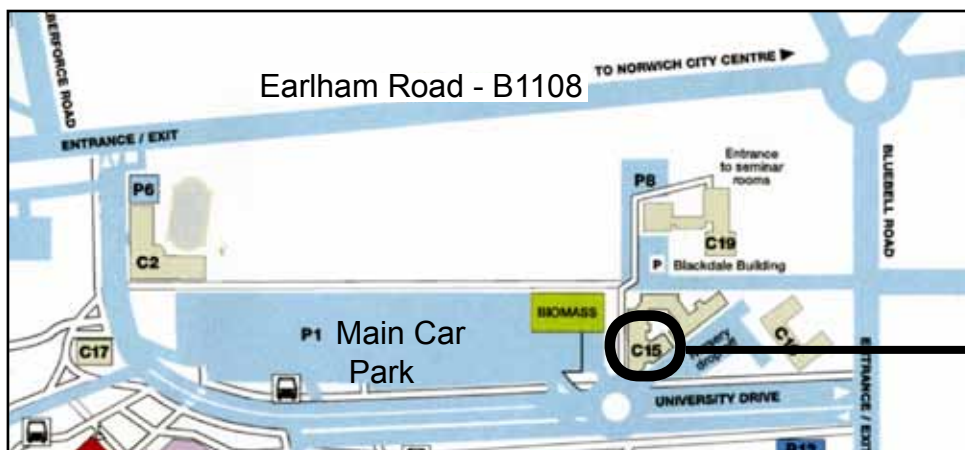
Friday 7th March 2014

Rob Walker

Angel Roofs in East Anglia

The carved angels in the roofs of the churches of Fenland and East Anglia are a nationally-known phenomenon.

Rob Walker is Conservation Officer for Herefordshire Council. He is a well-known historian of iconoclasm and is co-editor of a book titled *Getting Rid of Angels: The Journal of William Dowsing: Iconoclasm in East Anglia during the English Civil War*.



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INTO
building

Carscapes: the English Heritage Motoring Project

(12th March 2013)

John Minnis

The motor car was arguably the greatest single agent for change to England's landscapes in the twentieth century. But, although cars have been with us for nearly 120 years, it took a long time for them to make much of a mark. Unlike the railways in the previous century whose impact in the creation of substantial earthworks and new buildings and structures was immediate, the advance of the car was, until the 1950s and 60s, much less obvious, at least in terms of its effect on the physical environment.

The English Heritage Car Project explored both how the car impacted on the environment and how it created new types of building, the motor house, the garage, the filling station, the car park, the roadhouse, the motel, among others. The project resulted in the publication of *Carscapes: the Motor Car, Architecture and Landscape in England* by Kathryn A. Morrison and John Minnis, published by Yale University Press in November 2012 and *England's Motoring Heritage from the Air* by John Minnis will be published by English Heritage later in 2013. In addition, nearly 20 motor-related buildings have been listed following research undertaken for the project.

The lecture focused on the period between the two world wars. In 1919, when commercial aerial photography commenced, England, seen from the air, was much as it had been prior to 1914; effectively Edwardian England preserved as if in aspic. Towns, cities and suburbs, designed for an era where travel was by train, tram or horse, were still visually largely unchanged.

After a slow start, the process of change gathered speed in the mid 1920s, and the lecture examined how the new building types, such as filling stations, evolved and how people reacted to the opportunities and threats posed by the car. It was argued that heritage, both in depictions of motoring and in architectural forms, was widely employed to make a symbol of modernity acceptable to an essentially conservative country in the 1920s before modernism finally came to the fore in the following decade. In particular, responses to the new building types by bodies such as the CPRE were considered and there was discussion of how we define what we mean by a vernacular building - can a filling station ever be described as vernacular?



This garage at Flimwell in East Sussex, was built in 1926 and is a good example of an early filling station designed not to detract from its village setting. It was listed in 2012.

Pictures supplied by John Minnis

The lecture also examined the contribution of the car to the appreciation of heritage.

By the late 1930s, the presence of the car was becoming much more noticeable, although, with some notable exceptions such as new arterial roads including the Great West Road and the East Lancashire Road, there had been relatively few alterations to accommodate it. J. B. Priestley devised the phrase 'Bypass Britain' but in practice, it was pretty thinly scattered.

What was more prevalent was the spread of housing along the main roads out of towns and this ribbon development was regarded as the most detrimental effect of the growing popularity of cars. Traffic congestion was becoming apparent in towns ill-equipped to handle the rising numbers of cars but few of them did much about it. Some began to construct the first stages of what were to eventually become ring roads but few followed Coventry's lead in driving new streets (Corporation Street) through the centre.

It was not until the post-war period with the stimulus offered by post-war reconstruction that England's town and cities finally attempted to grapple with the need to accommodate ever-growing numbers of cars and to separate them from pedestrians by creating inner ring roads surrounding pedestrianised centres with, in many cases, the results that we are all too familiar with. Similarly, long distance travellers had to wait until the end of the 1950s and the advent of the motorways, to see dramatic change in journey times.



The KCB filling station, at Benson in Oxfordshire, of 1931, was demolished during World War II to make way for a runway extension. KCB stands for Keep the Country Beautiful and, with its thatched petrol pumps, it is one of the wilder flights of fancy in filling station design.

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Carscapes: the English Heritage Motoring Project (continued)

Post Script:

After receiving the text of the talk from John Minnis, a review of the *Carscapes* book appeared in issue 276 of *Current Archaeology* in March 2013, in which additional examples of petrol filling stations in interesting styles were pictured.

Firstly, the hyperbolic paraboloid canopy at Markham Moor on the old A1 in Nottinghamshire was shown. Built in 1960/61, it was listed Grade II in March 2012. Fascinatingly, in the correspondence section of the following issue (April 2013) was a letter from the draughtsman who drew the plans for the remarkable roof, working as an assistant to the architect. He commented on how much more elegant the canopy looked before the Little Chef was built in the space beneath it, but that before this, when the wind blew from the north or south, the canopy shape funnelled the wind, managing to double its speed at the pumps, making tank-filling a particularly hazardous exercise.

Secondly, the mushroom-like canopies of the Esso station beside the A6 at Birstall in Leicester were pictured; they are thought to be the only remaining examples of this style. They were also built in the early 1960s and listed in March 2012 as a result of this study.

Ian Hinton



Images from Current Archaeology 276

AGM Report

The afternoon walkabout in Walsingham (see page 12) was followed in the Village Hall by tea and scones and the AGM. Given the hot day, tea was especially welcome as members returned from the walk - although some had found ice creams and cold drinks in the village. Tea was a splendid array of scones, cakes and sandwiches, demonstrating that your Committee's talents know no bounds! Thanks to Sandy and Billy for a five-star chocolate cake.

As ever, the AGM provides a good opportunity to consider the previous year's activities and to look to the future. Adam Longcroft thanked Mary Ash for her organisation of the winter lectures and Dominic Summers for organising the Summer Tours. These do an excellent job of bringing members together. Ian Hinton has also done a great job of providing a fascinating newsletter (with colour front page- well done Ian) AND keeping down the costs.

We said a formal farewell and thanks to Sue Shand. Sue completed her time as Treasurer at the end of March 2013. Sue's contribution to the Group has been tremendous and we wish her well in her 'new' life. Maggy Chatterley was co-opted onto the Committee as Treasurer in March 2013. The Committee, therefore, has had some months to discover that Maggy has a keen eye for treasurer things and so we are pleased that she was formally elected as Treasurer at the AGM. Each of the Group's officers who handle money are elected on a rolling programme - this year it was the turn of the Membership Secretary, and Ian Hinton was re-elected unanimously.

A major issue for the Group this year is its finances. The cost of operating is increasing all the time, including postage and speakers fees and their travel costs. Because of the shortfall in the Group's income, the Committee regretfully decided to make a small charge (reported on page 9) for members attending the winter lectures starting in October. One member suggested that becoming a charity might have financial benefits for the Group.

This is something we will explore in the next few months and will report back to 2014 AGM. It was also suggested that people be given name tags so we might get to know one another's names.

A major 'outcome' this year was the production of Volume Five of the NHBG Journal, on the Norfolk Schools Project. The printing costs were covered by the grants received from English Heritage, so a free copy is available for every member; to minimise costs, you are encouraged to pick up your copy at an NHBG meeting.

The meeting finished a commendable 40 minutes after it started, covering all the business required without being too boring; and we still had the evening update on the Walsingham research to look forward to - this is designed to keep the Walsingham residents up to date as well as NHBG members.

Anne Woollett



Retiring Treasurer, Sue Shand, saying thankyou for the photo of the gift she will receive from her committee colleagues when it can be transported to her garden (two large potted photinias).

(photo: Karen Mackie)

Orchard House, Bramerton (14th May 2013)

Richard Ball, Alan Eade & Ian Hinton



Introduction

The owners of Orchard House, Neil and Judith Walker, contacted the NHBG, via a long-term member who was a friend, and arranged for Rosemary and Ian to visit and have a look at the house as it is in the process of being extensively renovated. After two visits we were still confused as to its development and Neil & Judith kindly agreed to allow a group of members to visit the house to attempt to explain its development with multiple pairs of eyes. Rather than ask a single member to write-up the day as is usual, Rosemary asked for contributions from anyone who saw the house. Richard Ball and Alan Eade responded, and their thoughts are set out below. We still don't yet know which of these, if either, is correct.

The House as it is now

The two photos at the top of the page show the house in March 2013 and the house as it was in the early 1950s. The right-hand axial stack was known to have been inserted in the nineteenth century.

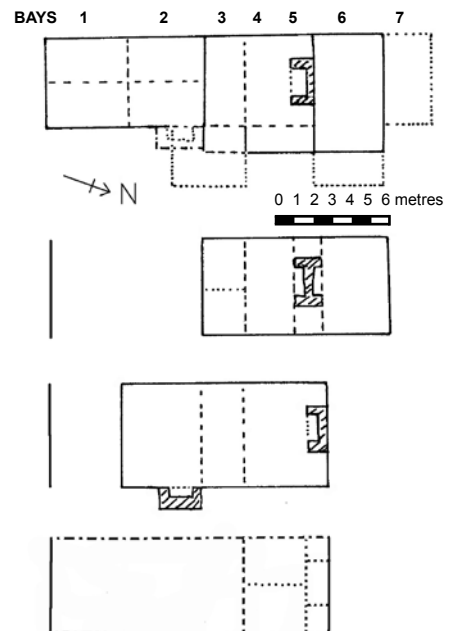
The top floorplan in the diagram to the right shows the current layout, with the roadside elevation at the top. Below it are three possible development sequences placed where they may have fitted into the building. Each was set out with its pros and cons for the attendees, highlighting the enormous amount of contradictory evidence that exists for each. The second floorplan is a typical three-celled timber-framed layout; the third incorporates the two brick flues that still exist, including the largely-removed one on the back wall in Bay 2, and the bottom plan shows the position of the two flint gable end walls, the lower part of the left hand one is more than 60cm thick and appears to be quite old, possibly early fourteenth century with its distinct coursing.

The external walls are all brick, in English Bond, but it appears that this is a skin outside another brick wall. This shows both in the front and rear walls. Did the inner brick wall replace the decaying timber frame of the original building which had previously been clad in brick?

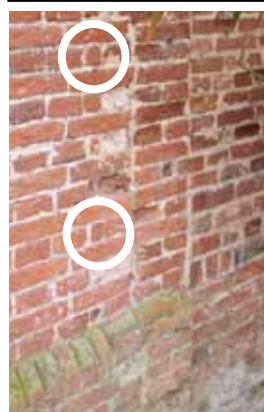
There are two vertical joints in the front wall brickwork, nine inches apart, between bays 1 and 2, right up to the eaves (see photo right), and the brickwork to the north of these joints has **queen closers** on alternate courses, showing that it was once an external corner. The capping on the plinth in the front wall also stops at this point. Interestingly, there is no equivalent joint or plinth change in the rear wall.

Bays 1 and 2 at the southern (left) end, appear to have been brought into residential use in the nineteenth century when the house was divided into four units and the second axial stack inserted. Bay 1 was described to the current owners as "the apple store".

Ian Hinton & Rosemary Forrest



Queen closers - small pieces of brick, of one-half-header width, used on alternate courses to enable proper bonding at external corners by allowing the use of a complete header or stretcher at the corner itself (in English Bond).



The two vertical joints in the brickwork between bays 1 and 2, showing queen closers on alternate courses to the left of the joint and the capped plinth stopping at the same point.

(photos: Ian Hinton)

Whatever the final answer about the development of this building, everyone on the visit agreed that the restoration of the house was in excellent hands and that Neil and Judith were doing the building justice.

Orchard House, Bramerton (continued)

Richard Ball's comments and thoughts

“Thank you for a very interesting and thought-provoking afternoon. Away from the site I have thought much about what we looked at yesterday and I feel that perhaps the two bays you number 1 and 2 are a unit - built in brick, possibly incorporating an earlier building or part of it, possibly around the late 1400s early 1500s.

I asked Neil about the rubbed brick window surrounds in this part and he says that they were existing when they renewed the windows - they look reminiscent to me of Hindringham Hall (photo below). If I understood him correctly he said there was an outer brick skin on the front wall which was removed when they dealt with the windows. This building may not have originally been intended as a dwelling house - the floorboards as seen from below looked very good, wide boards, Ian thought of oak, but I do not remember seeing them in the floor above - I feel I should have noticed them. Contrary to what I said yesterday the joist ends that Ian and I saw lying on the floor of that end room (1) are, according to Hewitt, standard for that period, even if the square proportions of the joists look rather different from what I (the un-expert) would expect. If it was built as a floored building then I think the two big joists could have gone into a main supporting joist running across the width rather than into a dividing wall? The windows might then reflect whatever its original purpose was.

It sits practically opposite the church which has a priest's door built into the south side of the chancel of brick (see below) - worth comparing with the brick of Orchard House? Pevsner states that this is seventeenth century, but on what grounds. Apparently Bramerton Grange (Pevsner) also has seventeenth-century brickwork.

This big room may have had an external chimney added at the time or later (on the east side) but I feel that much of what we now see of the opening could well be later alterations or reinforcement.

As to the supposedly timber framed end - that could have been an independent building, or an addition to the brick one - the other way round does not seem the obvious one to me.

With many thanks for making me think so hard! Thanks once again to both Ian & Rosemary and to our two hosts.”



Top - Orchard House
Middle - Bramerton church
Bottom - Hindringham Hall
(photos: Richard Ball)

The two sets of bricks at Bramerton look similar, but the moulding at Orchard House is just a plain chamfer, rather than the ovolo moulding of the other two.
Ian Hinton

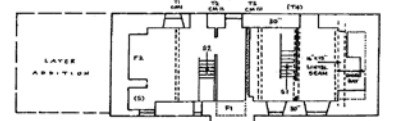
Alan Eade's comments and thoughts

“Following our visit and after studying Ian and Rosemary's excellent handouts posing various alternatives for the development of the house I felt that Suggestion 3, perhaps indicating a possible former Church House, seemed the most plausible (see definition below). A chance reference led to an article in *Vernacular Architecture* No. 23 (1992) 'Church Houses in Somerset', by E H D Williams. A drawing of that in Wick St Lawrence (shown below) immediately seemed very relevant, even to cells 1 & 2 of our building. However, Ian's reaction that the location of the Bramerton Church House is elsewhere, being clearly shown as such on one of the early O.S. maps, would seem to invalidate this suggestion.

However, is it possible that this part of Orchard House, comprising Bays/Cells 1-5 lying between the two high-pitched gables, roofed of a piece in oak and containing a 10m-long unheated first floor room was an earlier Church House before the era of butt purlins? I visited the first floor at the end of our visit but cannot recall the nature of the ceiling. Is it also possible that the discontinuity in the brickwork in the front wall where a stretcher-length 'gap' has been filled, but only to ground-floor ceiling height, indicates the position of a former heavy vertical timber forming part of an external staircase platform structure giving access to the first-floor room, as found in some Church Houses?

Mr Williams' article also states that 'a lateral fireplace was added to heat the central poorhouse'. Is it known that the practice of using the ground floor of Church Houses as the poorhouse is recorded in other/many villages in Norfolk and/or Suffolk? This is not something that I can readily research! Anyhow, a few thoughts which could possibly have some bearing on our final conclusions!

Thanks to the owners and to Ian and Rosemary for organising such an interesting visit. There was a great deal to take in when being confronted with a building of such intriguing complexity and so many possibilities!”



Wick St Lawrence church house

The Church House - The Church House was the medieval equivalent of the church hall. Until the mid fifteenth century, the festivals and church ales which raised funds for the church were held in the nave. As well as an increasing reaction against partying in the church, this period saw the introduction of pews into the church, reducing the available space. By the end of the fifteenth century most parishes had built a church house, often in, or close to, the churchyard, many in addition to a guildhall. There are many examples in East Anglia.

After The Reformation, many redundant church houses were sold to the former housekeeper, who continued to brew and sell ale, turning the building into a public house, many of which still exist today, often with vaguely ecclesiastical names (Cross Keys, Lamb etc.- refs. to the church dedication) and apparently oddly juxtaposed to the church. Others were converted to other uses to benefit the parish, often as a school or an almshouse

(The NHBG visited Laxfield in 2010 where the old guildhall, opposite the church, was first used as a school, then housing for paupers, now as a Museum, also with a pub right next to the church gates).
Ian Hinton

Meadow Cottage, Alington (5th June 2013)

Roger Crouch

On a glorious summer evening more than 30 members had the opportunity to explore the house and gardens of Gwyn Thomas, who has been custodian of this fine farmhouse since 1972. In the last twenty years he has acquired adjoining farmland and along with Ruth, his late wife, established a garden of just under two acres to create a worthy setting for the house. It was originally constructed on the common edge near the boundaries of several parishes and for most of its life has been occupied by tenant farmers and by 1956 had become almost derelict. Council Farm, as it was then known, was then purchased by Gwyn's predecessor and the process of sympathetic restoration began which was continued by Gwyn and his wife to bring it to its current condition.



*Part of the garden in the evening sunshine
(see also the back page) (photos: Maggy Chatterley)*

The documentary evidence suggests that this farmhouse is early seventeenth-century with possibly a makeover in the latter half of the century. The consensus of the members was that this tripartite lobby entrance building with its 2 dormer windows in the roof space is a remarkable survivor in its almost original state. To the left of the lobby is the high status hall with chamfers, stops and notches on all beams and joists, and a fine mantel beam over the hearth. This beam has several apotropaic marks plus a burn mark (taper) and extends over block work which has reduced the width of the hearth opening, this work was possibly carried out at the same time as the stair access in the lobby was blocked off.

In the parlour, the joists are plain indicating that a higher status plaster ceiling once existed, there is also a fine brick hearth and breast probably also plastered originally. The east wall (gable) of this room has had all the studs removed and the wall replaced by brickwork up to the girt. Upstairs the three chambers continue the high status aspect of the house, there is evidence of eighteen braces and in the parlour chamber another brick hearth with a particularly good ogee-shaped profile.

*Brick hearth
in the
parlour with
elaborately
cut bricks*



*Substantial
framing
upstairs
with one of
the eighteen
braces in the
house*

The roof space is accessed by the original lobby staircase from the first floor, both the rooms above the parlour and hall chambers have fine brick hearths (see photo) and, like many of the other bricks in the house, display **skintling** marks and would probably have been plastered originally.

Skintling - partially dried bricks are removed from the hacks (rows of drying bricks from the moulding process) and placed diagonally on top of each other with the bottom bricks brought to the top. After which the bricks are removed to the kiln or clamp, the ridges left on the surface are fired into the bricks and are known as skintling marks. (see photo on page 9)

Meadow Cottage, Alington (continued)



*Skintling marks
(defined overleaf)*

Dating the roof construction is difficult because of the existing plasterwork with only the principal rafters and collars visible, along with parts of the lower purlins; two of the collars are missing, but all the collar joints are marked with carpenter's marks sequentially. What can be deduced is that the dormer windows appear to be contemporary with the roof as they are fully jointed-in.

Another noteworthy feature of this house is the survival of the early, probably late seventeenth-century, ledged doors in all the doorways and cupboards. (see photos below)

Our peering and poking about was followed by drinks and nibbles and an interpretation of this house which was, of course, inconclusive as usual**, if only we had (Sir) Tony Robinson to sum up. It was agreed however, that we should give many thanks to Gwyn for allowing us to explore his house and gardens, and also to Lynne Hodge for organising the visit and to Sue Brown for the catering.

*** It was agreed that the house appears to be early seventeenth century (documentary research mentions a house here in 1608) but opinion was polarized between the view that this had always been a high status farmhouse since it was built, and that the house had received an upgrade in the late seventeenth century.*



Above: High quality, brick-built fireplace with cut bricks, even on the third floor

Right: Door to services from the Hall

Far right: Stair doors, up and down, on the first floor landing



Administration

Charging for attendance at winter lectures

As the Treasurer's report at the AGM has highlighted (reported on page 5), the NHBG's expenses have substantially exceeded the group's income for two consecutive years. The costs of undertaking and publishing our research, along with day to day administration, have all risen consistently. The summer programme of visits makes a sufficient surplus to fund the AGM day, but until now the Group has managed to avoid charging members for attendance at the winter lectures.

Unfortunately, the rising costs of speakers fees and the need to pay for travel and overnight stays for speakers who come some distance, have meant that this has had to be reconsidered. Taken together, the fees and expenses of the winter lectures take one quarter of all the income from membership subscriptions.

The committee has discussed this subject at length and concluded that the most important aspects of the winter lecture series were education and the need to cover a wide range of architectural subjects; therefore we should aim to continue to use speakers who are leaders in their field, wherever they are based, but find a different way of funding, or part funding, them.

With regret, it was felt the fairest way to do this was to impose a small charge on those who attend the lectures, invoking the principal that those using a service should contribute towards it. It is proposed to charge £2 per member (£3 for a couple) which will include a complementary glass of wine each, or soft drink, and nibbles. The rate for non-members will rise to £4.

The situation will be reviewed at the end of the 2013/14 winter lecture series, and if these charges appear to reduce attendance significantly, we may have to think again.

Adam longcroft

Flint Day (22nd June 2013)

Anne Woollett

Shawn Kholucy followed up his talk to the NHBG in November 2011 entitled 'Sharps'n'flats - flint building hereabouts' by leading a fascinating 'flint' tour of Eye and Thornham Parva. The afternoon brought a couple of showers of rain to prove that the sun does not always shine on NHBG visits.

Eye Castle

We started at Eye Castle which has had a complex history. It was attacked by Hugh Bigod in 1173 and had to be rebuilt. At this time it was extended with two square towers and a flint wall round the bailey, which we examined. The walls are of solid flints and mortar (rather than two parallel walls filled with rubble, as favoured by Roman builders at Burgh Castle) but there is no evidence for the use of shuttering. Flint walls have to be built in the summer, from late March to the end of September, up to six feet each season, as confirmed in a 1488 contract for Helmingham's church tower. The castle was attacked again in 1265 and sacked and since that time has been in ruins. In 1561-2 a windmill was built on the top of the motte. A later replacement was demolished in 1844 by Sir Edward Kerrison who then owned the castle. He built a house using flints with brick at the corners and used as spacers. It is said that he built it for his batman who in 1815 had saved his life at the Battle of Waterloo. The castle and the house are now largely ruinous, but a viewing platform provides a splendid view of the tower of Eye church (see front cover). In the bailey, a school (now gone) with a headmaster's house next to it in brick (which remains) and a workhouse (demolished in the 1990s to provide space for modern housing) were all built in the nineteenth century.



Eye Church

Eye church provides a spectacular demonstration of what could be achieved using flint and stone to produce complex patterning. The tower is about 100 feet tall and the west face is completely covered with elongated panels of flushwork. It is one of a very small group which have polygonal buttresses (along with Redenhall and Laxfield). The church is entered from the tower, its west window and tower archway into the church leave the north and south walls of the tower to carry the great weight of the stone and the extra weight of the church bells: the tower should not be able to support this weight on its two sides, but it does - and does so in a

monumental manner. The walls of the church are decorated in complex patterns of flint work: the initials TG appear frequently with a chalice design, referring to Thomas Golding, vicar here from 1489 to 1529.

The initials on the external wall of the chapel may be intended as Orate pro[anima] Syr Thomas Golding (Pray for the soul of Sir Thomas Golding). The de la Poles provided the funding for the south porch (their shields are displayed) but even here Thomas Golding's initials appear. The patterning in the south porch uses brick rather than flint (see back page) and it is suggested that it may be a result of repairs of the flint flushwork in the eighteenth century. The external walls of the chapel on the south side (a chantry chapel perhaps?) have terracotta panels in their battlements - a material used in Tudor period, providing perhaps a link with Henry VIII.



Terracotta panels set into the chapel battlements

In 1840s the church was reported to be in a state of disrepair and remedial work was undertaken. There is a considerable amount of sophisticated Victorian flint work in the east wall with a considerable amount of graffiti in the form of initials - of the masons or flint knappers?



On the north side of the church is some fine galletting - the use of tiny pieces of flint to fill the spaces between flints - giving the wall a

dark appearance of solid flintwork, without the complication of having to square and course the flints. This more easily provides the appearance of the 'black' tower referred to in the Helmingham contract.

Galletting in the nave north wall

*photos:
Ian Hinton
& Maggy
Chatterley*



Flint Day (continued)

We let ourselves be sidetracked by the interior of the church with its late fifteenth-century rood screen (again with evidence of Thomas Golding) and rood figures, and the east window by Ninian Comper in the 1920s.



SS Peter & Paul, Eye - interior

We also stopped to consider the intriguing timber-framed building at the side of the church, known as the Guildhall. Originally this was possibly a priest's house which, because it had an educational remit, became a grammar school after the Reformation. It was seriously renovated in the 1860s so that externally probably only the top of the dragon post is original.



Eye Guildhall

Eye Town Hall

We concluded our tour of Eye flintwork with a view of the outside of the – love or hate it - Town Hall, built in polychromatic brickwork (alternating courses of red and yellow (gault-clay) bricks) with flint panels. Designed in 1857 by E. B. Lamb, a Bradford architect who later undertook work for Disraeli at Hughenden Manor, it demonstrates a second use of flint and brickwork in Eye in the nineteenth century, several centuries after the church.



Eye Town Hall from the south, showing the use of red and yellow bricks

Eye Town Hall from the east, displaying more flint, but on this façade the gault-clay bricks have faded to a grey colour



Thorhham Parva church

Our next stop was at Thornham Parva to view some amazing Norman flint work. Dating from around 1070 the nave walls are built of erratic flints and sandstone set in what looks to have been fairly sloppy mortar which shows no evidence of later work or repair. The vertical gaps between the stones do not contain any mortar - an unusual remnant of Norman work but also evidence that flintwork was not necessarily rendered.



Original Norman flintwork in the nave wall at St Mary, Thornham Parva



Again, we allowed our attention to wander away from flint to the magnificent recently-restored Retable from 1360s; the wall paintings showing Saint Edmund; The Regency wooden gallery and, in the churchyard, the memorials to Basil Spence, the architect of Coventry Cathedral. The afternoon was completed in fine style with a most excellent tea proved by the churchwardens of Thornham Parva - our thanks to them and to Shawn Kholucy.



Thornham Parva Retable, viewed from the gallery

Walsingham Walkabout (13th July 2013)

Janet Ede

On a perfect summer afternoon Susan and Michael Brown took about 30 members on a walk around Walsingham to point out some of the buildings they have been investigating as part of the NHBG Walsingham project. They concentrated on three sites, Stonegate, Common Place and Friday Market.

At the first site, Stonegate, developed in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century, they pointed out Stonegate Farm, where they have worked out the complicated development of this building in several phases. Of particular interest here is a magnificent staircase at the rear, leading to the attic.

This is one of several staircases in the town, all dating to the 1690s, which the Browns think may have been built by the same carpenter.



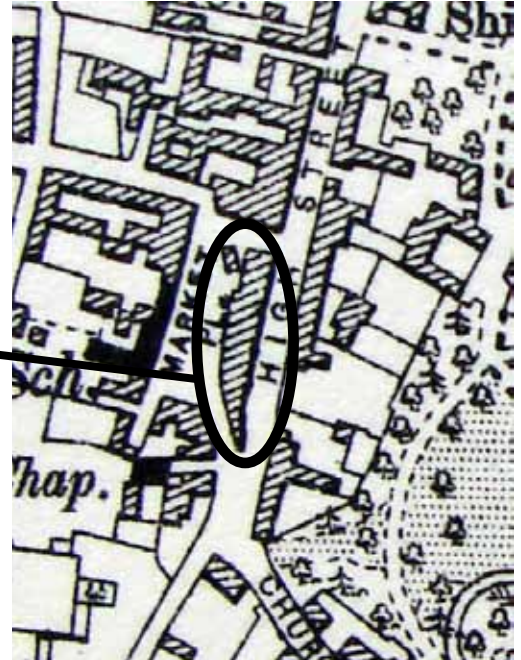
Two examples of Walsingham staircase newel posts which may be the work of the same carpenter

photos: Michael Brown



On to the Common Place, an open market square backing onto the Abbey grounds on the south side, consisting mainly of sixteenth- to seventeenth-century jettied timber-framed houses. Most of the buildings examined so far show many changes including divisions into smaller units; however there are signs that the range which includes The Bull may well have originally been one continuous unit. This roof has yet to be examined. There are also signs in the crown-post roof structure that the upper storey of No. 12 Common Place and 34 High Street may also have been one continuous space, possibly providing accommodation for pilgrims. No.3 Common Place also has a fine staircase at the rear.

As we walked down the High Street other buildings examined were pointed out, including No. 21 and adjacent houses, all with eighteenth-century brick façades. Inside, however, the Browns have found a fine decorated crown post roof, covering a continuous space of 88 feet across the whole range, suggesting this may also have provided pilgrim accommodation.



Friday Market infill, creating extra properties on the High Street

On Friday Market Place, at the opposite end of the High Street from Common Place, we were told that originally the market was much larger, the houses on the east side being later infill to provide additional High Street frontage. Several buildings have been examined here, such as Friday Cottage which has a jettied upper floor, all one room, with signs of a crown post roof.

At the end of the walk, the outstanding impressions were of the survival of so many timber framed buildings (unusual in these numbers in Norfolk), the number of crown- and queen-post roofs which survive, the fine staircases they have found and the evidence for these huge open first-floor rooms stretching the full length of buildings. This was a fascinating walk and we were given so much information that the final report is awaited with much anticipation. Thanks are due to Susan and Michael for sharing some of their findings with us and providing us with such good weather.



The view from the Abbey Gates is... ? (photo: Adam Longcroft)

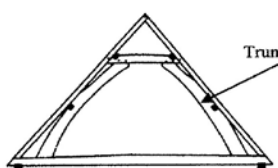
Truncated-Principal-Rafter Roofs in Walsingham

Susan & Michael Brown

Among the surprises of our survey of Walsingham houses has been the discovery of a new form of roof construction. This consists of truncated principal rafters surmounted by a collar, the rafters and collar joined by braces, either arched or inverted arches, with the whole structure mounted on a tie-beam inside a roof of common rafters. Truncated principal rafters are a feature of roofs in the northeast of England (see p118 of *The English Medieval Roof*, EHBG Day School, 2008) but they have not been identified before in Norfolk, the nearest one being an isolated example in Eastgate, Lincoln.

The closest parallel to this type of structure seems to be in the roof design of late sixteenth- to seventeenth-century houses in Holland, a point picked up by Richenda Codling during her unpublished work on Walsingham in 1980. In the Bull (and possibly in The Black Lion) the truncated truss is alternated with a contemporary queen-post truss, and in 1-3 High Street, the queen post has a rustic form of the truncated truss as a later reinforcement. The Bull, the north end of a long range that was probably a pilgrim hostel, originally had a crown-post roof from the evidence of the tie-beam mortice, so in this case, the truncated truss is a later replacement, presumably in the late sixteenth century.

Below are examples of similar roof construction found in Holland. Are we seeing evidence in these buildings of Walsingham of contact with the Continent, rather than with other parts of this country? Why are there so many here when none has been found elsewhere in the county, or are others still waiting to be discovered?

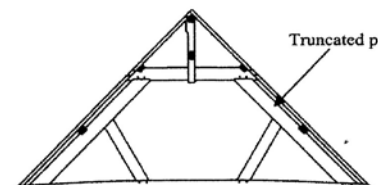


Truncated principal rafter

Truncated-principal-rafter roofs, including the closest example to Norfolk so far found, in Lincoln.

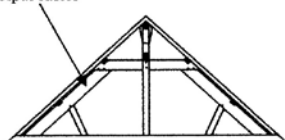
4a: 7 Eastgate, Lincoln, Lincolnshire c.1500ⁱⁱ

Drawn by Robert Hook

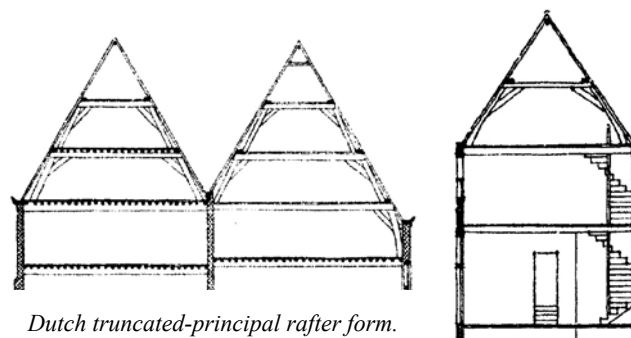


Truncated principal rafter

5a: 1-2 The College, Durham, County Durham 1531-2d (VA23, 59)ⁱⁱⁱ



5b: Pockerley Farm, Beamish, Northumberland - 1441-2d



Dutch truncated-principal rafter form.

So far, we have seen examples in 34 High Street and in The Bull Inn, Common Place, and in a photograph of St. Augustine's in Knight Street. We strongly suspect that there are also examples in St. Columba, Knight Street and in the front range of The Black Lion in Friday Market.



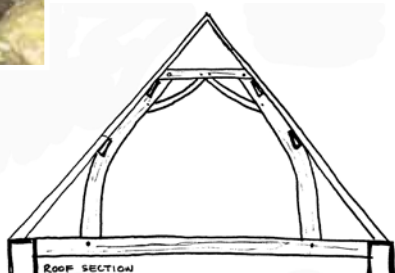
34 High St.-
above - the arched braces and collar
left - the cranked principal rafter.
photos: Michael Brown



The Bull
photo: Michael Brown



34 High St -
principal rafters as
drawn by John Denny



Principal Rafter-

Principal rafters support the purlins that run along the roof which in turn support the common rafters. They normally repeat the spacing of the building's frames (every 8 feet or so) and normally run from the wall plate right up to the ridge piece. In the form found here they seem to run inside one of the common rafters and terminate at a collar just above the purlin, whereas in the NE England early examples, the collar clasps the upper purlin

Three West-Norfolk Churches (27th July 2013)

Richard Ball

With beautiful weather, we visited three churches in North West Norfolk; Syderstone, Harpley and Wolferton. Our cicerones were Ian Hinton and Dominic Summers and what follows is some of what we learnt from them.

Syderstone, St Mary.

This is a simply styled Norman church with a post Norman round tower, apparently of around 1200. The south nave arcade is of circular Norman form but not necessarily contemporary, with the church since the arches differ slightly. The arcade wall is very thick as can be seen from the capitals.

Although the church has nave arcades, it no longer has aisles and the arcades have been filled in. Only the south arcade now contains inserted windows, although there are remains of inserted windows visible in the outside of the north wall but these have been blocked up at an unknown date and are not visible from the interior.

The north aisle was probably built during the early 14th century according to Pevsner, although in her will of 1356 Elizabeth Robsart left donations for repair of both aisles, so one can assume that they were both in existence then (and already in need of repair). It was demolished probably before The Reformation since the North door was reset into the last of the arches (visible from the outside) and this door, used for processions round the church, would not have been needed for the liturgy after The Reformation.

The south aisle was of the 12th century and still standing in 1739 according to Blomefield. Pevsner states that the nave was restored in 1784, which suggests that it might have been then that the south aisle was demolished but there is no known documentary evidence.

The east window has original curvilinear tracery with double cusping, of late 13th or early 14th century date. It survived the insertion of the late perpendicular windows in the chancel. The whole east wall from the outside is of fine quality (all the flints are knapped and some squared) and has probably been repaired and strengthened at the top to prevent the window spreading (of which there are signs from the inside).

The round tower at the west end of the church is believed to have been built to replace a central tower which collapsed around 1200, and there are some clues in the present walls that a crossing with tower above might have once existed. The tower has a west door which is typical of the period when the Norman style was coming to an end and the Early English period beginning, around 1200. Dominic's conclusion is that either the tower is of this date or, if it was later, that the door frame has been re-used.



West door, Syderstone
photo: Richard Ball

St Lawrence the Martyr, Harpley.

This is a grand church, much of which was built under rectorship of John de Gurney, 1294 – 1332. In the medieval period it was a rich church with rich patrons and with many chapels and guilds.

The chancel contains the remains of much high quality work such as the Easter sepulchre, the cusped door to the vestry and the very rare diaper work around the double piscina, only a fragment of which still remains. Only 40 or so examples of diaper work are known, of which only seven are in English Parish Churches. In all of these examples it appears to date from the century after 1250, perhaps the work of a single mason and his successors? According to Gerald Randall the Harpley example is a particularly fine one.



stone diaper
work around
the chancel
piscina in
Harpley church

photo: Ian
Hinton

There is a carved wooden chancel screen of probably 14th century date which has been rather crudely repainted in the second half of the 19th century. There are also several outstanding bench ends, and pierced backs to pews, again of high quality workmanship. The south door contains an unusual wicket gate which looks as though it were cut from the existing door, which has good perpendicular raised-work on the outside.

right: Harpley wicket gate
detail
below: door inside and
outside
photos: Ian Hinton



Three West-Norfolk Churches (continued)



*left: pierced pew backs,
right: one of many bench ends
photos: (left) Robin Forrest and
(right) Richard Ball*

The nave, whose roof is believed to have been replaced, has a west window rather than a west tower. Dominic thinks that the tracery in this window is of late 14th century date. The tower, again of probable 14th century date, is placed at the end of the south aisle. There was some speculation that this aisle and tower may have been part of an earlier church (as at Wells) but Dominic thinks that the tower is of too late a date for that to be the case. The south aisle is much wider than the north with a grand double piscina and three seat sedilia at its east end, presumably part of one of the medieval chapels.

Outside the high quality work continues. The south aisle has a battlemented parapet with much heraldry, the top edge of the east end gable is crocketed with a leaf motif, part of the idea of the “living church” current in the late 13th and early 14th century.

Wolferton, St Peter

Wolferton shows what you can do if you have the royal seal of approval and plenty of money - the church was restored in 1885/6 by Arthur Blomfield for the Prince of Wales, as the church is on the Sandringham Estate.

In 1486 the Bishop was granted leave for a national collection after a disastrous fire. The piers and other parts of the stonework are reddened, an effect of the high temperatures, and the roofs were presumably destroyed. Pevsner states that the nave roof is by Blomfield, 1885, but the tie beams and the carved-figure wallposts certainly look older. Perhaps they are the remains of the replacement roof after the fire in 1486? The roof above that level appears to be of pine and from the 19th century, presumably by Blomefield.



left: medieval carved wall-post

right: Victorian roof over medieval tie-beams?

photos: Ian Hinton



The outstanding pieces in this church are the three screens, presumably created for the restored church after the fire of 1486. The chancel screen survives from this period only in the lower dado with very faded painted panels (Pevsner says the upper part is by Blomfield) but the parclose screen in the north aisle survives and its details are consistent with the 1490 date in the opinion of Ian and Dominic. The parclose screen in the south aisle is very fine, in style apparently earlier than the fire (with its ogee arches) so the question arose as to how it had survived the fire. Colin Baker noticed that round this screen, where it abuts the stone work, a fillet has been inserted to fit the screen to the arcade – a very beautifully fashioned fillet, where necessary carved to match the screen – so that it would seem that this screen came from elsewhere and was adapted for this church after the fire of 1486. When this was done we do not know. Ian doubted whether 19th century joiners were capable of doing such fine work but I differ from him on that point.

Another notable feature is the ‘painting’ of Christ in Majesty above the chancel arch. Ian told us that on a former visit he and Robin found this peeling away from the wall, like loose wallpaper. Perhaps in Victorian times one could order wallpaper with appropriate designs for instant wall paintings!



The wall painting above the chancel arch in October 2012, photo IH



*The south-aisle parclose screen and two of the carvings it contains.
photos: (above) Richard Ball and (below) Ian Hinton
(the takers, not the subjects)*



South Elmham Hall and Minster (10th July 2013)

Roger Crouch

A group of 30 members congregated at this historic site on another glorious summer afternoon to be met and briefed by hosts John and Nicole Sanderson. Being a stranger to the borders of Norfolk it dawned on me that we had been lured into the neighbouring county of Suffolk.

The large group was divided into two; one group with Nicole left to explore the farmland and minster, and the other group guided by John explored the Hall. Those on the walk to visit the Minster passed through landscape shaped by the importance of the hall, seeing sites of former fishponds and the deer park. The Minster was found, within its Roman ditched enclosure, in the valley hidden among trees, about 600 metres south of the Hall. It has been recorded in medieval documents as *le Menstre*, *le Mynstre*, *le Mynstreclos* or the *monasterium*, and may imply the presence of a monastery; current thinking is that this was an Episcopal chapel built for Herbert de Losinga (Bishop of Norwich at the end of the eleventh century). The Minster ruins consist of a flint rubble building with an eastern apse, a nave and a western narthex (porch or tower base). Members were intrigued by the number of triangular holes in the internal walls, possible putlog holes?

South Elmham Hall itself is situated in a large quadrangular moated enclosure of about three acres, and this enclosure has physical and documentary evidence mentioning many structures: a chapel, cloister, gatehouses, stables, kitchen, bakery, laundry, wellhouse, dairy, dovecote and king's arbour. At the Hall, members were faced with a building of sixteenth-century appearance (remodelled) but with a thirteenth/fourteenth-century core. The house was entered through a Victorian porch which hides a thirteenth-century arched doorway leading to a possible chamber block which was attached to a, now vanished, open hall.



West face of the Hall, with the medieval hall to the right

In many places on the ground and first floors, fragments of original wall decoration are preserved, which show similarities with wall painting in Norwich Cathedral.



Wall decoration upstairs

On the ground floor of the chamber, two large beams run the full length with massive joists lapped in, but with few clues as to when these were inserted or altered. On the first floor of the chamber, there are more arches, two in the north wall, inserted later, probably when remodelling took place; another archway (now a window) has freestone quoins and footstep and was possibly an access to a chapel.

Moving to the roof space we encountered a fine queen-post structure with evidence of 'double' bracing, but with the secondary braces removed. There was also evidence of an early dormer window which would have looked out over the deer park to the west.

Substantial queen-post structure in the roof.

*photos:
Roger
Crouch*



Following our explorations on this very warm afternoon we were grateful for the spread of cream scones and thirst-quenching tea and could express our gratitude to hosts; Nicole for her enthusiasm for her eco-friendly farm and her dedication to the preservation of flora and fauna, and to John for his enthusiasm for the historical significance of the site, and to whom I apologize for the limited description I have given here.



Standing remains of the Minster; now thought to be Norman rather than Saxon

Elmham Minster

The search for Elmham Minster has been going on for decades, as the East Anglian Diocese was moved from "Elmham" to Thetford in 1071 and finally to Norwich in 1090s.

Which Elmham has been the problem - originally thought to be a Saxon Minster - various claims have been made for this building and for the one in North Elmham in Norfolk. Recent research has revealed the Norfolk Elmham building to be the Norman Bishop's Palace and the South Elmham building (here) to be an Episcopal Chapel built on the Bishop's estate in the Norman period. The site of the Diocesan Saxon Minster, if there was one, has still to be found, it could be beneath either building, although successive archaeological investigations have hitherto failed to reveal any evidence. *Dominic Summers*

Some more thoughts on thatching

Ian Hinton

In *Newsletter 22*, Alan Eade noted some Danish variations in thatched roofs, particularly the method of retaining the thatch at the ridge, using wooden or stone "crow's beaks". In *Newsletter 23*, I outlined the methods of thatching on the Isle of Man (IoM) and how they differed from the typical Norfolk pattern, particularly the differences in the angles of the roofs (50-55 degrees in Norfolk and only 30 degrees on the IoM, allowing the thatch to be run continuously over the ridge).

Recently, Maggy and I visited the far north east of Scotland where the pattern of thatching is similar to that on the Isle of Man, but with detailed differences. The Laidhay croft museum (on the edge of the peat-covered "flow country" south of Wick in Caithness) shows a croft as it was in 1800 (apart perhaps from the red-painted doors!).



Above -
Eaves detail showing the thatch-retaining stone weights

What did you do on your holidays?

If it included any buildings, why not share them with fellow members by submitting some photos and jotting down a few notes?

You don't have to write an essay to accompany them; Alayne, our editor, can beat your notes into shape if required.

Here, the all-reed thatch was retained by heather ropes (straw ropes on the IoM), and was weighted down at the eaves by tying long narrow stones to the ends of the ropes (rather than tying off the ropes to stones projecting from the wall). At the gable ends the ropes were tied off to iron bolts (rather than to projecting stones on the IoM).

The pitch of the roof is similar here to those on the IoM. The 30 degree angle requires a sealing coat at the base of the thatch to prevent rain draining through, whereas the much steeper angle in Norfolk prevents this happening. On the IoM this was a layer of turf, at Laidhay the base course was growing heather including a thin layer of peat, which swells when it is wetted.

Historically, this area has had few trees, so the roof timbers of buildings such as this croft consisted largely of driftwood from the beach. There are few "rafters", each of which consists of several curved pieces of tree, fixed together with several substantial pegs to create mini crucks (see photo below). The main roof load is spread by dozens of "purlins" along the axis of the roof, some are poles and others are reused from elsewhere. One innovative scarfe joint in a "purlin" consisted of the end of one piece of branch forced into a narrow Y-shaped joint in the next piece (see bottom photo below).



Above -
manufactured "crucks"
and multiple "purlins"

Right -
multiple pegs in joints
to create the cruck and
the Y-shaped natural
scarfe joint in the purlin



photos: Ian Hinton &
Maggy Chatterley

A Digest of Buildings Visited Since March 2013

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. This list is to inform members of the work undertaken on behalf of the Group.

Sue Brown.

26&28 High Street, Walsingham

These formerly two properties, now back as a single dwelling, form a house on the east side of the High Street, the façade being rendered. It seems that number 26 & 28 began as a late sixteenth century or early seventeenth century house possibly with a jettied timber framed upper storey to the front and a small jetty over a masonry wall (probably brick and flint) to the north east and a service room and stair extending to the south east. The ground floor front may have comprised a shop to the north and a heated parlour to the south.

Abbey Farm Cottage, Little Walsingham

This property constitutes the southern end of the Abbey Farm building. Externally its walls are in flint and brick with dressings in brick, probably of the seventeenth century. The present windows are mainly casements with two sash windows to the east associated with the rebuilt façade of Abbey Farmhouse, all under the same roof of mainly black glazed pantiles. The ruinous walls to the south show that the building was once longer.

22 High Street, Walsingham

Situated on the east side of the High Street, this house occupies a site which faced the market place before the intrusion of the houses opposite. It has the appearance of an underbuilt jetty, the ground floor being a shop with a vehicle entrance to the south. The upper floor is rendered under a pantiled roof with a chimney stack to the north (formerly in number 24?).

The Bull, Common Place, Walsingham

The Bull occupies the north end of the row of buildings to the east of Common Place. Its north end is jettied and follows the line of the road, the ground floor wall being in brick with a small brick-framed lancet window. The junction of the end jetty and the former western jetty, which would no doubt originally have been made by a dragon beam and post is obscured by the intrusion of the brick fronting added in the late eighteenth century.



Silver Green Farm, Silver Green Hempnall

Silver Green Farm is built parallel with the old common edge of Silver Green to the south-east of Hempnall village. It is a late-sixteenth/early-seventeenth-century, lobby entrance, one-and-a-half storey house which has undergone a roof raise. The mouldings on both the timber and the brick hearth are indicative of some wealth.

Lundy Green Farm, Lundy Green, Hempnall

Lundy Green Farm is aligned almost north-south on Lundy Green more than a mile south of the centre of Hempnall village. It is brick-built, in Flemish bond, with dentil strips at the eaves and at ground-floor ceiling level and has a gable-end stack at the northern end. It is roofed in glazed pantiles. The windows at the front are all four-pane vertical sliding sashes below rubbed-brick, flat-topped, arches. Inside, almost none of the timber framing survives and major changes have been made to the original three-celled layout.

Aviary House, King Street, New Buckenham

Aviary House is part of a row of adjoining properties centrally located on the main street of this planned town. The front of the house was originally jettied, with roll moulding on the jetty, but has since been brick-faced, with the wall downstairs extended at this time. The property is most likely of late sixteenth century date. The chimney appears to have been inserted into the property at a later date. It is uncertain what existed before this time but this insertion led to the removal of the original tiebeam in this location. A new tie beam was inserted and it may have been at this time that the ceiling was inserted above the first floor chambers, creating an attic floor.

Grange Farm, Lundy Green, Hempnall

Grange Farm is located more than a mile south of the centre of Hempnall village. Now a rendered and brick-faced, L-shaped, five-bayed house with a porch and three axial stacks, it appears to have been a lobby entrance house with an axial stack, hall, parlour and services, probably of the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century.

Manor Farm, The Street, Hempnall

Manor Farm was originally a one and a half storey timber-framed dwelling of the three-celled, lobby-entrance type of around 1600. Now mostly brick-built, it has undergone numerous changes to its original floor plan, particularly in the early nineteenth century when remodelled in the Regency style, and by the incorporation of associated farm buildings and new extensions; it now forms an irregular L-shape with a twenty-first-century stair turret on the north elevation.

The Old Nag's Head, Church Road, Holme Hale

The Old Nag's Head is aligned approximately northeast-southwest, opposite the church. It was originally a timber-framed open hall house, probably of the early-sixteenth century. A floor was inserted into the hall and a gable-end brick stack with a wrap-round brick gable was possibly built in place of the original parlour end. Later, a new two-storey timber-framed parlour was built with its own axial brick stack back-to-back against the earlier stack. The roof is thatched. A single-storey out-shut is built against the northern wall. Given its location it might have been the Church House.

Buildings Visited (continued)

The Willows, Bungay Road, Hempnall

The Willows consists of two ranges built at right-angles to each other. The east-west range was single storey until raised after 1964 and may have been the original service range. The house is rendered, partly over brick and partly over timber framing. The original floorplan is difficult to decipher as the (now demolished) northern wrap-round gable-end stack appears to have been original but there has been no equivalent stack on the southern gable end. In addition, the 3 rooms in this range are roughly equally sized, offering little clue as to their use.



Townhouse Farm, Lundy Green, Hempnall

Townhouse Farm has an east-west alignment along Lundy Green Road, across the road from the old common-edge ditch. It was originally a two storey timber-framed building, now with twentieth-century brick facing, with modern roof tiles and rebuilt upper stacks. Internally there is just sufficient evidence to confirm its origins as a three-celled timber-framed building, probably with a lobby entrance and probably of the early seventeenth century.

Osborne's Farmhouse, Bedingham

Osborne's Farmhouse is aligned almost east-west on School Road, close to the western edge of the site of Bedingham Green. It is a part-rendered and part-brick-faced, seven-bayed house with a twentieth-century stair turret on the front and a two-storey brick extension at the east end. The main range is now part two-storey and part one-and-a-half storey, which appears to have been adapted from an earlier open-hall house. There are two axial stacks - one consisting of four diagonally-set flues along the axis towards the western end and a modern one towards the eastern end.

Mystery timber feedback

We have received several responses to the article that was sent to the *Vernacular Architecture Group Newsletter* with a request for assistance from VAG members in identifying the use of the large timber found in a Hempnall roof, which was also printed in *Newsletter 25*.

The timber appears to have been one piece, almost 10 metres long, 32x33cm at its larger end, tapering to 20x17cm and is partly octagonal. There are no apparent mortices or peg-holes apart from the large-diameter hole and slot in the larger end and over 20 shallow-cut depressions in the angled faces.

The most common suggestion is that it was part of a mill - and a mill-post is one of the most substantial pieces of timber that was used in the late medieval period. In addition it has been suggested as the central pole for a dovecote about which the ladder rotated; part of a water mill, including the various power take-offs for other functions; a form of Archimedean screw set at a slight angle for raising water; an unfinished roof timber; part or parts of a rood beam; part of the frame for the church-tower ringing floor; the pivot for a ducking stool or a boat mast. No-one supported the possibility that it may have been a maypole.

Further consideration in the meantime has clouded the water rather than clearing it. Several further questions have been raised during discussions between ourselves and with correspondents:-

Was the piece of timber completed or was it still in preparation? It is not finished all the way round and some of the suggestions for the many shallow depressions in the angled sides focus on marking out for further work. If it was unfinished and therefore never used, its final configuration may have given us more of a clue as to its purpose.

If it is unfinished, this raises the parallel questions, why was it stored prior to completion? Was it no longer needed, or was it the project of someone who died before it was finished?

How was it cut in half? The cuts are not opposite each other - so the last break, along the grain, must have been a snap, as a saw cannot be manipulated to do that. If the intention was to just cut it in half, why were they not opposite each other?

Was it cut in half only in order to make it handleable for raising into the roof for storage?

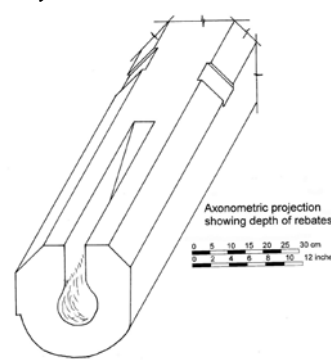
Was it hidden away because of its past or future use?

The responses to the article also raised other issues about the building that the timber was found in and its role in the discussion. Hempnall has documentary records for at least one Guild Hall, but none has been identified on the ground. Given its proximity to the church, the building may have been a Guild Hall or Church House. Could this affect the timber's likely purpose or the reason for its concealment?

It appears that the timber had to have been stored there since the current roof was built (double in-line butt purlins - probably mid seventeenth century) which covers both the, possibly contemporary, seventeenth-century southern part of the house and the older part closer to the churchyard. Since the mystery timber does not extend into the newer part of the building it could have already been there when the later part was built.

At the moment, despite all the kind and thoughtful responses, its use remains a mystery!

Rosemary Forrest & Ian Hinton



Meadow Cottage, Alington

Orchard House, Bramerton

Some textures from
NHBG Summer visits
in 2013

St Laurence, Wolferton



St. Mary, Thornham Parva



Meadow Cottage Garden



The Old Nag's Head,
Holme Hale



photos: Michael Brown, Maggy Chatterley, Ian Hinton.



Saints Peter & Paul, Eye, Suffolk