



editor Ken Hawkins ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk 01362 691455

Letter from the Chair *Trevor Ogden*

It's a poor substitute for meeting monthly and having the Museum open, but here is another of our more frequent Newsletters, aiming to keep in touch.

Covid-19 continues to curtail our activities. The August talk has been postponed until next year, and we have decided that it is not practicable or desirable to have face-to-face meetings for September or October, and probably not until the end of the year. However, we are happy to say that the speakers have agreed to provide online video talks for at least September, November, and December (if necessary). We hope on the planned meeting date we can have an on-line meeting by Zoom with the speaker for discussion and questions. Details are on [p12](#). This is no consolation to members who do not operate through the internet, and our sincere regrets to them in their difficult situation, but we hope that you find the Newsletter material interesting. (We intend that there will be a summary of each of the on-line talks in the Newsletter as usual.) If you have something that you would like to contribute to the Newsletter, please get in touch with Ken Hawkins, ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk.

For those who do use the internet, can I remind you of our website www.derehamhistory.com, which operates under the care of Sue Walker, and has a wealth of material of different sorts. Also, if you use Facebook, please have a look at and "like" our page, <https://www.facebook.com/DerehamHistory> which we are trying to "beef up" with more material.

The Assembly Rooms remain shut, so we cannot work on the Archive, but we continue to get donations, some of which you can read about in this issue.

Members who pass the Museum will have noticed that building work has begun. The external repair work is generally welcome, but we have been alarmed at the severity of the treatment of the pargeting, and we asked for the work to stop, and called in a consultant on pargeting to look at it and advise us. She has come up with recommendations for its treatment and restoration, and at the time of writing we are in discussion with the Town Council and Breckland's Historic Buildings Officer about what should be done.

Another piece of news on the building is that we hope to get some tree-ring dating done on some of the oldest timbers, which we hope will clarify not only the age of the building, but also something about the way it has developed over the centuries. We will keep members informed about this interesting development.

Apart from that, we continue to work for the future, both the Museum displays for next year, and the programme of future talks. We certainly did not foresee a year ago the position we are in now, but we all hope that next year will bring better things.

Maps, walks and pubs *Ken Hawkins (with lots of input from Sue Walker!)*

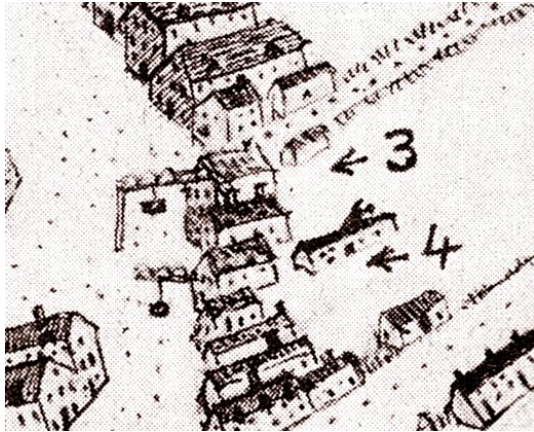
Many readers will remember the talk we had a while ago about the Paston Project. Although there was no direct link between the Pastons and Dereham, there is a very important connection through John Fenn, who came into possession of, and subsequently published, the Paston letters. He and his wife Ellenor lived at what became Hill House Hotel (now NR19 Hotel), just off the Market Place.

Back to the Pastons: the suggestion was made that Dereham Heritage Trust, in association with Dereham Walkers are Welcome, could, as its contribution to the Paston Project, arrange a walk around the town to include the significant Georgian buildings or sites that the Fenns would have known. The obvious starting point for researching the walk was the map included in *Dereham: The biography of a country town*, Noel Boston and Eric Puddy, 1952. This map, believed to be around 1757, is reproduced below.



The next step was to identify the buildings shown and numbered (or lettered) on the map, and relate them to modern day Dereham. With my own knowledge skimpy at best, that called for input from my colleagues. Amongst others, two of the items of interest (identified above) were those numbered 3 - The "King's Arms" (with big sign) - and 4 - Inn renamed "The Lord Nelson". In asking for information, Sue Walker pointed out that Site 3 (the King's Arms, where Poundland now is) is one of the most interesting visually on the

map as it shows a very large decorative inn sign extending over the road way with a leg support. It is similar to, but not as grand as, the one that stood outside the Scole Inn on the Norfolk/Suffolk border. Both were coaching inns. (Another sign you might know is The Magpie in Stonham Aspal in Suffolk, for which Sue provided two photos - one about 1910, the other as it is today.)



The King's Arms (3) and Lord Nelson (4)



Scole Inn



The Magpie, Stonham - c1910



and now

Sue notes that all the other inns on the map have only a bracket mounting attached to the wall or on a single post, but the large sign spanning the road from the King's Arms has a nice resonance with the town sign spanning the road today. Which brings us back to Site 4, and the Lord Nelson. The town sign is attached to what was once the Lord Nelson, demolished to make way for the Nelson Place development. Sue produced a postcard showing the position of the town sign in relation to the Lord Nelson. She believes it is close in date to the town sign being put up in 1954, judging from the design of the buses;



it may have been produced to celebrate the erection of the sign.

This then prompted a conversation between Sue and Rev Jonathan Boston (our President), as his father Noel was very involved in the town sign design - he was inspired by the Scole Inn sign.

Memories of Etling Green *Robena Brown*

DHT new member Anthony Nesbitt visited his family on Etling Green from around 1955 to 1968 and has kindly offered us some family photographs and memories from his childhood to record in our archive. Anthony also gave us permission to use the images on our social media so some can be seen on our Facebook page (*Dereham History & Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum*). In this current situation where we cannot meet face-to-face, we will endeavour to post more photographs on the Facebook and web pages for your interest.

We have also put Anthony in touch with the Mid-Norfolk Family History Society who are currently writing 'How We Lived' which will contain personal accounts of local lives in the early twentieth century, including that of Ben Norton (author of the 1994 *The Story of Dereham*) from Etling Green.

One particularly interesting image shows Anthony's maternal grandmother, Susanna Brunton, an Etling Green resident, drawing water at one of the pumps on the Green in the late 1940s. Her daughter Florence was Anthony's mother who grew up there during a period of great social change.



*Susanna Brunton (nee Lock)
Anthony Nesbitt's grandmother*



*Florence Elizabeth Nesbitt
(nee Brunton)*

It is appropriate to quote Anthony's explanation of this second photograph: 'My mother Florence Elizabeth Nesbitt (nee Brunton) getting water from the pump. This must be sometime in the late 1940s. The yoke did not have a carrying strap of any kind, but was just a simple wooden frame, presumably to stop the buckets hitting your legs. Later, probably during the 1960s, the pump was replaced by a standpipe attached to an outbuilding of the Myhill cottage. It served the whole row of cottages, however the water was very discoloured (rusty?) and it was recommended to boil it before drinking. Aunt Lizzie's (Lock) cottage had two or more large metal water butts to collect rainwater from the guttering. This was used for bathing, hair washing etc. Although the downpipes had old socks or stockings at the bottom to filter the water, the water would be teeming with little wriggly creatures during the summer months.'

We will print more childhood memories from Etling Green in our next newsletter.

Mystery objects from the Science Museum Trevor Ogden

On 20 July, The Guardian ran an article 'Appeal to public to help identify mysterious objects', showing a picture of a 'mystery object', about which the Science Museum was asking for help from the public. The item also appeared on the Guardian website at <https://www.theguardian.com/science/gallery/2020/jul/19/mystery-objects-from-the-science-museum-in-pictures>.



After just one look at the photo, Trevor was able to reply as shown below.

We can identify one of the items which you were appealing about in today's Guardian - see attached screenshot.

This is a fretwork machine made by Hobbies. It is one of a long series of such machines, and this one, the A1, is illustrated on pp34 and 126 of "The Hobbies Story", by Terry Davy (Dereham, Nostalgia Publications, 1998) ISBN 0947630198. The book says that the A1 was introduced in about 1899, and continued in manufacture until the 1960s.

Hobbies originated in Dereham, Norfolk, in the 1880s, and encouraged and supplied material for many practical hobbies. It included photography and cycling, but increasingly specialised in fretwork, ie, making items, mainly for the home, from ornamental woodwork. As well as tools and machines, it supplied plans and part-prepared timber for kits for all sorts of models, notably model galleons, and many types of building. Its magazine, Hobbies Weekly, was published from 1895 until 1965.

Hobbies ceased manufacture in Dereham some years ago, but a mail order company still operates under the name.

For those with access to BBC Sounds (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds>) there is an item about the Science Museum's 'mystery objects' project in 'BBC Inside Science' (Radio 4) for 30 July (first item).

Hobbies kits *Trevor Ogden and Robena Brown*

We have been given several things related to Hobbies of Dereham in recent months. Hobbies used to send kits worldwide, which enabled fretwork enthusiasts to make all sorts of models. Hobbies would supply the plans and instructions, and, if required, a kit of partially pre-cut wooden parts, all prepared in their works where Morrison's is now located.

A lady in Chelmsford kindly sent us a complete kit for making a model of the Mayflower - instructions, plans, wooden parts and fittings including masts and cord and minute staples for the rigging. Her late father had bought it and had never made it up. She was very pleased to find that we were keen to have it. Such an unmade kit is a rarity, especially of a ship model, and will enable us to have a Museum display to show how these things were done.



The kit of the Mayflower

Mid-Norfolk Railway has also been in touch to say that they were clearing one of their old buildings and had a lot of Hobbies kit material, so we were happy to take it off their hands. Most of it was multiple copies of plans of models, pretty filthy from having been exposed to many years of soot and general debris. There are a couple of dozen different models, some fairly interesting, so we have been sorting out the clean copies to archive. Unfortunately, these were plans only, not complete kits, but a skilled model-maker would be able to get the wood and get building.



Some of the ship kit plans which Mid-Norfolk Railway kindly gave us



More plans from Mid-Norfolk Railway farms and doll's houses



Hobbies modellers seem to have been keen on imaginary Swiss designs. These are more plans from Mid-Norfolk Railway

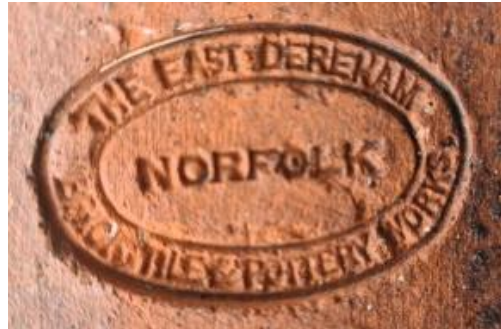
Even though the Railway did not have any plans with kits, they did have about 70 sets of one kit without plans (below). What is it? Some experienced 3-D jigsaw enthusiasts have offered to have a go. Any more ideas? Parts 1 and 2 are pentagonal and should stand out on any plan, but we haven't found it so far. The holes in 2, 5 and 6 look as if they match, but are too small for a nesting box. 12 is thicker than the others, so may be a base. 9 and 10 each have one long edge chamfered as if they fitted together to form a roof. A lock-down mystery! Does anyone else want to borrow a set to have a go?



The East Dereham Brick Tile & Pottery Works *Sue Walker*



I had a phone call recently from Dave Hudson, who discovered this wonderful piece of pottery in a friend's garden; it is about 18in high. On close inspection he discovered a trade stamp on it - THE EAST DEREHAM BRICK TILE & POTTERY WORKS.



He wanted to know if we could tell him anything about it; I said I had never seen another example or heard of that company and asked to see some photos which he showed me. Have any of you come across any other examples? I said we were thrilled that he had got in touch and would see if we could find out more. He does not live here but has visited Dereham in the past.

More on Etling Green *Robena Brown*

Etling Green had two known public houses. According to the excellent website www.norfolkpubs.co.uk they were named 'The Bell' and 'The Red Lion', closing in 1920 and 1952 respectively. Dereham's renowned Victorian diarist, the Reverend Benjamin Armstrong (1817-1890), mentions the Etling Green community and school which he visited many times during the course of his ministry.



Photo courtesy of Laurie Leeder

Mike Page's photos

In the last Newsletter, we featured an aerial photo of St Nicholas church, including Bishop Bonner's cottages, taken from Mike Page's website (<http://www.mike-page.co.uk/>) - with his permission, of course.

For this edition, we are showing a 1994 photograph of Dereham Railway Station, and for comparison, a Google Maps view of the same area today.



The supermarket and its car park (and petrol station) occupy a large part of this photograph - long before it became Morrison's. By contrast, the railway station is very basic (without track), and what is now Flagship Response is only under construction. And there is no Matsell Way.

Why Bawdeswell? Trevor Ogden

Dereham is proud that George Borrow was born here, and that in 1851 he mentioned the town favourably in his book *Lavengro*. His reward is that two portraits hang outside a hotel named after his last book, *Romany Rye*. It is just inexplicable that a much smaller neighbour of ours, Bawdeswell, should have got a mention 450 years earlier, by a much more distinguished author, Geoffrey Chaucer. How can this be?

The reference comes in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*, where Chaucer is introducing his company of pilgrims. One of them is a Reeve, a magistrate or other local official:

*Of Northfolk was this Reve of which I telle,
Beside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle.*

The Literary Norfolk website

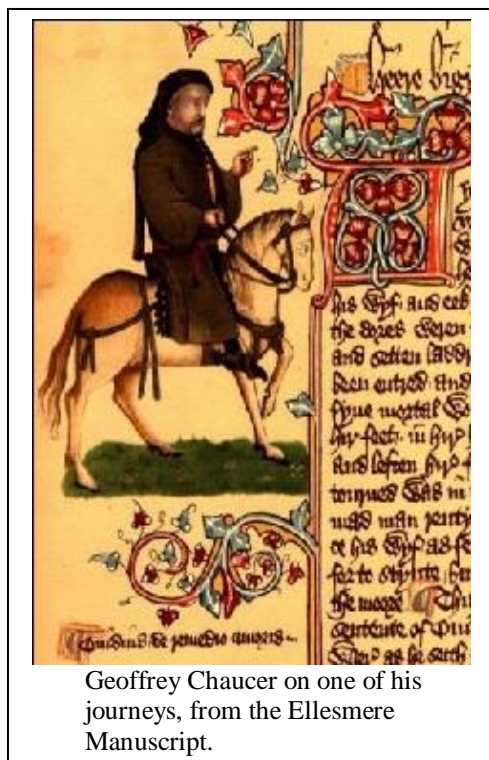
<https://www.literarynorfolk.co.uk/bawdeswell.htm> gives a modern translation of this passage, but doesn't say who did it, so with apologies to him or her, here is the description of the Reeve.

*The stallion-cob he rode at a slow trot
Was dapple-grey and bore the name of Scot.
He wore an overcoat of bluish shade
And rather long; he had a rusty blade
Slung at his side. He came, as I heard tell,
From Norfolkshire, near a place called Baldeswell.
His coat was tucked under his belt, and splayed.
He rode the hindmost of our cavalcade.*



The Reeve, from the Ellesmere Manuscript, an early MS of the *Canterbury Tales*.

How, out of all the insignificant villages of England, did Bawdeswell get this distinction? All of the other places mentioned in *Canterbury Tales* are well-known towns, like Bath or Canterbury, or have a traceable Chaucer connection. There were no county maps or atlases in Chaucer's day, and there is no reference to his presence in this part of the world, so it is hard to see how he can even have heard of Bawdeswell.



Geoffrey Chaucer on one of his journeys, from the Ellesmere Manuscript.

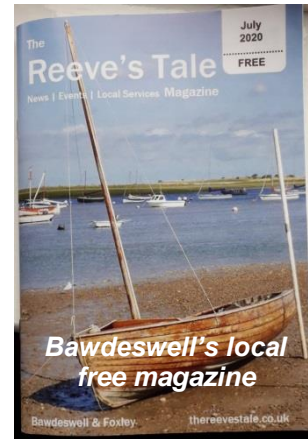
There is a late medieval house in the village, formerly the Crown Inn, and now known as Chaucer House. However, the Norfolk Historic Environment Record says that it is "perhaps late 15th century" - a hundred years after Chaucer - and "is unlikely to have had any direct connection with him". (It is though a handsome house, and at the time of writing is up for sale. If any member of DHT buys it, from the estate agent's advert it looks as if it would have a good garden for our summer evening meetings once we are through lockdown. We won't mind that the Chaucer connection is not real.)

I don't really know much about this subject, but in the absence of evidence I don't mind speculating. For many years Chaucer was sent here and there on various administrative tasks by the king or other patrons. Norfolk was then of course a populous and rich county, and it would be surprising if the King's business never brought him here. Perhaps one day Chaucer and his helpers were riding from the port of Lynn to the

County town of Norwich, and came up the Roman road where the B1145 now runs, to the little settlement of “Baldeswelle” in need of refreshment, or even a night’s lodging. It’s an interesting name to a poet, that long-short-long pattern of syllables, and there must have been a lot of time for thought on those long rides. Perhaps in the next day or two the couplet

*Of Northfolk was this reve of which I telle,
Beside a toun men clepen Baldeswelle*

just dropped into Chaucer’s mind and wouldn’t go away. Perhaps that was the seed of the whole 17,000-line poem. I had better treat Bawdeswell with more respect.



Letter to the Editor *Rev Jonathan Boston*

I particularly enjoyed “The theft of St Withburga”, but to be fair to Ely, people need to read the chapter on Ecclesiastical History in “Dereham”* where the facts are somewhat more accurate than the popular fable would indicate!

The link between Dereham and Ely is very strong. Ely was founded by Etheldreda, Withburga’s eldest sister, so Dereham was, in a sense, an outpost of Ely. The Bishop of Ely (then!) had a Summer Palace located within a moat at the west end of what was then (ie when we lived out there) the Vicarage garden. My father and Eric did some initial digging and located the well. It would be good if the Society were to stimulate further interest and activity in what should be a protected site.

Whilst it is true that there is nothing of her original grave, the whole purpose of the kidnap/body snatch (!) was to enable all of King Anna’s daughters to be together. Etheldreda, the eldest sister and founder of Ely would have been buried in front of the High Altar and Withburga at her side. When I was a chorister at Ely in the early 50s, I passed her grave every day!

When Etheldreda was both Queen and Abbess, she presided over an Abbey of both monks and nuns (living separately!). Of particular note today is that Etheldreda was not a priest, since she was a woman - but one very much in charge! The site is now clearly marked by four large candlesticks, before the High Altar.

**Dereham: The biography of a country town, Noel Boston and Eric Puddy, 1952; Chapter 8*

Membership matters

For anyone seeing this Newsletter who is not currently a member, can we invite you to consider it? Our membership year runs annually from 1 March to the end of February; the subscription rate is £12 for a single member, £20 for two people at the same address. In normal circumstances, we can take payment at one of our meetings, but while these are suspended, there are two ways open for payment. The first is to send a cheque, payable to Dereham Heritage Trust, to Ken Hawkins, DHT, 26 Hillfields, Dereham NR19 1UE. The second can be used by those who have telephone or internet banking and can make a bank transfer: our account is Dereham Heritage Trust, sort code 20-28-20, account 10179752 - but if you use this please make sure you quote as a reference ‘DHT’ and your surname so that we can recognise the payment as coming from you. It would help if you could also email or phone (01362 691455) to advise us when you did this.

Programme of events 2020-21

Our programme remains uncertain, but at last is beginning to take some shape. We hope to resume meetings when government guidelines allow and are reviewing this on a regular basis. Until then, we are trialling on line presentations. For September, if we have an email address for you (ie, if you get this Newsletter by email), we will send you a web link which will enable you to watch a presentation at a time of your own choosing (up to the date of the meeting). We will also send you a second web link to a Zoom meeting to take place at the scheduled meeting time of 19:30 on the planned meeting date. This will enable you to join a virtual DHT meeting, involving the presenter, to allow you to ask questions (and listen to the questions asked by others). Full details will be sent to everyone. **If you get this Newsletter through the post, but would be able to get Internet access, please let Ken Hawkins know, and we will send links to your chosen email address.** We expect to use a similar method for the rest of this year, but will let you know if that changes. Our website will also carry any unavoidable last minute changes (www.derehamhistory.com/talks.html).

9 September - on line
19th century industrial activity in Norfolk and its market towns
Speaker: Adrian O'dell

14 October - on line
Norwich at Work
Speaker: Sarah Doig

11 November - on line
Armstrong's Dereham
Speaker: Susanna Wade Martins

9 December - on line
Thatchers and Thackers, Larwoods and Fleggs: Surname maps as windows on the past
Speaker: Trevor Ogden

13 January 2021
Maud's Story – the life of a Norfolk Trading Wherry
Speaker: Linda Pargeter

10 February 2021 - to be confirmed
Annual General Meeting

10 March 2021 - *postponed from 8 April 2020*
25 years of archaeological research at Sedgeford
Speaker: Gary Rossin

14 April 2021 - *postponed from 13 May 2020*
Making tracks through Mid-Norfolk
Speaker: Paddy Anstey

Unless otherwise indicated, all meetings are at Trinity Methodist Church, 31 Trinity Close, Dereham NR19 2EP (off Theatre Street), and start at 1930. Admission to talks is £1 for members of Dereham Heritage Trust and £3 for non-members. Visitors are always welcome, with the fee payable on the door, refreshments included.

Next issue

In normal times, we plan to produce a Newsletter every quarter, in January, April, July and October. The press date for the next 'ordinary' issue is **15 September**: if you have material for this issue, please send it in to Ken Hawkins. And please don't hesitate to get in touch with us if you have any other comments of any sort.

In between Newsletters, our website www.derehamhistory.com is updated regularly so please have a look now and again.

Can you save us some money? If you did not receive this Newsletter via email, but would be willing to do so, please let us have your email address: we won't pass it on to anyone else without your permission, and we won't use it for anything but Dereham Heritage Trust business.