



Dereham Antiquarian Society

DISCOVERING DEREHAM'S PAST

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Welcome

Hello everyone,

I am very excited with my new role as Editor. Peter Bradbury, with many editions behind him, has now handed the keyboard over to me. You will join me, I am sure, in thanking Peter for his cheerful dedication over the years in producing issue after issue of the Newsletter, keeping all informed and up to date with the activities of the DAS. Peter has assured me that he will continue to contribute photographs and articles in future issues. Thank you Peter!

Peter's new role is that of Assistant Events Manager, offering support to our Events Manager, Sheila Jones, whose sterling work in organising trips and speakers is invaluable. We look forward to your continuing support of these events – check out the exciting line-up for the coming months.

Please feel free to email me with news or research for publication in the newsletter. Alternatively, for those without computer access, I will be more than happy to receive your news or articles at the monthly meetings. Any comments/suggestions will also be most welcome.

I look forward to a very full inbox!

Susan Keeler

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Chairman's Report

Well, we have opened the museum on its 50th anniversary and visitor numbers appear to be compatible with previous years. Under Sue White's guidance we have changed the layout of the reception room to give it a Victorian aspect and it has been favourably commented on by both volunteers and visitors.

The exhibition of families and people of Dereham is not yet complete but we will be adding to it through the year.

One other room has been set up with a Tudor theme and again comments have been good.

I would urge all members to make an effort to visit during the season, it would be nice to see you.

As always we are most grateful to our family of volunteers and are pleased to welcome several new faces this season.

Ray Fraser



The earliest known photograph of
Bishop Bonner's Cottages dated 1884



Registered Educational Charity (No 293648)

Archive Update

The archive team seems to have finished sorting out what to keep, and what to pass on. You would think that cause for celebration, but of course it is only the 'end of the beginning'. Now the accession papers have to be found for each item, and marked appropriately. Then the computer has to be properly updated. The items to be kept have to be re-boxed in some more sensible order, and the location altered on the computer. Items for disposal have to be photographed, ready to go onto the Museum's website to see if another museum would be able to utilise them. And then there is the simple rubbish that has accrued over the past fifty years, this has to be thrown out!

When all that is done we have to create Accession Records for each item retained without such a record.

However, the team keeps plodding on!

Steffi Spooner

Can you help?

It would be helpful if a few people could undertake to manage the provision of refreshments at the Society talks each month. It is not really onerous, just to ensure there is tea, coffee, milk available, and possibly a few biscuits. In general several people do 'muck in' with the washing up, so there is not too much to do!

Could anyone take this on? Please!

Museum Opening Times

11 May – 28 September 2013

Tuesday & Thursday 2pm – 4.30pm

Friday 11am – 1.30pm
(refreshments available until 12pm in Church House)

Saturday 1pm – 4pm

Museum Revamp

The first room in the Museum has been reorganised, under Sue White's direction, to make much better use of the space. A new reception desk has been built, just inside the door, and the room is now set out as it might have been in mid-Victorian times. Work is ongoing, and more information is to be added to the inside wall.

The 'middle' room on the ground floor is to show what life was like for a cottager around the time of the fire in Dereham in 1581. Bishop Bonner's Cottage was one of the few buildings to escape the conflagration which destroyed most of the town. Whilst it is possible that the chimney was in place by then, life was still pretty tough!



We soon have the Centenary of the First World War. It is likely that there will be government funds provided to enable towns to mark this event with commemorative activities and exhibitions. It is intended to devote one of the upper rooms in the Museum to the 1914-1918 War. There are several items in the archive to support this exhibition. It would be good to find a few more artefacts, information or family stories that relate specifically to Dereham itself, so if you have anything you would like to share/loan to enhance our exhibition, please do get in touch.

Steffi Spooner

The Website: www.derehamhistory.com

Launched in March and already there have been more than 700 'hits'!

It is so pleasing that visitors to the Museum have used the site, and have reported that they found it informative and useful. Sue White, who created our site, is keeping it up to date, and more information is being added as items are discovered in the archive that are of general local interest.

Please take time to look at the website, not only for information about the speaker programme and forthcoming events, but for the many resources and documents exploring Dereham's past.

Steffi Spooner



Excerpt taken from our website:

Elvins, Carriage & Coach Makers

In 1818 Mr James Elvin set up a business that reflected the demand for safe and comfortable travel on what were, in the main, poor roads. He began to build carriages and quickly established a reputation for quality.

In 1819 Charles Norton Elvin was born at Russell House in Commercial Road. The business must have prospered for he was educated at Gresham's School in Holt, and then at Cambridge.

The Elvins bought a handsome brick premises facing onto the Norwich Road (now the Memorial Hall). As well as repair and hire work they built new broughams, landaus, gigs and wagonettes. They became suppliers to many of the County families in the area.

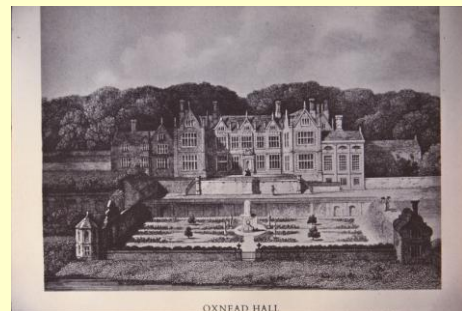
Charles Norton, who had a love of heraldry, was a much loved man in Dereham. A philanthropist, he was known as 'the poor man's friend'. He built Eckling Grange and died there in 1894.

Sue White

"PETER'S ANNUAL PILGRIMAGE"

Sunday 14th July 2013

This year I have chosen St Michael and All Saints in the hamlet of Oxnead, near to Buxton. The church is sited next to Oxnead Hall, once the home of the Paston Family, famous for writing over a thousand letters between 1372 and 1732, known as The Paston Letters. The church, which dates from the 13th C, contains a family vault, many brasses and two large monuments to the Pastons.



Please contact me if you would like to go, if you require a lift, that can be arranged! I would like us to assemble in the Cherry Tree car park for 2pm. If you need directions I will provide a map etc.

Peter Bradbury 01362 - 690096/peter_brad@talktalk.net

Events Listing 2013

Please call Events Secretary Sheila Jones (01362 820580) for further information

Visit to Southwold, Suffolk

9am from the Cherry Tree car park; cost - £16

Wed 10 July - daytime

Photographs from the Archives

Photos from the Dereham archives, including a selection of local manufacturers, Cranes. A 'hands-on' evening where you are invited to add names to faces/places: many of the photos are missing vital details – perhaps you can help. Please bring copies of your own local photos you would like to share.

Wed 10 July – evening

“Peter’s Annual Pilgrimage” –

Guided tour of Oxnead Church, Nr Buxton
2pm Cherry Tree, car sharing

Sunday 14 July 2013 - afternoon

Visit to The Old Hall, South Burlingham

(travelling using shared cars)

Wed 14 August

Visit to Audley End Mansion, Essex

9am from the Cherry Tree car park; cost: £28 (English Heritage members £17)

Wed 4 September

St Edmund and Medieval East Anglia

- *Dr Rebecca Pinner*

Wed 11 September

Annual Society Dinner – *Details to follow*

Wed 9 October

History Under Your Feet

- *Graeme Simmonds*

A talk about artefacts found when using a metal detector. Bring along your own items you've dug up to have identified and dated.

Wed 13 November

The Old and the New China

- *Gill Page*

An illustrated talk comparing the modern face of China to its famous ancient monuments and buildings.

Wed 11 December

Events – 2014

Working Horses in Norfolk

- *Steven Pope*

An illustrated talk about the rise and fall of horse power and its effect on farming. Scenes from Gressenhall Rural Life Museum of the working 19th C farm.

Wed 8 January

Society AGM

confirmed

February *Date to be*

The Mysterious Green Man

- *Mr & Mrs Worton*

Exploring the legend of the Green Man from pre-Christian times, and where to find different depictions of him in Norfolk churches etc.

Wed 12 March

17th Century Dereham Court Systems

Manorial

Held several times a year by the Lord of the Manor in his Manor House, or 'out-house' known as *Halimote*, sometimes presided over by his Steward or Bailiff (Estate Agent). Offences against the law, and Custom of the Manor were punished. More serious offences could be referred to the Hundred Court or the Shire Court (Sheriff's Court - usually held in Norwich).

Leet

The lord of a manor could be granted the privilege by the King of holding his own Court Leet, which endowed the powers of the Hundred Court to his Manorial Court, and saving his tenants the obligation of attending the Sheriff's Court, usually held in Norwich. A jury of twelve was chosen from the Freemen and owners of land, they were known as *Capital pledges* or *Head boroughs*, and they were 'sworn to enquire into the misdeeds of their "nye bors"'. The criminal and civil offences included: assault, alteration/damage/not maintaining of highways, incorrect weights and measures; they also elected Town Constables. Devices of punishment included: *a Pillory* (stocks – with person standing upright with wrists and neck secured); *Stocks* (person sitting with wrists and ankles secured); *Cucking Stool* (submerging in water while strapped in a chair); and the ultimate punishment – *The Gallows!*

The modern-day equivalent of the Leet Court is the Petty Sessions presided over by a Magistrate (JP).

Extracts from Dereham Manorial and Leet Court Rolls

1628

"Hugo Browne, gentleman, for permitting branches of trees to overhang the King's Highways leading from East Dereham to Mattishall." ----- Fined 3d

"Henry Archer, for obstructing the watercourse in his meadow running from *Gallow Moor* [Neatherd Moor] to *Stonbridge*." ----- Fined 3d

1631

"Simon Chandler and Alice Sherwyn were presented for receiving into their house *divers* [countless] persons of suspicious character to be a bad example to others." ----- Fined 1/-

1641

The Bailiff, John Neve, gentleman, was molested by several persons that were fishing the ponds in Etling Green. They used violence to carry away their fish. ----- Fined 1/- each

1648

The *Capital pledges* on oath say that they gave to the Lord of the aforesaid Manor this year the Customary due of thirteen shillings and fourpence. (This was the *Leet Fee*.) They then elected four persons "to the office of Constable of the town of *Estdereham*; two '*gustatores cervitie*' or Ale Tasters; two '*courvars*' or Leather Searchers and two '*innulaters Porcos*' or Hog Ringers.

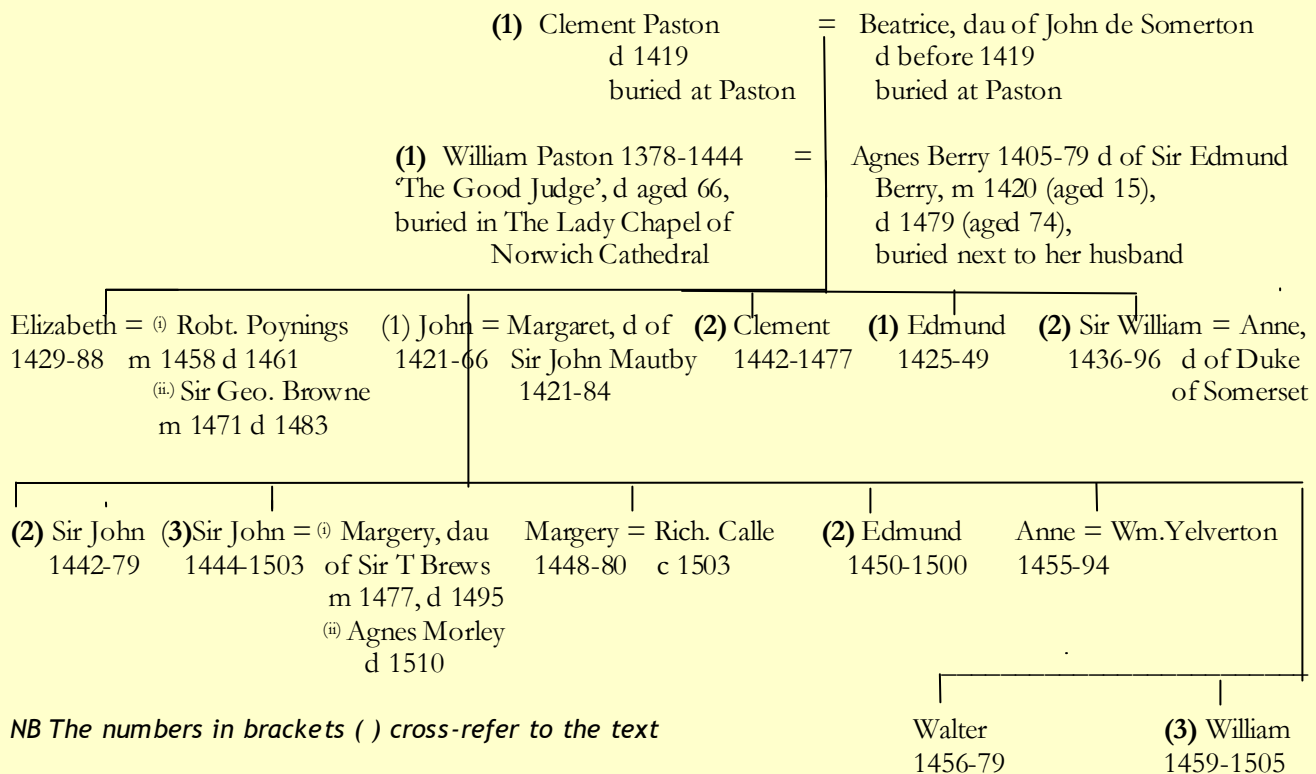
In the same year the Bailiff was attacked by *Richard Chamberelen*, "an assault on Rbt. Becket on the 24th of January last at *Estdereham*, and with a certain sword, in English, called a *Fauchyn*, of the value of 12d, had drawn blood on the body of the said Robert and forthwith rescued from the same Robert one horse of the value of 50/-, which the said Robert as Bailiff of this manor had *distrained*." [to seize goods etc., to force a person to go to court, pay rent or debt].

The powers of the Leet Court diminished as central government took on more powers, but various Parish Officers were still being elected in the reign of George III (1760-1811). The parish constables 'faded out' when the County Police were organised in 1839: the last Parish Officer to go was the *Pindar* – the man who put stray cattle in *the Pound*. There was a new Pound built in 1770 at the junction of Theatre Street and Cemetery Road.

Peter Bradbury

THE RISE AND THE FALL OF THE PASTON FAMILY

Peter Bradbury©



NB The numbers in brackets () cross-refer to the text

Part 1 - The Letters Period (1422 - 1509)

The village of Paston on the north-east coast of Norfolk is three miles south of Cromer and a mile or so inland on the old coast road between Mundesley and Bacton. It has hardly changed from medieval times when the Paston family were farmers there. The church containing several Paston memorials is 13th C with a thatched nave roof and stands near to the Paston Great Barn. A large house, built on the site of the original Paston manor house, stands behind it.

From this small village originated one of the most illustrious Norfolk families, they started out as farmers in the 14th C and finished as Earls of Yarmouth in the 18th C. The line died out with the death of William Paston, 2nd Earl of Yarmouth, on Christmas Day 1732; he had outlived all his sons. After residing in Norfolk for around 500 years the last of the family had to flee to France to escape the bankruptcy court. How this ignominious event came to happen I will reveal in the subsequent articles in this series.

Public attention was first drawn to the Pastons in 1787, when two volumes of original letters written to and from members of the family between 1422-1509 were published by John Fenn Esq. of Hill House in East Dereham (the house is still there in the market place). The work was presented to King George III, who was an ardent antiquary and collector, for which Fenn received a knighthood. The Paston Letters give an incredible insight of medieval life and are mandatory reading for students of late medieval history.

In 1378 there was born to Clement (1) and Beatrice Paston a son named William (1). Clement Paston was determined to establish his family seat at Paston village, and raise his status in the county; he realised that the safest way to protect his son's inheritance was to see he had a good education. In the early days it is probable young William was taught by the monks of Bromholm Priory at nearby Bacton. Later, with help from his uncle, he went to London to study law. On graduating as a lawyer he returned to Norfolk to commence his career, and soon began to rise in his profession. At the age of 34, the City Authorities of Norwich employed him as their Counsellor, and there is a 1412 document showing a payment of 13 shillings 4 pence for his "services recently rendered".

William became trustee for the properties of some of Norfolk's largest landowners, and executor to Sir William Calthorp. This display of confidence was a remarkable testimony to the esteem in which he was held. William's promotions continued with his appointment as Stewart of the Bishops Court in Norwich, and due to Bishop Courtenay's influence at the court of Henry V, he was later made a JP. All this legal work increased his wealth and enabled him in 1419 to buy the manor of Oxnead near to Aylsham. Situated on the banks of the River Bure this manor, much later, in the 17th C, was to become the seat of the Pastons.

The year 1419 was also a sad one for William owing to the death of his father, Clement (1); he was buried next to his wife Beatrice in Paston Church. But the next year, 1420, proved to be a happy one, because William, now 42, married a young lady - Agnes Berry. She was 15 and the heiress of Sir Edmund Berry of Harlingbury Hall in Hertfordshire. They made their home at Paston, where 12 months later their first child John (1) was born. This eventful year 1421 also brought more joy because William became Serjeant at Law; this was in recognition of his professional experience, and was the grade from where judges were selected.

With the marriage of William and Agnes the Paston Letters were about to commence!

The first of the existing letters is from Agnes to William, written c 1440, informing him of the visit of a young lady named Margaret Mauteby to meet their son and how well they behaved to each other. This was a girl from an old and wealthy family of Mautby near Caister on Sea; she had been selected to become John's wife. This kind of prearranged marriage became known as 'a marriage of convenience' and was the rule amongst the nobility and landed classes in 15th C England. The marriage agreement was drawn up between both families involving transfers of land and monies; these were usually long drawn-out affairs until both parties were satisfied. The matrimonial couple was not consulted in any way!

William and Agnes had three more sons and one daughter, namely Edmund (1), William (2), Clement (2), and Elizabeth (see chart). In 1427 William bought the manor of Gresham, near Felbrigg Hall, from Thomas Chaucer, son of the poet, and two years later in 1429 aged 51, became a Justice of the Common Bench on an annual salary of 110 marks (£73.33d). By this time the terms of the arranged marriage of his eldest son John (1) to Margaret Mauteby were agreed, and after John's 21st birthday in 1440 they were married. John was still an undergraduate at Peterhouse, Cambridge and after graduating he and Margaret went to live in Gresham Castle, his father's property near Felbrigg.

William Paston (1) became known as the 'Good Judge' and after a long and distinguished career, aged 66, he died in 1444, and was buried with great ceremony in The Lady Chapel of Norwich Cathedral.

John Paston (1) at 23 became head of the family and found himself in control of his father's large properties and having to uphold the Paston position in the county. He soon found he would need all his skill as a lawyer to preserve both the properties and the integrity of the family. The 'Good Judge' had made enemies by his judicial decisions and now they had their chance for revenge, also many envious eyes were looking at the wealth and properties in the hands of an inexperienced young man. Within a year of John (1) inheriting they made their move. The Vicar of Paston removed the stakes marking out a new road denying any agreement made with 'The Judge', and the right of his widow Agnes to the manor of Oxnead was challenged. Not long after John (1) had become a JP, one of the most outrageous events occurred in January 1450, when Lord Moleyns sent 1000 armed retainers, from his Wiltshire seat

, and attacked and occupied Gresham Castle. At the time John (1) was away on business in London, and only his wife and children together with twelve servants were living there. A forced entry was made and the family was forced to flee to the Paston townhouse in Norwich. John (1) immediately petitioned parliament and the Lord Chancellor for redress against Lord Moleyns, but in such troubled times (Jack Cade's Rebellion), it took a year before Gresham was recovered. Some writers consider 1450 as the beginning of the period of lawlessness which led to the first English Civil War (War of the Roses 1455-1485): certainly most of the troubles endured by the Pastons were caused by the breakdown of the feudal system of law because of the weakness of Henry VI. In fact lawlessness in Norfolk had reached such a level that Henry VI commissioned the Duke of Norfolk to visit Norwich to inquire into its causes. John Paston along with several other leading figures of the county drew up a list of grievances to present to the Duke. This led to an assault on John (1) outside the door of Norwich Cathedral by a notorious gang leader named Charles Nowell and five of his men. John's life was only saved by the timely intervention of some of the Sheriff's men!

On the death of his father William, John had become legal adviser to Sir John Fastolf of Caister Castle, indeed had become a trusted friend of the old knight, and when Fastolf died in 1459 was named as the heir to all his properties. Fastolf was one of the richest men in England and this great fortune now belonged to the Pastons, but for how long? Magnates like the Dukes of Suffolk and Norfolk were not about to be challenged by the likes of the Pastons, and for the next twenty years 'The Family' were to be constantly fighting to protect the Fastolf inheritance. The first attack came in 1461, the coronation year of Edward IV, from John Mowbray the 3rd Duke of Norfolk who seized Caister Castle claiming John was not the rightful owner. John (1) successfully petitioned Edward IV and regained Caister pending the result of the 'inquisition post mortem' to ascertain his rights.

The 3rd Duke died three months later and was succeeded by his teenage son, another John Mowbray. John (1) in an attempt to forestall future attacks on property, and to gain the support of a powerful patron,

boarded out his teenage second son John (3) into the household of the new 4th Duke of Norfolk who lived at Framlingham Castle in Suffolk, and installs his 19 year old son John (2) in the court of Edward IV, hoping to gain influential friends, and the 'ear of the King'.

There followed more troubles for John (1), now MP for Norfolk. He was attending a meeting in the Shirehall when he was attacked by one of the Sheriff of Norfolk's men and stabbed twice in the chest. Only the thickness of his doublet saved his life! The Sheriff was Sir John Howard, a cousin of the Duke of Norfolk. The news of the incident reached the King who summoned them to appear before him but John (1) ignored the first two, until finally a third summons arrived with a threat of execution for not attending. On arrival in London he was thrown into the Fleet prison. Two weeks later, after hearing the cause of his disobedience, he was pardoned and Howard was sent to prison in his place. Edward IV replaced the Sheriff and issued a proclamation to be read in the Shirehouse.

When he turned 21, John's eldest son John (2) received a knighthood from Edward IV, but this seemed his only achievement during his two years as a courtier and his father ordered him home to Caister Castle where he could help his father defend their properties. After the opulence of life at court he was not prepared to accept the change to his lifestyle, and secretly ran away from home, hoping to rejoin the Royal Court. His father disowned him, but, after several months of pleading by his mother Margaret, and the increasing necessity of John's (1) presence in London he reluctantly allowed Sir John (2) to return.

The problems continued. In 1465 the Duke of Suffolk seizes Drayton and Hellesdon, destroying the Manor House at Hellesdon, sacking the Church, and pillaging every house in the village. To add to John's (1) despair he was once again committed on trumped-up charges to the Fleet prison. He was released seven months later, in January 1466, but he was a sick man and worn out by continual pressure. On May 21 1466 he died aged 45 while still in London. His body was transported by foot from London on a bier led by a priest with six poor men walking on either side carrying burning torches back to Saint Peter's Hungate, the Paston parish church, in Princes Street, Norwich. The journey from London took six days. After laying overnight in Norwich the body was taken to Bromholm Priory for a very spectacular service.

Sir John (2) at the age of 24 became the head of the family and virtually became resident in London, leaving the running of his Norfolk and Suffolk properties to his mother Margaret and brother John (3) with lots of advice from his matriarch grandmother Agnes (61) who lived in Norwich and sometimes with Sir John (2) in London. A most important employee was Richard Calle who was a loyal and long-serving Chief Bailiff and General Manager, of whom we will hear more of presently.

In August 1469 the King was captured by the Earl of Warwick and held prisoner till October of that year. The 4th Duke of Norfolk taking advantage of the situation besieged Caister Castle with a force of 3000 men. To defend it was John (3) and a small garrison with enough supplies to last one month. Eventually they surrendered and were allowed to march out minus their weapons. This time Caister would be lost to the Pastons for five years.

As if the loss of the jewel of the Fastolf inheritance was not enough to bear, Sir John's (2) sister Margery, in the midst of all the troubles, announced she was betrothed to his employee Richard Calle and intended to marry him. Her mother Margaret could not believe her daughter could bring such disgrace on their family and proceeded to question her further. Margery explained how over a year ago she and Richard had secretly 'plighted their troth', today this would equate to becoming engaged, but in the 15th C this act of exchanging vows was considered the same as the marriage vows and recognised as no less binding by the Church. Once that was avowed, the question was at an end, and no human hand could untie the knot, to interfere with it was deadly sin!

Richard Calle appealed to the Bishop of Norwich to inquire into the matter, and free the point from any ambiguity. The Bishop could not refuse. He sent for Margery Paston and for Richard Calle, and examined them apart. He told Margery that he was informed she loved someone of whom her friends did not approve, reminded her of the great disadvantage and shame she would incur if she was not guided by their advice, and said he must enquire into the words that had passed between her and her lover, whether they amounted to matrimony or not. After hearing the words she had used, the Bishop examined Richard Calle and his statement agreed with hers. When Margery returned after her examination her mother's door was shut against her, and the Bishop was forced to find her lodgings in Norwich until he announced his verdict. The Bishop found in their favour and arranged for them to stay at Blackborough Nunnery near Kings Lynn until their marriage at Christmas. From this time on Margery is never again mentioned in the Letters.

To be continued...