

Winter Newsletter 2021

Volume 17-1



Bishop Bonner's Cottage Museum
& Archive Centre -
Dereham Heritage Trust

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Renewal issue
Subscriptions for 2021-2022
are due on 1 March.
Please see the details
on page 11.

Letter from the Chair Trevor Ogden



This photo by Mike Page is not the usual Heritage view of Dereham. It shows Tesco, Lidl, Aldi, Roys and the Greens Road industrial estate and the A47 in the foreground, and beyond them the town centre, and three of the green areas which have planning permission for new housing. This area is closer to the daily experience of many Dereham residents than the old centre that we are usually concerned with, and has surely received many times the investment put into the Town Centre recently

How are we as a community going to balance all the different views of Dereham? Breckland District Council plans to develop a Town Plan over the next 6 months, in consultation with Dereham Council and local interests. At the moment there is a noticeable absence of any mention in the project papers for the Town Plan about the need to consider heritage, conservation and culture. If Dereham is to continue to be a good place to live, and not just an opportunity to drop off the A47 into Tesco, it is surely important to consider the historic fabric of the town and its atmosphere, as well as its facilities.

The central area has lost some attractive buildings in the last 70 years, illustrating the weaknesses of the planning and conservation system. We need to conserve and improve what we have, and with this in mind we are aiming to contribute to the plan. Please let Peter Wade-Martins have any comments peter@wademartins.co.uk.

Still on buildings, our February online talk is on George Skipper, the son of a Dereham builder, who became an architect and designed some of the most striking Norfolk buildings of his time. Since he died in 1948 his work has been getting more attention nationally, and Richard Barnes, who gives the talk, has recently published a book on him. Details of how to access the talk are [elsewhere](#) in this issue. It is longer than usual, but even if you can only view part of it you will enjoy Richard's pictures of Skipper's work, and his commentary. Richard is unable to join our Zoom discussion on 10 February, but if any questions emerge from that meeting we will put them together and he is happy to answer them.

Turning to the old building that we occupy, Bishop Bonner's Cottage, building work will recommence when the weather improves. When it is complete, we have to clean, and set up the new displays on John and Ellenor Fenn and their work, that I wrote about in the last issue, and reset the old ones. We cannot yet give an opening date, but we hope that it will be the beginning of June at the latest.

Finally, I am sorry to report that Sue Walker has decided to resign as a Trustee. Sue has a long standing connection with the Trust and its predecessors, and her work will be well known to many members. Most recently she has spent many weeks working on the panels that aboutDereham has put forward as part of the Wayfinding project, and which are scheduled to make their appearance around the town from May onwards. She also has provided detailed background information for the planned Ellenor Fenn 'pocket park', another aboutDereham venture coming to fruition later this year. Happily, we have not lost access to her knowledge, experience, and gifts, as she continues as a member of the Trust, working on the Paston Project amongst other things.

Recent talks *Ken Hawkins*

In the December talk on surnames, Trevor asked "Who was the most famous Took descendant of the 20th century?". The answer is J R R Tolkien's character Bilbo Baggins.

January : **Maud's Story – the life of a Norfolk Trading Wherry - Linda Pargeter**

Linda's talk fell into four broad parts - the functions of wherries on the Broads, the history of *Maud's* working life, her restoration and her current use by a registered charity.



She told us of the three types of wherries to be found in Norfolk and Suffolk - Trading Wherries, carrying black sails and now represented only by *Maud* and *Albion*; Pleasure

Wherries, which have white sails, and are now down to three in number; and Wherry Yachts, which have a different hull, but of which again there are now only three. Trading Wherries had been operating in Norfolk and Suffolk from the 1600s. At the end of the trading era, some were converted to Pleasure Wherries, joining those built new. Wherries carried goods or passengers along the rivers; they had wide, shallow, hulls to navigate the rivers of the Broads, but could carry 40 tons. Most, like *Maud* were clinker built (overlapping hull planks), though *Albion* was unusual in being carvel (abutting planks).

Maud was built in Reedham in 1899, registered 1900; records list Daniel Hall as the builder, but it may have been his cousin William Henry Hall, who designed *Maud* and whose wife was Ethel Maud Frosdick. *Maud*'s first owner was Walter Christmas Bunn, and she was used to carry Jewson's timber from Great Yarmouth to Norwich. Her skipper was Alfred Powley. Linda showed a photo of *Maud* at Acle Regatta, and a sister wherry unloading at Fye Bridge (Norwich). Wherries would carry cargoes such as road building materials, or wire netting. In 1908, *Maud* was sold to the Yare and Waveney Lighter Company, and then in 1915 to Newhouse Ltd, then carrying grain, ale, coals, groceries, oils, vinegar, and more. Around 1918 she was sold to Hobrough & Son, and carried sugar beet to the new factory at Cantley, though had ceased using sail around this time and was probably using an engine. May Gurney took over the Hobrough fleet in 1940.



Linda and her husband Vincent found *Maud* in 1979 when they were seeking a hull to restore; she was the one in the best condition. She had been sunk in Ranworth Broad for 15 years, from where she was refloated, towed to Upton and there craned out in 1981. This was the start of a 5 year restoration plan - which was completed only in 1999! The hull was covered to enable it to be kept dry, enabling work to start on scraping and cleaning the often rotten timbers - Linda showed slides of the work in progress, which resulted in 40% of the hull planking being replaced. During this time, the professional help of a boatbuilder was secured, so in 1996 she was craned back in and floated to Ludham for finishing. In 1999 the 46 foot mast that swings down to negotiate bridges was fitted, and on 20 September a recommissioning party took place at Wroxham Broad: attendees included 4 other wherry rigged vessels. In 2015, ownership passed to a Trust, and *Maud* is now based at Ludham, from where she runs trips on the northern and southern Broads.

10 members enjoyed an hour's questions and discussion with Linda, ranging from the inspiration for the restoration to the process of researching information (before the Internet!) and talking to the relatives of key people in *Maud*'s history.

See <https://wherrymaudtrust.org/> for more information and membership (£15 per annum). Members have the opportunity to book trips on *Maud*; to participate in the annual archive meeting; to meet for lunches; and to volunteer their help with fundraising and crewing. A bi-annual newsletter covers all the varied activities of the Trust.

From the Archive - When did jam cost 8½d for a 2lb jar? *Robena Brown*

As an accredited museum we are happily obligated to add appropriate items to the archive, providing they comply with our collecting policy. Recently we were delighted to buy this real photographic postcard when it became available on an internet auction site.

When the card was received it was accompanied by a letter from the seller who told us he had been born in the town and had worked as an errand boy for Hamerton's shop in Church Street, Dereham in 1949-50. He kindly provided his telephone number and after contacting him we found out that when he left the town after his marriage in 1956 the shop was still trading by that name.



Hamerton's Store, Church Street, Dereham

There is no indication when this image was taken and it was not postally used which would have given us a dated postmark, but the style of the reverse matches that of other postcards produced prior to, or during, World War I. The question we ask ourselves is exactly when was it taken? We have no people in the image so no defining fashion to help us but 2lbs of jam was obviously a bargain selling at only 8½d.

Luckily for us, Herbert Cave, the excellent Dereham photographer who had his studio next door to Richard Hamerton's store, between that and Kerrison's butcher's shop, left a remarkable legacy of images taken in and around Dereham during World War I and throughout the 1920s.

On the evening of 8 September 1915, Zeppelin L30 dropped many bombs as it passed over the town and considerable damage was caused in Church Street, which took a direct hit.

The next morning Herbert Cave took this photo which clearly shows how Hamerton's store was virtually destroyed. The White Lion pub next to it (landlord James Eglen) was also badly damaged as was Herbert Cave's studio and other buildings on both sides of the street.



Church Street on 9 September 1915 after Zeppelin bomb damage

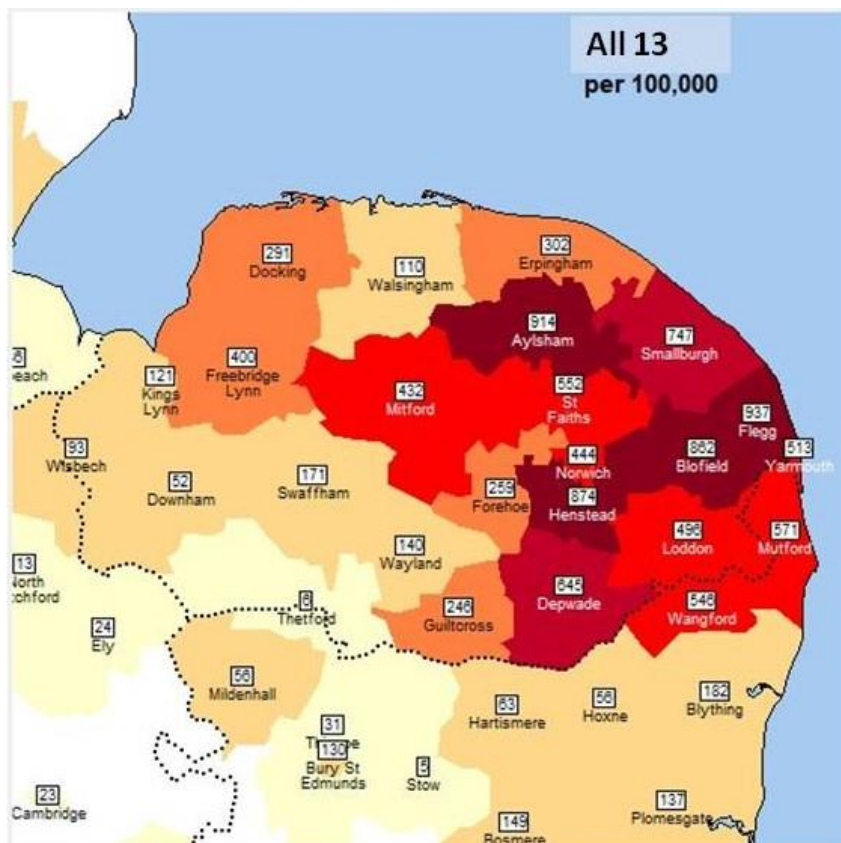


Church Street in 1916

Mr Hamerton rebuilt his store and he may have created an exact duplicate of the original. When the current situation gives us access to our archive again we can compare our new photograph to plans and other images of Church Street in those early years of the twentieth century to determine if this is indeed the old shop destroyed by the Zeppelin in 1915 or whether it is the new shop rebuilt from the ashes.

Old Norse surnames in Norfolk *Trevor Ogden*

If you heard my talk in December, or read Ken's report in the last Newsletter, you will remember that I talked about Norfolk surnames in the 1881 census, and 13 of them that derive from Viking names. The 13 surnames were still many times as common in parts of Norfolk where the Vikings settled as in other parts of Norfolk. A thousand years or so did not seem to have disturbed the population much! If you want to read the full account of this, a paper is now online at <https://www.academia.edu/44948541>. This map is the one I showed of the number of people with one of those names per 100,000 of the population in different parts of this area in 1881. The talk is still on DHT's website.



A History of Norfolk in 100 Places *Peter Wade-Martins*

Peter is a co-author, with Susanna Wade Martins and David Robertson, of a book being prepared for publication later this month. In this issue, we present the first of a series of extracts from the draft of the book: *Walsingham: a medieval pilgrimage town*.

The Augustinian priory at Little Walsingham in North Norfolk, the home of the shrine of 'Our Lady of Walsingham', was one of the great pilgrimage centres of medieval Europe, second only in England to Canterbury. Founded in about 1153, it was regularly visited by Henry III and his son Edward I in the 13th century and it continued to have royal visitors, including Henry VIII, up until the Dissolution in 1539. Only the 15th-century east wall of the priory church now survives as a folly in the gardens of Abbey House along with a vaulted undercroft in one corner of Abbey House. However, the gatehouse remains intact in the High Street. In 1347 the Greyfriars founded a house for their friars on the southern edge of town, and with the growing popularity of 'Our Lady' there was enough activity for both monasteries to flourish.

It has been estimated from the priory accounts for 1535 that, based on a likely donation of a penny for each pilgrim, there were on average 171 pilgrims a day, or 62,415 a year,

arriving in this small somewhat isolated market town. There were, of course, great seasonal fluctuations, with pilgrims arriving mainly between May and October when the roads were passable. These pilgrims needed accommodation. The best reason to visit Walsingham now is to see the extra-ordinary wealth of late medieval timber-framed buildings which provided accommodation for the pilgrims in the High Street, Friday Market and Common Place.

After the Dissolution of the priory the town descended from great wealth to relative poverty. This explains why so many late medieval inns, hostelries, and dormitories for the faithful have survived, modified in different ways, but seldom replaced. Walsingham contains more buildings constructed before 1700 than any other town of similar size in the county.

In 2010 a team from the Norfolk Historic Buildings Group started a detailed buildings' survey lasting four years. The earliest buildings were fully timber-framed with ground floor wall posts and studs and with jettied timber-framed upper floors. During the 15th century the building tradition changed so that the ground floors were built of flint rubble while the upper floors remained jettied. By the 17th century brick took over as the fashionable building material, and in many cases brick skins were simply added to reface earlier structures.

The priory and friary together owned most of the town and carried out the building works as speculative development. The ground floor rooms were large, some with fireplaces and some without, and those without may have had portable braziers and back kitchens to cater for the hundreds of pilgrims. The upstairs rooms were also large, forming dormitories, 35m long in one case, open to the roof. Narrow unglazed windows with internal shutters were normal on both floors.

Good examples of the pilgrim hostels with first floor dormitories can be viewed from the outside at 21/23 High Street, 31 High Street and 12 Common Place. The latter had an undivided 20m long upper chamber. By far the largest was in 47/49/51/53 High Street which had a continuous dormitory of 35m long extending across all four modern properties. This was in a prestigious location immediately opposite the principal gateway into the priory, but it is difficult to appreciate the extent of the timber framing now from the outside because 47 and 49 are hidden behind a 19th-century brick front.



*No 31 High Street which had a continuous first-floor dormitory for pilgrims.
(Photo by Peter Wade-Martins)*

There must have been many shops as well. Although evidence for them is hard to find, there are three shop windows, two still with their arches, visible at the west end of 1 Common Place. The only other complete examples of medieval shop windows in Norfolk are four in the mid-15th century Green Dragon in Wymondham (No. 66). The market house, as seen at Wymondham and New Buckenham (No. 23) is now so embedded in the fabric of the shop at the corner of the High Street and Friday Market that it can't be recognised from the outside.



Three 15th-century shop windows on the jettied west end of 1 Common Place.
(Photo by Peter Wade-Martins)

Just to wander around the streets and to look at the town is a real pleasure. There is much to see, although it is sad that some buildings stand empty and appear even derelict. There are pubs in Friday Market and the Common Place and tea rooms are usually open in season. There is also the parish church, rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1961, the Church of England shrine in Holt Road, built in 1931-7 and the Russian Orthodox chapel of St Seraphin of Sarov. This can be recognised by its onion dome in the converted railway station. If you are in Walsingham in the early spring the gardens of Abbey House are open to the public and the woods are filled with snowdrops. The extensive remains of the Friary on the southern edge of the town are private and are closed to public view. (Little Walsingham main car park: NR22 6BN)

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Ringling pilgrims to Walsingham

The constant ringing of bells was a feature of the Church life of every parish in Tudor times when Walsingham was an important place of pilgrimage. Henry VIII required all church bells for many miles around to be rung when he or his devout Catholic Queen went on tour and woe betide the churchwardens who neglected this mark of honour.

In 1513 when Queen Katherine made a pilgrimage to Walsingham, Shipdham churchwardens neglected to honour her visit by ringing the bells as she passed through the village. One of the royal servants was sent to the church demanding an immediate fine. The church account book details: ***'Payde for fawte [default] off rengyn qwhan ye queene cam thorow ye contre Xlld.'***

In 1523 when King Henry VIII passed through the village the churchwardens did not forget to order the ringing of the bells and accounts tell us they ***'Payd for expesys of Reggars [ringers] qwan the king came through the towne Xlld'*** thereby a precious nine pence was saved!

Christmas 1929 at the Workhouse *Robena Brown*

This item was scheduled for the last edition, but we ran out of space. So, it's only a month late!



This photograph was printed in the Dereham and Fakenham Times in early January 1930. Although we have no image of the inmates who enjoyed their Christmas dinner and the ensuing merriment, this is an important image of the whole group of those people responsible for the management and running of the workhouse.

Dr Megan Dennis, Curator of Gressenhall Farm & Workhouse Museum, and DHT Museum Mentor, was pleased to see this image which was new to her. Megan told us:

In 1930 the workhouse became a Poor Assistance Institution managed by the County Council. In 1946 it changed its name again to Beech House. Both changes didn't make much difference to staff or inmates – they just had different paymasters! Inmates and staff remained. It continued thus up to 1948 when it officially became Beech House, County Care Home for the Elderly as part of the new National Health System. By this time welfare had become much more specialised (with children's homes, mental health institutions and a variety of more individualised systems of care). The few inmates who remained were elderly and therefore Gressenhall continued to function as an old people's home right up until 1975.

The photograph below of the east wing from the road shows the workhouse c1900-06 and was used for the production of printed postcards, one of which was postally used in November 1906, and is held at Gressenhall Museum today.



Beech House, Gressenhall (c 1900-5)

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In February 1914, just a few months before the August outbreak of World War I, and 15 years before the date our Christmas workhouse photograph was taken, the Norfolk Regiment were appealing for recruits. This report from the archived newspaper gave an amusing story of how a 76-year-old, hale and hearty former soldier inmate of the Beech House Workhouse had sent a letter of application to join. Let us hope that he lived to the age of 91 and so enjoyed those Christmas festivities of 1929.

The newspaper campaign to obtain recruits for the Army resulted in nearly three hundred letters being sent from Norfolk to the War Office. The order was given that each man was to be interviewed in order that a report might be made as to his suitability for His Majesty's service. Now one of the applicants for the booklet setting forth the advantages of a soldier's life gave the address of Beech House, Gressenhall, and the sergeant set out from Dereham to visit his man. He found that "Beech House" was the workhouse, and the likely recruit a hale old fellow of seventy-six years, who wore the Queen's uniform in 1855, and was at Cork on the termination of the Crimean war. The veteran was pleased to see the sergeant, and told him he wanted to see what the conditions of the service were like nowadays in order that he might advise some of his young friends who thought of joining the service. The sergeant was charmed, and said he did not mind the three miles walk, and apart from his duty it was a pleasure to meet an old comrade. Next time he would call to see a veteran and not a recruit.

Dereham and Fakenham Times - 28 February 1914

Membership matters

Membership subscriptions are due as from 1 March 2021 for existing members. Our membership year runs annually from 1 March to the end of February; the normal subscription rate is £12 for a single member, £20 for two people at the same address, the same as last year. In normal circumstances, we can take payment at one of our meetings, but while these are suspended, there are two ways open for payment, as set out below. **Please make sure you let us know of any change in your postal or email address.**

Not a member but want to join?

If you are not currently a member, can we invite you to consider joining? Go to http://www.derehamhistory.com/uploads/1/6/2/3/16236968/dht_membership_leaflet_2020.pdf for our membership form, or request a copy from Ken Hawkins. Then either send your completed form, with a cheque payable to Dereham Heritage Trust, to Ken Hawkins, DHT, 26 Hillfields, Dereham NR19 1UE, or scan and email ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk your details, and pay by bank transfer to Dereham Heritage Trust, sort code 20-28-20, account 10179752 - but if you use this method please make sure you quote your surname as a reference so that we can recognise the payment as coming from you.

Programme of events 2021

Under normal circumstances, our AGM - the first since we became a Charitable Incorporated Organisation - would have been held in February. Although we postponed it until April in the hope of being able to hold it in the usual way, we have reluctantly concluded that this will not be possible, and it will instead be held on line. A separate communication will be issued to all members during March. The February date will be a 'normal' meeting (on line presentation and discussion - see below).

We have a full programme of speakers and events planned through the year, though it has to remain open to change. We still hope to resume meetings when government guidelines allow and are keeping this under constant review, but until at least May 2021, we are showing on line presentations. Our recent 'meetings' enabled those who had seen the talks to take part in some very interesting and extended discussions. We hope and believe that the same will apply for our future talks too. 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 and the other participants to ask questions and join the discussion. **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.** Talks are generally available to members for a week after meeting date; you can find them on our website.

We are not making the usual £1 charge to members to watch the talk or join the meeting, but we will be pleased to welcome donations to offset our costs - our speakers still deserve full recompense for their time and effort! Payment can be made by cheque or bank transfer as noted in the [Membership matters](#) section above.

The February talk is *George Skipper - the Architect's life and works*, presented by Richard Barnes. George Skipper (1856–1948) was born in Dereham in Norfolk, the son of a builder and developer. The boy excelled at drawing and attended Norwich Art School, studying art and an artisan's course on architecture. He was then apprenticed to a London architect who worked under Alfred Waterhouse and other influential figures. Returning to Norfolk, Skipper assisted his father before starting his own practice in

Norwich. Richard has written a book on this, recently published, and details of this are included with this Newsletter.

The talk, which **should be watched before the meeting** can be seen at <http://www.derehamhistory.com/video-talks.html>, Passcode BBCM. Please note that this talk lasts for two hours and forty minutes, so you may want to watch in 2 or 3 instalments. The link for the discussion at 7.30pm on Wednesday 10 February is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88189834099?pwd=ZFdPbDZZVkJZLMnF1cGZZdkNFZmd4QT09>, with the Meeting ID: 881 8983 4099 and Passcode: 326914. Mr Barnes is not able to join us on the evening, but he has kindly agreed to answer questions via email, and we will still be meeting to discuss these and the rest of the talk, so do please join us. If you have any questions, please send them to me (Ken Hawkins) as soon as possible but no later than 7 February to allow time for us to send them to him and get the answers back.

If you know any non members who might enjoy the talk, please ask them to contact ken-hawkins@tiscali.co.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

<p>10 March - on line 25 years of archaeological research at Sedgford Speaker: Gary Rossin</p> <p>14 April - on line Annual General Meeting followed by in house talk</p> <p><i>Planned dates continue to be the second Wednesday of each month. As and when we can restart physical meetings, they will be 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.</i></p> <p>12 May Making tracks through Mid-Norfolk Speaker Dr Patrick Anstey</p>	<p>9 June John Abel, Horse-dealer of Norwich Speaker Judith Havens</p> <p>14 July An Introduction to Norfolk's Mills Speaker Alison Yardy</p> <p>11 August Narborough Bone Mill Speaker Graeme Brown</p> <p>8 September Five o'clock tea with Betsy Speaker Elizabeth Fry (Georgette Vale)</p> <p>13 October Annual Dinner or talk - to be decided</p> <p>10 November Hobbies Speaker Martin Flegg</p> <p>8 December Hexachordia Venue Wellspring Family Church</p>
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Next issue

In normal times, we plan to produce a Newsletter every quarter, in January, April, July and October, and are resuming that pattern in 2021, but with an extra issue in February. The press date for the next issue is **22 March**: 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.