

EXCURSIONS 2021

Reports and notes on some findings.

24 April. Edward Martin, Nicola Currie and Professor John Parker.

Hitcham, a virtual excursion on Zoom (Report by Edward Martin). This was a three-part ‘excursion’. The first part being a virtual tour of Hitcham church to ‘launch’ Edward Martin’s new book — *Hitcham. A Landscape, Social and Ecclesiastical History of a Suffolk Clayland Parish*, a reduced version of the description of the church in this book is given below. The second part was an account of the ‘Restoring Henslow’s Bells’ project for Hitcham church tower by Nicola Currie, Hon. Secretary of the Friends of All Saints’ Church Hitcham. This raised £340,000 over three years, starting in late 2017, for a programme of work that included: moving the organ from the back of the church to the N aisle, and getting it restored by Bishop and Son, organ builders of Ipswich; taking down the church bells, which had been unsafe for 100 years, sending them for restoration at John Taylor and Co., bell foundry at Loughborough, building a new metal bell frame in the chamber below the original bell chamber (the timber bell frame of the 1520s already in there was left *in situ*), rehangng the bells with two additional bells; commissioning Cubitt Theobald Ltd to rebuild the ringing gallery in the lower part of the tower (this had been demolished in 1871); and, finally, installing a kitchenette and toilet in the base of the tower (Nicola and her husband Malcolm were awarded a Suffolk Heritage Champion Award for this work by the Suffolk Preservation Society in 2021). The third part was a talk by Professor John Parker, Director of Cambridge University’s Botanic Garden 1996–2010, on the Henslow Correspondence Project. John Stevens Henslow (1796–1861) was both rector of Hitcham and professor of botany at Cambridge, where he tutored and inspired Charles Darwin. This digital project aims to locate, transcribe, and bring together letters to and from Henslow.

Hitcham church. The 15th-century church tower is massive, but restrained in its decoration, being plain except for strips of chequerboard pattern flushwork on its angle buttresses (a pattern repeated on the castellated top of the nave). As at nearby Cockfield, the tower buttresses descend into the church, perhaps indicating towers that were free-standing when built. In contrast, the S porch is a splendid piece of 15th-century work, ornamented with trefoil-headed flushwork panels and niches for statuary above the door and in the buttresses. It closely resembles porches at Bildeston, Preston and Felsham (where wills of 1470 and 1471 refer to glass for the porch), and they are probably all by same mason. Thomas Fysshier, rector of Hitcham from 1466 to 1500, perhaps significantly, requested burial in the porch in his will of 1505, asking his executors to ‘bye a litell marbillstone to be sett in the wall at my sepulture and theryn to be sett a pece of laton and theryn written in lettirs my name and the day of my sepulture so as my goode frendes may have remembrance to pray for my soule and the lettirs theryn to be gilte’.¹ No such stone now exists, but there is a brass inscription recording that the porch was restored in 1882–3 in memory of the Revd J.S. Henslow.

Inside the church, 5-bay arcades of mid- to late 14th-century date separate the nave from the two outer aisles (Fig. 98). In the N clerestory above the piers is a rare survival of the original quatrefoil windows. The royal arms above the S door were installed in honour of King George VI’s coronation in 1937. The wooden angel over the N door is relatively modern and is thought to have been carved by Mary March-Phillipps of Hitcham Hall in the 1890s.

The impressive roof of the nave is a complex amalgam of two distinct periods of work. As

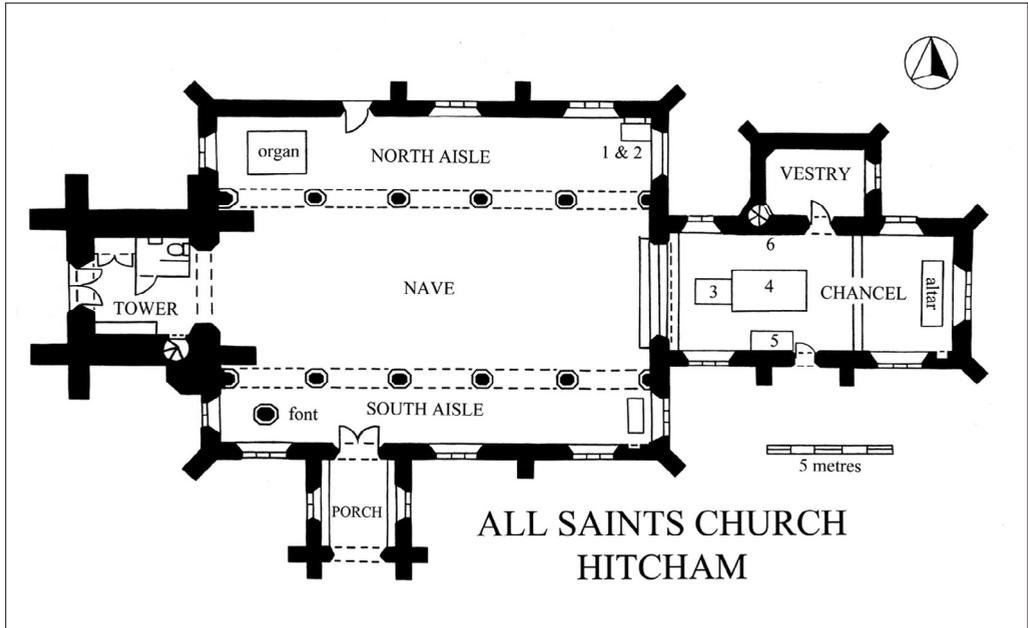


FIG. 98 – Plan of All Saints' church, based on one kindly made available by Philip Orchard of The Whitworth Co-Partnership.

KEY: 1. Wall monument to Sir George Waldegrave of Wetherden Hall (d.1637); 2. Floorstone with indents for a lost brass to George Waldegrave (d.1551) and his wife Mary Frances (d.1562); 3. Floorstone with indents for a lost brass to Sir John Spring (d.1547); 4. Floorstone with indents for a lost brass to Dr William Cooke, rector of Hitcham (d.1522); 5. Floorstone with indents for a lost brass to a priest, possibly Thomas Remund, rector of Hitcham 1413–38; 6. Wall monument to the Revd Professor John Stevens Henslow (d.1861).

originally built, this was a mid-15th-century double hammerbeam roof similar to the one that still exists at St Mary-at-the-Quay, Ipswich, and could well be the product of craftsmen from Ipswich. The roof was, however, almost completely rebuilt in the early 17th century and put back together with a number of new components. The clearest survivals of the original roof are the wall-posts with the mutilated remains of figures, probably saints. The hammerbeams may also be original and the bare ends of the upper ones, marked with nail holes, may originally have been adorned with the figures of angels. The ends of the lower hammerbeams were adorned in the 17th century with a series of oval wooden plaques surmounted with crowns and bearing various royal emblems and, on one, the initials 'I.R.', for King James I.

The intermediate trusses between the double hammerbeam ones are 'false hammerbeams' with short hammerbeams arch-braced to the tie-beams and supported below by scrolled brackets. Carved on the hammerbeams are a series of grotesque masks of high craftsmanship. Both the masks and the brackets are 17th century, though the hammerbeams themselves may be 15th century in origin. Notable among the other 17th-century additions are the pendant knops on the centres of tie-beams, and a higher series of simpler pendants hanging from the junctions of the principal rafters at the apex of the roof (possibly replacing the original attachments for kingposts, as at St Mary-at-the-Quay). The carved strapwork panels in the spandrels behind the hammer posts are also 17th-century additions.

The nave roof was the responsibility of the parishioners of Hitcham and there are a number of will bequests in the 1450s and 1460s from them towards work in the church: 1451,

Richard Walkefar ‘to the fabric of the same church 6s 8d’; 1455, Thomas Crowe ‘to the repairing of the church 20d’; 1459, Margery Cabow ‘to the emendation of the church 7s 8d’; 1460, Roger Charite ‘to the reparation of Hitcham church 6s 8d’; 1461, Richard Wederton [*Witherton*] ‘to the necessary emendation of the said church 13s 4d’; 1462, Peter Qwyntyn ‘to the repair of the church 20d’; 1464, Cecily Crowe ‘to the repair of the church 20d’.² These bequests may well have been towards the building of the original hammerbeam roof. This suggests that the building of the nave roof was very much a collective effort by the people of Hitcham. Possibly the prime mover in this group was Richard Witherton, esq., of Wetherden Hall. Witherton was a gentleman with a fairly high-status administrative and military past. In his will, dated 1 July 1461, he requested burial ‘in the body of Hitcham parish church, before the image of the crucifix’, i.e. in front of the rood screen and in a prime place below the new roof.³ He requested that his tomb be made ‘according to the fashion (*forma*) of the grave of William Cressenere, esquire, in the church of the friars in Sudbury’.⁴ Unfortunately, neither tomb survives. Witherton’s widow Joan was to provide a suitable chaplain to celebrate divine service in Hitcham church for his soul and the souls of his parents and benefactors for two years after his death. In her will of 1466 she requested burial beside Witherton in Hitcham church and left ‘to the repair of the church 3s 4d’.⁵ At least one of the rectors in this period also seems to have contributed to the work. Dr Thomas Bett(ys), rector from 1438 to 1452, left 40s in his will (dated 1452) to the fabric of Hitcham church.⁶

The aisle roofs, like the nave roof, also seems to be an amalgam of two periods of work. Most of the structure looks as if it is late 15th or early 16th century in date, the principal structural timbers being decorated with carved crenelations, as is common at that period. However, the horizontal boards that hide the junctions between the wall plate and the rafters bear carved vine scrolls that are more typical of the first quarter of the 17th century. The cresting that surmounts the boards also points to the same date. The bosses applied to the intersections of the rafters and purlins are late medieval in form, but some bear carvings of men’s heads that would fit, stylistically, better with a date of around 1600 than 1500. At the E end of the S aisle, one of the short wall-posts supporting a rafter brace has a plaque attached to its base that bears a crown over the initials ‘CR’, for King Charles I, suggesting that the work may have been as late as the 1620s or 1630. Altogether, the evidence suggests that a late medieval roof was rebuilt in the early 17th century and some new elements were added. The style of carving is different to that of the nave, suggesting either a different date or different craftsmen.

Separating the nave and the chancel is the lower part of a fine mid-15th-century rood screen with painted panels depicting angels bearing the Instruments of the Passion. From N to S these are:

1. The Scourge – upraised in the left hand of the angel, its knotted thongs dangling by his arm;
2. The Pillars of Flagellation – with cords about it;
3. The Spear;
4. Apparently the Seamless Robe – held up in the angel’s two hands;
5. Half blank, defaced;
6. Damaged, but probably the Cleft Reed for the sponge of hyssop;
7. The Nails and the Hammer;
8. Almost certainly the Crown of Thorns held in both of the angel’s hands.

In 1461 Henry Quarry left ten marks towards a newly built reredos (*tabulo*) and it may be that the screen was erected at same time.⁷ In 1524 Thomas Scorell left a croft to pay for a repair of the ‘boording [*on*] the bak syde of the Rood of the Candyll beame next the chancell’.⁸

The S wall of the chancel must have been unstable because in 1741 the antiquarian Tom Martin of Palgrave visited and noted that ‘the chancel is supported on the S side by two new brick buttresses, on one of which is this inscription: July 1716 Nicholas Clagett DD Rector’.⁹ The problem got worse, with the S wall ‘very much out of the perpendicular’, and the E wall in very bad repair, so in restoration works undertaken in 1878 by Robert Tooley of Bury St Edmunds, under the supervision of the architect George Edward Pritchett (1824–1912) of London, the S and E walls of the chancel were taken down and rebuilt (a photograph in the church shows the chancel roof precariously supported by worryingly thin wooden props). A contemporary account refers to the finding of a fragment of a ‘wayside or churchyard cross’ (claimed as ‘9th–10th century’) in the SE buttress of the wall, also fragments of a cist, a Barnack stone cross, ‘part of the old reredos’, and a piece of the base of a font, but unfortunately, all of these pieces were subsequently lost.¹⁰

The lost brass in the large stone indent in front of the altar commemorated Dr William Cooke, rector of Hitcham from 1500 until his death in 1522. He requested burial here in his will and directed that ‘I will have a gravestone of marble to be bought by myn executors of the price of six poundis threten shillings and four pens and leide ther upon me’.¹¹ A second large indent held a brass commemorating Sir John Spring of Hitcham (d.1547).¹² Near the S door is an indent of a priest under a canopy, which possibly represents Thomas Remund, rector 1413–38. There is also an armorial floorstone to Dr William Battie, rector 1667–1706 (when Tom Martin visited in 1741, he recorded that ‘A Hatchment hangs over the stone’ — but no longer). A wall monument commemorates Hitcham’s most famous rector, the Revd Professor John Stevens Henslow (d.1861).¹³ The wooden bishop’s stall or throne was installed by and for M.F. Maxwell-Gumbleton, suffragan bishop of Dunwich 1935–45, and rector of Hitcham 1935–48.

The chancel roof is an interesting development of the ‘false hammerbeam’ type of roof in which the ends of the hammerbeams are joined by moulded purlins — one on each side of the roof giving a strong horizontal line across the bottom third of the roof. Curved braces rise from the wall plate to the hammerbeams, and from the hammerbeams to the apex of the roof, but only the outer edges of these are now visible, as the gaps between the braces have been infilled with horizontal boards. This gives a bipartite ceiling made up of two concave sections separated by the longitudinal purlins. Further horizontal divisions are provided by smaller purlins in the upper curved sections and the central ridge piece. Vertical divisions are provided by the edges of the braces, which appear as narrow ribs. The overall effect is of a wooden ceiling divided into a series of rectangular panels, with carved bosses covering the intersections. The carved bosses are a mixture of purely decorative ones, with lozenges and arcs filled with floral and foliage forms, and more elaborate ones with human faces and angels. Notable are a fine male head, probably representing Christ, and a woman’s head, probably indicating St Mary.

A similar roof covers the chancel of Rattlesden church (this, like Hitcham, was under the patronage of the bishops of Ely), and it is very likely that they are the work of the same craftsmen. Roofs of a similar construction also occur in Hengrave Hall (near Bury St Edmunds), where instead of wooden boards, plaster ceilings have been applied across the braces, following their curves, but totally hiding them. This treatment leaves only the moulded hammerbeam purlins visible, rather like cornices, leading to them being termed ‘cornice-purlin’ roofs. At Hengrave the roofs date from around 1530, and it is likely that the Hitcham and Rattlesden roofs are not far distant in date.

On the N side of the chancel there is a double-storeyed medieval vestry that was restored from a ruinous condition in 1987. This has a bricked-up fireplace and a spiral staircase in one corner that leads to an upper chamber. The chamber’s floor had to be lowered in the

restoration, so it now covers the upper part of the lower window (heavily barred for past security purposes).

For a hundred years the bells of Hitcham church were silent because of the instability of its old wooden bell frame. But, with the aid of a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund for a project entitled ‘Restoring Henslow’s Bells’, this has now been rectified. It started in 2019 with the bells being lowered for restoration, enabling the old bell frame to be examined more easily and providing an opportunity to take samples for dendrochronology (tree-ring dating), which gave a probable date of 1520–9.¹⁴ The dendro date fits well with the available documentary evidence. In his will of 1522, Dr William Cooke, rector of Hitcham, gave 40s ‘towards a litill bell to hang in the stepull of Hecham so the township will b[u]y it within the space of a yere after my departure’.¹⁵ And, most significantly, in December 1524 John Bowell the elder of Hitcham made a bequest in his will of 13s 4d ‘to the makinge of the bellframe’.¹⁶ The township must have acted on these bequests because by 1553 Hitcham had managed to amass four ‘Great Bells’ in its tower.¹⁷ Curiously, there must have been bells there before the 16th century because, in his will of 1491, John Lever of Hitcham left 3s 4d to the ‘the reparacion of the bellys in Hecham cherche’.¹⁸ Later, in 1741, the antiquarian Tom Martin noted six bells at Hitcham, and in 1826 another antiquarian, David Elisha Davy, recorded five. Hitcham’s existing six bells are, however, considerably younger than their frame. The two oldest were cast by Henry Pleasant (d.1708) of Sudbury (one is dated 1697); two were cast by Thomas Gardiner (d.1762) also of Sudbury (one bell is dated 1744 and the other 1755); and two by Thomas Mears the younger of the Whitechapel Bell Foundry in London (both dated 1837).¹⁹ By the 1920s the bell frame was unsafe and the bells were secured in a locked position in 1926. In the restoration project, the old ringing floor became the new belfry, with a new cast iron frame for the bells built and installed by John Taylor and Co. of Loughborough.²⁰ A musicians’ gallery in the lower part of the tower, demolished in 1871 as unsafe, has been rebuilt as the new ringing floor. When the access doorway to the musicians’ gallery was reopened, it was discovered that the plaster lining of the doorway was still intact, and pencilled on the door archway were twenty-one strings of numbers, starting with 123456. This was a ‘ringing method’ (the numbers setting out the order in which the bells were to be rung) that has been identified as an old tune called ‘Double Court Bob Minor’, first published by William Shipway in his *Campanologia* of 1816.

The Friends of All Saints’ Church Hitcham raised £340,000 for the Tower Project in two years through The National Lottery Heritage Fund, Viridor Credits, other charities and some generous private donations.

12 June. Joanne Sear.

Late medieval Newmarket, a virtual excursion on Zoom (Report by Joanne Sear). Modern Newmarket contains very little to indicate that it had been a prosperous town, albeit a small one, in the late Middle Ages. However, whilst it definitely lacks evidence in terms of buildings, there are reminders, particularly in the street plan, but also in other features of the town. Members were taken on a virtual field trip focussed on late medieval Newmarket, linking it as far as possible with the modern town through photos and maps. Much of the evidence used for the ‘field trip’ had emerged out of work on a volume for the Suffolk Records Society on the records of the manor of Newmarket.²¹

The reason why so much is known about the infrastructure of the settlement at this time is that a number of manorial rolls have survived from the 15th century. These include both court and account rolls and are an interesting survival because the main focus of the manor was on trade rather than on agriculture, so the rolls reflect commercial rather than agrarian activities. The town is unusual for a number of other reasons, not the least is that it didn’t become firmly

established until the 15th century, at a time which was particularly challenging for newer foundations such as Newmarket. Its origins are relatively obscure, particularly since it never received a formal market charter, but it seems likely that a small trading site appeared at the location in the early years of the 13th century, although the almost negligible evidence for this suggests that it was relatively unimportant. A planned marketplace was probably created in the late 14th century, but it was not until the 15th that Newmarket became significant.

The most important reason for Newmarket's development and continued success was its location. By the 15th century it was surrounded by a number of agrarian settlements which were not effectively served by other markets. Although it was not on a navigable river, it had quite exceptional road links into both Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, and beyond. Many of these routes are referred to in the rolls and include 'Exningwey', 'Fordhamwey', 'Borwellewey' and 'Cambridgewey'.²² Newmarket was also on a major route in East Anglia running from Norwich through Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, before going on to London. This route had always been significant, but was growing in importance at this time because of the rising prominence of the port of London, so that goods were increasingly moved to and from the capital, rather than to and from smaller ports. Newmarket was located both near to a number of important cloth-producing areas, and between these areas and wool-producing areas, so that it served as a hub in the collection and distribution network associated with these interrelated activities. Newmarket therefore attracted two types of traders: people from smaller hinterland settlements who were predominantly engaged in agriculture and husbandry and who brought their produce to Newmarket to sell and, in return, bought foodstuffs and other essentials; and drapers, mercers and clothiers who traded cloth and wool within the town.

These two functions are reflected in the layout of the marketplace in the 15th century. It is likely that the earliest development of trade within the town was unplanned and took the form of an informal exchange site on the London to Norwich road, so that the earliest marketplace was on the main road through the settlement, probably at the location where present-day Wellington Street and Sun Lane form a crossroads with the High Street. Some formal planning seems to have occurred in the 14th century. Although a lack of sources from this period make it impossible to be precise about exactly what form this took, it probably consisted of the relocation of the marketplace to a dedicated site away from the main road, and the separation of this trading centre into a series of distinct commodity sectors. References in the court rolls confirm that by the early 15th century, most trade took place within this dedicated market site.

This 15th-century marketplace broadly lay within the rectangle of the modern Wellington Street to the west, Market Street to the east, High Street to the south and Fred Archer Way to the north. It was fairly large, a rough calculation suggests a market area of just over 1ha. The detail given in the 1472/73 account roll enables some reconstruction of the layout of the actual market area, although this is conjectural rather than definite (see Fig. 99). The market area included a range of features deliberately created to support marketing, including a tolbooth towards the centre of the market where various tolls and fines were paid, and the standard measures for the settlement would have been kept. There was also a market cross from which the rules and regulations of the market would have been proclaimed. This can be located with some certainty and was not in the main marketplace, but on the main road, which supports the idea that this was the site of the earlier market since it seems plausible that when the market moved, the cross stayed in its original position. In addition, there was a guildhall which was not constructed until towards the end of our period.

In common with many other markets of the time, many of the trading units were grouped together with other units selling similar commodities. The term 'row' is sometimes used in the rolls to describe these groupings, but whereas some of these did consist of units in a row, others were more akin to commodity sectors. At this time, the largest trading row was the

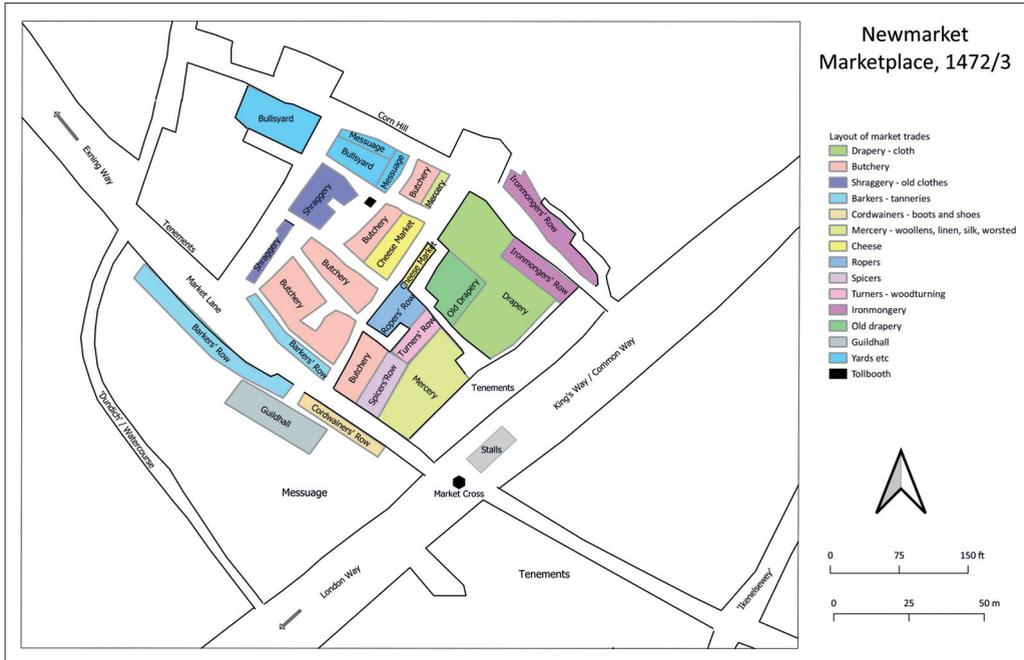


FIG. 99 – The market area of late medieval Newmarket (*map: David Addy*).

Butchery, or Butchers' Row, which had at least twenty-five shops or stalls, followed by the Drapery with at least twenty-three. Barkers' Row, the Mercery and Ropers' Row were also significant, with at least nine units each, whilst the other rows varied between six units and just one identifiable in Spicers' Row.²³ The layout of the market largely conforms with reconstructions that have been made of other medieval markets, for example, the market at Cambridge.²⁴ Broadly speaking, the commodity sectors devoted to the sale of foodstuffs were grouped together in the northern end of the market and comprised the Butchery and the Cheesemarket (which dealt with the sale of dairy products, eggs and peas and beans as well as just cheese) and, to a lesser extent, the Cornhill, although much of the grain sold here would have been wholesale. The southern end dealt with the sale of more expensive craft and manufactured goods, particularly in the Drapery and Mercery, but also in Spicers' Row and Ironmongers' Row. These 'higher end' goods were easier to access from the main road through the centre of Newmarket via the two lanes which ran to the east and west of the market area. Evidence suggests that some of the men who held shops or stalls in the Mercery or the Drapery also held more substantial houses along the main road, so that their trading units abutted onto their dwellings and may have even become incorporated into them.

The relative proximity of the Butchery to the Bullseyard is also worth noting. Animals, particularly cattle, to be sold as meat in the market were probably driven to the Bullseyard for slaughter and processing before the meat was taken to the Butchery for sale. It seems likely that the Bullseyard was accessed via a route running along the present day Exeter Road. The Bullseyard was also close to the water course, which ran to the north-west of the Bullseyard. Waste from meat processing could be disposed of in the water course, frequently referred to in the rolls as 'Dundich'. This didn't always happen as butchers were frequently amerced in the rolls for dumping intestines and guts elsewhere in the town.



FIG. 100 – St Mary's Square, Newmarket, with St Mary's church in the background.

The other occupation that required water was tanning. In the case of Newmarket, tanners and barkers appear to have operated together out of Barkers' Row. The location of this row is uncertain since it is not clear from the rolls, although it is possible to establish that the guildhall, Cordwainers' Row and Barkers' Row were all close to one another. The most notable historian of the town, Peter May, suggested that these were located in the present-day Sun Lane, previously called Guildhall Street.²⁵ However, for various reasons, it is more likely that they were located along Market Lane, particularly since this would have given easy access to a water source, which was essential to the tanning process, and proximity to those areas where animals were slaughtered and processed as a source of hides. Whilst the exact location of these rows is open to doubt, what is not is that they were situated next to each other, which ensured that hides tanned in the Barkers' Row were easily available to the shoemakers in Cordwainers' Row.

In addition to the main marketplace, both sides of the main road through the town (now the High Street) were lined with tenements and some of these were also trading units. To the north of the modern High Street, we can be quite certain about the location, size and layout of the tenement plots and the names of the holders. This is partly due to the fact that the manorial rolls predominantly relate to this area, but also to the fact that many of these plots have largely retained their size and shape. There has been some subdivision, particularly at the back of plots, and some infilling, but it is not difficult to observe the footprints of the original tenement plots; these have become fossilized into the modern street plan. The area to the south of the High Street is harder to establish, partly because much of this area was not within the manor and therefore not referred to in the rolls, but also because much of this area was heavily redeveloped in the 17th century at the instigation of the Stuart kings and the original street plan wiped away.

Hospitality was another important function of the town in the 15th century and many of the tenements along the main road through Newmarket were operated as inns. The account

roll of 1472/73 refers to twelve inns or alehouses, with all but one of these located on the main road. These were not only for the provision of refreshment and accommodation since some landlords traded in other goods, and also acted as intermediaries between producers and either consumers, or other retailers (including London merchants). In particular, Newmarket has been identified as a breaking-point on the route between the coast and London, so that it served as a hub in the distribution network for preserved fish, a vital component of the medieval diet, with landlords actively engaged in this process.

The two Newmarket fairs have also left their mark on the landscape of the town although they were in decline during the fifteenth century. Although there is no record of a charter for the market, two fairs are confirmed by charters. In 1223 Henry III granted the then lord of the manor the right to hold a three-day autumn fair around the feast of Sts Simon and Jude, 28 October, and in 1293 Edward II granted a three-day summer fair around the feast of St Barnabus, 11 June. The fairs were almost certainly held in the area just to the north-east of St Mary's church in a location which later became known as St Mary's Square (Fig. 100).

To conclude, Newmarket's location was such that it was ideally placed to provide basic marketing facilities to its hinterland, as well as serving as a distribution hub, particularly to the wool and cloth industries. By the end of the 15th century it was a prosperous market settlement attracting traders and customers from both near and far. Although at first glance there appears to be little evidence of this, much of the layout of the town was clearly established during the Middle Ages and this footprint remains.

7 July. *Bob and Jane Carr.*

Bury St Edmunds, a walking tour within the abbey remains in celebration of the 1000 years since the abbey was refounded by Cnut in 1020 (Report by Bob and Jane Carr). This was the first 'live' outing for the Institute following the restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic last year. The aim of the visit was to consider the standing remains of the abbey and its setting within the town, looking at the 'ruins' from a landscape perspective. Jane Carr gave a brief outline of the abbey's history. King Sigeberht of the East Angles (d.654) may have founded a monastery here, at *Beadricesworth*, where a Middle Saxon settlement is thought to have been in existence.²⁶ This monastery received the body of martyred St Edmund in the early 10th century and Bury St Edmunds became a place of great pilgrimage. In 1020 the religious community was refounded by Cnut as a Benedictine abbey and its first stone church was consecrated in 1032. In the 1090s Abbot Baldwin built a much grander church here, which survived until the abbey was dissolved in 1539. Under Abbot Anselm, 1120–48, a stone precinct wall was erected, and the Norman Tower dates from this period.²⁷ The abbey was endowed with great estates during its 500 years and became one of the wealthiest abbeys in England.

Members met on the Cathedral Green, near the sculptures of St Edmund (by Elizabeth Frink) and the wolf sculpture, where Bob Carr described the context of the abbey. Its area incorporated the site of the likely Middle and Late Saxon settlement, the latter seems to have been focussed upon the line of what we now know as Southgate Street and Northgate Street; the actual link between the two roads has been engulfed by the abbey, but determines the line of the West Front of the abbey church. (Fig. 101). Cnut's abbey was built as part of a planned unit with the new 11th-century town of St Edmundsbury. This can be clearly demonstrated when looking at the alignment of the street plan with the West Front on the Cathedral Green today. Looking W through the Norman Tower to the top of Churchgate Street with its axial crossing roads, then turning 180 degrees looking E, the central arch, site of the original abbey entrance doors, could be seen within the West Front. From here too, it was apparent that the surface water drainage of the town was centred upon Churchgate Street, leading downhill towards the West Front. At an early stage the precinct was bounded by a drainage ditch

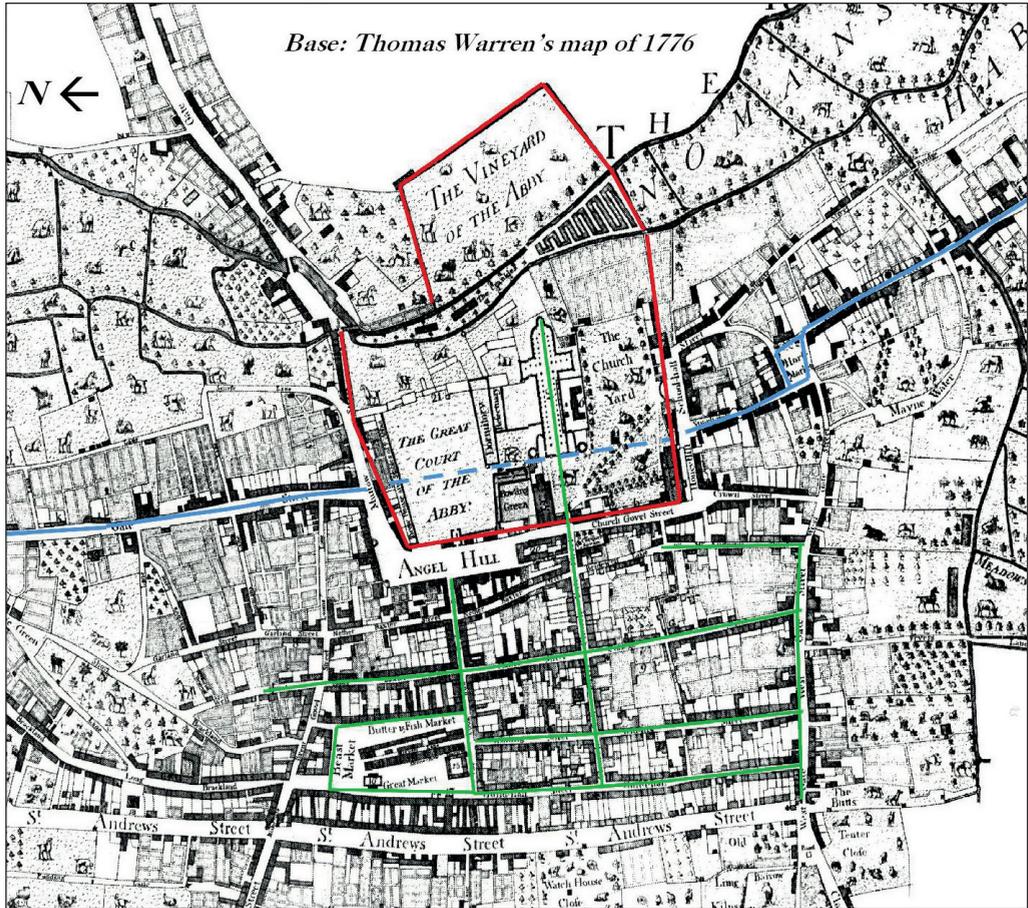


FIG. 101 – Features of Bury St Edmunds based on Thomas Warren's map of 1776. The blue lines show the projected pre-1020 alignment of Southgate Street and Northgate Street. The red indicates the boundary of the enclosure which formed the abbey precinct. The green denotes the Norman street grid of the town, sharing the axis of the abbey church.

running along Crown Street, Angel Hill and Mustoe Street. This must have failed by the 16th century when ground around St James's church was artificially raised and the church rebuilt to avoid future flooding. This explains why the base of the Norman Tower is at least 1.5m below present ground level.

Observing the great West Front of the abbey church, its three central arches and extensions for the W transept can be seen amidst the remains of the medieval building and its recent domestic occupation. What is seen today is the core work of the structure, the facing ashlar, originally as elaborate as that on the Norman Tower, having been stripped away post-Reformation. Its reuse in lay buildings and walls has become a characteristic feature of domestic architecture in the town. The scale of the West Front, as seen today, is somewhat misleading. Its contemporary ground level was at least 1.5m lower, as with the Norman Tower, and its superstructure of towers are missing, It would have been far more massive and imposing. New information panels by English Heritage, due to be erected on site in 2022, will interpret this view for future visitors.

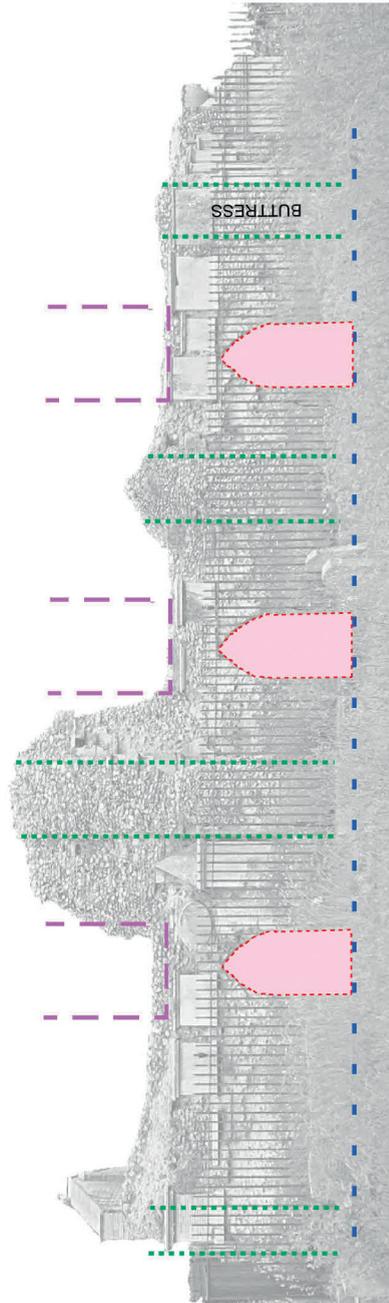
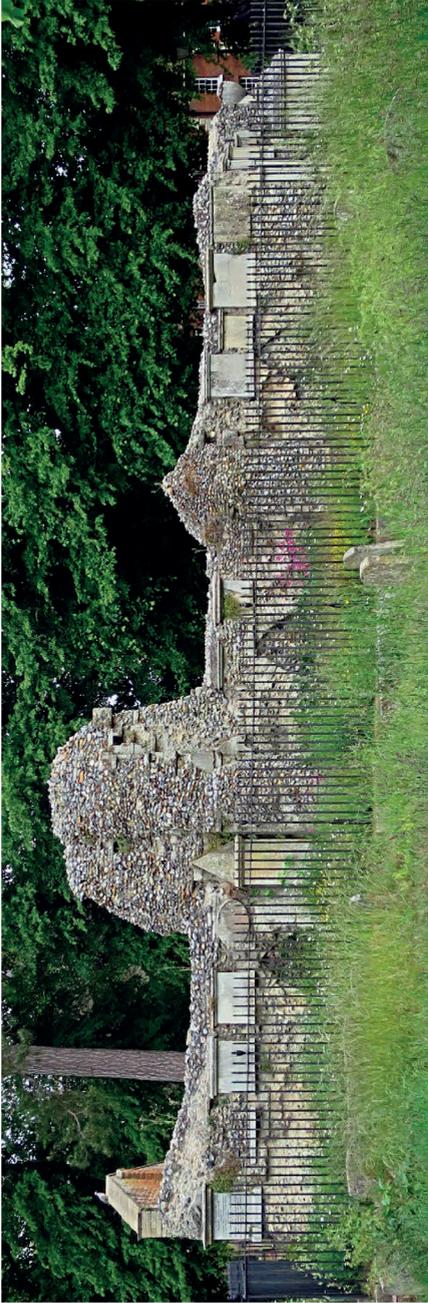
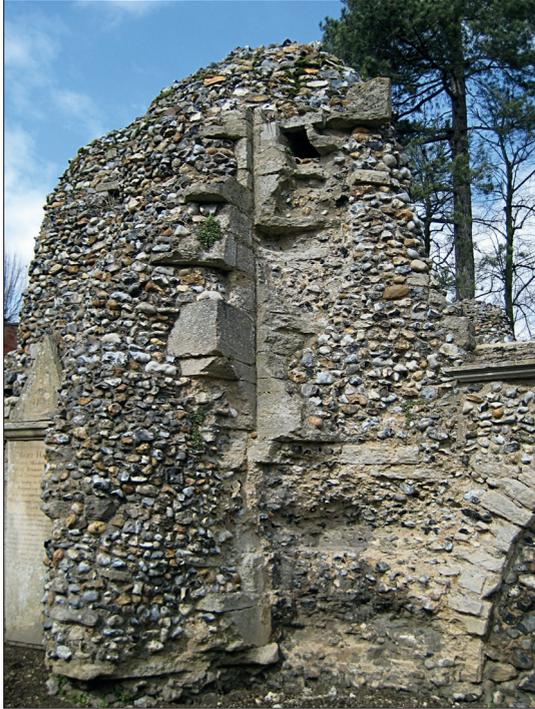


FIG. 102 – The Chapel of the Charnel viewed from the SE. The first image shows the surviving remains of the building, the second is a possible interpretation of these features.



window openings of a first floor chapel over can be imagined (Fig. 102). Again, ashlar has been removed, but some of the core work shows the incorporation of segments of reused stone coffins (Fig. 103).

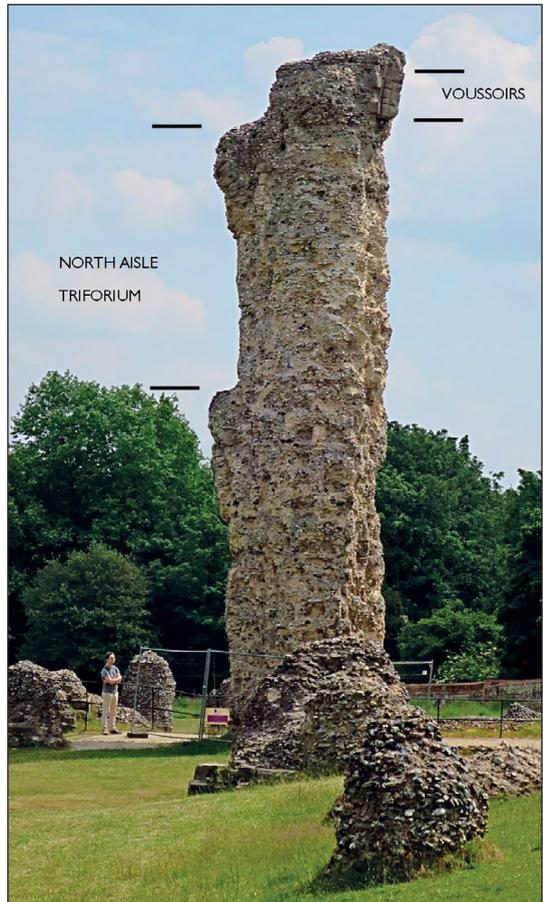


A good impression of the size of the precinct can be gained whilst looking to the S over the Great Churchyard. A fragment of the wall is still visible adjacent to St Mary's church, and is known to have run along the line of Honey Hill to the S. This expanse, together with the claustral area and Great Court to the N, and down to the river Lark, including the vineyard on the eastern slopes of the valley, combine to form one of the largest defined and undeveloped abbey precincts in the country.

The tour progressed into the Great Churchyard to reach the Chapel of the Charnel which was founded by Abbot John *et al.* in 1300.²⁸ Its original form with an open ground floor was served by three bays of arches and its presumed use was that of an open-air crypt, which acted as a repository for skeletal remains of interments disturbed by subsequent burials. Above the existing building, the

Fronting the churchyard and backing onto the S side of the nave of the abbey, the Clopton Asylum, built 1735–44, now The Deanery, was noted in passing.²⁹ The tour continued across the West Front and noted a fragment of 12th-century ashlar with decorative interlace, reused within the core material.

Entering the Abbey Gardens, the group observed the dormitory areas of the cloisters with views S over the nave of the abbey church, gaining an impression of its great overall length, probably the longest in the country. Ground level changes here demonstrate the clearance of floor materials of the N transept and crossing areas by archaeologists of the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works (MPBW) in the mid-20th-century, whilst for the bulk of the nave the deposited rubble of post-Reformation date is clearly visible (Fig. 104). At the crossing, the bases of the piers had obviously been protected by this demolition debris, until subsequent works have exposed them (Fig. 105). Close examination of the mortar bonding of the crossing piers shows the inclusion



PREVIOUS PAGE TOP:

FIG. 103 – The Chapel of the Charnel: stone coffin fragments reused in the coins of the S central buttress.

PREVIOUS PAGE BOTTOM:

FIG. 104 – The abbey church: N transept looking at surviving rubble level in central nave.

TOP:

FIG. 105 – The abbey church: architectural detail of NE crossing pier.

RIGHT:

FIG. 106 – The abbey church: NE crossing pier viewed from W.

of fragmented Roman building tile, used as a pozzolan to enhance the speed and setting of the lime mortar. Its appearance seems to be exclusive to these four piers, fundamental to their stability in supporting the building.

Observation from the nave shows that on the N face of the NE crossing pier a group of four surviving voussoirs can be seen in the projecting rubble core stubs. This forms the springing for the chancel arch at both clerestory and triforium level (Fig. 106). Standing within the crossing, the level of the presbytery floor and site of St Edmund's shrine can be estimated from the level of the single step and height of the vaults in the crypt below. Looking at the walls of the crypt, the position of the vaults are apparent. The clearance of this area by the MPBW produced reused stonework in the form of baluster shafts from a pre-Conquest building, which may be best explained by the rotunda chapel of Cnut, reportedly seen beneath the Lady Chapel on the N side of the presbytery.³⁰

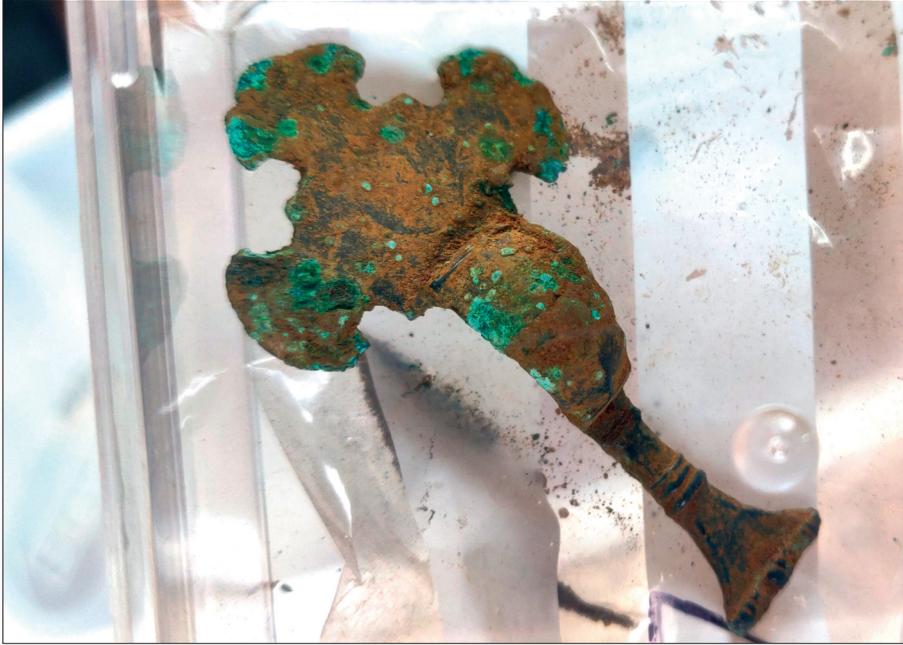
From this high point of the abbey church floor level, the land over the precinct drops away eastwards to the river Lark, where signs of ground-raising reclamation are visible within the presumed original flood plain. The tour noted the site of the tennis courts, beyond the crypt/shrine, an area previously unexcavated, and of considerable potential and interest. Geophysical and further survey work may happen as a result of the research agenda of the Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership, in which the Institute is involved. This partnership aims to combine the interests of all those using the Abbey Gardens, and not just of the management of the scheduled ancient monument.³¹

Whilst within the 'ruins', some discussion was had on the best ways of improving public understanding of the abbey, and the contrast between this archaeological area and the garden/leisure facilities which greet the visitor entering from the great medieval gate on Angel Hill, or the Eastgate entrance.

Having traversed the fragmentary rubble walls of the claustral range, and standing on higher ground near the Queen's Chamber, the full extent of the N portion of the walled precinct was visible, complementing views already noted of the southern extent from the Great Churchyard. Excavations at the Queen's Chamber, undertaken for the then Department of the Environment by Tony Fleming in the 1970s (unpublished) were of particular significance, as sherds of Middle Saxon Ipswich ware were uncovered, thus strongly suggesting the presence here of the pre-Conquest settlement mentioned above (see *Beadricesworth*), which preceded the abbey.



FIG. 107 – View of trench with pits and sunken-featured buildings at Rendlesham (©SCCAS).



TOP:

FIG. 108 – Anglo-Saxon brooch found by metal detecting over a trench during excavation (©SCCAS).

BOTTOM:

FIG. 109 – Excavated WWI practice trench cutting an Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building (©SCCAS).

The tour finished at the W end, inside the great Abbey Gate, and delegates were directed to observe that the wall line on this N side of the site is in fact the courtyard face of buildings which lined the external precinct wall, some 5m further N. Scars can be seen indicating the position of doors, windows and cart doors, testament to those structures built against the wall, but no longer extant. Delegates were also encouraged to exit via Abbey Gate and observe its position off the alignment with Abbeygate Street. This was caused by troubles with the townsfolk in 1327 who burnt down the original gate, immediately N of the current gate, and which would have aligned with the street.³² Also to be noted was the ornate tracery of the gate itself, which could be classed as one of the finest pieces of medieval building work N of the Alps.

7 September. Alice De Leo.

Rendlesham Revealed community excavation (Report by Alice De Leo, Suffolk County Council). Members were invited to visit the archaeological excavations at Rendlesham as part of the Rendlesham Revealed project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and led by Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service. The excavations are part of an extensive three-year fieldwork programme throughout the Deben valley. Summer 2021 saw the first season of excavations at Rendlesham, which were carried out by volunteers under the guidance of a small expert team from the Suffolk office of Cotswold Archaeology and Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service, with academic advice and direction from Professor Christopher Scull. Special thanks go to the landowner and farmer for their kind permission and support.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only a small group of twelve members joined the visit. The members were welcomed by Alice De Leo before being taken to the site where Professor Scull gave an introduction followed by a one-hour tour around the excavated trenches.

Previous investigations have identified Rendlesham as the largest and wealthiest settlement of its time so far discovered in England, covering over 50ha. It flourished for almost 300 years from the 5th to the 8th centuries. Five trenches were excavated in the wider area of earlier Anglo-Saxon settlement, targeting potential features identified on previous magnetometry surveys. The excavations in three of the trenches uncovered the remains of sunken-featured buildings, pits and post-holes of probable 5th–6th century date over a wide area, indicating an extensive settlement whose inhabitants were engaged in farming and craftworking (Fig. 107). Evidence of this includes bones from butchered cattle, sheep and pigs; items associated with spinning and weaving including spindle whorls and loom weights; melted metal fragments and slag indicating smithing and manufacture of copper-alloy objects; fragments of pottery vessels used for cooking and storage; items of dress including a copper-alloy brooch and buckle (Fig. 108).

Earlier prehistoric features were also excavated in three of the trenches, including an Iron Age double-ditched enclosure and prehistoric pits and a boundary ditch. Surprisingly, a WW1 military practice trench was also revealed in one of the trenches, probably dug by a battalion of the Territorial Force in 1914 or early 1915; this was cutting an Anglo-Saxon sunken-featured building (Fig. 109). In the fifth trench, a layer of buried soil 10–20cm deep was revealed overlying the archaeology; this was not excavated.

The next season of archaeological excavations is planned for summer 2022.



NOTES

- 1 Latten, an alloy of copper and zinc; T[he] N[atational] A[rchives], PROB 11/14/548 (Fyssher).
- 2 Northeast 2001, 186, no. 487 (Walkefar), 384–5, no. 1116 (Crowe); S[uffolk] A[rchives]/B[ury St Edmunds], R2/9/246 (Cabow); Northeast and Falvey, 42–3, no. 75 (Charite), 101–2, no. 181 (Wederton), 23–4, no. 43 (Qwyntyn), 121, no. 211 (Crowe).
- 3 Northeast and Falvey 2010, 101–2, no. 181 (Wederton).
- 4 Blois also recorded a monument in the church to ‘Wetherton et Johanna uxor eius’, see *Church Notes of William Blois*, vol. iii, 320, SA/I[pswich], GC17/755. William Cressener, esq., of Boxted was buried in the friars’ church in Sudbury in 1454 (will dated 31 March 1454, proved 10 May 1454, TNA, PROB 11/1/256).
- 5 N[orfolk] R[ecord] O[ffice], N[orwich] C[onsistory] C[ourt], Betyns 124 (Fenys).
- 6 Lambeth Palace Library, Reg. Stafford (Kemp), f. 276 (Bettyss).
- 7 Northeast 2001, 505, no. 1459 (Qwarry).
- 8 NRO, NCC, Briggs 211 (Scorell).
- 9 *Tom Martin’s Church Notes, Suffolk*, SA/B, E2/41/8b, vol. 11b.
- 10 *Suffolk Chronicle*, 11 May 1878.
- 11 TNA, PROB 11/20/342 (Cooke).
- 12 *The Breviary of Suffolk* (British Library, Harleian MS 3873, 55) records the lost inscription as ‘*Hoc tegitur saxo Johannis Spring miles qui quidem Johannes obiit 12 die mensis Februarij anno Christo nato millimo ccccclxvij cujus anime prospitietur Deus amen*’. It adds that ‘This epitaph is in Hitcham church, under his statue all armed, in brasse, 2 escocheons, 1 Spring’s single coat, the 2nd Spring empaled Waldegrave & Mouchancy, quarterly’. The 2nd shield was still in position in the seventeenth century when seen by the antiquarian William Blois. He also recorded a lost stone to ‘Sir William Fenis [with an inserted note: ‘qu. if not Sir Robt.’] miles et Dom. Elianor uxor ejus qui Gulielmo obit. 1509’, but he noted its shields were ‘reav’d’, i.e. stolen, see *Church Notes of William Blois*, vol. iii, 320, SA/I, GC17/755. This stone actually commemorated Sir Robert Fynes of Wetherden Hall who, in his will of 1509, requested burial in the church.
- 13 This by the Hadleigh-born sculptor and poet, Thomas Woolner (1825–92), a founder member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood who corresponded with Charles Darwin.
- 14 Bridge 2019.
- 15 TNA, PROB 11/20/342 (Cooke).
- 16 SA/B, IC500/2/17/74 (Bowyll).
- 17 ‘Church Goods in Suffolk No. XLVII’ [1553], *East Anglian Notes and Queries*, III, 1889–90, 286–7.
- 18 SA/B, IC500/2/13/101 (Lever).
- 19 Raven 1890, 202. For more details of the bellfounders, see P. Cattermole, *Church Bells and Bell-Ringing. A Norfolk Profile*, Woodbridge (1990), 192 and 199.
- 20 All Saints’ Parish Church, Hitcham, Suffolk. <http://taylorbells.co.uk/project/hitcham-suffolk/>.
- 21 Davis and Sear, forthcoming.
- 22 SA/B, Acc. 1476/12, 13 and 359/3.
- 23 These numbers reflect those shops or stalls which can be identified from the available evidence (particularly the account roll for 1472/73) as being located within a particular row. Unfortunately, it is not possible to discern the location of all of the shops or stalls which are known to have existed within the marketplace.
- 24 See P. Bryan and N. Wise, ‘A reconstruction of the medieval Cambridge market place’, *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*, 91 (2002), 73–88.
- 25 May 1975, 262.
- 26 Plunkett 2005, 106–7.
- 27 Suffolk’s Story 17 AD 654–1539 Bury St Edmunds Abbey (www.suffolkinstitute.org.uk/suffolk-s-story-17).
- 28 Gransden 2015, 221–4.
- 29 Bettley and Pevsner 2015, 49.
- 30 Gem and Keane 1981.
- 31 Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership (www.abbeyofstedmund.org.uk/).
- 32 Lobel 1933, 215–31.

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