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Work in Progress: The Cockthorpe Project

Introduced by Frank Hawes and Pamela Peake

The parish of Cockthorpe has had long and continuous links with the villages of the lower Glaven. It was formerly the seat of the Calthorpe family who until the early twentieth century also held land in Wiveton and Blakeney and from whom Nathaniel Bacon rented a home somewhere in Cockthorpe, whilst his new Hall at Stiffkey was being built. Then from 1744 till 1927 the benefice of Cockthorpe with Little Langham was consolidated with that of Blakeney, with the rectors living in Blakeney.

For a land locked parish, Cockthorpe excelled in having two Stuart Admirals baptised in the parish church, namely Sir John Narborough followed ten years later by Sir Cloudesley Shovell. Other mariners who are not so well remembered also hailed from the parish no doubt attracted by the sea rather than work on the land. Amongst these were five of six Dew brothers, with Thomas Dew becoming the Harbour Master of Blakeney in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

A recent UEA Local History course led by one of our members, Chris Barringer, provided the stimulus to explore local parishes further and it is hoped develop research interests that will continue. This was the incentive to look at the old parish of Cockthorpe with the now redun-

dant church of All Saints providing the focus at the start of the project, a choice that was warmly welcomed by the late Lady Harrod, Founder of The Norfolk Churches Trust.

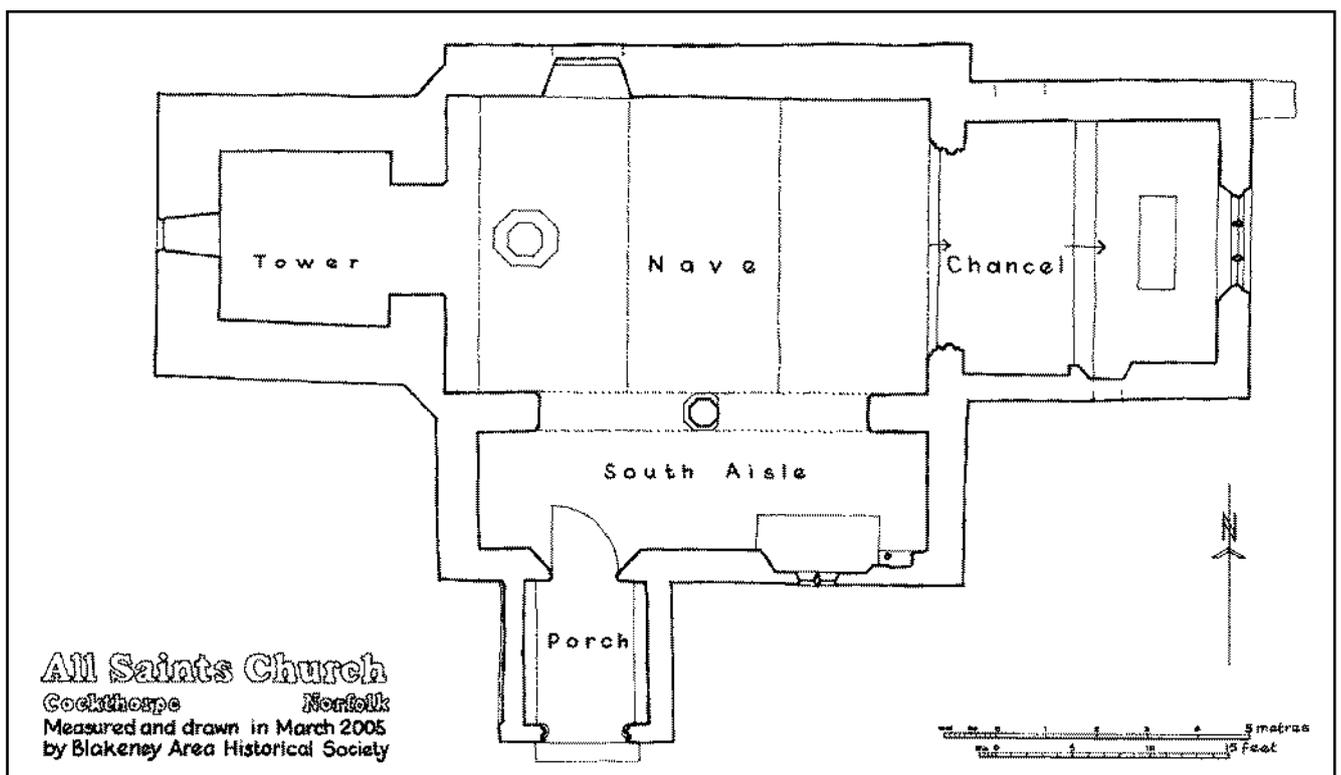
Before work started in earnest in March 2005, Lyn Stilgoe, a church enthusiast, began by leading us on a guided tour, indicating features of both historical and architectural interest. Then under the guidance of Frank Hawes, a small team took measurements of the church both inside and out from which the plan presented here was prepared. A second, smaller group led by Pamela Peake, recorded the monumental inscriptions in the churchyard and after these are checked against the Parish Registers they will be published.

Some thoughts on the church

Many interesting questions were identified during the preparation of the plan, for example, the strange arrangement at the junction of the nave and the tower that needs further thought.

The tower apparently dates from c1300, but the north wall of the nave is much older. The lower part is almost certainly Saxon with fine examples of flint quoins which surprisingly neither Pevesner¹ nor Mortlock and Roberts² mention. The height of this north wall was raised, probably when the clerestory on the south side was added, but when was this? The arcade below the clerestory is probably of similar date to the tower though the clerestory windows seem contemporary with the fine 15th century roof.

From the interior of the nave it can be clearly seen that the roof is formed of three bays, but it





Photograph 1. Cockthorpe Church from the south-east in the early Spring with myriads of snowdrops flowering in the churchyard. Many interesting features are visible: the Porch, South Aisle, Clerestory and Tower with remnants of the old nave roofline showing.



Photograph 2. North-west corner of the nave where it abuts onto the tower, showing the flint quoins of the Saxon wall of the nave and the fillet of brick and flint bridging the corner between the nave and the tower.

stops short of the west wall by about 600mm (2 feet). One suggestion is that the roof timbers were brought from another church that had slightly different dimensions. Another is that the ancient west wall of the nave could have once filled this gap. This would be strange, but the existence on the exterior of triangular fillets that now link the tower to the nave could possibly be associated. They are not bonded into either the tower or the nave walls and seem to have been built to close gaps which came into being after the tower was built.

There are many tantalising problems that need to be explored and there will no doubt be similar anomalies to be unravelled between the monumental inscriptions and the written records. All will be reported in future numbers of the Glaven Historian.

Participants included Helen Brandt, John Cucksey, Frank Hawes, Maurice Matthews, John and Pam Peake, Jan Semple, Lyn Stilgoe, but special thanks must go to Sue Matthews who provided life-saving warmth and refreshments on some cold winter days.

References

1. Pevsner, N & Wilson, B. *The Buildings of England: Norfolk Pt 1* 2nd Ed. 1997
2. Mortlock, D.P & Roberts, C.V. *The Popular Guide to Norfolk Churches 1: North-East Norfolk*. 1981

From the Norwich Mercury Smugglers!

Extract from the 23rd-30th June 1733 edition: "Wednesday last, 18 Smugglers were pursued from Cley, and that coast as far as Kimberley, in Norfolk, by the Customs and Excise Officers, about 13 in number, Arm'd; and altho' the Smugglers were so many in number and some Arms, only one made Resistance, and while he and a Custom-House Officer were fighting, one of the Smugglers (as 'tis said) shot at the Officer, but miss'd him, and shot one of the Gang into the Breast, who dy'd Yesterday. The Officers secured 5 of them, with 19 Horses, and all their Cargoe, being near 200 Weight of Tea and other Contraband Goods on each Horse. The 5 Smugglers were carry'd before Justice HERNE on Thursday, who committed them to the Castle, for refusing to find Sureties. Their names are as follows, viz. George Baulick, Tho Cockerel, John Dorcarry, Robert Day, and William Bream."

One is tempted to think the Excisemen must have had a tip-off, and time to call up reinforcements, as thirteen Officers was about double the usual complement at Cley Customs House. Kimberley is between Wymondham and East Dereham, some 30 miles from Cley, so it must have been a fair old chase.

The confiscated contraband would often be sold off to help defray the running costs of the Customs House.

Another potential contribution to their funds was reported in a later edition of the Norwich Mercury 26th June-3rd July 1736:

"Yesterday se'nnight was carried to the Custom-House in Cley, fourteen Gallons of Brandy, and Six Hundred and Ninety Pounds of Tea, which was seiz'd the Day before near Northwalsham [sic], by Mr John Bayfield and Mr John Massingham, Officers in the Customs."

For some reason, on this occasion it was the Officers rather than the smugglers who received the name-check. Both the Bayfield and the Massingham families still live in the area.

From the Norwich Mercury Property Announcements

The Announcements and Advertisements that peppered the pages of the Norwich Mercury (and other papers) often provide intriguing glimpses into the commercial life of the community. An example is the Salt-water Bath at Clay which advertised its attractions in the 14th April 1764 edition in the following terms:

*“At CLAY next the Sea, in Norfolk
A SALT-WATER BATH,
WHICH may be supplied with Sea-Water several
Times in a Day, if required. This Bath has met
with the Approbation of those Gentlemen and
Ladies who have made trial of it.
Good Lodgings, &c. to be had near the said
Bath, on the most reasonable Terms.
Enquire of Thomas Smith, of Clay aforesaid.”*

Some 27 years later the premises were being offered for sale in the 11th June 1791 issue:

*“CLEY BATH
To be SOLD by AUCTION
By J BURCHAM
On Monday the 20th June instant, at the
Fishmongers Arms at Cley next the Sea, Norfolk
(if not sooner disposed of by Private Contract),
between the hours of Three and Six o'clock, sub-
ject to such conditions as will be then produced,
ALL those premises commonly called the
BATHING-HOUSE, at Cley aforesaid, lately in the
occupation of Miss Mary Smith, deceased: com-
prising a kitchen, 2 parlors, bakehouse, pantry,
cellar, 4 lodging rooms, 5 garrets, 2 small gar-
dens, with brewhouse, coalhouses, a two-stalled
stable, & other convenient buildings, together
with the 2 baths adjoining the Channel, regularly
supplied by the tide with sea-water, and neces-
sary dressing rooms to accommodate each.
NB. It is presumed this situation is worth the
attention of any person properly qualified, as it
affords not only a genteel way of life, but a profit-
able one, and no capital required.*

Part of these premises are freehold and part copyhold.

For particulars apply to Mr Purdy, at Kelling, or Mr Burcham, at Holt.”

The sale having gone through, the new owner set about improving his purchase, which was advertised in the 5th May 1792 issue in the following terms:

*“CLEY next the SEA, NORFOLK
MR KALURE, Surgeon and Apothecary, respect-
fully acquaints Ladies and Gentlemen, and the
Public in general, that he has fitted up, on a new
construction, a SEA-WATER FLOATING MACHINE*

for Cold and Warm BATHING (the Old Bath being entirely laid aside), with two Dressing-Rooms, and other conveniences, and with proper attendance, which was opened for Compnay on the 1st May – Boarding and Lodging in a roomy and convenient House, and on more reasonable terms than in most places in Wngland.”

Unfortunately we have absolutely no idea to which property all this refers. This was prior to the building of the present bank and sluice so the Glaven would have been tidal all the way to Glandford Mill, though it seems probable that the premises were located at the northern end of the village near the quays.

Another property offered to let in the 30th August 1746 issue clearly was near the quay (though this is not immediately apparent):

*“To be LETT,
And enter'd upon immediately, at Clay near Holt
in the County of Norfolk,
A Well-accustomed Brewing-Office, with all
Brewing Materials thereto belonging, with a con-
venient Dwelling-House adjoining, together with a
Set of good and Well-accustomed Drawing-Houses,
proper and convenient for the same; the whole
now occupied by Mr BENJAMIN SMITH.
NB. The Stock of Beer, and all other Stock of
the said Mr SMITH in the Brewing Business, is to
be sold.
Enquire of Mr JAYE at Holt, or of Mr SMITH at
Clay aforesaid.”*

What appears to be the same premises, with added land, were on offer again three years later in the 29th July 1749 issue:

*“To be Lett, and Enter'd upon
at Michaelmas next,
at Clay in Norfolk,
A Very Convenient BREWING-OFFICE, with a
good Dwelling-House and Outhouses thereto
belonging, also several Drawing-Houses well
Tenanted, and about a hundred acres of Arable
and Pasture Land.
NB. The House is well situated near the Key,
and if it do not immediately meet with a Tenant for
it as a Brewing-Office, shall Lett it to a Merchant,
there being all Conveniences belonging for that pur-
pose. For further Particulars enquire of Mr
FRAMINGHAM JAY, at Holt in Norfolk.”*

Presumably no tenant was found as the property was advertised again on the 7th April 1750; this time the land was optional and the brewing utensils were to be sold. More was made of its convenience for a merchant.

Again we have not identified the property in question (there are a few candidates) but Jay occupied the house now known as Mill Leet.

From the Norwich Mercury Election Fever!

Sir Robert Walpole was fighting for a new lease of power – a great contest was in the offing between Walpole's Whig candidates and the Tory opposition in the Election of 1733.

"Holt. September 12th. On Monday last Wm Morden, Esq., one of the [Whig] candidates for the county of Norfolk at the ensuing election, came to the place, accompanied by Lord Hobart and Lord Lovell, Sir Philip Astley and Sir Chas Turner, Barts., Harbord Harbord, Isaac Letteup, Augustine Earle, Peter Elwin Esqs., a numerous body of clergy and several other persons of distinction and aboe five hundred freeholders on horseback. They invited all to drink the healths of His Majesty, the Queen, Prince, Duke, Princess Royal and the rest of the Royal Family, together with those of the Prince of Orange and Sir Robert Walpole with that sincerity as becomes loyal subjects of the best of Kings and Friends to a most able and faithful minister. The whole company repeated their assurances of supporting the interest of the above-mentioned candidates to the utmost of their power."

The victory was won by six votes! In a later edition of December 1733 it was reported that:

"It is believed that Sir Robert Walpole spent £60,000 over the election."

A much later edition of the Norwich Mercury reported on the festival at Holt given on 12th August 1814 following the end of the war with France and the banishment of Bonaparte to Elba:

A festival was held at Holt in commemoration of the happy return of Peace. Subscriptions for the festival poured in to the amount of £169 19s. At noon a signal gun was fired and the inhabitants formed up in procession in the market place. This was led by 24 young ladies, the band, the flag-bearers, the large laurel-decked Peace Loaf. The dinner company of about seven hundred persons all cleanly dressed in their Sunday clothes and wearing white cockades were assembled in twelve parties under the respective presidency of the Rector W Barwick Esq., the Rev J C Leake, Messrs Sales, King, Withers, Banks, Cheatte, Leech, Shalders, Allen and Baker; 24 genteel youths followed to assist the young ladies in waiting upon the diners. An orchestra was erected on the Spout's Common, with 12 tables diverging as rays all arched and flagged by the hands

of the ladies of the town. Seventeen toasts at intervals of ten minutes followed the dinner; sports of a comic type came at five o'clock, then dancing; fireworks at ten bade the dancing cease and with their last flash the happy day expired."

There was no festival following the battle of Waterloo – only thanksgiving at the church. Presumably they didn't want to tempt Providence again.

Monica White

Contributors

Ronald Beresford Dew was formerly Director of Manchester University' School of Management – now retired to Wiveton and enjoying it.

Frank Hawes is a retired architect who has been in Cley for the last twenty years.

Jonathan Hooton teaches geography and environmental science at Notre Dame School, Norwich. He is probably better known here as the author of *The Glaven Ports*.

Richard Jefferson, former cricketer and teacher, is an avid collector of things historical, especially those relating to the Glaven Valley.

John Peake, biologist, formerly worked in the Natural History Museum, London; has many early links with north Norfolk.

Pamela Peake, author, lecturer and formerly adult education tutor; has a long-time fascination for social history.

Donald J B White is a Fellow of University College, London, and was formerly Reader in Botany at the College.

John White was curator and botanist at Westonbirt Arboretum, a Forestry Commission Research Dendrologist; now works as a freelance writer and consultant.

Monica White is a botanist and formerly lectured at University College, London.