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The Hamilton family at Easton

by Brigadier Packard

When Alexander, 10th Duke of Hamilton, inherited the Easton Park Estate from his relative, the 5th and last Earl of Rochford, in 1830, he was already well acquainted with the White House, the Earl's mansion, where he had stayed in childhood. As a ducal residence however, he thought it too small, too close to the village street and not sufficiently imposing. For his initial visits to Easton therefore, while the extensive alterations he planned were being carried out, he lived at Glevering Hall, which he rented from the Arcedeckne family. The whole of the park was surrounded by a high brick wall built in the crinkle crankle manner then recently introduced from the Continent by French prisoners-of-war; the village street was diverted to its present alignment and the mansion itself was much enlarged. The Duchess, the former Susan Beckford and one of the richest and most beautiful heiresses in England, turned out to be a martinet. Woe betide any of the Estate tenants who offended her! The village shop was almost opposite the mansion's entrance gates and lounging villagers, chatting housewives and playing children in front of the shop offended her dignity. By her orders the shop-front was moved to the back of the shop and the shop-front rebuilt as a picturesque building. The smithy, too, was near her entrance gates and it, too, had its front entrance turned round to the back. When the Duchess went to church through her private entrance from the park she was preceded by a liveried footman carrying her prayer book and followed by the tailcoated butler. As she entered the church the whole congregation rose and remained standing until she was seated in her silken curtained and lovely Georgian four-posted pew.

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March 26 Meeting

Mr. G.W. Cooper gave an interesting talk on the Flour Mills of Framlingham, illustrated by diagrams prepared by him. He briefly traced the development of mills from the Stone Age hand quern. The first mill, water operated, in Framlingham was built in 1327. The river Ore had been dammed at the upper part of the mere, below the Castle. The waterwheel was where Walne's Garage now stands. Mr. Cooper indicated where the various mills stood and touched upon the Wickham Market firm of Whitmore & Binyon which had a nation-wide business constructing mills. He showed a model of their beam engine which had been made by an apprentice aged 16 of that firm. Not all mills were for flour; Packard's mill dealt with fertiliser and that at Saxtead Lodge ground horses' feed. The latter mill (smock type) had been purchased standing at Ufford and was drawn by road to its new site. Miss Cook, daughter of the owner, was at the meeting and described how she, as a child, watched this. Another member, Mr. J. Abbott, gave another eye-witness account of the pulling down of the mill many years later.

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April 23 Meeting

The visit to Mr. Hector Moore's Forge at Brandeston proved popular and about 60 attended. The mass of seemingly dull metal came to life with Mr. Moore's explanations and proved of considerable interest. Massive gates, 11 by 10½ feet and 8 cwt each, were in course of construction for Bloomville Hall, Hacheston. All work was by traditional methods; no electric welding. "How is consistency of curves maintained?" Mr. Moore's answer was "Let your eye be your guide and your money the last thing you part with." He demonstrated by fabricating a scroll. Among the pieces of ornamental metal work by which the Brandeston Forge has achieved a wide reputation is the Jubilee Cross which was walked to the villages of the diocese; the Bishop of Charleston's (USA) crozier; the Walter Horne trophy for Suffolk's Best-Kept Village; bronze work now in Worcester Cathedral. Husband and wife form a powerful team in that Mrs. Mary Moore does the design and the working drawings, having studied at St.Albans School of Art. That she specialised in modelling animals was obvious - there was an exquisite Pegasus among the specimen windvanes. The smithy is probably older than the 1702 to which it has been traced. Shoeing is still done and there was some amusement at the rack of bespoke shoes each labelled as to the horse concerned. Mr. Moore shoes horses from Felixstowe to Stowmarket but among the 200 horses there are just no farm horses.

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Our energetic secretary, Mrs. Cooper, and her husband, Mr. Geo. Cooper, are

Motors were few and far between in 1914 and when the throb of one came from the Framlingham road half-a-mile away, someone would say "Dr. Dicks on his rounds." Dr. Dicks came to Framlingham for health reasons in 1911 and left in 1925 after the great tragedy of losing his only son of six. The steering of the car had failed. 14 years of service included an incident when Dr. Dicks and a constable courageously tackled a deranged man and got from him a loaded gun. The Doctor died in 1954 and Mrs. Dicks returned to our town 11 years ago. Greetings, Mrs. Dicks, *lang may your lum reek,* as the Scots say (long may your chimney smoke).

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The Beggars Opera — The Queen's Head Alley has apparently many nicknames. One informant states quite categorically that it was 'always' known as 'The Beggars Opera'. Another states quite as categorically that it was never 'the rat hole'. Obviously the term 'rat hole' referred to the physical shape of the entrance and passage-way and not to any infestation by rats. But what is the derivation of the name 'Beggars Opera' ?

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Tudor architecture is today regarded very highly but it was the jerry-building of its time. The forests which had covered so much of this country had over the centuries been slaughtered. It was no longer practicable to build entirely of timber as had been the practice. Thus the modernists of that day constructed a timber frame and filled the gaps with rubble, brick, clunch or clay lump. The local variation, which we term 'stud and plaster', was to nail laths outside and in, plastering both. In other words Tudor 'cavity walls' ... and very effective.

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The Framlingham Theatre is still standing - behind the Midland Bank in Church Street. The *East Anglian Magazine* (Dec.1952) mentioned that between 1710 and 1786 our theatre was in the Norwich Theatrical Circuit but that after 1786 it came into a circuit of small towns. Playbills of our theatre are in the museum. Mr. Lanman reminded us of another location not very well known. This was the town Pound where straying animals were placed. It was on the Castle side of the Badingham road just beyond Messrs. Hatchers depot.

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A Saint in Framlingham ? — Quakers do not 'hold with' titles, even 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.' If however, they ever so far forgot themselves as to elect or designate saints, surely a leading candidate from their own ranks would be Elizabeth Fry. *Everyman's Encyclopedia* says ... 'She devoted her life to endeavouring to alleviate the condition of those who suffered imprisonment. The conditions, especially in the women's prisons, were early in the 19th century only to be described as terrible and it was mainly due to her efforts, which were as persistent as they were wholehearted, that the matter became one of practical politics and thus being dragged into the light was made the subject of inquiry and ultimately improved. She visited Newgate Prison in 1813 and in 1817 she formed an association for the improvement of conditions and also extended her interests to continental prisons ...' Elizabeth had married one of the cocoa family of Fry and was the daughter of John Gurney, the Norwich banker, who had a branch of his bank in Framlingham. Gurney's Bank was taken over by Barclays in 1896. Would it not have been natural for Elizabeth to have accompanied her father on one of his visits to the picturesque town of Framlingham? Can anyone contribute any evidence of this?

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Men in Mini-Skirts — Not long ago we thought that history of which there was no written record would always be a closed book. Human ingenuity has however, few limits and, for a century or more, researchers have been painstakingly assembling facts and bringing to bear all the resources of science. This careful detective work is having results and our knowledge of our ancestors should progressively widen. Obviously it is slow work but it could be more reliable than some written records. The Romans wrote some of the earliest reports on the Britons but they were not altogether reliable because the Romans were prisoners of their own conventions. They classed the Ancient Britons as barbarous whereas there is evidence of civilised economies for almost thousands of years before J. Caesar arrived here. The Romans, too, were scurrilous about our ancestors habit of wearing trousers, which the Romans said looked ridiculous. After all, every Roman knew that the proper attire for civilised men was the toga, a long gown, and that the tough Roman soldiery wore mini-skirts.

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Framlingham has, for a town of its size, say 2,000, a high standard of shops. For example, three bakers, each baking bread and cakes of a high standard; butchers, too, of similar high standards. Incidentally, Mr. John Durrant's shop was formerly

Books of Local Interest *'BLESS THIS HOUSE'* by Norah Lofts who lives at Bury St. Edmunds and who has written several books with Suffolk locations. The real hero of this book is a south Suffolk house. Written in a pleasing style the narrative covers the vicissitudes of the house and its occupants over several centuries. *'EAST ANGLIA'* by Doreen Wallace. Miss Wallace wrote fiction based on her native Cumberland. Then she married an East Anglian farmer (and now lives at Wortham) and several books with an EA setting followed. In this Batsford book Miss Wallace stands back and surveys the land and its people, a job perhaps better done by soneone from the outer world. The chapter on dialect includes the trip word used by the young of the EA species on unsuspecting new (foreigner) teachers. "What is a ruler?" and the teacher's answer would be corrected fortissimo and with action ... that it is a field roller.

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EARL SOHAM BRIDGE cost £108 The new bridge at Earl Soham is a big improvement. The one it replaced, hump-backed, was probably that built in 1790 at a cost of £108.13s. Towards this sum the Soham gentry subscribed £15.15s. and the County allowed £30. The remainder, it was hoped, would be raised by savings out of the surveyor's rate of sixpence during 1790 and 1791. These details were given in the diary of Wm. Goodwin, a surgeon and farmer, and quoted in the *East Anglian Magazine* of February 1953. Goodwin's comment was that the work might have been done for less money! What did this year's bridge cost?

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Act of Parliament Clock The ingenuity of those Westminster folk in devising new taxes might, if applied in an industry, clear our balance of payments troubles very quickly. Nevertheless there were some dead-ends in the past. There are, for example, still to be seen in our district windows blocked to escape the 17th century window tax. It lasted from 1696 to 1851. A more shortlived tax was that on watches and clocks. People buried theirs and, as a consequence, certain public authorities approached the Clockmakers' Guild in London to produce a standard reasonably-priced clock for placing in public locations. This they did and in Framlingham one was put into the cupola building which used to stand opposite Barclays Bank on Market Hill. The tax lasted only one year, 1796-7, When the building was demolished in 1813 the clock was sold and eventually Mr. Geo. Cooper purchased it. He has put it into working order. The clock, termed an 'Act of Parliament' clock is in a black wooden case and has a square face. This name is sometimes applied incorrectly to clocks of similar style but with a round face. These were made about the same time and with the same works, for coaching houses. The accepted name for these is 'Publican's clocks'. *(Information supplied by Mr. Cooper)*

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History is TODAY It is notoriously difficult, at the time, to realise when history is being made ... but it is all the time. For example, the Paston Letters - private correspondence 1418-1506 of a Norfolk family - make no mention of the discovery of America nor of the expulsion of the Moors from Spain - events we consider of some importance. Today, before our very eyes (as Tommy Trinder might say), a big development is taking place without many of us being aware of it. This is that English is becoming the international language. Much of the credit for this is due to the Americans with their volume of films, TV and radio packaged programs, books, magazines and for their technical, industrial and commercial proficiency. Obviously Britain and the other English-speaking countries add their not inconsiderable contributions. We stand to benefit very much from the international use of our language and it will be in our interest to adopt American, Australian etc. usages, when proved of value, thus avoiding separate languages developing. Today English is the major language of international trade and industry. Nearly all nations teach it as the first foreign tongue, and where it is not the first it is usually the second. Many countries use English as a neutral means of communication, *e.g.* India, Malaya. English is the language of air travel; all aircraft are given landing instructions, etc. in our language throughout the world. Scandinavians publish books in English and only later in their own language if the demand is there. Such is the range of technical books in English, the serious student is almost compelled to learn our language. In 1914 French was the diplomatic language and was bidding to become the international one, but today it is well down the scale. It seems probable that in the next few years Chinese will replace French as the second international language. Esperanto, Ido, Volapuk - fabricated languages based on European ones - are just nowhere in the race. Well, we gave our name (Anglia) to England and we can be happy to share our language with the world.

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Most of the villages round Easton had their brick kilns. The one in Easton itself was certainly used for hundreds of years. In the Ipswich Record Office a document recently turned up which shows that in 1703 John & Samuel Richbill contracted with Wm. Mayhew to supply him with 40,000 building bricks from the Easton Brick Kiln. However, the kiln has not been in use since the final sale of the Estate in 1922.

(Contributed by Brigadier Packard)

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What exciting times we live in! Big changes are occurring and this brings interest to all of us. One change, though perhaps a minor one, is that many articles we have hitherto hardly valued are now fetching surprising prices. Victoriana is snapped up as soon as it appears. And later material, too. In a London shop recently an Edward VIII coronation mug, not in first-class condition, was priced at £5.10s., whereas a George V one, 25 years older, was 35/-. A pair of 1925 Wembley Exhibition stamps, used, were £6.

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The 1840's were known as the 'hungry forties' and, for agriculture, they persisted in effect up to the 1914 war. The causes were many. The disruption during and after the Napoleonic wars,the Industrial Revolution, the repeal of the Corn Laws, cheap farm produce from the newly opened-up America, Australia etc. There was little acceptance of the idea that farmers could, or should, be helped to cope with economic changes for which they had not been responsible. Farming was in decline and farms were going derelict. There were cases locally where farmers dare not thresh stacks. A bank loan might have been made on the strength of the crop; creditors might have been told 'pay you when I thresh'. Owing to falling prices, depredations by rats, mice etc. the value was probably far less than the bank loan and promises made. Upon threshing, the deficit would immediately become apparent ... and payable. Some time ago Mr. Foulsham of Stradbroke, in a letter to the *East Anglian Magazine*, quoted a case where a stack had stood unthreshed for 28 years. There was practically no corn left. Was there a nickname for these thresh-shy stacks?

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Framlingham Commonwealth of Nations ?

We are a restless and enterprising race and for centuries folk from this district have been going further afield in an endeavour to better themselves. To Ipswich, London, Canada, USA, Australia, New Zealand, etc. Just as there are far more people of British origin outside these islands than now here, there must be many more people of Framlingham (and district) origin overseas than here. Unfortunately contacts are in time lost but many emigrants and their descendants do look back with interest and pride to their places of origin. Conversely Framlingham has its own interest in the accomplishments of those whose characters were formed here. Some of the emigrants are in States whose allegiance is to our Queen, but some have relinquished this. Our interest does however, endure. There can be hardly a family in our area that does not have one or more members overseas. We would like to hear of the achievements or story of any ex-Framlinghamian (or of one from the district). Here is one who made good, even if six generations later. As a result of a family quarrel (how East Anglian!) a yeoman farmer of Swanton Morley, about 40 miles north of us, disinherited his eldest son. As a result three of his grandsons emigrated from Hingham, Norfolk, to New England in 1633. One was Samuel Lincoln, his descendant was Abraham Lincoln, perhaps the most famous President of the USA.

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A hundred years ago a local farmer analysed the economy of a farm. The price of a coomb (18 stone) of wheat should be no more than the week's wage of a labourer. The other corn - barley and oats - should pay the rent. The cows should keep the house going *i.e.* milk, butter and cheese sales should pay for the food etc. Chickens and eggs were the wife's perks *i.e.* her dress allowance and pocket money - she probably received nothing more. Can anyone quote any more yardsticks like these?

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Getting values right

A girl swimming in the sea at Aldeburgh was having difficulty in getting ashore owing to the undercurrent and called to a boatman to come to her assistance. He took no notice and she eventually reached the shore unaided. On asking the boatman why he hadn't come to help her, he replied "The last gal Oi helped only gave me half-a-crown. We git five bob for a body."

(from 'SUFFOLK DIALECT' by Claxton)

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Contributions for 'FRAM' are welcomed and should be given or sent to E.C. SHANKS, 64 Waddington Way, London, S.E.19. Write the complete paragraph or note down the gist and we will develop.