

FRAM

Newsletter no. 11

April 2025



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Web Sites

Framlingham History Society: <https://framlinghamhistory.uk/>

Framlingham Historical Photo Archive: <http://framlinghamarchive.uk/>

Introduction

Here is our Newsletter for April 2025. Thanks to Alison, John and Annie for their work in putting it together. As always, we are very keen to hear from members with suggestions – and better still – articles, for inclusion. You will find in it information about this year's Summer Visits. I do hope many of you will join us for these outings. If you recall, we had a discussion at the AGM about the future of Summer Visits, prompted by relatively few members taking advantage of them in 2024. But it was the overwhelming view that they should continue to be offered. Details about how to sign up for this year's visits will be issued separately before very long. Then, it's up to you! You may also like to know that we will be supporting the Town Councils commemoration of VE day by setting up a presentation in the Crown Hotel on May 8. Do come along and see our displays.

David Ransom

Bob Roberts. An Obituary

It is with great sadness that we have learned of the death of Bob Roberts. Bob was a very significant member of the History Society. Soon after joining the Society, he became a committee member and in the minutes of the 1997 AGM it is reported that he had edited and published the first Fram Journal, which he continued to produce twice yearly – numbering no less than sixty in total – until 2019, when ill health made it impossible for him to continue. In March 2020, The Journal was replaced by the bi-annual Newsletter of today.



Long serving members will need no reminder of the scholarly authenticity, range, and quality of the Fram Journal, and thanks to recent work by committee member Simon Garrett, this magnificent source of learning, interest and fascination is now available to existing members and all visitors to the Society's website - virtually

in perpetuity. Bob's working background was that of a professional Archivist and Librarian which accounts for the very thorough nature and presentation of the journals. For many years he was employed as such at the City of London Guildhall Library, and he is still remembered there today by those who worked with him. There was a touch of eccentricity about him which together with his interest in both history and current affairs made him a charming and loyal friend and committee colleague. The society is both delighted and thrilled that it can continue to treasure and remember Bob for the wonderful Fram Journals he has left with us. Since drafting this piece, we have received a very affectionate and interesting email from Christopher Nickolds, one of Bobs childhood friends, which complements much of which we remember about him when he lived in Framlingham.

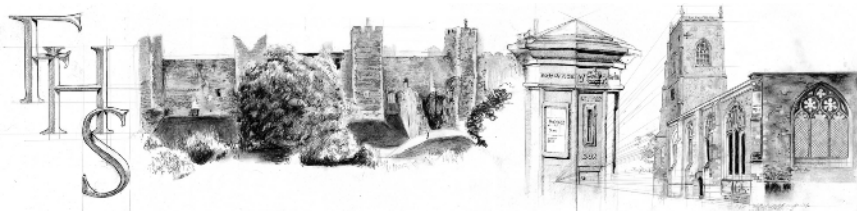
Memories of our School friend - Bob Roberts

We met Bob when we all went to Cheshunt Grammar School, from September 1953. Right from the start, Bob stood out - he was at the time a lot taller than most of us! Like many of us, he came from a modest background. He lived in a Council House in Upshire, a village near Waltham Abbey, where his father was a bricklayer. Bob was bright and studious, but certainly not lacking a sense of humour. Whereas he enjoyed the serene sport of fishing, he hated games and school sport. During one notable games period, being instructed by the games master to practise a rugby tackle, he simply hacked out with his boot and caught the teacher's shin.

As we grew older, he converted to Roman Catholicism. And whilst others of us, during our 6th Form days, interested ourselves in politics, and would go canvassing for one or other of the main political parties, Bob decided that, for him, Total Monarchy was the answer! Some of us, including Bob, studied English at A level, where the syllabus included the poetry of T S Eliot. "The Wasteland" was one of our favourite poems, which inspired Bob to name our group of friends "The Worshipful Company of Wastelanders" - WCW - a title we embraced and retained over the years - a useful name for what was, amongst other things, a social and drinking club!

We went on trips and holidays together. On one walking holiday in North Wales, Bob turned up in a lounge suit, carrying a rolled umbrella, with a fishing rod strapped to it. However, he did get to the top of Snowdon, Tryfan and other peaks in that garb, even if his black office shoes were in tatters by the end of the week.

He excelled academically, and was the one member of our group to go on to Cambridge University - Clare College. During university vacations, he worked as a hospital porter at the Royal Free Hospital in London, where his uncle was Head Porter. After University, we all went our separate ways and gradually lost touch with Bob. He married Jane, and had two children. Bob was a one off. Eccentric but loveable. We remember him with affection: a good friend, highly intelligent, modest, warm hearted, caring - and great fun. May he rest in peace.



Framlingham History Websites Simon Garrett

The websites maintained by the Society have been expanded greatly in the last year.

The framlinghamhistory.uk website now contains a growing collection of articles about Framlingham's history. These were launched in December 2024 in a "Framlingham History Advent Calendar", which contained 24 articles, one behind each door on the calendar. This was heavily publicised, and was covered

by BBC Radio Suffolk. Website statistics showed that several hundred people in the Framlingham area accessed the website for the first time during that month. The articles in the Advent Calendar can now be found on the website at framlinghamhistory.uk/articles/. The collection is regularly extended and now contains around 40 articles. We are always keen to hear of stories, recollections or articles to add to the collection.

The website also contains an archive of back numbers of the Society's Newsletter and Journal. This can be found at framlinghamhistory.uk/newsletters-and-journals/, and there is a combined table of contents of all past issues at framlinghamhistory.uk/newsletters-and-journals/contents-of-all-newsletters-and-journals/. The Journal/Newsletter has been published two or three times a year since 1997, and a short newsletter was published in the 1960s and 1970s. Earlier issues (prior to 2015) were published on paper only, but all have been digitised and are available online.

From 1997 to 2019 the Journal was edited by Bob Roberts, who sadly died in February 2025. His obituary is in this Newsletter. Bob was a major contributor to the Journal, and after he was no longer able to edit it, a shorter publication has been produced, hence the change of name to "Newsletter".

It should be noted that the latest edition of the Newsletter is available only to members of the Framlingham History Society.

The Society also maintains two photographic archives. The main archive of historic photographs is on a separate website at <https://framlinghamarchive.uk/> and contains around 1,000 photographs dating back to the 1870s. There is a modern photo archive on this website at framlinghamhistory.uk/framlingham-photo-project-2011/. This is a photographic snapshot of Framlingham life in 2011.

A sister organisation the Lanman Museum maintains a website at <https://lanmanmuseum.uk/>. This contains many illustrated articles about the Lanman Museum in Framlingham Castle, and the complete catalogue of museum artefacts can be searched.

Summer Visits

We have now finalised details for this year's summer visits and booking details with further information will be sent out shortly.

Date	Venue	Start Time	Ticket price
Friday 23 rd May	The Food Museum	2:00	£16.00
Tuesday 24 th June	Linden House, Eye	2:30	£15.00
Friday 4 th July	Wingfield College	10:30	£15.00

Each visit is designed to add something over the normal visitor experience. In the case of the Food Museum we get a guided tour including a view of areas not generally available plus a season's free admission to the Museum. The visit to Linden House allows us to see inside a private historic house not usually open to the public and includes tea and scones! Wingfield College is in private hands but we have unique opportunity to visit followed by a tour of the church, all under the guidance of Edward Martin. We hope this offers a varied agenda and would advise booking as soon as possible, as places are limited.



Wingfield College Great Hall

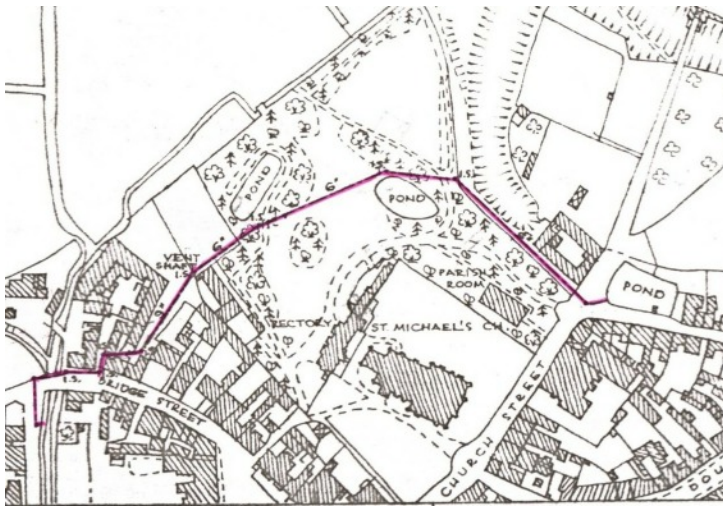


The Food Museum Smithy



Linden House

Some time ago, I was given this map which had been in the possession of the Rector Martin Bulstrode. It states: Details taken from "Plan of sewer from castle wall Brewery through rectory grounds to Bridge Street sewer." Signed by Thomas Miller, May 1895. Traced from O.S. sheets, 1954. Bulstrode also added:



The sewer marked in RED [6inch diameter at upper end increasing to 9 inch near the river] is now taking waste from the castle – prior to that it only took waste from the Castle Inn and the Rectory. It is thought that originally it was not a sewer but a means of supplying water from the Castle pond to the lower part of the town (as there is seldom enough water in the river) in the event of fire. The manhole in the centre of the road by the Castle pond clearly used to hold a head of water equal to that of the pond. The pond is now almost dry, and there is a sluice on a chain which could be opened on the sewer side of the manhole to let water down the sewer.

Several people clearly recollect a point on Riverside by Walne's [Riverside] garage which was maintained by the old volunteer fire brigade. When this was abandoned is not known- probably when water was laid on in the town [1938]. Then it was converted, it is assumed, to its present use as a sewer. The present deplorable state of the Castle pond can be attributed to the cessation of the need for it to be kept in good condition in order to supply water in the event of a fire, not only at the bottom of the town but also at the top.

There is still a pair of galvanized pipes that cross the river, and a single larger pipe. Could that be the pipe referred to above? I recall as boys that we would pull ourselves across the double pipes and they were subsequently always shiny. Obviously not a tradition that has been maintained!

Sources for Framlingham History Research

John Bridges

I thought it might be useful to outline some of the sources I use when researching aspects of Framlingham's history for the last 200 years or more.

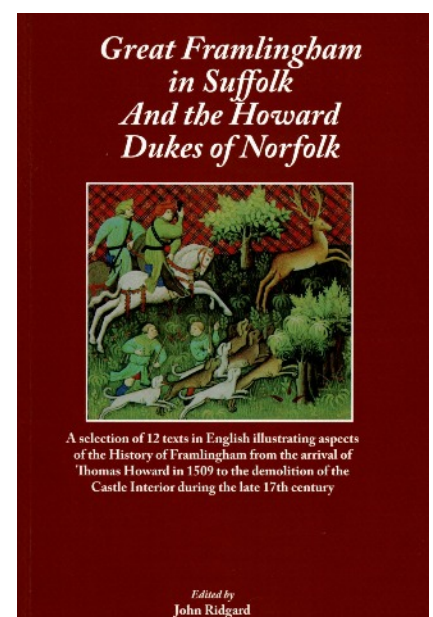
Books

There have been several books that include information, but the main sources are:

The History of Framlingham by Robert Loder, 1798. This is a fairly dry read but includes great detail on the castle, church and how the town functioned. A copy is available in the library to consult but not take out.

The History, Topography and Antiquities of Framlingham and Saxsted by Richard Green was published in 1834. It builds on Loder's work with additional material. It usefully has an index.

Lambert's Family Almanacs. These were published annually between 1871 and 1916. Packed with local information on events, people, births, deaths and marriages etc. The information was consolidated into one large book by John and Suzy McEwan in 2000. An excellent source with a good index.



Framlingham Guides by Oswald Sitwell. He was a thorough researcher of Framlingham history and produced several editions of his guide. They include much information on buildings. Look out for the 1974 edition.

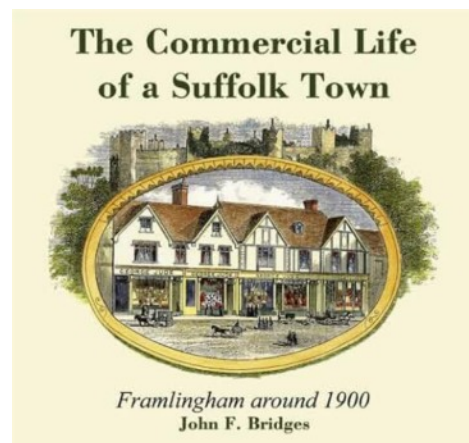
Great Framlingham in Suffolk and the Dukes of Norfolk by Dr John Ridgard. A series of texts for the period 1509 to late 17th century.

The Commercial Life of a Suffolk Town, Framlingham around 1900, by John Bridges. Published in 2007, it covers 32 trades and professions that existed then.

A History of Framlingham, by Muriel Kilvert. Published in 1995, it starts in the Saxon period and continues through the 20th century.

A Suffolk Town in Wartime, Framlingham 1939–1945, by John Bridges. Published in 2018, it provides a full account of life in the town throughout that period and is still in print.

On an eminence. Celebrating 150 Years of Framlingham College. Published by the College in 2014. Some of these books are available in our library, and if not, can usually be ordered for you.



Trade Directories

These are a most important source for establishing when businesses operated and where. The earliest is *The Universal British Directory of 1790–1798*. The most recent reliable one is *Kelly's Directory* of 1937. There are around 22 similar directories for the intervening period. There have been some post war directories, but I have found them not to be very accurate. I have the Framlingham information from all these directories, and am happy to check details if anyone wishes.

Newspapers

Very important sources of information. These are available to search online from the British Newspaper Library, Find My Past and Ancestry. You either need a subscription or you can pay for individual sessions. *Framlingham Weekly News* was our local paper that was in print between 1859 and 1939. It cost one penny throughout all that time. The good news is that it can be searched in the library at no cost. These sources all have optical character recognition so you can enter the details and it will come up with either 'No results Found' or many hundred! The knack is refining the entry information to get the best result.

These search engines now search ALL papers, so if you are looking for something in 1820 for example, you may well find it in the *Ipswich Journal*, *Suffolk Chronicle* or much further afield. These on line organisations now have a vast amount of general information including Births, Deaths and Marriages, Census returns and much more. Suffolk Archives are currently digitising their records, which will hopefully be online soon. The last census that can be consulted is 1921, but there is the 1939 Register which can provide information on roles that had been taken up prior to the war, e.g. ARP, ambulance driver etc. However, if it is considered that some of these people may still be alive, their entries are redacted.

Starting in December 1893, *FWN* ran a series of articles on commercial and general aspects of Framlingham based on the entries in Pigot's Directory of 1830. It ran through 19 issues. It is probably the most comprehensive record for the town in that period and is the source for much written history. The early issues were transcribed into the FRAM Journal (April, August, December 2010, April 2011 and April 2012). One day, we might complete them.

FRAM Journals and Newsletters

Thanks to the work of Simon Garrett, he has put on line all the FRAM Journals and Newsletters. This also includes the earlier Newsletters that were produced between 1968 and 1974.

Visit <https://framlinghamhistory.uk/> and look for the list of contents which should enable you to find your subject of interest, and then go to that issue.

I hope this will inspire you to look into some aspect of Framlingham's history, and perhaps write an article for the Newsletter.

George Brooke Keer's Financial Downfall in 1832

John Bridges

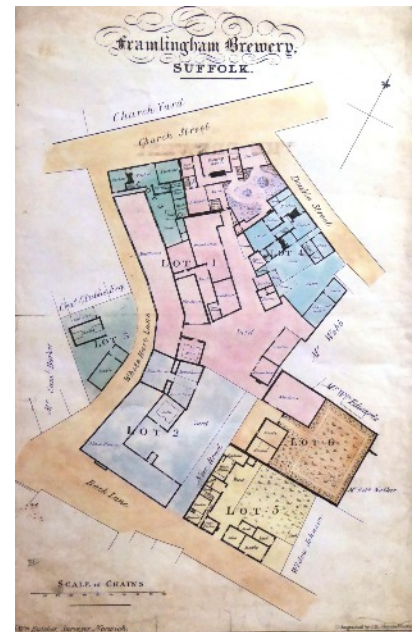
In the last newsletter we looked at the circumstances surrounding Charles Clubbe's financial demise in 1832, brought on by the bankruptcy of George Brooke Keer (GBK). At that time a trader could become bankrupt if he could not pay his creditors, but no longer went to prison. An individual such as Clubbe, in similar circumstances, would be declared an insolvent debtor. Some time ago I was sent a document by a distant relation of GBK that originated from the National Archives (TNA B3/2882). There were a great number of files contained in the document, and I set out to find whether this provided useful information. It did not disappoint.

The main difficulty is that most of the information is of course hand written and difficult to read, supplemented by printed forms that are also filled in by hand. Those familiar with such documents will know that there is a great deal of repetition, and the contents of a page could have been summarised in a few sentences. There are also many legal phrases and terms not in use today. However, it has been possible to extract much important detail.

Earlier articles on GBK have generally referred to him as having 'some financial difficulty with the Tax Collector' in relation to tax on malt. The phrase originates from the series of articles in *Framlingham Weekly News (FWN)*, in 1894. These articles relate to a period some 65 years earlier and are a most important source of Framlingham history. Robert Lambert, owner of *FWN* in 1894, was born in 1835 so had no firsthand knowledge of those events. The bankruptcy document referred to above, makes no mention of unpaid malt taxes, but does say a great deal about all the other people GBK owed money to.

As an individual creditor, it would have been difficult to bring pressure on GBK to settle any outstanding bill. However, if someone owed significant sums of money to a bank or legal person, that would have been a different matter. GBK had three sons and a daughter, Mary. Manning Keer was 39 years old at this time and an agent for the Norfolk and Norwich Joint Stock Banking Company (NNJSBC). His office was in GBK's mansion house, sometimes called Step or Stair House, situated on the corner of Church Lane and Bridge Street. GBK jnr was 42 years old and involved with his father's business and lived in the large house in Church Street, currently the offices of Turner and Ellerby. His other son Davie was a doctor.

The FIAT of bankruptcy is dated 7th February 1832. FIAT is a Latin term essentially meaning 'let it be done'. There is a petition by George Carthew of Redenhall in Norfolk, Gentleman and Attorney at law against GBK, a common brewer and merchant, who owed him £100 and upwards. This relates to Promissory notes from 1826 that were signed not only by GBK snr but also by his sons GBK jnr and Manning Keer (MK). They had promised to pay on demand the sum of £200. The *Suffolk Chronicle* of 3rd November 1827 noted that the directors of the NNJSBC had appointed George Carthew of Harleston and Manning Keer of Framlingham as joint agents of the bank.



George Brooke Keer's malting and brewery, Fore Street and Crown & Anchor Lane. Credit *Lanman Museum*.

It should be no surprise that GBK had borrowed from the NNJSBC, with Manning's assistance. Thomas Nimmo of the Norfolk bank stated that GBK was indebted for a large amount and he was sent by the directors to Framlingham. On 1st February 1832, he called at GBK's mansion to demand payment of the debt. He was met by MK and after explaining the purpose of his visit, MK went upstairs and was there for some time. When he came back downstairs he said his father was not at home and the money could not be paid. A separate statement from GBK jnr said that he was there also, as was his father, and that they had agreed that they should tell Nimmo that GBK snr was not at home.

At the Crown Inn on 10th February 1832, GBK was declared and judged to be bankrupt. It was stated that he had for the last 20 years exercised the trade of merchant and brewer of beer, and of selling same and buying wine, spirit and liquor, and by these dealings had become indebted to George Carthew. The process had now begun, with Commissioners being directed to enter his properties and seize money, jewels, plate, household stuff, goods and merchandise, and to prepare an inventory. If there was any resistance, they were to break open premises in order to execute the warrant.



George Brooke Keer's mansion on the corner of Bridge Street and Church Lane. Credit *Lanman Museum*.

GBK was then ordered to attend the Crown Inn on 22nd February and 27th March to make a full disclosure of all his assets. At the same time, creditors were asked to attend and be prepared to prove their debts. Henry Pigeon, a distiller in Southwark, was owed over £2,000, although various figures were given. GBK snr and jnr and MK were all named. The largest account was for the NNJSBC who was owed £10,189 by GBK.

Creditors were obviously concerned as to whether they would get any money back. If they were also trading with others they may well have been able to weather the storm. But, anyone who owed GBK money was required to pay it back, 'otherwise legal proceedings will be taken'. The fact that someone needed to borrow money suggests that person could not readily repay it, and

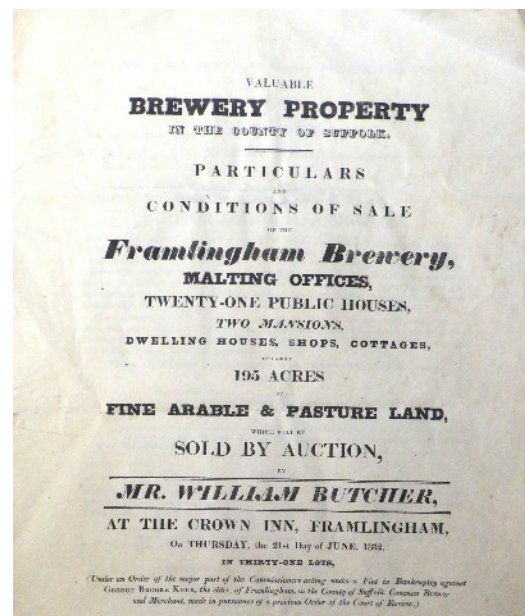
it seems that Charles Clubbe, the Framlingham attorney, found himself in this situation.

Although the creditors turned up at the Crown Inn on 22nd February, GBK did not and he did not send any reason for his absence. The creditors were there in force and disclosed the amounts owed to them. The Commissioners were clearly not happy with GBK not showing up. They learnt he was confined to his bed, being unwell. The proceedings were adjourned until 1pm when they made their way to GBK's house! He said that he was not prepared at that time to make a full disclosure and asked for extra time, which was granted. On the 30th March, those whose debts had been proved were required to meet at the Crown Inn, to assent or dissent the Assignees from selling or disposing of the estates. The Assignees could also carry on businesses, employing competent persons to run them. In the Bridges family blacksmith accounts he was initially referred to as 'G B Keer', but from late 1832 the account is called 'Mr G B Keer Assignees, other side'. This situation carried on until 1842 when the account was unsatisfactorily resolved. The account is crossed through, where my great-great-grandfather John Fruer Bridges wrote 'Mr Keer have swindled me completely out of this and his bill was made with only figures and no goods and obliged to pay the balance as advised'.

GBK snr died in 1835 aged 78. It is presently unclear how GBK jnr could have been further involved with this business for another ten years, seeing as he was a bankrupt and the farms had been sold. GBK and his family had to surrender everything to the Commissioners. These requirements were set out in detail, concluding with one exception: 'the necessary wearing apparel of this examinant and his children only exempted'. For the man who had built a substantial business, starting the Fore Street malting and brewery in 1788 and developing 21 public houses, this was a massive fall from grace, from which he could not come back. He died just three years later.

The list of creditors is a long one, with approximately 64 businesses and individuals all being owed money. The sums owed to the smaller creditors amounted to some £15,513. Many local names are listed including Henry Thompson, grocer and draper (father of Sir Henry Thompson) for £113, John Fruer, builder for £221 and John Fruer Bridges, blacksmith for £18. The NNJSBC was the largest creditor, being owed over £17,000, making a total approaching £33,000. There is no reference in the document relating to unpaid malt tax. There may be other documents with further details, but the present ones show overwhelming evidence to prove his bankruptcy. The process of selling off the assets started in March 1832 with the details recorded in local newspapers.

A three-day auction at the end of that month for all the household goods included a grand piano. In June all the property was sold off in 31 lots, which included the two mansion houses and two farms and the 21 pubs. In October the live and dead stock on the farms were sold, and on the 29th October all the trade equipment of the brewery, including 120 hogsheads (6,480 gallons) of stale beer!



Sale document of 1832. Credit *Lanman Museum*

The amounts raised for the properties were given in the 1894 *FWN* articles, with a total of £21,775. In addition there would have been sums due from debtors to GBK such as Charles Clubbe. On 25th January 1833, the Commissioners met to examine and audit the accounts in order to see if a dividend could be paid. They determined that there was a balance of '£1,770 due to the treasurer after payment of all moneys now in the hands of the Assignees, and we are therefore unable to make a dividend'.

Framlingham at that time, like other market towns, would have been quite insular. It would be another 27 years before the railway arrived. The collapse of the GBK empire affected many people in the town. Even The Crown Inn where all the proceedings were conducted was affected, being bought at the auction for £1,170.

What happened to GBK jnr and Manning following the bankruptcy? For GBK there seems to have been a period of around ten years where he had some involvement with a business or farm, based solely on the blacksmith's accounts. In the 1851 Census, he is a widower living with his unmarried sister Emma, and noted as 'formerly a brewer'. In 1861 and 1871, he is still a lodger on the Market Hill. He died in 1876.

His younger brother Manning fared better. By 1837 he was placing adverts for the sale of property. He became secretary of the East Suffolk Agricultural Association and remained so until his death in 1857. Manning had also been a successful wine and spirit merchant, with his premises on the Market Hill (present chemists). In the 1851 Census he is noted as such, living with his wife Harriet. He was also treasurer to the Framlingham Horticultural Society. Not bad for someone who had been declared bankrupt.

I should emphasise that the interpretation of the bankruptcy documents has been quite demanding and there is much that is not clear. If anyone would like to have a fresh look at it, I will be pleased to share the information. I would like to thank Liz Craig for copying the TNA document and sending to me.

Ploughing over Time

Alison Bowman

The modern essentials of farm machinery are the tractor and the combine, familiar to all of us. However, this was not always the case. Until the turn of the last century the horse was a much more common sight and involved a high level of human intervention. I was struck when watching the films shown at our AGM how similar the methods used were to those used in the Luttrell Psalter and how sharply they contrasted to what we see now – procedures that had remained unchanged for thousands of years had undergone a total revolution in a relatively short space of time! This can be seen from the images below.



Ploughman of Arezzo,
National Etruscan Museum of
Villa Giulia, Rome 6th century
BC

Ploughing with a yoke of horned cattle in ancient Egypt. Painting from the burial chamber of Sennedjem, c. 1200 BC



Ploughing with oxen. Luttrell Psalter c1330 AD

Note: up to six oxen could be in a team the number depending on the soil type. Teams could also be a mix of oxen and horses.

Tractor and plough, in front of pair of oxen pulling plough c1910. *George Grantham Bain Collection (Library of Congress)*



This photograph is interesting as it shows the transition taking place. Coming from the US, it has oxen still being used. In the UK one early change was from oxen to horses. For many thousands of years, oxen were the primary beasts of burden on the farm but in the UK in 1801, the Enclosures Act led to the end of the open-field approach to farming that had persisted since the late Middle Ages. It was this that led to the decline in the use of oxen. Six or even eight oxen harnessed in pairs, one behind the other, were too inflexible to plough and work smaller fields compared to a couple of horses or three aside. Oxen did have advantages over horses as they are more robust, the latter being far more prone to injury and requiring a more carefully managed diet. In hard times, oxen could survive on mouldy hay and straw, which could never be feed to horses without ill effects. On the other hand oxen require large volumes of bulky food eaten in one meal, taking a long time to digest, needing to rest after eating. Horses can eat and digest within an hour.



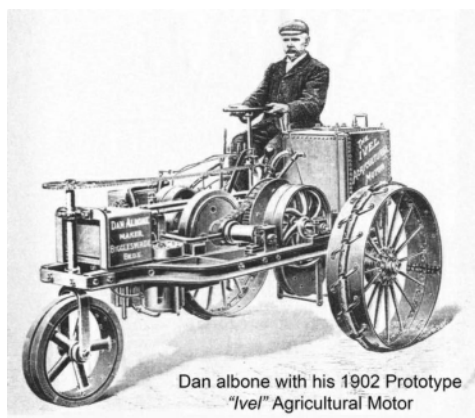
A traditional horse-drawn plough in rural Ireland c1945

And then came the tractor.....The first tractors were steam-powered ploughing engines. They were used in pairs, placed on either side of a field to haul a plough back and forth between them using a wire cable. In Britain Mann's and Garrett developed steam tractors for direct ploughing, but the heavy, wet soil of England meant that these designs were generally less economical than a team of horses.



Harrison Machine Works 1882 tractor

Things rapidly moved on from there, with the first petrol fuelled tractor being developed in the US in 1869. The first commercially successful light-weight petrol-powered general purpose tractor was built by Dan Albone, a British inventor in 1901.



Dan Albone on his prototype Ivel Agricultural motor. Picture from North Bedfordshire Gazette, Friday, January 23, 1903.

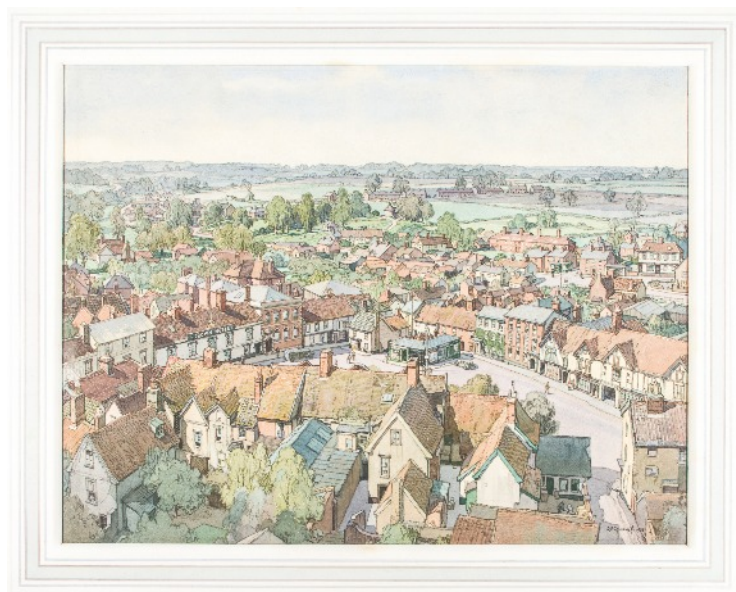
Tractors have evolved since then using a variety of configurations and fuels including bio-diesel, LPG and wood (in WW2). The basic farm tractor is a simple open vehicle, with two very large driving wheels on an axle below a single seat and the engine in front of the driver, with two steerable wheels below the engine compartment. Enclosed cabs are fitted on almost all modern models, for operator safety and comfort. It is used for a wide variety of operations much as oxen and horses of old, but involving, as with most modern arable farming, fewer people and no animals!



NEW FRAMLINGHAM BOOK

Our Society is preparing a limited-edition book *Framlingham a Portrait Through Time, 1544–2016*.

This exciting project will portray in etchings, paintings and drawings over 110 images with detailed captions relating to their historic background. The most prolific artist associated with Framlingham is Leonard Squirrell, whose patron was James Mason Martin who grew up in Framlingham. Squirrell's exquisite watercolours capture not only the castle and church, but many locations around the town between 1914 and 1974. Also featured are many drawings by John Western along with work by over 40 artists. The hardback book will be available later this year, with



From the Church Tower, by Leonard Squirrell, 1955.

an anticipated price of £20.

If you would like to reserve a copy, please contact framww2@gmail.com or call 01728 723557.

Overpaid, Oversexed, and Over Here – The USAAF in World War II by Geoffrey Kay 11th Dec 2024

Also known as the 'friendly invasion' the backdrop to the arrival of thousands of US soldiers to the UK was the fact that the war was not going well for the Allies. Allied troops were widely spread, hundreds of thousands were evacuated from France at Dunkirk, and back home, the population of the UK was changing as various national communities scattered across the country were rounded up and made internees on the Isle of Man.

There was a sense that the 2nd World War would be different from the 1st. This would be a war in the air with the bombing of cities designed to demoralise civilian populations. The RAF already had bomber bases in Norfolk and Suffolk. Pearl Harbour brought the US into the war coupled with Hitler declaring war on the US.

Massive logistical planning was involved in moving the RAF to bases to Lincolnshire while the US moved into Norfolk and Suffolk. Stanstead became the reception airport for US planes. This brought an 'invasion' of thousands of US soldiers into numerous airfields and airstrips across East Anglia, mostly bomber bases, at a time when most British men were away.

There were some differences in approach between the allies. The British preferred to fly at night, while the US preferred day time. The US policy was to use precision bombing while the UK used a carpet-bombing method.

GIs were paid seven times more than their British counterparts. They were young men a long way from home. Each base housed approximately 3000 men. The US shipped in their food, and they ate better than the Brits. They looked smart in their tailored uniforms.

On the journey over GIs were given a booklet to help them cope with life in the UK. There was guidance on how to behave in someone's house and how to behave in a pub. They struggled with UK currency. The native population found them brash and dopey, although they were generally welcomed.

GIs lived in Nissan huts on the bases, something they complained bitterly about. They flew 'flying fortresses', with mustang fighter planes accompanying the bombers part of the way. The range of the fighter planes gradually increased as the war progressed.

The US Airforce was segregated. There were no black aircrew. Black GIs were mostly given the role of building airstrips, which they did with great speed. Trains brought hardcore from bombed out houses in London to use as the base for new airstrips. (After the war much of it was dug up and used to build the M1). The black soldiers lived under canvass during their time here, as opposed to the Nissan huts for the white soldiers and airmen. Black and white GIs were thrown together in the unsegregated UK. This led to tensions and frequent fights. There were major clashes between black and white GIs in various places in the UK. Some pubs were asked to choose whether to be 'white' or 'black'. The Fox at Hawley, for example chose to be a black only pub. In towns too, some nights were black and some white, for example in Eye. This led to three-way culture shifts – native British, black GIs and white GIs. It was unusual for British people to see so many black people but generally locals sided with the black soldiers. To see black GIs fraternizing with white British women incensed the white American soldiers. Black GIs played an important part in D Day, particularly in the infantry, although no black faces appear in films on the subject. They have been air-brushed out.

American entertainers – black and white – were flown in to entertain the troops. Joe Lewis visited Stowmarket. He was hugely popular, particularly among the black troops. James Cagney also visited, as did big bands such as Glen Miller. Aircraft hangers were turned into concert halls and local people were bussed in. Many relationships were fostered between GIs and British families.

The death toll of bombers was very high. There were huge demands on medical services and hospitalization on a big scale. More food had to be grown at home as supplies were not always getting through on the Atlantic convoys.

GIs brought their own culture with them such as rodeos. They were here for two years but had an impact that lasted long after they had left. Once D Day started many GIs left the UK for France very quickly, often with no time to say goodbye. There were thousands of GI brides. This brought mixed experiences, some happy endings but also many broken hearts. GIs had to get permission from their base commander to marry. White soldiers generally received permission, while black soldiers did not.

Maddingley Cemetery commemorates fallen GIs. Thousands more have no graves. Across Suffolk some remaining bases and museums mark their presence. For many years veterans returned on an annual basis partly to renew friendships. This generally meant white veterans, black GIs rarely returned.

Is it possible that the good treatment black GIs received in the UK and the experience of living in a non-segregated country provided some of the germs of the Civil Rights Movement?

The Great Colchester Earthquake of 1884 by *Dr Jonathan Belsey* on 26th Feb 2025

Despite being the most destructive earthquake in British history, the Colchester earthquake of 1884 is not a widely known event. However, it was an important event at the time. It caused panic among the population and people ran outside in fear; the ground shook; pictures and ornaments fell over, and chimneys collapsed; buildings shook, and the church spire collapsed in Red Lion Square. Not all earthquakes are noisy, but people reported hearing a sound like distant thunder or the rumble of a tube train.

Contemporary theories included speculation that the Fenians had blown up the army garrison in Colchester. Others thought a volcano had erupted – it was only the previous year that Krakatoa in Indonesia had taken place. Others wondered if the gas works had exploded. In other words, it did not initially occur to people that what they had experienced was an earthquake.

In 1961 the BBC carried out an interview with Mrs Jane Wardley aged 91 years. She had been 13 years old at the time of the earthquake. At that time, she worked at a school in Wivenhoe. She reported hearing a noise, like a rumble. The school was damaged. No-one went to bed at night for fear of a tidal wave that never came. People were very frightened.

Extraordinarily, no-one was killed but many were left homeless as houses were often not well built. Many churches were damaged. The earthquake had a twisting action and falling chimneys were a major risk. The large water tower in the centre of Colchester, known as 'Jumbo', survived unscathed. It had only been finished six months before but had been extremely well-built. Older, timber-framed buildings also survived much better than newer brick-built houses. While the epicentre was Colchester, the effects were felt across most of England.

A fund was set up – the Mansion House Fund – to help people affected. While some used fake photographs to try and cheat the fund, detailed records were kept as to where the money went.

In 1935 the famous 'Richter Scale' was devised. It has not been used since the 1940s but it was important in understanding the process of earthquakes. The shallower the quake, the wider it is felt, and Colchester was a shallow one but caused great damage. The European macro seismic scale measures how an earthquake would be experienced and its likely impact. Colchester measures between 8-9 on this scale which equates to heavily damaging and destructive.

Colchester became a tourist attraction. Special trains were laid on for people to come and look at the damage. A 245-page official report was produced. Books were written about it – some very badly such as Robert Buchanan's *The Earthquake pt 1*. Fortunately, part 2 never appeared!

The Resurrection of the Medieval Rood by Timothy Easton on 22nd Jan 2025

A rood screen refers to a decorative wooden partition that separates the nave from the chancel in a medieval church richly painted with religious imagery. The word 'rood' means cross, signifying the crucifix that would typically be displayed on top of the screen.

The screen served as a visual barrier between the congregation and the clergy with the rood at the centre acting as a focal point for worship. Many screens feature intricate painted scenes depicting saints and biblical stories. East Anglia has a particularly high concentration of well-preserved rood screens, showcasing the area's rich medieval artistic heritage. In many churches there was a canopy of honour over rood screens to honour the statues that were under it.



The rood screen at Ranworth showing the two side altars and central panels of twelve apostles © <https://www.ranworthchurch.com/rood-screen>

During the reformation under Edward VI rood screens were taken down as being associated with Catholicism, as was other iconography, such as statues. The Protestant Reformation was concerned with the practice of praying to an image and having intermediaries between the worshipper and God. The visual imagery of Catholicism was replaced with the 'word', the bible and with seeing and hearing the priest. By the 1540s there was a bible in every church by the order of Henry VIII.

Statues, standing in a recess or niche were removed while heads carved at each corner of the niche were left intact. They were seen as forces that averted evil and so were left in place. Also left in place were symbols scratched on walls, for example the letter 'M' symbol for Mary/Maria. It was not the letters that worried Protestants, it was the images. Some churches had Marian altars. The symbol 'M' acknowledged Mary as the queen of heaven. It is found all over churches and migrated into houses. It functioned as a protective touchstone for people. The year 1570 is known as the 'Little Ice Age', there was failure of crops, starvation and plague. This led to an increase in protective marks.

Some remaining rood screens were subsequently damaged by iconoclasm and have lines scratched across faces. In terms of the colours used these were generally yellow, red, black, green, white and gold-leaf. Very rarely were blue pigments used due to the cost of production.

During the revival of high church Anglican practises in the late 19th century some rood screens were replaced. In some churches 'doom' paintings were commissioned, 'doom' being a term for the last judgement. They were encouraged by the church to highlight the contrasts between the reward of heaven and the agony of hell to guide Christians away from misbehaviours and sin. These were usually located in the chancel arch because it was visible to worshippers during services. The division between the chancel and the nave symbolised the divide between heaven, purgatory and earth.

Local Examples

- Dennington church has retained its rood screen
- Kedington church well worth a visit

- Ranworth church, Norfolk is one of the finest examples of a surviving rood screen
- St Andrew church in Bramfield also has a good example
- Southwold is a good example of high-quality paintwork
- Lound church has an example of a reconstructed rood from 1912 designed by Ninian Comper
- Wingfield church retains its pre-Reformation organ on top of the rood screen.
- Wenaston church has a good example of doom paintings
- Bedfield church has two surviving bibles from Henry VIII