

FRAM

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Web Sites

Framlingham History Society:	https://framlinghamhistory.uk/
Framlingham Historical Photo Archive:	http://framlinghamarchive.uk/
The Lanman Museum	https://lanmanmuseum.uk/

Introduction

David Ransom

Here is our 2026 Spring Newsletter, which I commend to you. Once again our thanks are due to dedicated committee members, John Bridges, Alison Pickup, and Annie Heining for the bulk of its content.

At a recent meeting of the committee, to plan this season's summer visits, it dawned on us that the average age of the committee members is as near 80 years of age as to make no difference! I'm sorry to bang on about this but we really cannot expect to thrive, perhaps even continue, on this basis. It is quite clear from the attendance at our events – be they Winter Talks or Summer Visits - that members welcome and enjoy the activities we provide. But we need new blood and ideas to sustain them, and the capacity to share the work which has to be done, more widely.

Having said that, in 2025 the society produced what we on the committee came to refer to as 'the book'! Thank you to so many of you who bought copies of *Framlingham – a Portrait through Time*. Six hundred copies were created, published and distributed by the team of John, Ali and Simon, and now - a few months later – not only has it sold out, but a profit of around £3000 has been added to the Society's funds. This is a spectacular result and one of which we take great pride. The only place where there may be some remaining copies is the EH shop within the castle. So, if you did not get a copy you have to look sharp!

We are working on providing three summer visits this year and you will soon be contacted with further information and booking details, but to return to my plea for more members to take part in running the society's activities. Becoming a committee member involves attendance at only three or four committee meetings a year; and, being a trustee is not an onerous commitment. If you would like to help, but only with a specific activity e.g. the summer visits, we would welcome you to the committee as a co-opted member, rather than as a trustee.

Please give my appeal careful consideration. The society needs you! .

Tony Martin 1937 to 2025. Past President of our Society

The passing of Tony Martin marks the end of a long association with both the college and the town. Many of us will have known him, a larger-than-life character, who once encountered was rarely forgotten.

He had a profound commitment to all matters associated with the college despite feeling that it had failed to provide him with the education that his father had paid for. However, he was full of praise for his woodwork teacher, who taught him how to work with his hands. The many intricate models of steam engines and farm wagons that he built in later life bore testimony to that early guidance.

National Service then called. During that time he saved up to buy his first car, an Austin 7, which allowed him to explore the area around his barracks and further afield. He was though, destined for a career in farming, with memories of his early experiences at Playford described as all 'sunshine and happiness'. He then farmed on his own account at North Green Farm in Sibton.

A lifelong interest in all matters concerning Framlingham, saw him at various times being a town councillor, President of the History Society and Chairman of the Lanman Museum. He was instrumental in several projects and in particular, the establishment of a blue plaque on the Market Hill for Framlingham's other famous son, Sir Henry Thompson. It was his enthusiasm and drive that saw the town's museum re-established as a separate charity, and which is still going strong.

Tony was very forthright in his views and never pulled his punches. This could lead to long-lasting fallouts, from which there was no coming back. But, his dedication to the town and college was always at the forefront of everything. His views did not always align with those of the college or town council as he tried to balance the best interests of both.

His enthusiasm for all matters Framlingham can be traced back to his great grandfather John Martin who, in 1865, at the age of just 17, came to Framlingham as clerk to the attorney Charles Clubbe. John did well for himself and was able to send his son James Mason Martin to the college, who in turn was followed by his



Tony with his Hawes History of Framlingham and Loes Hundred (JFB)



Tony posing with a Rolls Royce, 2016 (JFB)

proofs. But, in an unusually quiet voice, he said he was unlikely to make the book launch, and so it turned out to be.

Tony Martin was a man whose life was deeply committed to traditional values and who contributed so much to the town and college. We will no longer see him standing at his gate, engaged in conversation with whoever was passing by. He will be greatly missed.

**Framlingham Local History Fair, Castle Community Rooms,
Saturday 2 May, from 10.00 to 16.00.
Admission free.**

The Society is pleased to inform you of this event and hope that you can support us by attending. In addition to display tables from our Society and the Lanman Museum, several other local societies will also be in attendance e.g. Alde Valley Family History; Framlingham College; Thomas Mills High School; Charnwood Genealogy; Parham Airfield Museum; Saxmundham History Society; Wickham Market Area Archive Centre; Worlingworth History Group; Yoxford History Group; Debenham History Society.

There will also be several display boards showing aspects of Framlingham history. This will include a new collection of photos all taken 50 years ago, which shows how much our shops have changed in this time. Also a display of less obvious photos of present Fram to see if you can recognise them, called 'Know Your Fram'. The history of Ford cars in Framlingham in the time of A.G. Potter is portrayed on another set of display boards. People will be enticed into the Hall by two classic Ford cars parked outside. Plus much more.

We do hope you will be able to attend.

son Leonard and then by his sons Peter and Tony.

His grandfather was a very successful Ipswich solicitor and one of the college's most generous benefactors. James was also patron to the artist Leonard Squirrell and Tony inherited a large number of his pictures which were displayed throughout his house. He was only too pleased to show them to anyone who was interested.

Our History Society's new book of Framlingham paintings just would not have been possible without Tony's collection. He was full of enthusiasm for the project and was able to see the



**FRAMLINGHAM LOCAL
HISTORY FAIR**

SATURDAY 2ND MAY

CASTLE COMMUNITY ROOMS, CHURCH STREET

10.00 TO 16.00

The Framlingham History Society is hosting a Local History Fair. There will be many displays of our local history along with other local organisations, including:

- ❖ The Lanman Museum
- ❖ Alde Valley Suffolk Family History
- ❖ Charnwood Genealogy
- ❖ Framlingham College
- ❖ Parham Airfield Museum
- ❖ Saxmundham History Society
- ❖ Thomas Mills High School
- ❖ Wickham Market Area Archive Centre
- ❖ Worlingworth History Group
- ❖ Yoxford History Group
- ❖ Debenham One-Place Study

Admission is free, but donations would be most welcome. Put this date on your calendar.

This is an edited version of the article Tony sent to the *East Anglian Daily Times* in 2015, which evokes a gentler age of motoring.

I spent most of my National Service on Salisbury Plain when it took me 18 months to save £40 for my first car. It was parked against the wall of a garage at Weyhill near Andover and was my passport to the wider world beyond Bulford Barracks.



'Fred' resplendent in Dulux Gloss (JFB)

The Austin Seven was first registered in 1934 and so was 23 years old when I got it. It reliably carried me on 48 hour leaves to Ipswich. I could get away on Friday evening and complete the 200 mile journey in exactly six hours. Then, the A30/303 was a delightful road. On one occasion I stopped at Camberwell, near Sandhurst behind a large Rolls Royce with a flag on the front and five stars on a plate. As I was in uniform I am able to say that I once saluted Field Marshal Montgomery.

Sunningdale and Virginia Water were charming then and the run past Staines and into Hounslow, Chiswick and Hammersmith uncomplicated. Hyde Park Corner

was always interesting and in Oxford Street there was a row of telephone boxes where I'd ring my mother to say I would be home in three hours. I always was. It was easy in those days to find Leytonstone and the A12 to Romford and thus to Suffolk.

The Austin was black when I bought it but acquired a green livery (Dulux Gloss) and the name of 'Fred' at the Pathological Laboratory of Tidworth Military Hospital to which I was attached. We found that a bottle of Benzine added to the five gallon petrol tank gave smoother engine running, especially in damp conditions, long before BP thoughtfully put it in their own fuel and called it National Benzole.

'Fred' opened up the West Country for me so that I was able to discover the wonder of the Hot Spring at Bath and I could sit in the solitude of Stonehenge. I would go to Salisbury where, for £1 one could eat where the officers ate at the Haunch of Venison by the Butter Cross.

I met my parents, once, for Sunday lunch at Simpson's-in-the Strand. I remember that the doorman in his top hat, gold braid and frock coat, solemnly opened the passenger door and tipped the front seat forward so my father could get in the back and my mother in the front. I then took them back to Liverpool Street. 'Fred' came with me to Agricultural College near Northampton so I regularly travelled the old A45-Wellingborough, Higham Ferrers, Kimbolton, St Neots, Cambridge, Newmarket, no bland by-passes then: just the small towns of old England before the sixties did dreadful things.

'Fred' came back to Suffolk with me, only once not under his own power. Something went wrong in Cambridge and my father had to tow me home behind his Humber Super Snipe. I think this was the only time 'Fred' exceeded 45mph.

I think I did about 20,000 miles of trouble-free motoring, perhaps with a bit of help from Radweld, RedEx and plenty of oil. It was simple to take the cylinder head off on a Sunday morning, scrape the coke off it and the pistons, grind the valves and their seats and have a spot of lunch before returning to Hampshire or Northants.

I drove lorries and Landrovers in the Army and I drove a General in his Austin Princess staff car. I drove the medics and the Queen Alexandra's nurses in Austin A40s and A70s and Vauxhall Victors but I never again had so much fun as I had with 'Fred'.



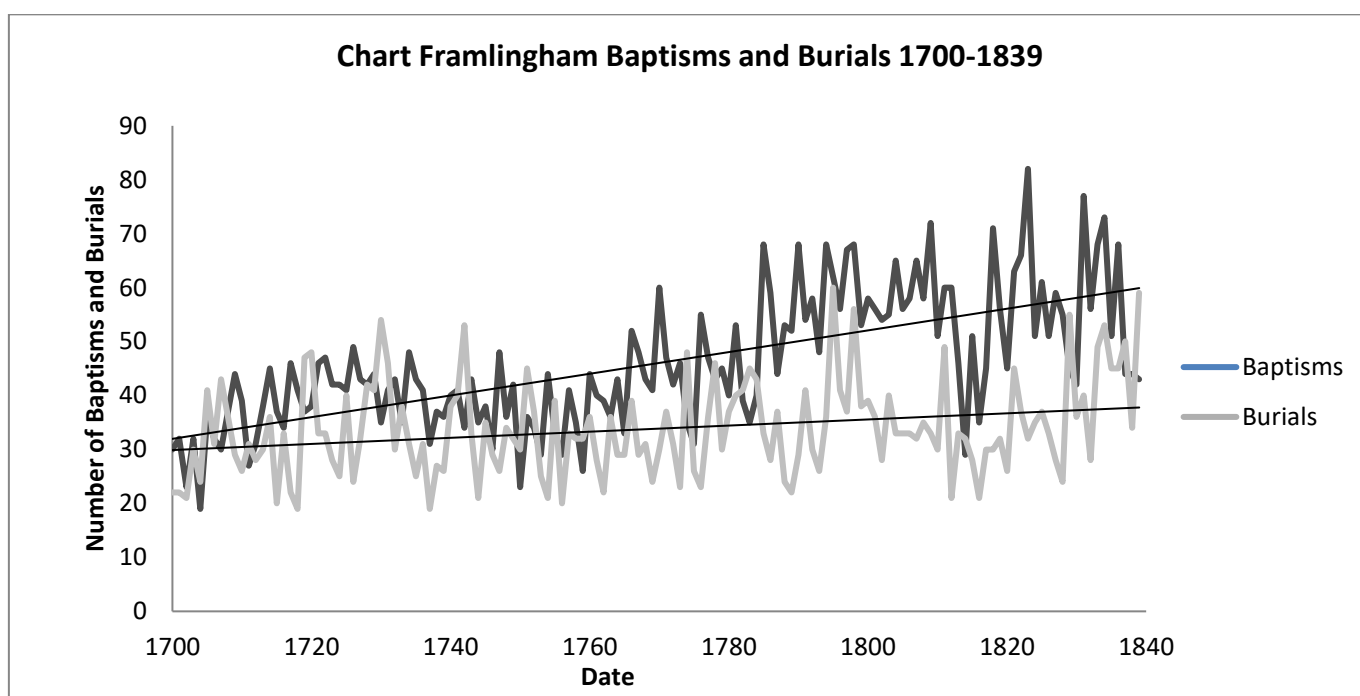
Tony in uniform, with 'Fred', 1957 (JFB)

Framlingham's population 1561-1839: Part 2, Population changes 1700 - 1839

Gill Hackman

In the October 2025 edition of the Newsletter, Part 1 of this note explored Framlingham's population changes in the 1561 – 1700 period. Part 2 of the note completes the story by looking at developments between 1700 and 1839. The parish registers suggest that, if we ignore those who came to the town and those who left, the population of the town would have been fairly static or increasing slightly until around 1765, followed by a period of growth (Figure 5).

Figure 5



From 1700 until about 1765 the number of baptisms and burials recorded in Framlingham each year was erratic (Figure 5), but there were generally between 20 and 50 burials and 30-50 baptisms each year. In most years there were more baptisms than burials, suggesting that the population may at this time have been gradually and persistently increasing. Muriel Kilvert refers to a 1724 *Surveyor's Report for Framlingham*, presented to the town at Easter 1724 and suggests that the population of the town may by then have been about 1,460,ⁱ an increase of around 8-16 people a year since Patten's estimate for 1670.

From around 1770 to 1839 the number of baptisms increased considerably to around 50-80 a year, whilst the number of deaths remained generally in the range 20-50, with a slight upward trend in the figures, suggesting that the local population was increasing. This is confirmed by the early Census figures for Framlingham Parish quoted by R Greenⁱⁱ, and by the 1841 Censusⁱⁱⁱ. Before 1841, Censuses were less reliable. They were completed by clergymen or overseers of the poor giving counts for local areas.

Particularly in 1801, some entries may have been based on misunderstandings of what was required. The 1841 Census was more detailed and thought to be more accurate than earlier censuses. It was based on forms completed by each household, although this was a bit of a challenge as many people could not read or write.^{iv}

The Census figures for Framlingham were as follows:

AA

Year	Population*	Increase	% increase	% employed in agriculture
1801	1854			42% of persons
1811	1965	111	6	41% of families
1821	2327	362	18	44% of families
1831	2445	118	5	44% of families
1841	2523	78	3	**

* The figures for 1801 relate to Framlingham Township, for later years to Framlingham Parish.

** This figure appears not to be readily available, except by laboriously extracting and adding up information from individual household returns.

It seems likely that the rapid increase in population between 1811 and 1821, followed by a slowdown in the following 20 years reflected changes in agriculture in the surrounding countryside and changes in the brewing industry in Framlingham.

Most of the time from 1793 to 1815 agriculture had benefitted from war with France, the supply of goods from overseas was disrupted and the price of food doubled.^v Farmers in Suffolk were able to benefit from this by ploughing up pasture to grow wheat. In Framlingham town, in the early 1800s George Brooke Keer senior had created a prosperous brewing firm, perhaps reflecting more general prosperity in the area. He bought 21 inns and public houses as well as 195 acres of land and property in Framlingham and the local area. He had a brewery with an adjoining "mansion", offices, a new and grander mansion off the Market Square, 2 houses, and 6 inns or public houses and a stable in Framlingham, as well as 15 inns and public houses, 2 farms, cottages and stables in nearby villages.

But after the war corn prices fell and many farmers were in financial difficulties. They were unable to pay back loans on land, or unable to pay their rent. The wages of farm labourers were reduced by a third and men were laid off.^{vi} In Framlingham town there were specific problems. In 1832 Mr Keer the brewer had financial difficulties, and on 7 February 1832 he was declared bankrupt^{vii viii ix x}. The brewery was bought at auction for £1,400 in 1832, by Abraham Thompson. It was next sold in 1857 for around £650.^{xi xii} There may have been many reasons for this fall in price, but it seems likely that changes in the economy of Framlingham and in the brewing industry were 2 of them.

These problems in agriculture and Framlingham's brewing industry would have a serious effect on the other businesses of Framlingham. Farmers had less money to spend and farmworkers were hard up or out of work.

The failure of the brewery too is likely to have led to hard times in Framlingham as some brewery workers, coopers and draymen are likely to have lost their jobs. Household staff from the large new grand mansion that George Brooke Keer had built on Market Hill may also have lost their jobs as no one wanted to buy the mansion, and it was pulled down.

Nevertheless, by 1839, when the available computerised parish registers for Framlingham cease, things may have been looking up. Framlingham was a busy market town, with all the services needed to support the surrounding agricultural area and to use the local barley to make malt and beer. Framlingham was included in both Pigot's and Robson's Directories of Suffolk for 1839^{xiii}. There were shops of all kinds, 2 banks, 4 solicitors, 2 brewers, 5 Maltsters, 2 millers, 7 inns, people to build or repair almost anything (including coaches), 5 schools and much more.

Transport too was improving, though it was still not very good. Towards the end of the eighteenth century a branch of the Ipswich to Yarmouth turnpike road came to Framlingham from Saxmundham.^{xiv} By 1839 there were daily coaches to London, 3 times a week to Norwich and twice a week to Ipswich. In addition, carriers took goods to and from London 3 times a week, to Ipswich 7 times a week and weekly to Norwich and Stradbroke.^{xv}

This tale of the growth of the town's population leads up neatly to the picture which emerged in my earlier article on Double Street in the Journal of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation society, October 2018, pp 9-20 (<https://framlinghamhistory.uk/newsletters-and-journals/contents-of-all-newsletters-and-journals/>). In 1841 214 people lived in Double Street, most of them were born in Framlingham but about 1 in 10 came from elsewhere. The residents could get almost all they needed without leaving Double Street. Butchers, bakers, grocers; drapers, tailors, a dressmaker and a hosier, shoemakers and shoe menders; blacksmiths, whitesmiths a wheelwright and an organ builder all lived in the street. There were schools, a surgeon, a lawyer and a bookseller.^{xvi}

ⁱ Kilvert, Muriel L, 1995, op cit, pp 24-25. (This may refer to a 1725 Valuation of all the messuages, cottages, tenements and hereditaments within the Parish of Framlingham, held by Suffolk Archives (FC101/F1/1). The survey may have been the basis of the population estimate in Muriel Kilvert's book.)

ⁱⁱ Green, R, The History, Topography, and Antiquities of Framlingham and Saxstead in the County of Suffolk, 1833, reproduced by HardPress, Miami, 2019, p8, and Histpop.org, Online Historical Population Reports. HISTPOP.ORG-Browse>Census; Enumeration abstract, 1801 page 345; Observations and enumeration abstract, 1811 Page 319; Observations, enumeration and parish register abstracts, 1821 Page 318; Enumeration abstract, 1831 (Part 2) Page 616.

ⁱⁱⁱ Census 1841, HISTPOP.ORG-Browse>Census>1841>Enumeration abstract, 1841 Page 301.

^{iv} Ons.gov.uk/visualisations/storyofthecensus/

^v Dymond, David and Northeast, Peter, 1995, op cit, p97

^{vi} Ibid.

^{vii} Stannard, PJ, The Inns of Framlingham Past and Present, as read to members of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation Society, 30 November 1959, and reprinted in FRAM, the Society's newsletter October 2020

^{viii} Kilvert, Muriel, 1995, op cit, p29

^{ix} London Gazette Issue 18913, 9 March 1832, thegazette.co.uk

^x Bridges John, George Brooke Keer's financial downfall in 1832, FRAM Newsletter no 11, April 2025.

^{xi} Suffolk chronicle, 10 October, 1857, from findmypast.co.uk

^{xii} Stannard , PJ, 1959, op cit.

^{xiii} Historical directories of England and Wales, specialcollections.le.ac.uk, Robson's Commercial Directory, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk, 1839, pp38-41and Pigot's Directory of Suffolk, 1839, pp 548-549.

^{xiv} Dymond, David and, Martin, Edward, Editors, An Historical atlas of Suffolk, Suffolk County Council Planning Department and Suffolk Institute of Archaeology and History, 1988, pp104-105

^{xv} Historical directories of England and Wales, specialcollections.le.ac.uk, Robson's Commercial Directory, 1839, op cit

^{xvi} Hackman, Gill, A Reflection of Changing Times: Life in Double Street Framlingham 1841-1939, Journal of the Framlingham and District Local History and Preservation society, October 2018, pp 9-20

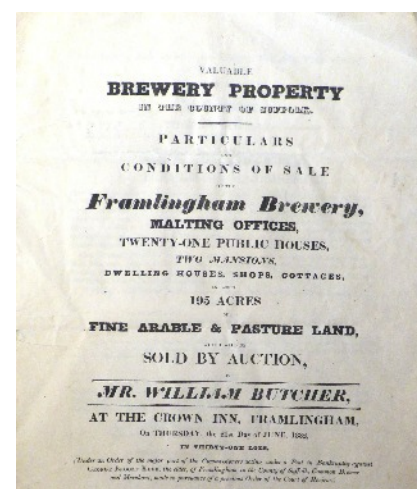
George Brooke Keer. Further Observations

John Bridges

In the April 2025 issue of our Newsletter we saw how the world of a renowned Framlingham businessman fell apart and took others with him. The complete bankruptcy file is at the National Archives reference TNA B3/2882. I am indebted to Liz Craig who copied those extensive and complex documents. More recently she has used AI to try and make practical use of the information and she has shared her results with me again. These have been checked against original entries and found to be correct. A particular task was to establish a list of all the creditors and the amounts owed. From that data I have extracted the following, all shown to the nearest pound:

Norfolk & Norwich Joint Stock Banking Co. £10,189; sum of other main creditors £8,792.

Plan of GBK brewery and maltings (Lanman Museum)



Sale document (Lanman Museum)

Smaller creditors

all located in Framlingham as follows:

Samuel Bloomfield, farmer, £300; John Fruer, builder, £221; John Meadows, carpenter, £100; Henry Thompson, grocer, draper, £114; John Oakley, innkeeper, £92; George Blumfield, harness maker, £32; Joseph Smith, veterinary surgeon, £22; Henry Clutten, carpenter, £25; John Fruer Bridges, blacksmith, £18; John Dixon, butcher, £16; Constantine Woolnough, glazier, £15; Jasper Peirson, gentleman, £26; treasurer Mills Trust, £9; William Manning, druggist, £9; George Heffer, blacksmith, £8; Henry Dallestone, carpenter, £7 (this was for the coffin of GBK's wife); Silvanus Bridges, blacksmith, £6; James Cooper, tailor, £4; Edmund Kindred, miller, £3; James Freeman, earthenware man, £1; George Lee, whitesmith, £2; James Newson, tailor, £1.

There were at least another 15 creditors from beyond Framlingham including a spinster in Laxfield who was owed £144. There has been much written about GBK and his bankruptcy over the years, and they all refer to his trouble with the Tax Collector for not paying the duty on his malt. This might have been seen as an unfortunate situation which several businesses find themselves in. The legal documents show a very different picture, that of a man who was prepared to borrow money from all levels of society. He was probably seen as the most important businessman

in Framlingham, owning 21 pubs in the town and surrounding area and providing employment to many in his brewery and maltings.

It was *Framlingham Weekly News* in 1894 that stated 'Through some financial difficulty with the Tax Collectors for duty on malt, Mr G.B. Keer's affairs were thrown into bankruptcy...'. The editor at that time had not been born when the bankruptcy occurred, so would not have had any first hand knowledge of those events. That myth has been perpetuated ever since, but has now been put right. I must again thank Liz Craig for her assistance with this matter.

Winter Talks

We have had a fascinating series of talks over this winter, as diverse and as interesting as ever. For which many thanks to Charles Seely for organising these. There is still one talk to go, *Behind the Green Baize Door*, by Brian Thurlow, on Wednesday 22nd April.

Annie Heining has kindly prepared a synopsis of the talks so far:

Framlingham in the 1940s - a talk given by Bill Flemming, 26th November 2025

I was born in 1935 in College Road. My father was illegitimate. My grandmother had been in service when she became pregnant. My father was brought up by his uncle, William Hatcher. William was a haulier. He owned lorries and horses used for the dustcarts. He also owned other buildings in the town.

Living conditions were pretty basic. Cooking took place in a hut out the back on a paraffin stove. I don't know how my mother did it. There was a standpipe in the kitchen and also a tin bath. But we had electricity and a radio, although it took ages to warm up. Page 28 in *Framlingham: a Portrait Through Time* shows the view we had across the road showing the grounds and farm buildings farmed by Mr Cyril Fulcher of Mount Pleasant Farm.

We took the train to Ipswich to see the pantomime at the Hippodrome Theatre which was owned by Mr Bostock who built the Regal cinema, opening just after the war started. We used to go to the children's programme on Saturday afternoons for 3d. In those days no films were shown on Sundays. Before the cinema opened films were shown in the Assembly Hall. I remember seeing cowboy films, the seating on hard wooden benches. The cinema programmes then consisted of short films, newsreel and then the feature film. There were also shows for the war effort – all amateurs but some were very talented. Percy Edwards, the bird man on the radio, he lived in Otley and would judge the talent shows.

I remember Jonny Platts, the Headmaster of the Primary School, he and his wife were very severe. I took the 11+ but didn't pass. I did get an interview, but I blew it!

Being war time, rationing came in. My mother made a marrow pie. I just didn't fancy it and refused to eat it. My father threatened to give it to the poor – I took it down to a poor family myself!

In October 1940 bombing started. We got under the kitchen table when the warning went off. When the all-clear sounded we saw Miss Harvey's house had gone. My father found her body and was never the same afterwards. Other houses also went and people killed. Framlingham wasn't deliberately targeted; most bombs were left over from German raids and were dropped as the planes were on their way home.

During the war years what is now the scout hut was an Air Ministry building built when the Americans came. The Americans made a big impact – I was 7-8 years old. You could hear them warming their planes at Parham in the mornings. They lost over 700 men while they were here.

Later we moved to Badingham Road. My father worked in the office of Hatcher's. Every Monday he went to Campsea Ash to allocate animals to the different slaughterhouses and arrange the transport. On Wednesdays he did the same at Saxmunden. Sometimes I accompanied him.

I had my first proper bedroom at Badingham Road but living conditions were still basic. There was the standpipe in the kitchen along with a bath that had a lid and a copper to heat water. A large water tank was out the back on a raised plinth. There was pipework to the bath in the kitchen and the water was beautifully soft. The toilet had to be emptied by hand but in 1947, we were put on mains sewerage. We also had an electric oven – but everything was very slow by today's standards.

We listened to Children's House with Larry the Lamb. On Saturday evenings it was, *In Town Tonight* at the Hippodrome and then a play. We also went to the Hippodrome in Ipswich and saw people like, Arthur Askey, Sandy Powell and Dina Sheridan. After the war entertainment in Framlingham started up again and FADS put on plays and the horse show started again, which also had a gymkhana and jumping competitions. We didn't go on holiday, but we would visit Kessingland and saw family there. It was difficult to go on the beach due to the war time defences. We also had days out in Lowestoft.

In 1949 we went to Carshalton with my parents to stay with an aunt and uncle. We went out most evenings. We saw *The Crazy Gang* and the 9 o'clock nudes and a football match between Chelsea and Newcastle - 3-2 to Newcastle. It was a very special week in my life.

I also remember father taking me to a wood at Bruisyard. We went as beaters for a shoot and got a pheasant for our troubles. When food was short, we went rabbiting to supplement the meat supply. We picked rosehips for the Ministry of Food to make into rosehip syrup and blackberries for jam for our own consumption. At age 13 years I started working at Rookery Farm on Saturdays and in the holidays for 9d an hour. One of my jobs was to hitch Mary, the mare to the cart. I also helped with the harvests. It was extremely hard work.

I loved gardening and we had a garden front and back at Badingham Road. While gardening there I unearthed a Henry III penny dated 1248-50. I also found coins from Elisabeth 1st, Charles 1st and 2nd, Nuremberg tokens and cartwheel pennies.

The Story of Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies - A talk given by Chris Turland on 22nd October 2025

One may be forgiven for thinking that Ransomes invented the lawnmower, given how many they made, but they didn't.

Robert Ransome was born in 1753. He was a Quaker. He set up a brass and iron foundry near Norwich. Between 1783 and 1793 he patented several ploughs including a self-sharpening plough.

In 1789 he moved to Ipswich and set up an iron foundry. Together with his son, James they made ploughs for different types of soil. In 1818 James took over and in 1830 Robert died.

The foundry diversified, taking on railway work. William Cubitt joined the firm. He was a creative inventor, inventing, among other things self-regulating windmill sails. He left the company in 1826. But the creativity continued with the invention of a hand-powered threshing machine in 1844. This was despite the Swing Riots which destroyed threshing machines to protest their impact on rural employment. The company talked to farmers, offering to plough their fields in order to test out new products. Ransomes never produced anything that wasn't made on site. Sometimes they designed things that never reached the production stage, such as a double-sided plough. From the 1840s through to the 1960s they sold steam engines with threshing machines as a harvesting kit. Thousands were sold all over the world.

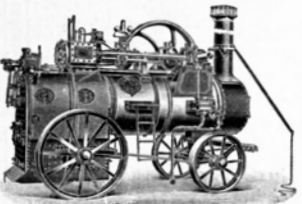
The company built a new site next to the docks and the river. In 1851 they had a stand at the Great Exhibition. Interestingly Garretts and Ransomes never shared information. In 1884 the company became Ransomes, Sims & Jefferies after lots of changes in the board. By this time the factory was on a massive scale.

Edward Budding invented the lawn mower but couldn't keep up with the demand. Ransomes became agents to sell them and eventually bought the patent from him. They began to invent different types of lawnmower, including, in 1926 the first electric lawnmower. They are still making lawnmowers today.

In 1902 they invented the diesel tractor (before cars). They were building electric vehicles before WW1, while during the war they produced vehicles for war work to replace the horses killed in the conflict. They also developed airplanes and built a new factory to cope with production. This was to counter attacks by German airships. The factory was built in six weeks and, during the course of the war, approximately 800 aircraft were built. As an interesting aside, the government refused to supply pilots with parachutes during WW1, believing it would encourage them to bail out, rather than fight.

Women took over factory work during the war, particularly making propellers. The company continued to be guided by Quaker ideology and moral code. The 2000 women employed during the war were all offered employment after the war if they wanted it.

RANSOMES, SIMS & JEFFERIES, LTD.



PORTABLE STEAM ENGINES



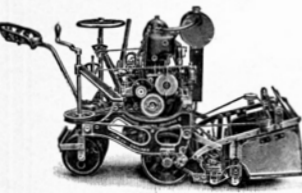
THRASHING MACHINES



DISC PLOUGHS



SHARE PLOUGHS



MOTOR LAWN MOWERS



ELECTRIC VEHICLES

ALSO SPECIALISE IN

Traction and Stationary Steam Engines, Boilers, Maize Shellers, Clover Hullers, Cultivators, Horse Rakes, Harrows, Disc Harrows, Mealie Planters, Hand and Horse Lawn Mowers, Potato Diggers, Electric Platform Trucks.

IPSWICH, ENGLAND

After WW1 Ransomes built trolley busses for Ipswich Council as well as selling all over the world. This lasted until the 1930s when double-decker busses began to replace them. The inter-war period also saw the development of the mini plough for the land settlement movement.

During WW2 the company made mine clearance attachments for tanks and other machinery for the war effort. Women again took over working in the factory and, as with the previous war, were offered jobs afterwards.

After the war the company made fork-lift trucks through the 1960s and 70s. However, a series of unsuccessful takeovers led to a return to making ploughs and combine harvesters – developed on an American model. The company is still running under a different name although now owned by an US company.

Tales of the Suffolk Smugglers - A talk given by Barbara McElroy on 25th February 2026

The 'golden age' of smuggling was between 1720s – 1830s. There was no smuggling to speak of until then. So, why did it develop when it did? The simple answer is wars and the need to raise funds in order to fight them. Tariffs of 25% were put on all French goods (one might compare this with someone else today). Therefore, smuggled goods, such as brandy produced in Holland, were much cheaper. Holland also produced over-proofed gin especially for the smuggling market. This could be watered down when sold on. Known as 'mothers ruin', the social consequences were significant, not unlike the drug problems of today.



William Hogarth, Gin Lane, 1 February 1751.
Etching and engraving. 350 mm x 302 mm. ©
Photo: Royal Academy of Arts, London.

Tea drinking had become popular, given that the water was not fit to drink. Large tariffs on tea encouraged its smuggling on a significant scale. Smuggling became big business, it was organised crime and, it was often violent. Smuggling became socially acceptable and many 'respectable' people were involved. Landowners, farmers, justices of the peace and lawyers often funded smuggling. Fishermen were well placed to top up their income as were local labourers. Boats arrived on dark nights. Churches were often used to store contraband. There was a culture of silence, often enforced by violence and intimidation.

*Five and twenty ponies,
Trotting through the dark —
Brandy for the Parson,
Baccy for the Clerk;
Laces for a lady, letters for a spy,
And watch the wall, my darling,
While the Gentlemen go by!*

The risks were significant. Boats could be confiscated, fines could be imposed, transportation or even hanging could be the fate of those convicted.

Successful smuggling gangs were well organised, with a number of different roles to be performed. There would be a Spotsman, both on the boat and on land; a Lander would find a place to go ashore; a Tubsman was responsible for getting the goods off the beach and into a safe hiding place, and a Batsman who was there to protect the Tubsman.

The White Hart at Blythburgh was a well-known smuggling pub. The high window at the back of the pub had a good view of the estuary and was an ideal signalling point. Most of you will know the story of Black Shuck, the black dog with red eyes, said to be the devil himself. If you saw him, your death was imminent. Blythburgh church has marks on the door said to be the claw marks of Black Shuck and recent research has shown a correlation between smuggling sites and sightings of Black Shuck.

In 1720 a lone excise man confronted a group of smugglers at Snape. They stoned him, pulled him off his horse, beat him up, cut off his nose and left him for dead. Beccles was also a popular place for smugglers. In 1745 an informer was pulled from his bed at night and was never seen again. The Eels Foot Inn was another regular smuggler haunt. In 1747 a gang fought with soldiers, who eventually managed to capture two of them. Although there were many cases where gangs fought with the authorities as they were taking other smugglers into custody.

The Hadleigh gang was said to be at least 200 strong. They used Dunwich, Covehythe and Sizewell Gap to bring contraband ashore, although the end users could have been as far away as London. They tended to use the Roman roads to transport goods, especially the road from Peasenhall to Earl Soham. In 1785 William Godwin, a diarist who lived in Earl Soham noted twenty cart loads came through in one day. Official records from May-September 1775 coming through Sizewell Gap include lace, silk, raisins, tobacco, brandy, gin and sixty horses carrying tea. All in all, 4500 horse loads of contraband. The trade was huge.

In several places there were tunnels through the cliffs, although non remain. It was imperative to get the goods off the beach as soon as possible. The Parrot and Punchbowl at Aldringham as well as the church were regular places for storage of contraband.

The authorities were aware that pubs were regularly used to store smuggled goods, often with secret cellars. They started placing dragoons on site to discourage or catch those in the act. One such was the White Horse

at Leiston. The landlady gave the dragoons free gin which meant that when the goods came in the dragoons were in no fit state to do anything. Back up was called but the smugglers managed to get 300 barrels of gin out the back door, hiding it under muck heaps.

The Hadleigh gang met at The George. They played a cat and mouse game with excise men and dragoons and there was often violence. The advantage for the smugglers in Hadleigh was that many of the houses had through attics and/or cellars enabling goods to be moved quickly. The Hadleigh gang leader was eventually captured, tried and transported to Australia.

This story would not be complete without mention of the legend of Margaret Catchpole. Born in Brandeston of a poor family, she went into service with the Cobbold family, where she was found to be very helpful in caring for the Cobbold's very large family. She hooked up with a smuggler named William Laud who wanted to marry her. In order to go to him, she dressed as a man and stole a horse. However, she was caught, tried and sent to Ipswich prison for three years. But, Margaret managed to escape. Laud is waiting for her at Sudbourne. Both are captured, Laud is killed and she is transported to Australia, where she became a farmer and midwife. There is some confusion over whether William Laud existed at all.

Smugglers were often tipped off that excise men were coming and generally had a plan B. For example, John Key, the landlord of a Dunwich pub and successful smuggler, moved to Beccles. Excise men shot his horse while in pursuit of him. He managed to find a replacement that looked extremely similar, which allowed him to deny that it was him they were chasing. Successful smugglers were ingenious at leading excise men up the wrong path and pulling the wool over their eyes. Putting dragoons in pubs clearly had its drawbacks which may be why cottages like the ones in Fram on the corner of College Road and Mount Pleasant were built in the 1830s.

By the end of the 1830s the Coast Guard system was established and men were properly trained. There were lots of lookouts on land, many of which can still be seen today. Plus, many of the tariffs had been removed so the profits to be made from smuggling began to dwindle. Smugglers kept no records, so all research is based on excise records.

The Story of the Mid-Suffolk Light Railway - affectionately known as 'The Middy'

A talk given by John Reid 23rd April 2025

This is the story of the Middy, a railway to nowhere, the tracks just ran out in the middle of a field.

It might first be useful to explain - what is a light railway? Railways had taken over the country in the 19th century, except in rural areas, such as Suffolk. The government therefore created the light railway programme, covered collectively by one act of parliament. This meant the process of building was quicker and easier.

The plan for mid-Suffolk was to join up the two main lines running north/south, one from London to Norwich and one from London to Great Yarmouth. The initial prospectus did not produce a big take-up of shares and there was a struggle to raise the necessary funds. This was despite 600 people coming to the ceremony at Westerfield held to launch the scheme. The project was not helped by employing contractors and engineers who were not familiar with the locality and the nature of the terrain.

However, construction started in 1902 and good progress was made for the first two years. By 1903 the line had reached Laxfield, and by 1904 it had got as far as Cratfield but no further. Mr HR Gillingwater was employed as the first Superintendent. He was instrumental in getting the line fit for use. And, in 1904 the line opened for goods traffic. The railway had 10 passenger stations. These included Haughley, Mendlesham,





In 1905, the MSLR's entire loco fleet poses at the incomplete Haughley station, no.2 leading no. 1. Locomotive Publishing Company.

Brockford and Wetheringsett, Aspell and Thorndon, Kenton, Worlingworth, Horham, Stradbroke, Wilby, and Laxfield. Haughley served as the junction for the Middy, connecting it to the main rail network.

Finances continued to be desperate and 1905/1906 were the worst years for the Middy. It was refused a licence to run passenger trains and in 1906 declared bankruptcy.

In 1908 the line finally received approval to transport passengers from Haughley to Laxfield. Mr Gillingwater organised trips to Felixstowe which were initially very popular. The trains travelled at 25mph with goods and

passengers on the same trains. There were three trains a day in each direction. Unfortunately, the line didn't get as far as Halesworth which would have helped. In 1909 an extra station at Wilby was created. The line then comprised a nineteen-mile stretch from Haughley to Laxfield.

During World War 1 the line made money. Jobs were given to women, with male employees away at the front. Five of the sixty male employees were killed during the war and at home the line was bombed by Zeppelins near Gipping. After the war the railways were worn out.

LNER took over the Middy in 1924, although somewhat reluctantly. They attempted a rationalisation and one of the engines was scrapped. By 1928 they had all be scrapped. The stations were rudimentary and cheaply build and Laxfield functioned as the main base for the line. The Middy continued to run through the 1920s and 30s. It provided an important source of employment in a time when work was hard to find. With World War 2 and the coming of US airbases the railway was upgraded to bring in massive amount of supplies and equipment for the USAF. Again, women were employed on the line. A plane crashed the line in 1942 and with increasing competition from cars and trucks, this killed the goods traffic. After the war the service never got back to previous levels.

There were numerous level crossings on the route, but after the war the staff operating the crossings were made redundant. From then on staff on the trains had to get out and open the gates. This made the service even slower.

1948 bought nationalisation. Some in the audience may remember Dr Ian Allen, a GP in Framlingham. He was a great photographer of the final years of the line. It was clearly dying but limped on until 26th July 1952 and the track was lifted in 1953. Between 1952 and 1992 the Middy faded away.

In 1990 the museum was formed, stimulated by the interest generated by Peter Paye's book about the line. Four members of the Stowmarket Railway Club decided to form a museum to keep the memory alive. It became an educational charity, saving as many artefacts as possible. The museum is built on the site of Brockford station goods yard. There has been thirty-five years of restoration and acquisition. In 2002 steam trains ran again, 50 years after they stopped.

– In 2015 the museum was Suffolk museum of the year

– in 2021 it won the Heritage Railway Association's Restoration Award for restoring the Shredded Wheat Co's Fowler 0-4-0 diesel shunter

– It doubled the route length in 2023 to approx. one kilometre

Witchcraft and Feminism - a Zoom talk by Prof. Diane Purkiss -

28th January 2026

Are witches a feminist issue? It is both obvious and yet not obvious. Are we judging the past by modern values? Is it all about black hats and casting spells? Are they powerful women engaged in acts of resistance? This image doesn't square with reality; they were usually poor and powerless. Are they young and attractive, perhaps seen as a sexual threat? The reality is that they were usually older women. The image of witches being burnt at the stake remains a dominant one, and yet the reality is that in England witches were rarely burnt, they were hanged. Many of the myths allied to witchcraft come from films, popular fiction and TV. But if we look at the actual evidence from the historical record of trials, a very different picture emerges.

The pointed black hats are an 18th-century invention as is the flying broomstick, although witches were believed to be able to fly. Brooms are for housework, associated with being a housewife. To be flying instead of cleaning is clearly transgressive. Similarly with the cauldron, a simple cooking pot when used to conjuring spells becomes transgressive. Witches are often portrayed as ugly. Women are not supposed to be ugly. This evolving image tells women what they are supposed to be.

The alternative modern image depicts witches as young and beautiful, traditional and yet breaking with tradition. The real stories of women tried for witchcraft are often a lot more interesting than the TV version. The historical witch, seen in woodcuts does not resemble her modern counterpart. She is not attractive. Often, she has no shoes and wears shabby clothes. She may be scary and/or vulnerable but not powerful. She might be lame or have problems with her eyes such as a squint. She surrounded herself with cats and dogs and birds. A woman who surrounds herself with pets rather than children is transgressive. She often has facial hair and is therefore likely to be menopausal. Most of those accused are older women. If woman's main purpose in life is to be productive, what happens when you become too old to have babies?



Title page of *A Most Certain, Strange and True Discovery of a Witch* (1643)

Myths Debunked

- The witch trials were not caused by the Inquisition or linked to Christianity.
- They are not a hangover from medieval times. The trials peaked under Elizabeth 1st and are more associated with literacy and trade.
- In England 2000 were tried and approximately 500 were convicted.
- The witch hunts were not set in motion by the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486)

- The first witchcraft act was in 1542 under Henry VIII
- Convicted witches were not burnt in England
- They were not pagan
- They were not midwives
- They did not meet in covens
- They were not tortured in England

Witches and Feminism

The vast majority of those accused of witchcraft were women, accusations being used to define what a woman ought to be. Other women were often the accusers, particularly young women such as at Salem. The reason for this can be traced to the fact that young women frequently worked for older women and, as their boss, told them what to do and had a measure of control over them. Therefore, an accusation of witchcraft could be used as revenge. It is too simple to say it is a war on women by men. In other countries it was mostly men that were accused, such as Russia, Iceland, Estonia and Salzburg. The idea of the witch still surfaces today, for example it was thrown at Hilary Clinton during the 2016 election campaign.

The Trial System

Through the testimony given we hear the real voices of women accused and their accusers. They were often identified through reputation and the reports of paid informers given to a magistrate. Informers could even earn enough to make a living out of accusations. The next stage was information gathering. A jury of those who knew the accused was recruited. Those who knew the accused were felt to have the best knowledge of whether the accusations were true. The jury is composed entirely of men, so at this stage the process moves out of the hands of women. Depositions are collected. The case could be thrown out at this stage or could go further if the accusations were felt to be true, along with further accusations of family members. There were no lawyers. On the day of the trial evidence was given to the jury. Several cases were heard over the course of the day for various crimes. No appeal was possible (although it was possible to ask the monarch for a pardon). If found guilty the sentence was hanging although the convicted were initially sent to jail. Many in fact died in jail either of starvation or disease.



The history of witches and wizards: giving a true account of all their tryals in England, Scotland, Swedeland, France, and New England; with their confession and condemnation 1720

Examples

Ursley Kempe was tried and convicted in St Osyth in 1582. St Osyth was an area in decline following the dissolution of the priory. Ursley was a healer/cunning woman. She touted for business to a pregnant woman with a sick child. The woman declined her services. The woman then became lame and her baby died. She then hired Ursley to cure her leg but doesn't pay her. The lameness returns. The woman is then sure Ursley is a witch and accuses her. Ursley has an illegitimate son who testifies against her about all her pets (familiaris) or fairy hobmen (see notes).

Elizabeth Southern is 80 years old and has been known as a witch for 50 years. She lives in the area of Pendle Abbey also recently dissolved. She dies in prison, blind and lame. Her actions can be seen against the conflict

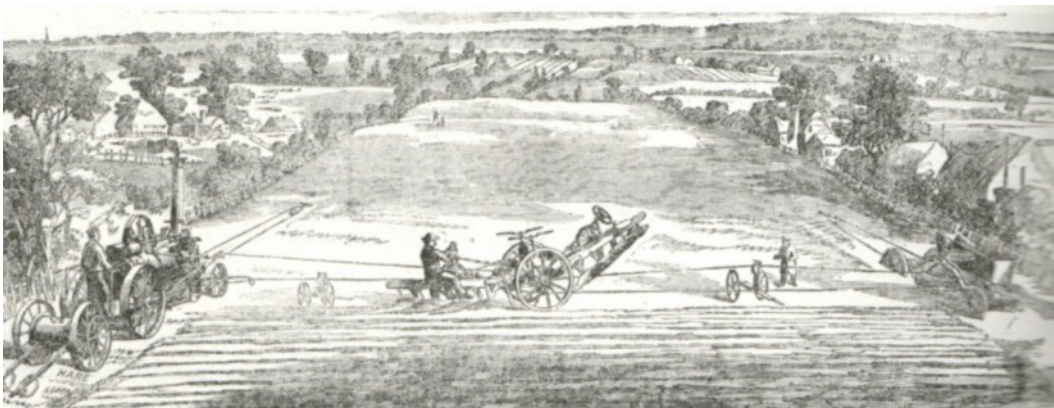
between residual Catholicism and resurgent Protestantism. She was accused of speaking in tongues using a charm book with charms against various ailments. These charms were reminiscent of Christian prayers, and one may speculate that for Elizabeth these were half remembered prayers in Latin. (Charm books were very popular in the 15th century, kept by many families.) As a young girl saying prayers/charms to heal the sick was considered a good thing, especially when in Latin, but the law changed. There is then an argument for suggesting that these women became easy scapegoats when times were hard.

Notes

1. *Fairy Hobmen were small hairy creatures. Some lived in woods and hills but there were special ones that lived in a particular house and were inherited with the house. They help women with housework. Mostly, they like being fed, especially the top of the milk. You must never thank them or give them clothes. There are strict laws about how to treat them and they are easily offended. In Shakespeare, Puck is the most famous example. As religious opinion hardens, hobmen become a grey area, morally ambiguous. Protestants came to see them as devils and the people who see them as witches.*
2. *There are only three recorded cases of women being ducked. Ducking was mostly a punishment for nagging, being harsh or scolding.*

A Momentous Day in Framlingham. July 4th 1860 John Bridges

This article is not about the great event the year before, when the branch line to Framlingham station opened on 1st June 1859, but there is a connection. The celebratory opening lunch held at the Crown was presided over by John Peirson who was instrumental in bringing the railway to the town. He was a wealthy gentleman who lived at Broadwater House.



Fowler steam plough made by Ransomes and Sims (British Museum)

The 1860 event was the holding of the annual show of the Suffolk Agricultural Association, in Framlingham. The newly-opened railway was an important aspect in choosing the Framlingham location. Special trains were laid on from Ipswich and Yarmouth for passengers, while heavy machinery could also be transported here.

The town laid on a great welcome with flags and banners along with 14 triumphal arches at various locations proclaiming slogans such as 'Welcome to Framlingham', 'Success to Agriculture' and 'Success to Industry'. Crowds of visitors thronged the streets.

The agricultural activities associated with the event were widely spread over three locations, which caused some difficulties. The highlight was a demonstration of steam ploughing on Peirson's land on the other side of the rail line next to his Broadwater House, some distance from the town. One report noted that trains

would run every 20 minutes from the station to the Broadwater site. It is not clear if this happened, but there was reference to a shortage of cabs to transport people and excessive charges.

In the early days of steam ploughing there were many systems tried but they predominantly only used one steam engine in conjunction with various pulleys and tackles. If you see a ploughing demonstration at a show nowadays, there are usually a pair of Fowler engines pulling the plough between them. Back in 1860, Fowler did not have their own manufacturing works. From 1857 all their equipment was made by Ransomes and Sims in Ipswich.

Typically, the Fowler/Ransomes system consisted of a portable engine, windlass, anchors and four furrow plough which could plough one acre per hour. Also demonstrated, but on the other side of the rail line closer to Broadwater House, was the latest grass mowing machinery of Garrett of Leiston. All these demonstrations drew great crowds and often blocked the way of the equipment being used. No health and safety concerns then.

Further demonstrations took place on the Fens, opposite the Station Hotel. There, 24 men dug 24 furrows and laid drainage tiles within them. There were also further demonstrations of grass-mowing equipment. Although hand digging of drains would be replaced by steam-powered mole draining, the introduction of the grass mower and reaper binder had already made inroads into mechanisation of the harvesting process.

However, the big event for most visitors was the show on the castle meadow where all the main manufactures from near and far had their stands. We should not lose sight of the fact that Suffolk was the leading county for the manufacture of agricultural machinery, with their equipment being exported all over the world. It was estimated that some 10,000 people were on the show ground in the afternoon.



Ransomes were one of many manufacturers at the show. This sign is from a later period. (JFB)

Whether you were interested in agriculture or not, a visit to Framlingham on July 4th 1860 had much to offer.