

suffolkVIEW

The magazine of the Suffolk Preservation Society



STAVERTON

ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST COLLECTIONS OF ANCIENT OAKS

Gary Battell, Woodland Advisor to Suffolk County Council, considers the history of Staverton Park and the importance of maintenance to secure the future of this ancient woodland.

Thanks to four generations of the Kemball family, Staverton, with its awesome presence and 3,020 ancient oak trees in Staverton Park and Little Staverton, along with the Thicks, is one of the great wonders of our natural world.

The ancient woodlands of Staverton Park and the Thicks are both of great historical and conservation interest. The site is designated as a SSSI (site of special scientific interest), a SAC (Special Area of

Conservation) and is within the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Today, the name 'Staverton Park' refers to three main blocks of woodland named Staverton Park, the Thicks and Little Staverton which total approximately 89.81 ha or 221.83 acres. However, the original boundaries of the Park were an area of approximately 151 ha or 372.97 acres.

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Fiona Cairns

Director, Suffolk Preservation Society

Welcome to the autumn edition of Suffolk View. It has been a busy summer which has given us lots of opportunities to meet many of you in person across our range of social events. From Lowestoft in the east to Ickworth in the west we have seen and learnt about some of the excellent work of those who are looking after Suffolk's historic landscapes and buildings.

Our lead article is by the county Woodland Officer, Gary Battell who provides an intriguing look at 'Staverton Thicks', an ancient woodland, distinctive due to its ancient pollarded oaks and exploring management techniques in an age of climate change.

We are also delighted to introduce our new intern, Anna Forrest, (page 9) who is joining us as part of her work placement to fulfil the requirements of a Master's degree at Cambridge University. She has generously given us a preview of her dissertation on Suffolk Almshouses (page 7).

This edition also brings you another fascinating insight into the early origins of our charity, with a piece of recent research by Dr Alan Mackley (page 10) about Janet Becker, one of the founding members of the Society who worked across the county campaigning to protect the county's buildings and monuments.

Our final contributor, renowned local architectural historian Timothy Easton (page 13) unpacks the significance of single colour paint schemes in the interiors of Suffolk's 16th and 17th century vernacular buildings.

We are launching our next Heritage Heroes Awards (page 18) and we do hope that you will get involved and nominate people that you know whose commitment to caring for our heritage is worthy of recognition. Whether the project is big or small, we are looking to celebrate and recognise these often-unsung heroes.

We are grateful to all those who have generously donated their time, their knowledge, their enthusiasm and their support to deliver the programme of events to our membership this year. The highlight was in July at Cockfield Hall, courtesy of Jon and Lois Hunt.

It was a rare opportunity to meet some of the most high-profile people who are actively working to restore and enhance one of the county's most important estates. A round up of our events can be found at page 25.

As the days become shorter and the temperatures cooler, we turn our attention to how we can keep our homes warm and the energy bills manageable. Many of our members are custodians of some of our most important heritage, often experiencing first-hand the challenges of managing uninsulated and draughty buildings. In a time of climate emergency and escalating heating costs it has never been more important to do what we can to meet this challenge head on. SPS has partnered with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings to bring their popular 'Energy Efficiency and Old Buildings' training event to Suffolk. It will be held at Haughley Park Barns on November 22nd. It has been generously funded by Historic England and the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership. More details can be found at page 26.

We do hope to see you there.

“ We are grateful to all those who have generously donated their time, their knowledge, their enthusiasm and their support to deliver the programme of events to our membership this year. ”

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Staverton Park

Ancient woodland

The majority of Staverton is on loess (an unstratified, geologically recent deposit of silty or loamy material chiefly deposited by the wind). A key feature is that there is not a podzol formation in the soil within the Park, a type of soil that you would expect on heathland and where the land had never been wooded.

This leads one to believe that much of Staverton has had continuous tree cover (Rackham and Battell). The Eyke/Wantisden parish boundary runs through the Park which may suggest that it was originally a shared vital resource that was in short supply for the two parishes.

In 1086 it was listed in the Domesday Book as *Stauertuna* or *Stauretona* [OE **stæfer* 'stake, pole' + *tūn*], a manor with a church and woodland for 30 pigs, held by Hubert de Montchensy as a tenant of Robert Malet, the Lord of Eye. This is a reference to the wider area that later became the parish of Eyke. Woodland is rare in this part of Suffolk in the Domesday Book, so it is likely that the 'wood for 30 pigs' equates to the area of Staverton Park.

During 1177 Staverton was taken into the king's hands on the death of Hugh Bigod, Earl of Norfolk, though it was noted that it 'was of Hugh de Munchensi's lordship', and ownership continued to be disputed into the 1190s. In 1199 Staverton was granted by Hubert de Montchensy to Hugh Bigod, son of Earl Roger, though Hubert retained use. This settlement might provide a context for the development of the Deer Park from pre-existing woodland.

From 1086 deer parks flourished with the introduction of the fallow deer, an oriental beast which was easier to keep in confined parks. Staverton Park was first recorded in an account roll of Roger Bigod, Earl of Norfolk in 1268/9 when *Herbagium* was mentioned (a place of herbage?) and *de herbag estival in eodem* (was this a festival to celebrate new life in spring?).

During the 13th Century, the Bigod records for Staverton Park show that bark was stripped from felled oaks and sold for tanning leather, acorns were sold for fattening pigs, wood sold for timber and fuel, and grazing rights were let for sheep and stock.

Later, probably in the 16th Century, many of the standing oaks were pollarded; the 'wattlesticks' or 'stallons' cut from them were used to form woven walls plastered with mud from which early houses were constructed.

These mature oaks were then pollarded at approximately 50-year intervals until the mid 1800s and form the present-day oaks we see today.

The Park, in 1528, was sold by Thomas, Duke of Norfolk to the Priors of Butley Abbey during the prosperity of the monasteries. It was during this year that Butley Priory Chronicle recorded the visit of Mary Tudor (Henry VIII's sister), Dowager Queen of France and Duchess of Suffolk. She hunted foxes and had a cheerful picnic lunch with fun and games with laughing gentry under the oaks 'sub quercubus', in 'Parcum de Staverton'. By 1540, however, the 'farm of Stafferton' is listed once again in an inventory of particulars for a grant to the Duke of Norfolk.

By 1601 the Park changed hands again to Sir Michael Stanhope who commissioned John Norden to produce the first ever detailed survey of the area, which is still in existence today. This map shows the Park as 'well wooded' with sheep paths and heathland and many features, which can be seen on the present-day map of the farm. During this century, after the production of Norden's map, several areas of the Park were cleared and cropped, reducing the area of Park to roughly its present size.

At some time during the 1700s, a large circular table was made from Staverton oak for a banquet held at Orford Castle for the Marquis of Hertford (a friend of the prince Regent) which is still found in the castle today.

It was recorded in 1764 that pollarding was continuing at a slower pace for the production of fuel and its popularity was waning with sheep grazing



Top
Three generations of arborists who have undertaken work at Staverton

From left to right: Jamie Foster (Farmland Forestry – Arb & owner) who did work on the 1946, 1996, 2001 trees, Gary Battell (Suffolk CC Senior Woodland Advisor) who planted the 1996, 2001, 2021, 2022, 2023 trees, Colin Kemp (Arb) who did work on the 1946 planted trees in 1995, Matthew Powell (Farmland Forestry - Arb) who did work on the 1946, 1996, 2001 trees.

Bottom Left
Trees which were retrenched in 1995 by Colin Kemp, and 2022 by Jamie Foster & Matthew Lloyd.

Bottom Right
Jamie Foster (Farmland Forestry) crown thinning Staverton oak trees planted by Gary Battell in 1996.

taking precedence. By the mid-1800s pollarding ceased altogether and the Park was sub-divided by hawthorn hedges. One of these sub-divisions was The Thicks which contained oaks and holly. The hollies were never recorded until Thomas Cromwell in Excursions in the County of Suffolk (1819) wrote about 'hollies in great quantities, a beautiful sight in winter'. Even though there has been little mentioned about them, it is presumed that the hollies were present for many years before, but were not noted since they were so common in the Middle Ages, playing a large part in both Christian and pagan ceremonies.

In 1900 sheep grazing stopped and the Park and Thicks were used as a game reserve, promoting the regeneration of birch, rowan, bracken, mosses, and lichen. Since then, vegetation of Staverton Park has not altered greatly, leading to the discovery of rare mosses, lichen and beetles and contributing to the site designation as a SSSI (site of special scientific interest) and a SAC (Special Area of Conservation).

During World War Two, between 1939 and 1945, the Park was used as a military camp for tank exercises and trials for developing 'Funnies', machines for breaching enemy sea defences.

A visit of inspection by King George VI was recorded with photographs found in the Bovington Tank Museum. Two aircraft are known to have crashed into the Park, one German and one Canadian, burning and creating large clearings in the Park and Thicks.

After the end of World War Two, Mr J H Kemball bought the Park and Farm and by 1950 he noticed an increase in deer numbers. By 1982 the number of deer was considerably higher resulting in much damage to the local crops. The answer was to fence approximately 50 acres of the Park to keep the fallow deer off the fields and red deer were also introduced into the pen. Therefore, after a gap of 200 years in its history, an area of the Park was once again what it was originally supposed to be, a Deer Park.

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Staverton Park

Ancient woodland

Today the family continue to plant and care for young Staverton oaks, control the bracken, cut the paths, and manage the deer. Staverton is a highly valued conservation site and Natural England, the body which designated it a Site of Special Scientific Interest, has a risk adverse, minimum intervention approach to its management with a priority for deadwood. However, climate change and pathogen pre-planned mitigation management may be a far better methodology to sustaining this iconic historical and biodiverse site. Management solely by non-intervention in ancient woodland deadwood habitat is unsustainable and will only further accelerate the spiral of tree decline and premature death of the trees in Staverton.

No human will ever see the full life cycle of an oak tree, let alone the many infinite variables, so there will never be a complete point of certainty in the science of oak trees as can be achieved in farming. Realistically we will never, with the same assurance, understand the complexity of an oak tree's

life cycle. However, there is a need to extrapolate the best practices over the last 30 to 40-years to keep oaks alive through the rapid and catastrophic change that is happening now and will only increase in the future.

Aesthetic or no tree pruning is a luxury we cannot afford. More oak trees will need to be retrenched or reduced in size to where they can sustain themselves for the long term. Humans should remind themselves oak trees just want to live, and their large size and structure is no longer sustainable as conditions in East Anglia become less desirable for large mature trees.

Since the 1750s, the approximate date of the last pollarding at Staverton, there has been a period of great natural regeneration with no re-pollarding or retrenchment. It is likely that this led to a spiral of stress that is being accelerated by climate change and pathogens, the primary pathogen being phytophthora. Therefore, management solely as a non-intervention ancient woodland deadwood habitat will only further accelerate the spiral of tree decline and premature death of all the trees in Staverton.

The retrenchment of East Anglian oaks should be achieved over a relatively short period of time in a progressive, pre-planned and bespoke manner whilst they still have enough energy and vigour to respond. Keeping just one large veteran oak alive for another few decades will give more back to this planet than any planting scheme. If the thousands of pollarded oaks that make up our landscape are managed this way the Suffolk landscape will stand a fighting chance for future generations. This approach along with new planting of native species and the creation of new pollarded trees will also help soften the changes that will inevitably happen all too quickly.

The next two to ten years will define which approach was the best way to deliver the key sustainable development goal for Staverton.

Many thanks to Edward Martin and Rosemary Hoppitt for their historical research.

“ This is an awesome place. Oaks of unknown age, surrealistic shapes and improbable girth moulder in the dim shade of yet mightier hollies or rise out of a sea of bracken. ”

Oliver Rackham, Ancient Woodland, 2003



A Staverton oak tree over 900 years old

Energy Transmission in Suffolk

It's time to change the rulebook

Fiona Cairns *Director, Suffolk Preservation Society*

Sometimes the way nationally significant energy infrastructure projects are managed is like something straight out of Alice Through the Looking Glass. Reality and language are bent and shaped to suit those in charge.

An example of the plasticity of words came from National Grid who embarked on a summer consultation into their plans for over a hundred miles of new pylons in our region. These will carry electricity from the wind farms in the North Sea to where the power is most needed, in the South East.

They switched the name for this project from the somewhat ironic East Anglia GREEN to something more suitably hyperbolic: Great Grid Upgrade - Norwich to Tilbury.

Earlier in the year, after much pressure from local MPs, communities and campaigning groups, Government reversed its initial decision to refuse a review into whether offshore routes might be a possible alternative to some or all of the overground proposals. It was finally announced this summer, before the pylon public consultation concluded, that a study will now be carried out to assess alternatives to future overhead lines, based on four criteria: cost to consumers, deliverability and operability, impact on the environment and impact on communities. The report, we are told, will provide clear and independently prepared options of how this much-needed renewable energy can connect to, and be transported along, the electricity system in the most cost-effective and holistic way. This can be seen as a small win.

However, this review, to be conducted by the National Grid's Electricity System Operator, isn't to begin until after the current consultation has finished. So may be not such a win after all!

So, whilst we are hopeful that the case for offshore transmission in the future may yet be successful, the Norwich to Tilbury pylon scheme is still being progressed and we must therefore continue to proactively engage with the likely prospect that this scheme will be brought forward under current parameters, however unpalatable.

I understand why some organisations are calling for either the whole route to be placed offshore or underground regardless of the financial costs. But the conundrum is whether such stances might make it easier for National Grid to ignore their views in their entirety. A dilemma that many groups such as SPS are having to grapple with.

Of relevance to this debate was the issue this summer, of a report by the Electricity Networks Commissioner, Nick Winser CBE, the first comprehensive review for decades as to how this country plans and delivers its electricity transmission needs.

In essence the Winser Report starts from the premise that the current system works for no-one and will certainly not be fit for purpose in meeting the ambitions to deliver 50GW of wind power and 24GW of new nuclear, and providing customers with clean, secure, affordable electricity.

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Energy Transmission in Suffolk

“ There is a noticeable lack of democratic engagement/involvement, leave alone co-design, and there is pretty much no mention of local council or community groups’ input to his new faster system. ”

Commendably, Winser sets out the key objective of his report is to **reduce the timescale for building strategic transmission by three years, and ultimately by a half.....**

I believe that we must hit the more ambitious end of this and reduce the overall timescale to seven years. I am confident that this is achievable.

To achieve this, he makes no fewer than 18 recommendations covering everything from improved coordination between relevant agencies and Government departments to better communications (basically winning hearts and minds through improved advertising and engagement).

Encouragingly, he argues that a new set of design principles is needed to replace the Holford Rules.

Winser observes that these should be comprehensive, ***detailing the principles and methods used to design new transmission systems and the configuration of pylons and other assets,*** and dynamic - so, unlike their predecessor, they will be updated as new technologies and expertise progress.

He also makes the case for establishing a clear and public set of guidelines to compensate those impacted by ‘hosting’ new powerlines.



“It worked for Paris and Blackpool.”

These would comprise lump sum payments for individual households close to new lines and a community fund for those in the broader locality of new lines.

However, as SPS sees it, the major flaw in the Winser report is its inherent top-down view of the world.

The process of siting new transmission lines remains something to be done to communities. There is a noticeable lack of democratic engagement/involvement, leave alone co-design, and there is pretty much no mention of local council or community groups’ input to his new faster system. But if this is overlooked, then the planning friction will still remain and applications will be bogged down in legal challenges just as before.

A third document issued in the summer implicitly makes the same point. The Government consultation on ways in which NSIPs or Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (like Sizewell C) can be speeded up seeks to improve engagement with impacted communities through clearer guidance and earlier and more meaningful consultation.

We believe that communities impacted by the so-called Great Grid Update deserve a stronger voice in this process.

Moreover, the Proposer must realise the importance of treating affected communities as having legitimate viewpoints that must be taken seriously if we are to realise the aim of reducing delivery times.

One wonders if the Government is finally beginning to recognise that the current system needs wholesale reform, and that “social licence”, or the consent of those impacted, is essential to speeding up the delivery of the infrastructure if net zero targets are to be met.

Perhaps National Grid and Nick Winser should take heed.

National Grid certainly needs to up its current game well before the new NSIP reforms are approved.

Now is the time for them to go further and earlier in engaging with local communities in a way that is meaningful, not just a tick box exercise which many at the moment think it is.

It is time they started talking ***with us*** not just at us.



Almshouses in Suffolk

A study of housing provision for the elderly poor

Anna Forrest *Heritage & Research Officer*



Figure 1: Robert Gardiner Almshouses, Elmswell

Historic almshouses are an instantly recognisable, picturesque feature of many of Suffolk's towns and villages, and yet only a handful have been the subject of published research.

Until recently, books describing almshouses nationally tended to focus on examples which were particularly old, large, or elaborate, and there were relatively few county-wide studies of the more humble foundations. In 2016, the Family and Community Historical Research Society published *The British Almshouse – new perspectives on philanthropy ca 1400-1914*, noting that there had been only peripheral academic interest in post-medieval almshouses from an architectural and social historical perspective, and making a case for further academic study.

It is in this spirit that I am researching a group of surviving almshouse buildings in Suffolk, founded during the period 1600-1834 and operating in parallel with relief provided by parishes to the poor under the Old Poor Law. In excess of 150 almshouse

foundations established in Suffolk between c.1400 and the early 20th century have been identified, from which I have created a shortlist of 24 which fall within my period of study and which have excellent surviving fabric and archival evidence. Twelve of these are still used for their original purpose. I am gathering documentary and structural evidence and considering the circumstances of the buildings' creation, their original form, features, division of space, and facilities, and drawing conclusions about what they illustrate about attitudes towards housing the elderly poor during the period. This article introduces the research I am carrying out, and I hope to write a follow-on article in the future. The culmination of my research will be a dissertation submitted next May as part of my Masters in Building History at the University of Cambridge.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines an almshouse as 'a house for the accommodation or support of the poor or needy'. They have their roots in the medieval hospitals run by monastic foundations until the Dissolution, after which the founding and endowment of hospitals and almshouses virtually ceased. Elizabeth I passed an Act in 1597 '*For erecting of hospitals or abiding and working house for the poor*', which enabled private benefactors to found and endow almshouses, houses of correction and similar institutions by the simple act of enrolling a deed in the court of Chancery. This led to a marked increase in almshouse foundations during the first decades of the 17th century. A false impression could be gained that the majority of these almshouses were lavish and wealthy, arranged around a courtyard, with a chapel, communal dining space and warden's accommodation. In fact, the majority are simply rows of near-identical accommodation units arranged within a symmetrical façade, often bookended with elaborate gables. Elmswell's Robert Gardiner almshouses, founded in 1614, are quintessential (*Fig 1*).

I am particularly interested in unpicking how these almshouses functioned behind their attractive façades. What accommodation was thought appropriate for the elderly poor? How much space was each almsperson allocated, and what fixtures, fittings, furnishings and facilities were provided? To what extent did the principal façade confirm or belie the standard of accommodation within? What ancillary buildings and external spaces were provided, and how were they regulated? I will also be considering how or if the approach to providing almshouse accommodation changed during the course of the period from 1600-1834.

Most of these buildings have necessarily been altered over time to improve the standard of accommodation or to be put to new uses. Nevertheless, the structure usually preserves evidence of former openings and partitions, and some buildings can be compared with the original plans and

Almshouses in Suffolk

specifications for their construction, preserved in archives. William Cary of Halesworth (d.1686) left detailed instructions in his will for his almshouses (Fig 2), asking that they should,

'conteyne twelve roomes, besides garretts, foure yards and a halfe square and eight foot high, all to be bricke from the foundation to the rooffe, two to be tiled Gabell endes with double chimneys, and two chimneys of equal distances betweene each; foure fire hearths supplyes twelve roomes; one pump or well in the middle behind the house comon to all'

Minute books for the Thomas Mills almshouse, Framlingham (1703), and the Ann Smith almshouse at St Mary Elms, Ipswich (1760), record in minute detail the construction of the buildings, listing the intended number and dimensions of windows, doors, chimneys and rooms, the names of the suppliers of all of the building materials, and interior details such as the installation of wainscot and shutters.

Almshouse interiors have been very little studied, and the historic size of each

unit of accommodation varied. The majority of the examples I have seen originally had a single ground floor room, or at most a room and a half, and perhaps an attic room above.

Documents have shown that it was relatively unusual for almspeople to share their accommodation with anyone else. Those offered a place in an almshouse were therefore able to retain residential independence when they might otherwise have been asked by the parish to share accommodation with other paupers or with family members who may not have been able to support them. In every case, a large open fireplace dominates one wall of each unit. This was particularly important both symbolically – having a hearth of one's own was highly valued - and practically - as a source of warmth and nourishment. Interiors also preserve original stair compartments, doors, door furniture, and partitions. In some, such as the Cornwallis almshouses in Brome,



Figure 3: H-hinges and chamfered joists at the Cornwallis almshouse, Brome.

small features such as decorative hinges and chamfer stops on beams provide a degree of embellishment that is perhaps unexpected (Fig 3). The often vertiginous staircase provided originally to access attic accommodation presents problems of accessibility today.

Ancillary buildings for facilities such as communal wash-houses and privies appear to be rare survivals, although map evidence indicates that most almshouses had them. At Hawstead's Metcalfe almshouses, founded in 1811, the original wash-house survives with its wide fireplace, space for the washing copper, and two adjoining privies which, according to the almshouse rules, were to be 'taken care of and kept in order by all the poor persons' (Fig 4).

Figure 2: Almshouses built according to William Cary's instructions, Halesworth.





Figure 4: Wash-house at the Metcalfe almshouse, Hawstead; privy entrance on left.

I am hoping to discover more of these buildings, or at least find evidence on the ground of their former existence. It is also clear that most almshouses had a back yard or garden, and that in many cases the gardens were equally divided amongst the inhabitants to enable them to grow their own produce and to have a space for recreation. Lady Anne Windsor noted in her founding deed in 1608 that she wished her almshouses at Stoke by Nayland to have *'one garden rometh [room/space] to or for every house severally divided from the rest, and one rometh before all the same houses which is railed and fenced from the highway and meant to be kept and used as a common grass platt for the four inhabitants in the same four houses'* (Fig 5).

Rules and regulations governing the daily lives of the almspeople survive in the archives for several almshouses, and would usually have been hung on the wall of each unit of accommodation. Some of the clauses provide useful information about the buildings' layout and materials. At the Ann Smith almshouses, Ipswich,

'No woman must go into her respective cellar after candle light if there are chips, straw, [...] broom or kindling in any therein capable of being set on fire unless she goes with a candle in a lanthorn upon pain of expulsion.'

Several almshouses' rules reveal that windows were glazed, and it was up to the occupant to fund repairs in the event that they were broken. The widows living at Gardiner's almshouses in Elmswell were required to keep their

'chambers, gardens, walks and grounds clean, wholesome and sweet.'

Meanwhile, the occupants of the Mary Warner almshouses at Boyton, opened in 1746, were threatened with expulsion if they were

'to break any part of the brick work or tiling, or cut any of the timbers in the roof, floors or partitions of this almshouse.'

Inventories of almshouse contents are rare but one dated 1746 survives for the Clopton Hospital in Bury St Edmunds (now the Deanery), which is by far the grandest of the almshouses I am researching.

Each of the twelve inhabitants had a bedstead and curtains, a coverlet, a table, a chair, a coal grate, tongs, fire shovel, fender and poker. Additional bedding 'for the uses of the nurses' was provided in the rooms of two of the almspeople who must have been receiving round the clock care. Other rooms listed in the inventory include the hall, laundry, kitchen, pantry, linen store, larder, cellars and a brew house.

The trustees and occupants of the almshouses I have visited so far have been incredibly generous with their time, providing me with access to interiors and exteriors and sharing information about the history of their buildings. If any readers of Suffolk View have links to any of Suffolk's 17th- and 18th-century almshouses, I would be delighted to hear from you at sv@suffolksociety.org



Figure 5: Lady Anne Windsor's almshouses with the 'grass platt' in front, Stoke by Nayland.



Anna Forrest

Heritage &
Research Officer

I am delighted to be working in a voluntary capacity with the team at the Suffolk Preservation Society as part of my Masters in Building History at the University of Cambridge. More years ago than I could possibly admit to, I volunteered in my gap year for SPS under the directorship of Greg Luton. That experience sparked in me a passion for historic buildings, leading me to change my degree course from English to History of Architecture and Medieval Studies. I followed this with a Masters in Medieval Studies, which led me to a 20-year career as a Curator for the National Trust in the East of England. From 2019-2022 I was project curator for the

£6m 'Raise the Roof' project at Oxburgh Hall, Norfolk, during which extraordinary discoveries were made which rekindled a desire to get 'hands-on' with historic buildings and take my career in a slightly different direction. At the end of the project I left on a high note and enrolled on the Masters, which has been an incredible experience so far. Working alongside Fiona, Bethany and Julie is going to be invaluable, offering me a different perspective on heritage protection, planning and engagement. I will be here until Christmas, and will return again in the spring, and I look forward to meeting some of you over the next few months.

Janet Becker: historian, novelist, poet and artist

A forgotten Suffolk campaigner

Alan Mackley is an honorary research fellow at the University of East Anglia. He is currently editing a recently discovered wartime diary of Janet Becker, Suffolk campaigner and early member of the Suffolk Preservation Society.

On Saturday 20 February 1943, Janet Becker, a single woman approaching her forties, living with her widowed mother in Wangford, attended a conference in Ipswich. The subject was highly topical: Town and Country Planning. The conference passed unanimously the resolution: 'That this conference representing local government bodies in East Anglia and others interested in town and country planning calls upon the Government to expedite its declaration of policy in regard to planning, so that

local authorities may know what they are expected to do in the future.' Government was in fact moving. The Ministry of Town and Country Planning was created in 1943 and 'The Town and Country Planning (Interim Development) Act, 1943', received Royal Assent on 22 July 1943. A pattern was set for the control of post-war development and protection of the countryside.

Janet Becker, historian, novelist, poet, campaigner (a member of the Suffolk Preservation Society) and artist, is now

largely forgotten. She was born in London in 1903 as Margaret Janet Becker (Janet was soon preferred). As a young child she was introduced to east Suffolk, which became a central influence on her life. Her father, artist Harry Becker, took his family to Wenhamston, first for summers and then in 1913 he exiled himself permanently from the London artistic scene to spend the rest of his life working in the field to portray the life of agricultural labourers. In 1926 they moved to the Blythburgh hamlet of Hinton. Harry Becker died in 1928. The family's financial position was always precarious. Janet's fees at St Felix School Southwold were paid by a charity and later, in London, she was supported by a wealthy mentor.

Janet left school without the exam passes needed to become a university undergraduate. She followed a matriculation course at University College London for two years but, against advice, did not go on to work for a degree. She wrote to her mother 'Six years of uncongenial swot and stodge and cram!' and 'When I do get a BA it will be too late



“ The book should prove a valuable aid in the propaganda for the preservation of scenic beauty ”

“ I go to all these places, and I see all these churches, but I come back and wonder if there are any places as fair as Blythburgh and Suffolk ”

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Janet Becker
at Southwark
Cathedral

to take up anything’. After UCL she attended a secretarial college and then took up an opportunity to satisfy an existing passion to work in an archive on original documents, studying the medieval accounts of Rochester Bridge. Another advantageous introduction led to her main career, as a pioneering woman cleaner and restorer of church monuments. From the early 1930s she travelled widely, as far as Bodmin in the west to Ayr in the north, working in cathedrals and parish churches. She claimed to have washed the faces of many kings, aristocrats and gentlemen. Attendance at the Ipswich conference meant a break in Janet Becker’s usual routine. Her work on church monuments had stopped during the war but she was not idle. She kept an occasional diary titled ‘Shop on Wheels’ describing her war work. From 1942 to 1944 she rode from home, with a trailer attached to her bicycle, carrying cigarettes, hot buns, chocolates, razor blades and clothing mended by helpers in Wangford, the things needed by the servicemen manning a searchlight battery in Henham Park. She also made Valentines for sale, organised a gardening competition, performed a play and even lectured in a barrack hut. The Major in charge spoke to her after an inspection: ‘Miss Becker? I’ve heard so much about you from the men and seen your name up on notices about mending socks, and I’m delighted to have this opportunity of thanking you personally for all you’re doing.’ In parallel with her work on church monuments, and her war effort, Janet

Becker was writing. After her research on Rochester Bridge was published came works of local history, two novels (set in east Suffolk), a volume of verse, and letters to newspapers deploring ‘The Spoilation of Rural Suffolk’.

Janet Becker’s first novel, *Ploughshare into Pylon*, published in 1939, develops the spoilation theme. Set in a thinly disguised Suffolk village of Wheatfield it describes battles of the 1920s and 30s with encroaching road improvers, the motor car, speculative builders and the electricity pylons of the title. It encapsulates the thinking and attitudes of the rural preservation movement between the wars. In a foreword the chairman of the Suffolk Preservation Society points to a moral, that the ‘nefarious purposes’ of developers can easily be achieved

if faced only by apathy. A reviewer wrote that the ‘book should prove a valuable aid in the propaganda for the preservation of scenic beauty’.

The endpapers illustrate the emphasis placed on the dramatic visual transformation of the countryside: trees have been felled, roads straightened, houses built and pylons erected. The mill has gone and the shop has expanded with a filling station. A telephone box has appeared and the old manor house is in ruins. It is ironic that Janet presaged the impact of the motor car in a journal describing a tour around Suffolk in 1922. She wrote that on entering Lavenham: ‘They were committing sacrilege by waking its peace with a car’.

Bottom Right
At Winchester
Cathedral with
volunteers

Page 11
Illustrations of
Wheatfield from
*Ploughshare into
Pylon*, 1939

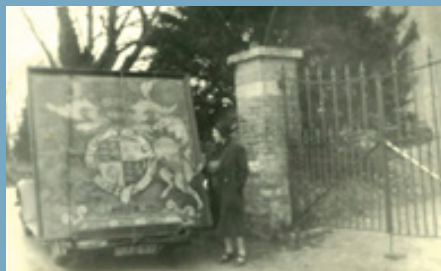
Continued on page 12 >



A forgotten Suffolk campaigner



Janet Becker



At Swanton Morley, Norfolk, 1947

Ploughshare into Pylon is set on the cusp of the takeover of the old rural order by the car, roads, electricity pylons, houses, and the mechanisation of agriculture. The story ends with the passing of a Rural England Protection Bill, promoted appropriately by an MP fortunate enough to have gone to Cambridge and have inherited a large estate and a fortune. For the book is written from the perspective of the comfortable well-off middle class. A central character is a vicar's daughter who marries a wealthy architect. They are the heroes. Their contemporaries bemoan their falling incomes. The rural poor are romanticised although statistically their position in Suffolk was as dire as any workforce in the country. The villains are tasteless and rapacious shopkeepers and developers, concerned only with profit. This is a conservative story with an underlying regret at the loss of an old order. It is worth remembering that in its earliest form the National Trust's scheme to save country houses reflected the belief that a house had to be lived in to have meaning. So, impecunious homeowners were allowed to remain in their mansions with the National Trust picking up the bills.

In the book the damaging visual consequences of development are emphasised over the benefits. The supply of electricity is refused by one villager, because the company will not put the wires underground. Key characters are killed by cars speeding on improved roads. A thinly-disguised Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings is featured. This is not a green story nor is it concerned with biodiversity but it is genuinely of its time and worth reading.

Janet Becker had a long and close attachment to Blythburgh church. In 1935 she published *Blythburgh. An Essay on the Village and its Church*, a work still valued by village historians. She consulted experts on matters as varied as the colour on the font and the alms box, a supposed room under the floor of the Hopton chapel, and the interpretation of the ruins of Blythburgh priory. In 1946 she was the Exhibition Secretary, effectively curator, for an exhibition in Ipswich Art Gallery called 'Bygone Blythburgh', to raise money for a new peal of bells for the church and she contributed a poem to the catalogue.

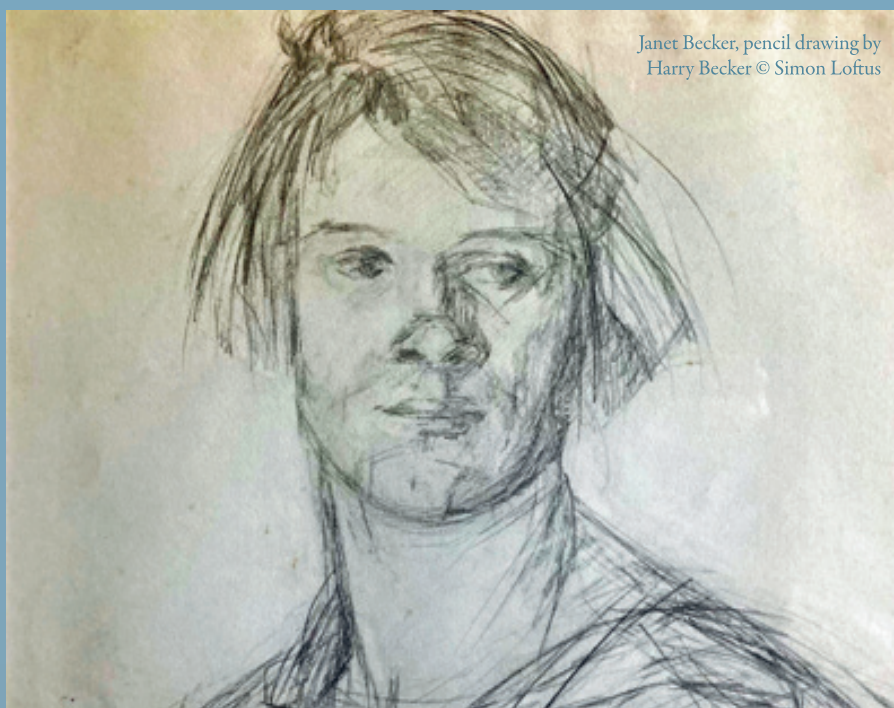
Janet Becker died in 1953 of leukaemia, aged fifty. For her funeral service, and a year later at a memorial service for the dedication of a plaque, Blythburgh church was full. The congregations were representative of her wide interests and associations. The funeral service was attended by the mayors of nearby towns, representatives of the Conservative party

(she chaired the Wangford branch), and of organisations and individuals with whom she had worked: the Suffolk Institute for Archaeology and History, of which she was a council member, the Suffolk Preservation Society – she was on the Executive Committee, and the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches. The memorial service was attended by the Earl of Stradbroke, Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk (Janet Becker had painted the funeral hatchment for his father), and addressed by the Bishop of Dunwich. The secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings wrote that Janet was recognised as a pioneer and said that they had instituted a course of practical study for the cleaning and repair of monuments so that the good work Janet started could be continued.

Clearly Janet Becker was a person of some consequence in Suffolk. In an address to a historical society in Somerset she explained that her heart was always in the county. She declared: 'I go to all these places, and I see all these churches, but I come back and wonder if there are any places as fair as Blythburgh and Suffolk'. She deserves to be remembered for the contribution she made and the light she threw on the county in the first half of the twentieth century. Her 1922 motor-tour journal, wartime diary and the many poems she left are being considered for publication.

Some images taken from the family archive:

www.waddington.family



Janet Becker, pencil drawing by Harry Becker © Simon Loftus

Plain colour schemes in Suffolk

A lesser-known approach to interior decoration in timber-framed buildings

Timothy Easton is a Suffolk based architectural historian who is a specialist on the painted surfaces of sixteenth and seventeenth-century buildings. In the following article Timothy explores the importance of the use of plain colour in Suffolk's vernacular buildings, where a single colour is used to decorate the interior of a timber frame.

We bought our first house in Debenham, Suffolk, in 1972. At that time, it was a row of three timber-framed cottages, but during its renovation we found that it had been built as one house around 1400. We quickly discovered colour on some of the timbers.

My wife and I were both trained as artists, so we were adept at spotting the evidence of plain colours. That is where a single colour was applied liberally to decorate an internal

timber frame that was intended to be left on show. When the 16th-century timber-framed chimney had been formed in the former open hall of our house around 1540, the lintel had been painted with a red colour and was still attached to the front surface.

Red was commonly used in such circumstances before 1600, and was not just limited to the hearth beam. It can sometimes survive on the central crown post of open

halls, beneath the accumulated black sooty deposits left by the smoke from an open fire or an early leaky chimney.

Yellow ochre was sometimes used as an alternative for such plain schemes. A fine example of the latter is in the parlour chamber of Grundle House, a late 15th-century house in Stanton (*fig 1*). This was painted around 1500 with a plain scheme of yellow ochre, with some limited ornamentation of black hand-painted imitation carved cresting applied across the central tie beam. The same design is on the uppermost parts of the wall framing. The rest of the walls had been painted with plain yellow colour. The two curved braces are meant to appear carved by using freely-drawn brush lines.

Although there are many surviving examples of sections of wall paintings in Suffolk buildings, these excited me less to record. Perhaps I was spoilt by the opportunity that both of us had with our close proximity to the canvasses and panels of sophisticated painters that have been through our studios over the last fifty-five years. My wife, Christine, spent those years as a picture restorer and both of us had been within touching distance of Michelangelo's great frescos after climbing to the top of the scaffolds erected inside the Sistine Chapel, so we were a bit spoilt.

Continued on page 14 >

Figure 1 Grundle House, Stanton. The painted parlour chamber with simple painted cresting, known as brattishing, circa 1500; photo taken in 1979



Plain colour schemes in Suffolk



Figures 2a and 2b



However, I quickly concluded that the people I heard lecturing at conferences on historic structures in the 1970s had neglected the subject of the use of internal plain colours in framed buildings. Forty-five years later, these plain schemes are still not fully appreciated by many researchers of buildings elsewhere in the United Kingdom. But in Suffolk, at least, they were one of the main forms of 17th-century internal decoration. I am sometimes told they don't exist in other counties, but then I look and find this is not the case. It would appear that the building historian's eyes are not familiar with the tell-tale evidence. Admittedly in fragmentary form this can look quite odd, so until a complete room is viewed, inexperienced eyes simply don't know what to make of partial fragments.

Further examples of plain schemes were subsequently drawn to my attention, one in Bury St Edmunds and another in Hadleigh. This confirmed that such schemes were quite widely distributed in Suffolk. They were also very noticeable in Bedfield Hall, the house we moved to in 1982.

With the restoration of Bedfield Hall, where so many rooms contained this evidence, it became easier to show a different way of viewing the interior of a completed building of the early 17th century, in contrast to the elaborate wall paintings made a few decades earlier.

At present it is the only British house where all the rooms (except for three) are known to have been decorated with plain scheme designs made over a ten year period. Of the 14 rooms that make up the ground and first floors, the three that were not given this distinctive treatment were these. The parlour of 1630, because it was panelled throughout. Paint was used on

the timber mullions, which made them resemble black stone and the wooden saddle bars supporting the glass between them which were painted with minium (red lead), so that they appeared to be metal from outside; and a smart black-painted linked box scheme under the plastered centre beam. The unpainted hall chamber was probably hung with painted cloths, because the walls had an uneven mixture of studs from 1423 with additions

from 1630. Lastly, the maid's chamber of 1620 was not painted, denoting its lesser importance in the overall scheme.

There can be an overlap of these different types. For instance, in the parlour of 31-37 High Street Debenham there is a very finely executed black and white painted scheme of fantastical beasts surrounding the cartouches of the early 17th century owners, William and Mary Motts (*fig 2a and 2b*). On the staircase leading to the parlour chamber above there is a plain scheme of red fictive studs. In another house nearby, The Ancient House, 3 Gracechurch Street, there are similar painted stripes on the landing outside a room with portions of two painted schemes (*fig 3*). The earlier is made up of linked quatrefoils with flowers depicted in the centre of each with areas of text. This was painted over around 1625 with an obscuring layer of limewash. Onto this was added a plain scheme in green fictive studs with the additions of imitation



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

capitals and base mouldings to present a radically different classically-inspired form of room. So, in the latter we can observe the taste from around the early years of the 17th century, after it replaced the more elaborate painted scheme below from the late 16th century.

A red scheme of this kind is found in the parlour chamber decorated in 1630 for a wealthy widow, Mrs Julian Acton of Ipswich, (monument in St Mary Elms) who lived at Bedfield Hall from around 1620 until her death in 1640 (*fig 4*). The choice of red or green for painting both the studwork, or fictive studs on plaster, during the 17th century, tended to be reserved for one of the better rooms, like a principal bed chamber. However, the use of black size-bound pigment was much more common. Many of the rooms at Bedfield were given this painted treatment (*figs 4 & 5*).

This noticeable change after 1600, when black pigments became the standard colour to paint interiors (*fig 5*), coincided with the fashionable use of black fabrics to display an owner's wealth. Black dyes were expensive and once the fabric had been dyed twice with mordants, the cloth rotted in a short time. So black was not simply associated with death and the newly introduced black ledger stones in churches, but was seen as a status colour.

How to find the original paint

When colour was applied to studwork in the 17th century, it was a common practice to paint parts of the plastered infill between the studs. By painting approximate parallel lines down each side of the painted studs onto the plaster, the width was increased, and the vertical sides appeared to match, even if the timber beam or stud had a wavy edge (*fig 6*). Often when the paint is no longer immediately visible on the timber, the same colour can be rediscovered under the later paint layers where it had been drawn into the porous surface of the adjacent plaster wall. Once that colour is established it is possible to mix the same shade of size-based paint and reapply to the timbers without overlaying the original evidence on the plaster. This way the original internal space can be represented in a way that is more faithful to the intended look of the original builders.

These plain schemes became the main decorative step forward in the 17th century. They were a simpler way of creating a background for the fashionable chests and chairs that became more affordable to the inhabitants of our towns, villages and farmhouses at this time.



Figure 6

Fig 2a and 2b – The wallpainting at Motts House, Debenham

Fig 3 The two consecutive painted schemes at No 3 Gracechurch Street, Debenham. Photo taken before restoration. 1968

Fig 4 The red painted room at Bedfield Hall, 1630

Fig 5 The black painted studs in the bedroom of 1620 with simple painted ornamented capitals on the plaster. Bedfield Hall.

Fig 6 Detail from the red painted room at Bedfield Hall showing the extra painted lines along the plaster down each side of the studs.

Fig 7a The plain scheme of fictive studs showing through the later distemper, on the reverse side of the red wall at Bedfield Hall

Fig 7b The same painted vertical studs of 1630 after later distemper paint removed. Bedfield Hall

Fig 7c The fictive painted studs restored. Bedfield Hall

Articles can be found at:

[independent.academia.edu > TimothyEaston](http://independent.academia.edu/TimothyEaston)

Bedfield Hall can be visited via

INVITATION TO VIEW

To book tickets, visit:

tickettailor.com/events/bedfieldhall/764914



Figure 7a

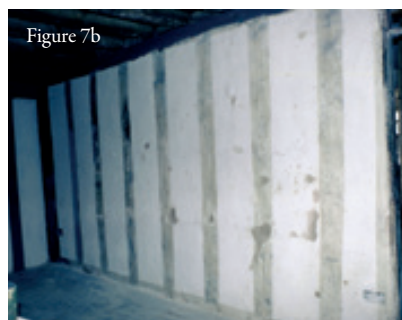


Figure 7b



Figure 7c



Why we need to retrofit our old buildings

The message from Carl Elefante, former President of the American Institute of Architects, couldn't be clearer: 'Don't demolish it – retrofit it'.

Bethany Philbedge *SPS Planning Officer*

A clear and true message which we need to take on board with regards to Suffolk's very many historic but unlisted buildings.

These hundreds upon hundreds of houses, former places of worship and sometimes public buildings form a significant part of what we at the Suffolk Preservation Society term our county's 'humble heritage'.

Although not listed buildings, and therefore not accorded the same level of protection given to those that have been added to the statutory list, they are very frequently much-loved elements of the

local townscape, streetscape and landscape. They give meaning and colour to many people's experiences of particular places.

Readers can probably each name at least a handful known to them.

Yet they are all too frequently the objects of neglect – both intentional and unintentional.

Some recent examples, all of which the Society has been campaigning to avoid demolition, include a large Victorian Gothic house at Nowton; the 18th century weatherboarded White Cottage

at Framlingham; an early 20th century weatherboarded bungalow in Felixstowe and a 17th century cottage in Wortham.

A key argument put forward by some applicants, is that the replacement buildings will be much more environmentally sustainable than the existing ones. This argument, however, is a negative collateral consequence of the essential and praiseworthy efforts of Suffolk to achieve carbon neutral status by 2030. The Society believes, that such an attitude can often be self-interest masquerading in green clothes!



“ The greenest building is the one that already exists ”

It is well understood that emissions from the built environment must be reduced if the UK is to meet net zero by 2050, and a proper policy framework for assessing the embodied carbon within our built environment is long overdue.

The 2022 House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee report, 'Building to net zero: costing carbon in construction', stated that:

Finding the appropriate balance between demolition and new build versus reuse and retrofitting of existing buildings is crucial to a built environment policy which delivers sustainable outcomes. Considerable emissions are involved in demolition and rebuilding of properties, especially when measured under a whole-life carbon approach: under this approach, it becomes more debatable whether the replacement of properties is a sustainable approach to take.

Last year, Marks & Spencer's plans to bulldoze its flagship 1929 store on London's Oxford Street sparked a public row over the role of embodied carbon in construction and the case for an alternative retrofit-first approach highlighted the environmental and heritage costs of demolition. Along with many other heritage groups, SPS was delighted when the appeal was dismissed and Marks & Spencer were not granted planning permission for demolition.

So, instead of knocking down and building new, we must adopt a more sustainable approach and embrace retrofitting wherever possible.

Basically, retrofitting involves improving the energy efficiency of windows and doors, insulating roofs and floors, and above all making sure that a building is well maintained. It is clear that a dry and draught proofed house is infinitely easier and cheaper to keep warm than one with holes in the roof, blocked or damaged gutters or downpipes,



The Marks and Spencer store at Marble Arch, Oxford Street

and cracks in the render letting in moisture. As retrofitting techniques improve and costs come down, more and more owners of both listed and unlisted historic houses are looking at this as a way of balancing care for heritage with a sustainable response to the climate emergency. It was clearly a favoured option in reducing energy consumption during our community energy visioning workshops held in Debenham in 2022.

But there remains a lack of access to good, clear and authoritative information. That is why the Society is taking a lead.

Partnering with the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and Historic England, and supported by the Suffolk Climate Change Partnership, we've organised a day-long course on 22 November that will explain how to avoid potential problems through a holistic approach to retrofitting, while presenting a background to the latest building science with practical advice and examples of best practice.

The course – called Energy Efficiency and Old Buildings to be held at Haughley Park Barn - will be led by two national experts in this field: Marianne Suhr and Roger Hunt, authors of the Old House Eco Handbook.

The loss or harm to both listed and non-listed properties lies partly in the inconsistency of the advice offered. We therefore encourage built environment professionals: architects, conservation officers, housing officers as well as students and homeowners to attend the event.

Together, we are confident that through a better appreciation of the options offered by retrofitting, we can square the circle in Suffolk making older buildings more energy efficient, contribute to our net zero ambitions and avoid any more unnecessary demolitions!

See page 26 for details on how to book your place on the Energy Efficiency and Old Buildings workshop.

Update on the White Cottage, Framlingham

A fire and subsequent demolition of the White Cottage in Framlingham in August was a disappointing end to the story for all of us who had championed this unassuming piece of Suffolk's heritage over the years. Many Members will remember that SPS had campaigned for over 10 years for the re-use of the White Cottage, which was owned by

Framlingham College. Earlier this year we had reason to be positive about the future of this rare but humble weatherboarded building as the College had withdrawn their latest application for demolition and had agreed to meet SPS and East Suffolk Building Preservation Trust to discuss options for bringing the building back into use. Following the fire however, a

structural engineer report and Council site visit concluded that demolition was 'urgently necessary' and the building has now been demolished. We understand that Framlingham Town Council have now requested sight of the Fire Officer's report. We will continue to follow this matter with interest.

“ Celebration of small but significant acts of heritage care ”

2023/4 Heritage Champion Awards launched

We are pleased to announce the launch of our latest Heritage Champion Awards aimed at recognising the work of local people and communities who are dedicated to looking after Suffolk's historic places and buildings.

The vast majority of good conservation work in Suffolk is carried out by or under the direction of local people, mostly on a voluntary basis and often unrecognised. Whether that is one person or a group working and caring for part of their local heritage, these are the very heritage champions that our latest awards seek to recognise, promote and congratulate.

Previous winners have demonstrated a wide range of achievements, including: leaders of amenity societies committed to protecting local heritage (*fig 1 Martin Lightfoot, Chair of the Bury Trust*), those who have led fundraising and restoration schemes (*Fig 2 Nicola and Malcolm Currie, Hitcham Church restoration*) and others who have made longstanding commitment to maintaining some of Suffolk's most iconic landmarks (*Fig 3 Alan Gilpin, gardener at Little Hall, Lavenham*). Whether the contribution is small or large, we want to hear your nominations of people who you think are worthy of recognition.

The Suffolk Heritage Champion Awards is set to go live on 1 November and will be open for submissions for three months, with the winners announced in the spring edition of Suffolk View. The Award ceremony will take place in July at Heveningham Hall.

The Heritage Champion Awards comprise two categories:

AWARD FOR AN INDIVIDUAL'S CONTRIBUTION TO A HERITAGE BUILDING OR SITE

AWARD FOR A COMMUNITY CAMPAIGN TO PROTECT A HERITAGE BUILDING OR THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

We want to make entering the awards as simple and as straightforward as possible. So we'll be accepting self-nominations, as well as nominations by third parties and will only require a maximum of 200 words and a couple of pictures, one of which should be a photograph of the person or people being nominated, and one of the project if applicable.

More details about the entry requirements for each of the Heritage Champion Awards categories are available on the Society's website at www.suffolksociety.org

We look forward to receiving nominations for your Heritage Champion.



Martin Lightfoot, Chair of Bury Trust



Alan Gilpin, gardener at Little Hall Lavenham



Heritage Champion Awards 2021



Nicola and Malcom Currie, Hitcham Church Restoration



Bethany Philbedge

Planning Officer, Suffolk Preservation Society

Planning Overview

Update and comment on local planning issues

For details on all SPS's planning campaign work, see our monthly bulletins available on our website at

suffolksociety.org/campaign-bulletins

ON SHORE WIND TURBINES - A RELAXATION OF THE RULES?

The Government has announced its intention to reverse an effective ban on onshore wind turbines, made in response to the growing national focus on renewable energy and securing greater energy security. The previous tight regulations had resulted in only 20 onshore wind turbines receiving planning permission since 2015 which may be linked to the exponential growth in applications for commercial scaled solar farms.

This change should give local communities more choice in identifying a better mix of localised renewables with some more willing to accept a turbine or two rather than see large swathes of countryside go under solar panels.

One concern, however, is around the size of new generation turbines. A recent report from the Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy shows that over the last ten years' increases in turbine capacity are linked to increases in height and rotor diameter. In 2012, the average height of a turbine was under 80m, today it is closer



The four wind turbines at Eye

to 130m. A 20m turbine which might be acceptable in one location could totally ruin the landscape and setting of nearby sensitive

buildings in another. Much more detailed guidance for planners, developers and communities is required.

NATIONALLY SIGNIFICANT INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS – AN UPDATE

A decision on the Sunnica solar energy scheme which would cover a total of 2800 acres in West Suffolk/ East Cambridgeshire was expected at the end of September. However more time has been given by the Secretary of State to consider the proposals and a decision is now expected by 7 December. Campaign group 'Together Against Sizewell C' has been granted permission to appeal to the High Court against the 2022 consent for the **Sizewell C** nuclear power station on the grounds of

an inadequate supply of potable water. Meanwhile SASES (Substation Action Save East Suffolk) has been granted permission to appeal the development consent orders for **EA1N and EA2 wind farms**, which included substations and a National Grid connection hub being built at Friston, on the two grounds of flood risk and cumulative impact.

Other NSIP projects impacting the county continue to move forward. The Examination

into the **Bramford to Twinstead** 400kV pylon line began in September whereas the second consultation into the **Norwich to Tilbury** Line took place in the summer with the submission of the DCO application not expected until the end of 2024.

A second non-statutory consultation into the **LionLink** interconnector project, which will connect energy generated offshore to both the UK and the Netherlands via subsea cables, completed in early November.

Planning Overview

LATEST ROUND UP ON COMMERCIAL SOLAR FARMS

In September the Mid Suffolk Planning Committee meeting considered three applications for large solar farms. Two were around the Bramford substation, the first being a duplicate of the contentious application which had been refused by Mid Suffolk back in February. Since Mid Suffolk had refused the original application, the applicant had successfully appealed the decision and the committee felt therefore, that there was no alternative but to approve this one.

Decisions on the other two applications were deferred to a later date. Discussions with the applicant for a scheme in Palgrave, which will cover an area larger than the village itself, have since resulted in the edge of the development being located an additional 95 metres from the edge of the village. The scheme was then consented in October. Meanwhile a site visit is to be arranged to view the site of the application north of Bramford, in particular to assess the topography of the

landscape and the potential cumulative impact of the scheme with at least two other large solar farms very close by.

SPS has long been calling for the cumulative impact of these large schemes to be taken into account and is of the opinion that a site visit from those making this important decision is well over due. It is, however, welcome that Mid Suffolk Council, whilst supporting renewable energy schemes, are viewing each scheme on its own merits.

SPS is supporting CPRE's campaign for a 'rooftop revolution'. CPRE's report 'Shout it from the rooftops', into the potential for meeting our energy needs through installing solar panels on the rooftop space available across the country, cites research by University College London that installing solar panels on existing buildings and car parks would enjoy near-universal public support and help minimise objections to large solar farms in the countryside.



NEWMARKET'S HERITAGE PROTECTED



Queensbury Stables © Philip Fuller

Positive news has been received regarding the future of the Queensbury Stables in Newmarket. On a number of occasions over 3 years SPS has urged that the development of the site adjacent to the listed stables should be reduced to be in line with the local plan policy which proposed up to 50 dwellings and that any development on this site must facilitate the sympathetic restoration and viable reuse of the listed buildings. Therefore, whilst a Planning Inspector has ruled that an appeal for a 123 dwelling development on the site should be allowed, we welcomed his dismissal of the appealed listed building consent for alterations to the Queensbury Stables. He imposed a Grampian condition on the planning permission for the new dwellings so that development on this site cannot commence until new details of the repair and refurbishment and reuse of the listed stables has been agreed by the local authority. SPS has consistently argued that the stables, which are buildings at risk, must be brought forward as part of any successful scheme, and welcome this outcome.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING – AN UPDATE

In July the government committed an additional £7.1 million to the Neighbourhood Planning Support Programme which is run by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLHUC) and aims to support groups developing neighbourhood plans. This brings the total funding to the programme to over £47 million since 2018, allowing the scheme to continue for a sixth year into 2023/24.

A growing number of parishes around the county have volunteer groups which continue to work on their Neighbourhood Plans. The SPS is aware of around 60 Neighbourhood Plans in Suffolk which have now been

formally adopted, or ‘made’. Around 10 are nearly over the finishing line having been through Examination, whilst many more are being worked on. It is good to see that so many communities have now grasped the nettle and are putting in place a policy framework which can help to shape their environment. It is essential that these plans, once made, are regularly updated, to avoid the risk of all previous work being undermined.

We are interested in how the focus of these plans reflect the priorities of the communities at the time and how this is changing.

Lavenham, one of the first communities in the county to have a ‘made’ Neighbourhood



Plan has gone through the process of reviewing their plan. Their new Plan, currently in draft form, shows a marked change in emphasis due to the climate emergency, now including detail on how the community will tackle climate change and a need to live in a more sustainable way as a major focus.

MAINTAINING OUR AONB DARK SKIES



SPS has long championed efforts to maintain the dark night skies in our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) whether through scrutinising how applications for development minimise potential light spill or supporting the Dedham Vale Society in its bid for Dark Sky Status. Earlier in the year we were

pleased that an appeal for an external lighting scheme at Higham Park in the Dedham Vale had been dismissed, the main issue being the impact of the proposals on the character and natural beauty of the Dedham Vale AONB. The Inspector commented that the site is within a naturally dark area due to the limited levels of development and lighting and that this contributes to the natural beauty of the AONB which would be adversely affected.

We also welcomed the AONB Partnership's new guidance on appropriate lighting within the county's AONBs. Dark skies are one of the defining characteristics of these tranquil landscapes, and we must strive to keep them that way. The new Lighting Design Guide will help developers and

decision-makers make positive choices that will safeguard these landscapes' special qualities. It is available to read here:

coastandheaths.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Lighting-Guidance-in-National-Landscapes.pdf

In September, a Ministerial Statement made by Therese Coffey promised to strengthen AONB Management Plans and place a stronger requirement on partners to contribute to their delivery through the introduction of new legislation in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill. The aim is that this will help create a national network of beautiful, nature-rich spaces that can be enjoyed right across the country.

ZERO CARBON READY HOMES TRIAL ON A ‘LIVE’ DEVELOPMENT SITE IN SUFFOLK

Taylor Wimpey, one of the UK's largest residential developers, has announced the launch of its zero carbon ready homes trial testing low carbon technologies through multi-specification prototype homes on a live development site. It is hoped that the trial of five prototype homes will provide an insight into how to address major industry challenges to deliver zero carbon ready homes in line with the government proposed introduction of the Future Homes Standard in 2025. The five trial prototype homes, located at Taylor Wimpey's development site at Chilton Woods in Sudbury will combine an array of innovative, low carbon technologies and have been designed to ensure they can still be sold and lived in, and that the new technologies work seamlessly for customers' living requirements.



Suffolk Spotlight

A roundup of local people who are actively engaged in working towards protecting, interpreting and promoting our unique built heritage.



Brandon Station building © The Breckland Society

BRANDON STATION UPDATE

Piers Hart

Chair Suffolk Building Preservation Trust

We thought that the emergency listing of Brandon Station in 2021 had removed the building from the risk of demolition by the railway operator. We were therefore shocked to learn in January 2023 that Greater Anglia had notified Breckland District Council of its intention to remove the roof, on the grounds of safety. According to their contractors, the whole station roof was in imminent danger of collapse, which in turn would have pushed the walls out onto the track. Not only was the assessment of the building's condition inaccurate and exaggerated, the means of removing the roof was to be by crane operated grab, which would have resulted in the walls collapsing onto the track anyway. Fortunately, swift action by Breckland's Head of Planning, Simon Wood, and Historic Building's Officer, Andrew Gayton, prevented this barbarous act from taking place. Subsequent examination by eminent historic buildings consultant and architect, Rod Shelton, and leading historic buildings structural engineer, Ed Morton, determined that a very simple and effective repair could be made quickly and at reasonable cost.

Of course, the rotten timbers would not have deteriorated to such an extent had Greater Anglia erected a 'tin hat' over the whole building in the autumn of last year

as they had promised. Rather late in the day, and ignoring expert advice, a roof has now been erected over the station, with massive scaffolding not only around the outside, but also inside the building, along with solid wooden cladding and plastic wrap cocooning the building. The result is that no restoration work can be carried out, leaving the structure in limbo for the foreseeable future. The stupidity of the situation is that the whole roof could probably have been fully repaired for the cost of the scaffolding erection and its ongoing hire.

Greater Anglia has responsibility for some 132 stations in the region, of which at least

17 are at risk, and some in a serious state of dilapidation. SAVE British Heritage, the Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust and SBPT are so concerned at the deteriorating condition of these stations, along with that of an equivalent number of sound but empty stations, that they have started a campaign, S.O.S. – Save Our Stations (www.save-our-stations.com) – to pressure government into action to save this important part of our railway heritage. It is early days yet, but the Norfolk and Suffolk trusts are encouraged by the support given by Jo Churchill MP, who has secured a meeting for us with the Secretary of State for Transport early in September.

In an ideal world, responsibility for such unloved and unused stations would be transferred to an independent body, which could work with (instead of against) local communities to restore them to meaningful use. Who knows? Manned ticket offices might even reappear!

Brandon railway station, on the Breckland Line, serves Brandon and the surrounding area, although the station is actually situated across the county boundary in Norfolk. The SPS is very happy to support the Save Our Stations campaign to protect the important railway heritage that exists in Suffolk and the wider area.



Brandon Station currently under wraps



Extension of
1792, for an
assembly room

East end of jettied
Market Hall, c.1451, reduced
in height in 1792 to
accommodate a first floor
assembly room. Jetty underbuilt
at this time too.

West end of jettied
Market Hall, c.1451.
The Guildhall is behind this
building, at right angles to it.

Caretaker's house, built in 1887
on site of demolished
Market House (1433), and
incorporating re-used timbers.

THE HADLEIGH GUILDHALL COMPLEX – A TIMELINE

Jan Byrne

*President of the Hadleigh Society and member
of the Hadleigh Society History Group*

Hadleigh Guildhall Complex today is comprised of the Market Hall, Guilds Halls and Victorian New Town Hall, although in its very early days it was possibly larger with a Market House with almshouses below, a detached kitchen, longer guildhalls and the Market lands with houses and shops within it.

From its inception the property has belonged to the people of the town and been run for them by their Chiefe Inhabitants, probably the leading cloth merchants and drapers. They are named in the many early documents, and as trustees of the buildings, became known as The Hadleigh Market Feoffment. The Feoffment was generally appointed internally and ran the building until 1998 when Hadleigh Town Council became the sole trustee, now having responsibility for the running and maintenance of the complex on behalf of the town.

The Hadleigh Society History Group has spent two years producing a 34-page timeline of the complex starting from the earliest reference to the Market area and the construction of the various buildings, describing their multiple uses from 1374 through to today.

All entries are dated and referenced back to their original deeds, charters and multiple

documents, many of which are held in the Hadleigh Town Archives kept in the Guildhall complex. The History Group comprises members of the Archives Group, who have been cataloguing the Town Archives for over 20 years, and a group who have been transcribing and translating the many medieval documents held in the Town Archives and at Bury St Edmunds, Canterbury and Ipswich.

The timeline tells the story of the people of Hadleigh and how they developed and used their buildings, from acquiring the land from the Lord of the Manor of Toppesfield Hall, confirming their rights to the Market (originally conferred to Toppesfield Hall in 1252) and the building of the Market Hall and Market House in the 15th Century. It describes the ownership of the building by the Chiefe Inhabitants, its use as a 'Civic' centre, early Grammar School and almshouses, and how land was made available for the building of the Guilds Halls (a freestanding two storey building with basement and detached kitchen). Following the abolition of the Guilds in 1547 and the sale of their halls by Elizabeth I, the town bought back the Guilds Halls and joined them to their existing properties.

It is not possible to identify, so far, the individual use of all of the rooms as their names and purpose change over time. Documents refer to the Council Chamber, Treasury, Grammar School, Free School, workhouse etc., and of course the rooms used

for Charities' annual feasts and social events.

In the 20th century parts of the building were variously used as the National School; a corset factory; the army in both World Wars used rooms for recreation; and the town's organisations used rooms for meetings and storage. The multiple uses continue today, anyone can hire a room seating from 60 people through to the Victorian Town Hall seating 250, and the building continues to house the offices of the Town Council.

The timeline identifies that this building has been, and still is, at the heart of our town. It is positioned abutting the Church grounds, the Church and the Deanery Tower. All three were built during the medieval period, are grade 1 listed, and are still being used for the purposes for which they were built.

Our timeline is now available on the Hadleigh Society website at:

hadsoc.org.uk/guildhalltimeline

We will continue to add to it as we find out more about the complex and any changes that might occur.

The Hadleigh Market Feoffment Charity has a project in progress looking at the future of the building. Their reports so far can be found at:

hadleightownhall.co.uk/future-use-study

Suffolk Spotlight



Recording taking place in Broke Hall, Nacton

SUFFOLK'S UNFORGETTABLE GARDEN STORY: ONE YEAR ON...

Karina Flynn

Volunteer Support Officer, Suffolk's Unforgettable Garden Story project, Suffolk Gardens Trust

In September 2022, a partnership project between the Gardens Trust and Historic England was launched with a mission to uncover and safeguard Suffolk's historic green spaces. The project sought to engage experienced researchers and passionate local history enthusiasts alike, with the aim of unearthing hidden narratives, expanding knowledge, and celebrating these invaluable sites.

In collaboration with the Suffolk Gardens Trust, our initial endeavour to recruit and train new volunteers for researching and documenting underrepresented green spaces has achieved some fantastic outcomes. Our dedicated volunteers immersed themselves in desk-based research, discovered material in local archives, and conducted on-site visits.

Historic England identified specific historic parks and gardens across Suffolk of exceptional significance, and a



Survey being carried out in Benton End Garden, Hadleigh

dedicated group of volunteers launched into their research, unravelling the rich histories intertwined with these landscapes. Their work was further enriched by the wealth of existing research contributed by Suffolk Gardens Trust members, which significantly enhanced the value of the efforts put forth by our new volunteers.

By the deadline in June, we received an impressive 20 research reports from volunteers. Additionally, 16 applications have been submitted to the National Heritage List for England, paving the way for possible inclusion in the Register. Achieving registered status represents the highest level of protection for these sites, though it's not the sole avenue of recognition. Our goal is to ensure that researched parks and gardens, even if they stand without formal designation, find their way onto various platforms, including Local Lists, the Historic Environment Record, Parks and Gardens UK, and Historic England's The Missing Pieces Project.

We hope to be able to make exciting announcements regarding successful registrations this autumn, adding to the existing 23 registered parks and gardens across Suffolk. This achievement will be a testament to the enthusiasm and dedication of our volunteers.

As the project concludes in the coming autumn, we are planning a celebratory event to commemorate its legacy. We hope this event will inspire the continuation of research efforts and the sharing of knowledge about Suffolk's rich landscape heritage. Stay tuned for further details!

THE BURN MARKS OF LAVENHAM SUFFOLK – A REQUEST FOR HELP

Kathleen Fisher

I am a current student on the Mst Building History course at The University of Cambridge, and I am reaching out to historic building owners in Lavenham to help me with my ongoing research into burn marks.

Burn marks are relatively common in Suffolk and have been observed in a wide range of buildings with medieval origins. They appear more commonly on fireplace surrounds but can also be seen near openings such as doors or windows. The mystery surrounding the origins of these marks has fuelled an ever-increasing interest by the public about what the origins and motivations for these marks may be. Currently, there is no direct evidence of why these marks are placed, and whilst scholars have made broad assessments of marks and possible motivations, our understanding of burning is still limited.

My research aims to investigate the practice of creating burn marks in Lavenham, by recording as many marks as possible in the village and to facilitate this I am seeking to gain access to 20-25 properties. This data will then be analysed statistically to see if any relationships between the position, frequency and location of the marks can be demonstrated.

The project will conclude in April 2024 and any homeowners in Lavenham who would be kind enough to help are requested to contact me directly by email at: kf419@cam.ac.uk



Burn marks on a bressummer at Little Hall in Lavenham



HERITAGE-LED REGENERATION IN ACTION

A great day out in sunny Lowestoft!

A mixture of SPS Members and new faces joined us for a fascinating day out in Lowestoft in April. We started the day at the East Anglian Transport Museum with an introduction to the projects and activities in the Lowestoft Heritage Action Zones from the Project Manager, Rebecca Styles.

Everyone then hopped onto a vintage bus for the trip into town entertained and informed by commentary from Ivan Bunn, well-known local historian. We were then treated to three owner-conducted tours of the interiors of fascinating historic houses on the east side of the High Street – one was once owned by Sir Thomas Allin, an Admiral in the Anglo-Dutch Wars (who later moved to Somerleyton Hall), another a former apothecary's shop still laid out as such and a house dating back to the 16th century which was thought to have been used as a sugar factory.

Safely transported back on the vintage bus, we all had the chance to stay on to visit the transport museum in the afternoon.

TOURS AND TEAS AT BEAUTIFUL ICKWORTH

We were delighted to welcome many SPS members and new faces to Ickworth House in May for a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon exploring this National Trust gem.

The afternoon began with a walk and talk from National Trust Manager Adrian Shepherd, exploring the history of the house and some of the challenges posed by adapting to climate change.

We then accompanied the Head Ranger on a guided walk where we saw evidence of the original Ickworth village close to the original manor house, demolished before the current house was built. We also learnt about ongoing work to reinstate trees in the landscape to recreate the views of the Capability Brown inspired scheme – many of which were lost during the war as parkland was turned over



to food production. Others accompanied the curator on a tour of the artwork collection in the house and had the chance to view the exquisite and extensive silver collection, thought by many to be the finest in Europe.

Finally, we were treated to an array of sandwiches and cakes at the Ickworth Hotel – the perfect venue to relax and chat with others over afternoon tea.

Special thanks to **Reeman Dansie, Fine Art Auctioneers** for kindly sponsoring this event and to the National Trust and the Ickworth Hotel who generously opened their doors to us.

SUMMER GARDEN PARTY AND SPS AGM

Suffolk Preservation Society members, staff and trustees gathered in the warm June sunshine for a garden party in the charming Little Hall gardens at Lavenham.

Everyone welcomed the opportunity to meet up, ask questions, reminisce on past achievements and discuss forthcoming projects and priorities in such beautiful surroundings.

With drinks and canapes in hand, surrounded by the heady perfume of roses and honeysuckle, we heard short presentations



from our President Geoffrey Probert and Chairman Robert Townshend. They highlighted the achievements of the charity over the last twelve months and reminded us of the many challenges facing our countryside and built environment.

A SUMMER EVENING AT COCKFIELD HALL

In July over 120 SPS Members and friends met for an evening in the grounds of Cockfield Hall at Yoxford. We were treated to champagne and canapes and enjoyed the opportunity for a close-up view of the imposing Yoxman sculpture by local artist, Laurence Edwards. We were also able to hear about the ongoing landscape restoration of the Cockfield estate by the international landscape architect Kim Wilkie. The event took the form of a conversation between architect and artist exploring their respective views of art, time and space, skilfully led by the distinguished founder and Director of Messums Wiltshire, Johnny Messum.

We are most grateful to our hosts Jon and Lois Hunt, who generously organised this fundraising event on behalf of the Society.



Energy Efficiency and Old Buildings training day

Wednesday 22 November £140 per person £95 SPS Members

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Led by Marianne Suhr and Roger Hunt - authors of *Old House Eco Handbook*, SPS has partnered with Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings and Historic England to provide a one-day event on energy efficiency and retrofitting old, traditional and listed buildings.

Join us on this course to learn how to make a home - whether it is medieval and timber-framed, Georgian, Victorian or Edwardian, detached or terrace - energy efficient and low carbon without devaluing the future sustainability or character of the building.

The course will be relevant for owners of period properties, professionals who advise on improving energy efficiency of historic buildings, and students who want to learn more about this growing area of interest. With opportunities to hear from Historic England on the latest policy position and ask the trainers, Marianne and Roger, questions throughout the course, the event is also an excellent chance to meet and learn from other owners who may be facing similar challenges. Full details can be found on our website.

The SPAB is an IHBC recognised CPD provider and attendance certificates for CPD will be available on request.



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Founded in 1929, the SPS Charitable Incorporated Organisation No. 1154806 is working to safeguard the buildings and landscape of Suffolk.

The views expressed in Suffolk View are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the position of SPS.

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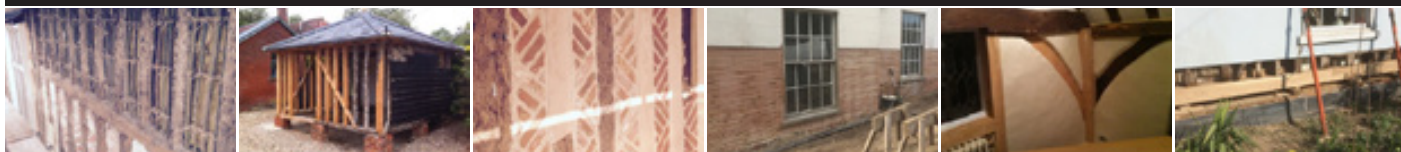
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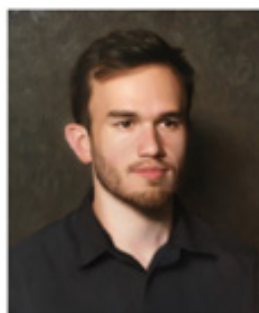


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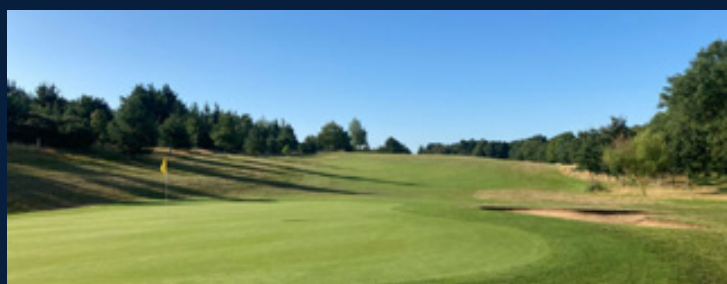
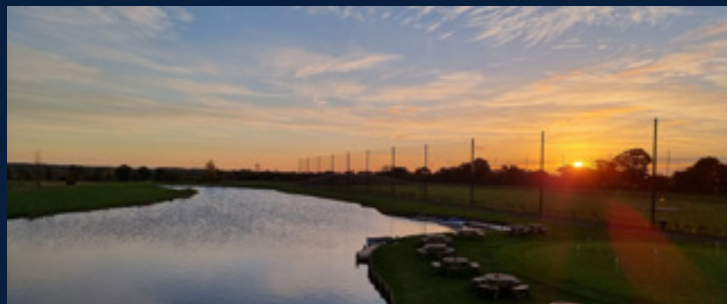
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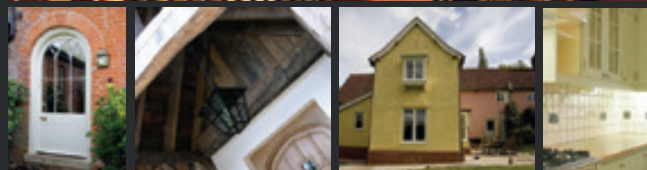
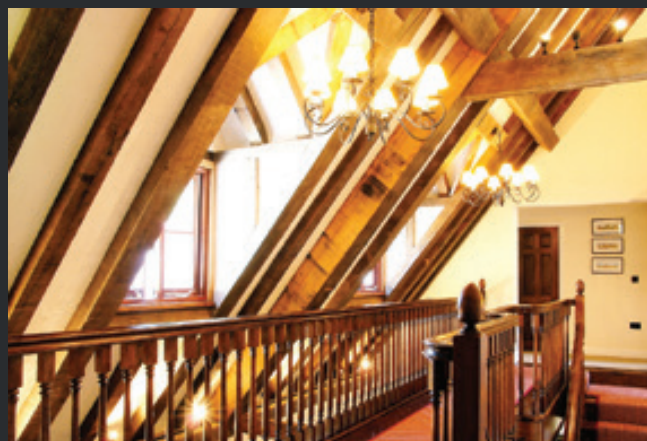


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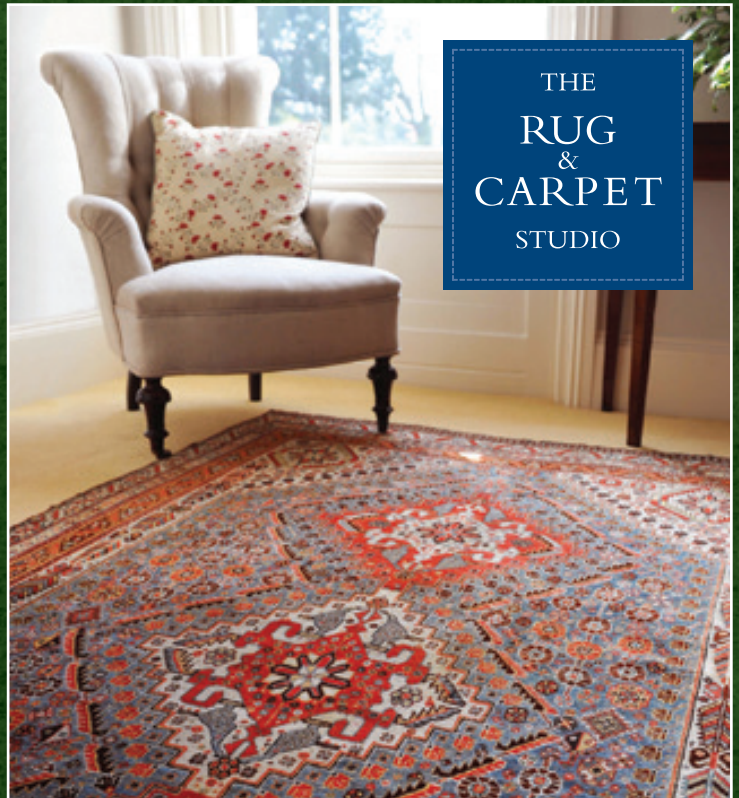




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