

**Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteers
& Local History Study Group**
NEWSLETTER 1 May 2020



We hope you are all coping with the current strange and difficult situation. (The historian Peter Hennessy thinks that history will now be divided into 'BC' (Before Coronavirus) and 'AC' (After Coronavirus). We hope very much that you will want to keep in touch with the Study Group and with Dragon Hall/National Centre for Writing generally. To that end we are sending you **a few snippets** which we hope will be of interest and help to keep you in touch.

For those somewhat averse to the internet please skip those bits. But the intention is to give you some '**tasters**' of the wealth of material available. We include a few short pieces related to our area of Conesford, aka King St plus Ber St, and the Norwich area generally. If you have any snippets, extracts, maps, photos etc, please do send them to us and we'll do our best to include them in future editions.

Please also send in one or two **quiz questions**, perhaps with a photo, about our area or Norwich generally and we'll collate them into a quiz section.

The Lads Club

We had a fascinating talk in November by David Howes about the Kings Centre and were due to take up his kind invitation to have a tour in the summer. Hopefully that will still happen one day. In lieu of that, here are a few extracts from interviews about the Lads Club, conducted as part of the King Street Community Voices project*. The Kings Centre was built on the site of the Lads Club and we believe incorporated some of that building into it. The interviews give a graphic picture of how the club operated and illustrate what an innovative project it was, started by Norwich's Chief Constable, John Dain, in 1918.

"We'd have had 30 or 40 boys in there, we were open every night of the week, different trainers would take turns to take the boys to London or Nottingham, or wherever.

People are different now. We were qualified coaches and we were strict with the boys. They came in, they all had to be in on time and they always came and said goodbye to the trainer before leaving. If you didn't do what the trainer said, home you went.

The parents knew the boys were looked after. That was a sport, if you were a bit wayward, that taught you discipline and you were fit, you lived for it, you didn't have to prove anything to anybody. If they got in trouble outside, one of the trainers would tell them off as well. There was a tremendous amount of boys who might have got in trouble with the law, but your time was taken up with the boxing and you had to be dedicated and didn't have time to mess about outside.

We'd take boys out a lot, some of these shows would be in big hotels in London, the Grosvenor, Barbican Centre and so on, and it was a good start in life. One of the lads, I gave him an apprenticeship and taught him a trade; he still comes to see me.

People came from all over the country to the Lads Club, it was probably one of the best gyms anywhere, and the facilities, with the tiered seating and so on, there wasn't a better place in the country to box. We'd have 600-700 boxing fans crammed in there on a Saturday night.

I was introduced to the Lads Club by a friend, John King, when I was just under 12 years old. From Monday to Friday evenings, most of the boys would be at the Lads Club. I think we paid about 3d or 6d to come in.

The first pop concert I remember at the Lads Club around 1970-71 was going with my older brothers to see Yes, with Groundhogs and Dada as support, which consisted of Elkie Brooks and Robert Palmer. They had big bands - Derek and the Dominoes, the Who, Traffic, Pink Floyd. It was standing only, really crowded, a rather cold concrete floor.

The Lads Club always entered a float in the Lord Mayors Procession. In 1991 the theme was Fairy Tales and Myths and we did the Old Lady in the Shoe, we actually made a massive great boot with a roof."

Speakers: Ron Springwell, Andy Springwell, Denis McGee, Ian Millins, Tim Nelson

- All the available transcriptions of the interviews can be seen on our website: <https://www.dragonhallnorwich.org.uk/pages/community-voices.html>



Norwich Lads Club c.1970



The boxing ring

Update on the King's Centre: it is closed until further notice which has meant an end to their Sunday 'open house' for those in need. They are however delivering meals to some of the city hostels. David hopes we can rearrange our visit in the AC world.

HEALTH and WELFARE in KING STREET in the early C20th

These notes are the result of **Lucinda Smyth's research** on Health records of a century or more ago. It is perhaps salutary in these Covid 19 days to remind ourselves of the everyday hardships of that time. Death records for 1899 show the devastating nature of TB at the time and that life expectancy was so much less. It was also very sad to read that a 16 year old girl had drowned herself in the Wensum.

The 1908 Education Report has some interesting information on the background of the pupils of Horns Lane School; the school's log book has not survived so it's good to have this:

Parental Income bands:

A = 4 shillings per head after the payment of rent (presumably per week).

B = 2/6 to 4s

C = 1s. to 2/6

D = less than 1s.

The majority of the Horns Lane parents fell in Band C but a considerable number were in B & D, and very few in A. Life must have been very hard. Even after the First World War there is evidence of need and lack of welfare provision. The 1920 Education records show that people were struggling to pay for such things as spectacles and surgical boots, and grants (often partial) had to be paid. Some fees were payable at special needs facilities, e.g. the Clare Sanatorium and the School for the Blind and Deaf, and parents clearly struggled to pay.

It is shocking to see children referred to as 'feeble minded' or 'mentally defective'. The Womens' Labour Group urged the provision of school milk; local Education Boards had been allowed to do this for some time but many were failing to do so. Free school milk was not introduced until after WW2 and then removed, I believe, by Margaret Thatcher. Most of us will remember school milk - I was, I have to confess, a rather ungrateful recipient!

M.B.

Dipping into the Archives

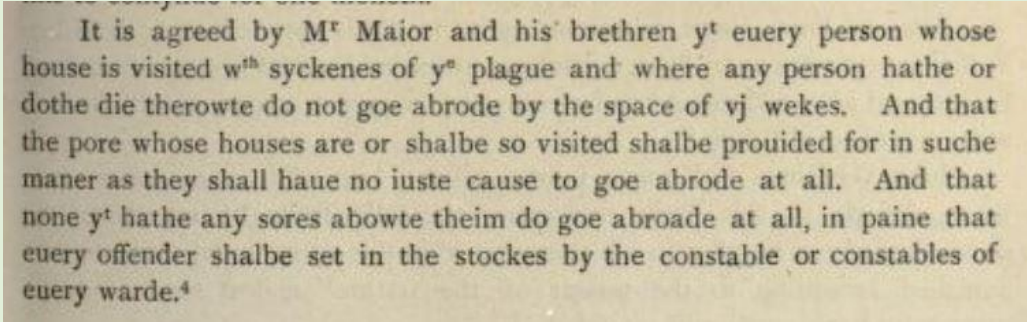
In the absence of access to the NRO or the Library, why not take a look at some of the excellent material available on line?

One possibility is **Records of the City of Norwich (1906)**, co-edited by 'our own' (one time vicar of St Peter Parmentergate), Rev W.Hudson. It's an amazing and rather random two volume miscellany of transcriptions of documents from Domesday Book onwards, very few of them available in published form elsewhere. On line you see the actual pages but it's very accessible because each volume has a number of excellent indexes and you then use a slider at the bottom of the screen to go straight to the page you want, or you can just browse with the slider. Also you can actually turn the pages individually by using arrows at the bottom of the screen. Don't forget to 'toggle full screen' (apologies for the jargon) - at bottom right of screen, and to use the plus and minus buttons to zoom in and out. Give it a try!

Vol I: <https://archive.org/details/recordsofcityofn01norwuoft/page/cxlvii/mode/2up>

Vol II: <https://archive.org/details/recordsofcityofn02norwuoft/page/408/mode/2up>

One example: a rather topical item from the Mayor's Court about **a plague in 1579** which provides for a 'lockdown' for 6 weeks. Note that special arrangements are to be made for the poor. Note too that the punishment for leaving home is to be set in the stocks!



It is agreed by M^r Maior and his brethren y^t euery person whose house is visited wth syckenes of y^e plague and where any person hathe or dothe die therowte do not goe abrode by the space of vj wekes. And that the pore whose houses are or shalbe so visited shalbe prouided for in suche maner as they shall haue no iuste cause to goe abrode at all. And that none y^t hathe any sores abowte them do goe abroade at all, in paine that euery offender shalbe set in the stocks by the constable or constables of euery warde.⁴

Extracts from **The Norfolk Mercury** also offer some interesting snippets, e.g. one about Elizabeth Pulley, an old lag, who one guesses was desperate to have **some nice victuals for Christmas**:

Jan 11th 1793

Monday last was committed to the Castle by Thomas BEEVOR, Esq., Elizabeth PULLEY, an old offender, charged with breaking into the shop of Mrs Elizabeth MINNS, of Hethersett, in the night of the 24th of December last, stealing from thence two cheese, four pieces of Bacon, several half pints of butter, a quarter of a stone of raisons [sic], half a stone of flour, and two rolls of worstead, the property of the said Mrs MINNS, which she has confessed. -- The above offender has been in the Castle four times, and convicted of a burglary at the assizes in 1781 in the same town, and sentenced to hard labour one year in the Aylsham bridewell.

From <<http://www.foxearth.org.uk/1783NorfolkChronicle.html>>

LOCAL FILMS 1

For a summer Study Group meeting we had planned to show some of the films available on line from BFI/East Anglian Film Archive. Here's the link to one of them, **a trip on a coaster** from Yarmouth to Norwich in 1982.:

<https://player.bfi.org.uk/free/film/watch-palbro-pride-up-the-yare-to-norwich-1982-online>

To see all the local films available from BFI click on <https://player.bfi.org.uk/free> and put 'Norwich' in the Search box.

INTERESTING WEBSITES: No. 1.

Some of us may have had enough of looking at screens and just want to turn to books at this time but there is now some very interesting material available free on the web. Here is a link to one example:

The British Museum: this is very easy to use and you select a topic and a period and then choose an item to see with a very clear, simple description of it.

<https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/>

An example of one item, an Anglo - Saxon silver penny:

<https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/object/silver-penny-of-henry-earl-of-northumberland>

PHOTOGRAPH CORNER 1: SYNAGOGUE STREET

We intend to feature some of the wealth of photos of the King Street area, many of them to be found on the internet, notably those by George Plunkett. Synagogue Street roughly bisected the site of the Austin Friary, which was demolished at the Dissolution. It ran between St Anne's Lane and Mountergate, believed to be the only street in England named

thus. **The Synagogue** took a direct hit in the Norwich Blitz and the street was demolished, along with many others in the post-war 'improvements'. It now lies beneath the massive apartments development being built by Orbit Housing.



Synagogue Street by George Plunkett



The Synagogue

Please do send in any photos that you have which we could feature.

A GOOD READ

In theory many of us have more time for reading and we'd be glad to receive any brief reports of books of historical interest. No doubt some of you have already finished the last **Hilary Mantel** volume about Thomas Cromwell and it would be good to hear responses to it.

One of our members has managed to finish an earlier C.J. Sansom title, 'Heartstone' which contains a vivid description of the capsizing of the Mary Rose. Having recently visited the masterly Mary Rose exhibition in Portsmouth one can see how much he owes to it.

Assuming that a number of you have read Sansom's '**Tombland**' re Kett's Rebellion, it would be good to make up a miscellany of brief comments from you about the book Contributions please in the next week or so!

RJM/HP/MB April 2020

Quiz Questions: Where are these? What are they for? What do the letters stand for?

