

Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteers & Local History Study Group

NEWSLETTER No. 13 Nov. 202



All DH Heritage and Archive Volunteers, and Study Group Members:

Date for your Diary: **Monday December 11th** (NB: Not the 18th)

In lieu of the normal Study Group meeting, our December event will be a **Seasonal Norwich Walk** led by Shea Fiddes, followed by **tapas in The Coach and Horses**, Bethel Street. Valerie has booked for 20 and paid the required £100 deposit. She will bring in menus to our meeting on Nov. 20th, or can send them, for us to make our choices in advance. If you want to come to the Coach & Horses, but will not be attending the meeting on Nov 20th, please email Valerie now (vikginger@gmail.com) to ask her for a menu to make your choices.

The walk is not compulsory (ed. I hope!), so if you will not be on the walk please join us at the Coach and Horses around 12.00. As last year, please bring **sufficient cash** to pay for our tapas and a tip.

Study Group News

Study Group Meeting: Monday 20th November 10.30

At our next meeting Richard Matthew will talk about '**Dad's Army: Conesford 1355**' ('Don't panic!') and possibly answer questions on Robert Toppes and related matters. We will also confirm arrangements for December 11th (see above), and if time, have an update on the Archive Project, on the 'Stepping into Dragon Hall' project, and discuss a 'guides refresher session' for January.

Meeting on October 16th

Keels & Kilns: Heather began with a resume of Shirley Harris' '**Keels and Kilns**'* written for the King Street Research group in 1993. She focussed on the lime kilns that were dotted along the west side of Conesford Street. In the early 1400s they were beyond the city walls on the chalk and lime escarpment below Ber Street. By 1500 there was a kiln almost opposite Dragon Hall, leased in 1570 by Richard Nixon who had moved into a nearby property after his marriage to a limeburner's sister. In the following years he became a prosperous member of the community, employing labourers to hack out the chalk to fill the kiln, maintain the fire with coal (bought upriver from northeast England) and replenish the kiln when it had burnt out. Richard bought property in the area which gave him further income from rents. He bought a keel and dealt in rushes in later life. As his reputation grew he took more and more responsibility in St Julian's parish and is found witnessing wills, being a godfather to one of the vicar's children and being a councillor for the parish.

*[*This is one of a series of small booklets which were the fruits of some really good research by members of the King Street Research Group, led by Chris Barringer, the*

moving spirit of the group who drove through the restoration of Dragon Hall. We have a few copies of the booklets - available free to Study Group members.]

The Bangs Family: Heather then introduced Peter Bangs who recently came on a tour of Dragon Hall and hinted then that his ancestor may have had a very strong connection with Dragon Hall and Robert Toppes. We were really thrilled when he agreed to come and elaborate! Peter presented us with a selection of sections from his family tree which he has been working on with his brother Paul for many years. The result of their work is a series of publications from Amazon which are copiously illustrated with maps, photographs and references to source material. [*Augustine Banges of Norwich - A Medieval Civic Dignitary*' is of particular relevance to Conesford and Toppes].

Peter has spent many hours in the Norfolk and Suffolk Record Offices, the National Archives as well as others Record Offices such as Chester. He praised the staff for the help he was given and is presenting copies of his publications to the Norfolk Record Office. The more he and his brother searched the more they found of great interest. It was wonderful that he could come and share his findings with us, accompanied by his wife, Jen.

Peter started by showing slides of his family tree in the 19th and 20th centuries. He is related by marriage to the Sloman family who founded the Lyons Corner House chain pre war. He pointed out from the beginning that name spellings were a bit of a challenge but with a name like Bangs there was a chance that references to this side of the family could be more easily identified than a Smith! For example, in 1700 the St Johns Church, Oxburgh parish records show that Sampson Bangs married Mary Low. Her name and its spelling are very hard to decipher. In 1623 Edward Bangs - brother to Peter's 6x great grandfather - is on the passenger list of a boat sailing to New England, 3 years after the Pilgrim Fathers. Edward played a major role in setting up the Plymouth colony, and went on to found a whole Bangs dynasty in the US.

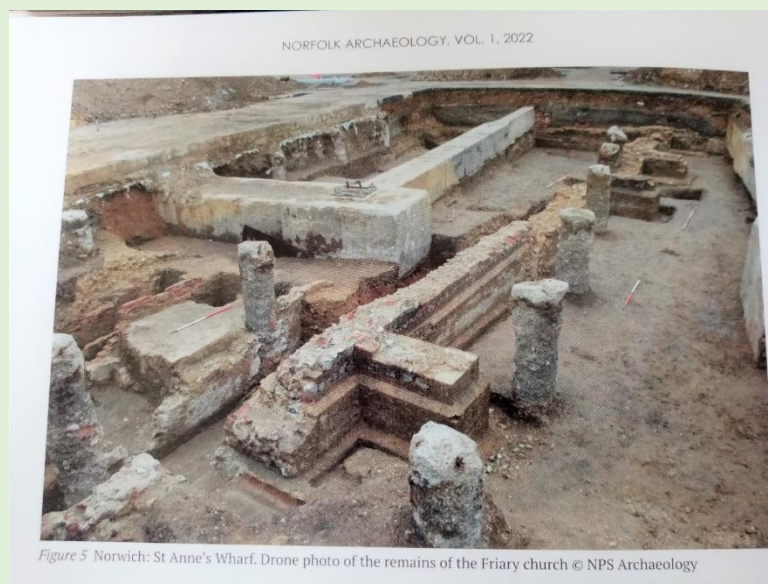
In the 1500s Richard Bangs, yeoman, lived in the Broadland village of Smallburgh. The manor court records in 1543 show that his father William answered a plea from Chris Amos to whom he owed 60 shillings. Both William and Richard are listed in tax returns. It appears he had moved to Norwich by 1547 and is mentioned in a witness statement of 1582 and referring to himself as a tanner. His land in Smallburgh was rented out and he was fined several times, once for overstocking the fields after harvest. In Norwich he lived in the parish of St Martin at the Oak and Landgable tax assessments show he owned 2 houses one backing on to the river. In 1577 he was sheriff of Norwich and the Mayors Poor Book shows he distributed money to the poor in 1579. At one point it appears he got into a massive debt of £600 with the inference that he had been duped. His death record shows that he had committed suicide in 1586.

Richard was descended from **Augustine Banges**, a contemporary of Robert Toppes and local 'builder's merchant'. **See below for a lucid summary about him, kindly contributed by Peter Bangs.**

Meeting on September 18th

The Friars of Norwich: Mary Bradford spoke about the four friaries in Norwich – one next door to Dragon Hall, now the site of several blocks of apartments. At the time of Robert Toppes, friars would have been a very common sight on King Street. They originated in the thirteenth century from groups of wandering preachers who wanted to bring religious revival, return to the values of the early Christians, bring the gospel to the poor, especially in the towns, and combat heresy, ignorance and indifference. The Popes of the time saw their value and four main groups or Orders, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Carmelites and the **Augustinians** (Austins) were formed under their leadership, and quickly spread throughout Europe.

These friars or brothers were itinerant mendicants who were dependent on alms for their living. As time went on and their success grew, they needed substantial properties to house themselves, provide large preaching areas and burial grounds. All four had large houses in Norwich, two of whom, the Austins and the Franciscans were actually on King St. The survival of the Blackfriars/ St Andrews complex gives some idea of what the others would have looked like. It has been estimated that there were about 200 friars in Norwich just before the Black Death and about 120 in 1500.



Remains of the Austin Friars church, uncovered prior to erection of apartments on the site

All of the Orders were known for their learning and associated with the developing universities: in Norwich all four Friaries were recognised as a ' Studium' to which friars from all over Europe would come to study. Unlike monks they were not tied to a particular house and unlike local clergy not restricted to a parish and subject to the local bishop and could exercise pastoral and sacramental duties freely. This could cause resentment but local compromises were made - friars had to be licensed by the bishop and parish clergy received part of any fees or offerings friars obtained from their parishioners. The Friars remained popular and almost up to the Dissolution were being left donations in about half of Norwich and Norfolk wills.

Profile: Heather Pfeiffer

In the first of what we hope will be a series of 'profiles' of Volunteers and Study Group members, our Chair, Heather paints a self – portrait. To have actually seen the famous Scottish fisher girls is a wonderful link to a vanished era and indirectly to our own site also:

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My Norfolk family were tenant farmers in the Hingham area who retired to Lowestoft where they lived in genteel poverty. Herrings were an important part of my diet and as a young child in the early 50s I watched **the Scottish fisher girls** mending the nets and the trawlers returning to harbour laden with fish. Years later I learnt of the significance of herring in the medieval diet and how they were cured for storage in barrels in buildings like that of the Abbot of Woburn behind Dragon Hall. At Newcastle University I studied History and made many friends not just in the History department but Fine Art too. It was there that George introduced me to contemporary art at a time when faces like Bryan Ferry, David Hockney and Richard Hamilton were familiar in the department. It was then too that George and I started looking into the history of the Austro Hungarian empire and the Pfeiffer family from the Stuttgart area who had migrated down the Danube river as the Ottoman Turks retreated in the 18th century, and began to farm land not far from Novi Sad. After teaching careers in Bradford and Reading we came to Norfolk and I joined the King Street Research Group at Wensum Lodge lead by the inspiring Chris Barringer Since then I have followed the fascinating story of Dragon Hall’s rediscovery and redevelopment and the work done by Chris and so many others to keep its story alive. My interests now are very broad and include contemporary politics (compelling but disturbing), art, gardening and, of course, our children and grandchildren aged between 3 and 27.

Heritage Open Days

The **tours** on the 11th September were well attended (45 - 50 visitors) and received. There were 6 tours, led by Richard, Adrian, Phil, Gill & Mary and **the Toppes film** was also offered as a follow up. We agreed that, in future, it would be a good idea to adopt Adrian’s suggestion and show the film at the end of all our tours.

The **Family Event** on Sunday 17th September, organised by Sarah Power was also a huge success - 140 visitors in all. Richard and Phil played a full part in the various activities and collected the names of potential Heritage volunteers.

Archive Project

After a long pause we have resumed work on the Archive. Having completed the cataloguing of the items in the Norfolk Record Office (the ‘NRO Collection’), we have now commenced the editing of the items in the **‘Digital Collection’**, mostly 20th and 21st century images. As well as a few of the Archive Volunteers recruited through UEA, we also give a warm welcome to some new Volunteers who have started editing on line.

News from NCW

New CEO

As you may know, the CEO, **Chris Gribble**, has been appointed as CEO of the Forum Trust. We thank him for his support and his work in getting NCW established so successfully in Dragon Hall. We are very glad to know that **Peggy Hughes**, previously Executive Director of NCW, has been appointed to succeed him and we look forward to working with her.

New Heritage Co-ordinators

Some good news on the heritage front: NCW has received some funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for the **'Stepping into Dragon Hall' project**. This allows them to appoint three part – time Heritage Co-ordinators to improve public access, especially to the 'Rectory Rooms' – as they used to be known – and to the 'Butcher's Shop', aka 'Swatman's, aka Wolfson Room. This is an excellent addition to our own efforts in highlighting the 500 years of Dragon Hall's life as a home, pubs, rectory, etc. as well as its life as a trading hall.

The Wolfson Room will also revert to its earlier role as a **reception space**, (older colleagues will remember this!) which will be open approx. 20 hours per week for drop-ins, organised events and community activities across Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. This is likely to happen early in the New Year.

Conesford News

Proposal for Jurnet's House to become a Jewish Heritage Centre



Plans are being drawn up to create a Jewish Heritage Centre in what was **Jurnet's House**, part of the Wensum Lodge complex and later known as **'The Music House'**. It is the oldest known Jewish dwelling, and one of the oldest domestic houses, in England. The city's "foundational" role in the rise of antisemitism, based on **the infamous' blood libel'** in Thomas of Monmouth's fictitious account of 'St. William' in around 1150, made it the right location, say the organisers. It will require a major fund-raising effort. Dr Marion Prinsley, whose synagogue has been leading the fundraising efforts, has said that the hope is for the UEA to also set up an academic post for Jewish Studies.

(Adapted from a BBC report 29.6.23)

We will follow the progress of the plans with great interest and wish the organisers well in their efforts.

Nos. 125 – 127 King Street – the 'Boleyn Building'

Some of us were heartened to see the boards in place over the side and frontage of our neighbouring building and thought that it heralded the beginning of its renovation and development. But despite the developers holding a public information session recently, inquiries at the City Council Planning Dept (as of September this year) reveal that no full planning application has been submitted and no planning approval of any kind has been given since 2013.

The Puzzle – Where is the image below to be found?

[Answer at the end of the Newsletter]



..... and two Haiku by students at City College, based on the carving in the Great Hall:

Dragon guards the sky
Flame frozen in faded wood
Proud roar now quiet
Ed Jones

A vacancy here
Where many home fires once burned,
The ghosts of cooking
Julia Webb

A different kind of dragon

by Cherry Chen



More dragons

For an excellent and comprehensive article by 'Col. Unthank' about dragons in Norwich, with superb images, go to:

<https://colonelunthanksnorwich.com/2016/10/20/dragons/#:~:text=Also%20in%20the%20Great%20Hospital,allowing%20her%20to%20break%20free.>

Augustine Banges - a contemporary of Robert Toppes

Augustine Banges appears in my family tree - a generation or two above my 8x great grandfather - the records for the time are incomplete so it is hard to be precise. He was born in or near Strumpshaw, before moving to Norwich in the 1390s. In 1395 he was listed as a freeman of the city, his occupation recorded as a "piscator", or fisherman. At some time in the 1390s he married Emma de Banningham, who had been left a house on Conesford Street (now King Street) in a 1390 will. The house plot occupied one side of a lane that led down to the river from Conesford Street. We know this because in 1398 Augustine and Emma sold that property - the sale deed is at the Norfolk Record Office. So for a few years it would seem that Augustine had lived in that road. We don't know exactly where he moved to but all the evidence suggests that he lived the rest of his life in the area.

By 1399 Augustine is seen in the city Treasurer's Rolls, being paid 7s 9d for the supply of rushes at the Common Staithe. He had become a builder's merchant, and over the next thirty years we (my brother Paul and I) have found over 100 payments to him from the city for reeds, thatch, timber, nails and, especially, burnt lime. This he often supplied by the cartload. He supplied timber for the rebuilding of the Common Staithe, and tiles by the thousand for channelling and covering some of the cockeys (small streams) leading down to the Wensum. He supplied tiles and other materials for various market stalls and burnt lime for the building of the Guildhall. In 1426 the records show that he owned an inn in the area, though we don't know exactly where it was. Augustine's trade activities must have been very profitable, as he was involved in the purchase of several houses in and around Conesford. This was often with co-purchasers, suggesting they were investments - little different from the "buy-to-let" purchases that were favoured by many much more recently, until the banking crisis of 2008.

So Augustine built up a substantial business and must have been well-known in the area, and in 1414 was elected as a councillor for Conesford. He would have attended many meetings in the very Guildhall which he had helped to construct. His civic career moved on, and by 1422 he became one of the two city treasurers, and by 1427 he was listed as an alderman, though his appointment to that post may have come a few years earlier. In 1432 he became one of the city's two sheriffs. In many ways, Augustine's civic role had similarities to that of Robert Toppes, although Augustine was

never mayor, nor MP. Augustine was probably about 30 years older than Robert, though the exact date of birth of both of them is not known for certain. Augustine's marriage to Emma in the 1390s might suggest a birth date of around 1370. As aldermen they are mentioned in various documents, attending the same meetings and even being taken to court in the same cases. Both were prominent in the activities of the Guild of St George. There can be no doubt that the two men knew each other. The period in which they were simultaneously aldermen was a time of great turbulence in the city's governance. It isn't clear from the records we have seen so far if they were in the same "faction" or not.

Given the long period over which Augustine was supplying building materials to the city, in and around Conesford, the question has been asked as to whether he supplied materials for the construction of Dragon Hall. The simple answer is that no evidence has emerged so far to that effect. The only records we have for Augustine's trade are municipal ones, where he was paid by the city for supplying building materials. He must have also supplied materials to private purchasers, but no details have been found in the archives to date. I have just read in the June 2023 Newsletter that Robert Toppes owned a limekiln in Conesford Street. So that would lower the probability of Augustine supplying the burnt lime for the mortar, but it doesn't rule out the possibility of his having supplied other materials. Given the large number of oak trees needed perhaps Robert - as an astute businessman - got these at source from landowners with oak woods.

Peter Bangs

All the above and more can be found in our book - available as a print-on-demand paperback at Amazon.co.uk: *Augustine Banges of Norwich - A Medieval Civic Dignitary*

Authors: Paul Bangs & Peter Bangs

There are other books on our researches available from Amazon too.

ANSWER to The Puzzle above:

It's in the pavement just outside the door into The Old Barge Room
