

**Dragon Hall Heritage Volunteers
& Local History Study Group
NEWSLETTER No. 5: December 2020**



Photo by George Pfeiffer

To all our Dragon Hall friends and supporters - from the Newsletter production team - looking forward to seeing you in 2021.

*'We'll meet again,
Don't know where,
Don't know etc '*

Wesołych Świąt i Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku
Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda
Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année
Fröhliche Weihnachten und ein glückliches Neues
Jahr
メリー・クリスマス

20 Questions for a Christmas Quiz: A Good (virtual or real) Walk round Norwich

Identify these features, people and landmarks on the route below, starting at the northern end of King Street and finishing at Dragon Hall . **The best score for this, plus the best result submitted for the **Word Search below**, receives a copy of **'The History of Norfolk' by Chris Barringer**.**

1. The Jewish family that founded this building in the 12th Century.
2. This Danish invader was here in 1004.
3. A ruined church in a peaceful spot up the steps.
4. After crossing Carrow bridge and turning left you will soon be reminded of a Norwich twin city.
5. It takes some imagination to envisage what occupied the area where Riverside entertainment venues are now - name the 'works' owners.
6. The next bridge reminds us how once the area was dominated by important heavy industries.
7. Continue walking along the river bank. Name a ferryman who rowed his customers across the Wensum in this area in late Victorian times.
8. Which is the oldest surviving medieval bridge in Norwich still in use today?
9. Which heretics were burned near this bridge in the 15th century?

10. Continue towards the cathedral. Where can you go to see eagles and dragons decorating the building?
11. As you walk through the Close you think of those long gone and remembered here. Which female life is especially commemorated here?
12. And another once eminent citizen comes to mind as you leave the Close; to whom is Shakespeare's Henry V referring here: 'Good morrow, old ---- - ---- - ----, A good soft pillow for that good white head were better than a churlish turf of France'.
13. From Tombland turn right and as you walk towards Magdalene Street you will find a building whose name reminds us of the Danish settlement in this part of Norwich.
14. Turn left along Colegate and back across the Wensum as you head up Duke Street to a cross - roads where a street name reminds you that this patch was once at the heart of the weaving industry.
15. Turn right and look down Westwick Street towards an area twice severely flooded: In which years?
16. Now head up towards the market place. The atmosphere in the city centre must have been so different when people came to the 3 markets: Cattle, Hay and Provisions. Which came first?
17. On which prominent building could you once see an urn - like object known as the Norwich Time Ball? Now proceed to King Street.
18. A familiar church which reminds us of leather workers.
19. Where was 'My Lord's Garden'?
20. By this time you are not far from Dragon Hall. Why were there headlines like 'Dragon sinks Old Barge' and 'Hands off the Old Barge' in the local press in 1986?

C	N	I	E	N	F	A	W	I	M	Q	U	E	R	T
A	Y	W	O	D	E	H	O	U	S	E	P	O	U	Y
S	E	A	A	D	K	F	G	L	H	K	J	M	A	Z
P	L	L	H	T	T	N	F	E	E	R	T	S	P	M
L	O	I	H	S	N	L	Y	T	T	S	O	D	R	K
M	B	M	I	S	W	E	A	V	E	H	E	E	N	I
N	A	R	T	O	R	A	Y	A	E	P	H	S	A	U
D	R	A	W	O	H	Y	R	M	N	T	L	E	M	J
H	R	M	N	E	R	E	L	C	A	I	T	P	T	N
T	I	K	O	L	S	Y	F	F	S	N	A	W	A	B
F	N	N	V	L	E	T	K	A	L	G	N	A	W	H
C	G	M	E	Y	P	T	R	R	E	B	N	T	S	Y
X	E	E	M	G	P	A	H	N	A	I	L	U	J	G
A	R	S	E	D	O	R	A	I	K	M	W	A	O	B
S	S	P	L	I	T	T	E	D	E	T	D	N	O	Y

Word Search

Look for the names of 14 people connected to Dragon Hall - or close by - over the centuries.

Answers to Quiz plus Word Search

Please email your answers to Heather Pfeiffer by January 1st:

h.pfeiffer@btinternet.com. The first set of correct answers gets the prize!!!

Diary entries for Christmas Past

It is likely that for many of us our Christmas experiences this year will be very different from usual, so perhaps it may be a good time to look at the reality of Christmas in times gone by.

Samuel Pepys kept his famous diary between 1660 and 1669. He records the devastation caused by the Great Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of 1666. On Christmas Day 1666, when it is all over, he writes:-

“Lay pretty long in bed. And then rise, leaving my wife desirous to sleep having sat up till 4 this morning seeing her maids make mince pies. I to church where our parson Mills made a good sermon. Then home, and dined well on some good ribs of beef roasted and mince pies; only my wife, brother, and Barker, and plenty of good wine of my own; and my heart full of true joy and thanks to God Almighty for the goodness of my condition at this day.”

James Woodforde’s Diary 1759 - 1802 records the daily life of a wealthy country parson in rural Norfolk. His entries for Christmas remain very similar through the years. In 1793 he writes:-

“Dec.25, WEDNESDAY also Christmas Day. ... This being Christmas Day I walked to Church this morning, read Prayers and administered the Holy Sacrament, gave for an offering 0.2 6. Had a very respectable Appearance at the Altar to partake with me of the H. Sacrament, 2 Rails. The Singers sang the Christmas Anthem and very well, between the Litany & Communion. The following poor People dined at my house or had their Dinner sent to them & one shilling each - Widow Case, my Clerk Tom Thurston, Christopher Dunnell, John Peachman, Tom Carr and Nathaniel Heavers. Dinner today, a boiled Rabbit and Onion Sauce, Surloin of Beef roasted, plumb Puddings and Mince Pie.”

An interesting entry for December 19th 1785 records a visit to Norwich which could perhaps be regarded as a Christmas outing!

“After Dinner the Captain and myself, went and saw the learned Pigg at the rampant Horse in St Stephens ... - We stayed there about an Hour - It was wonderful to see the sagacity of the Animal - It was a Boar Pigg, very thin, quite black with a magic Collar on his Neck. He would spell any word or Number from the Letters and Figures that were placed before him; paid for seeing the Pigg 0. 1. 0.”

Mary Bradford

Margaret Paston to John Paston 24 December 1459: ‘No disguisings or lewd sports’:

Please you to know that I sent your oldest son to my Lady Morley to have knowledge what sports were used in her house at Christmas next following after the decease of her husband. And she said that there were no disguisings [acting] not harping, luting or singing, nor any lewd sports, but just playing at the tables [backgammon] and chess and cards. Such sports she gave her folk leave to play and no other. Your son did his errand right well, as you will hear later. I sent your younger son to Lady Stapletons and she said the same as Lady Morley, that this had been the practice in places of worship [honourable households] where she had been.

One senses here the Pastons’ insecurity about their social status: needing to learn of the correct etiquette from the gentry; and not content with just one opinion, but obtaining two: belt and braces!

RJM

Christmas Cancelled 1645

On Christmas Eve 1645 the mayor of Norwich ordered **churches to close, shops to open and everyone to go to work**. Christmas festivities were outlawed. This didn’t go down well. People were fed up with the civil war, the expensive food and the high taxes. When tax collectors made their demands on the market place they were faced with the butchers brandishing their meat cleavers.

By 1647 Christmas was banned everywhere. The Cof E had been abolished in favour of a presbyterian system and all holy days disappeared. But not without a fight. Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds celebrated rowdily, riots broke out in Kent and the mayor of London was verbally assaulted as he tried to rip down Xmas decorations.

Here in Norwich the Sheriff went to Parliament to get the Mayor arrested for listening to demands from apprentices for a Xmas holiday. To prevent his arrest the crowd shut the gates and took the city. Disorder quickly followed, climaxing in a frenzied race to escape the headlong rush of the cavalry through the narrow streets. As the rain pelted down the city centre ripped open under the force of **98 barrels of gunpowder**.* (Guy Fawkes' 36 barrels were more than enough to blow Parliament sky high)

Looking back from our restricted times it could be an interesting story for historians to interpret. The subsequent trial at the Guildhall had the accused down as royalists and reactionaries. Maybe so, but it's worth a thought that more than a few of them were sick of **being put upon by an overbearing elite** and simply relished the chance to lash out.

Shea Fiddes

[* See Newsletter No. 3 for a link to a blog about 'The Great Blowe']

EDP Archives on line: <https://www.localrecall.co.uk/>

Over 750,000 pages covering over 150 years of local news stories. One month costs £5.99. Maybe someone would like to research a topic for our area and report back?

Zoom in to the Study Group meeting on Monday, January 18th at 10.30

Emboldened by the success of a recent informal meeting on Zoom by some of the 'old lags', we are planning a Study Group meeting on Zoom as above. Invitations will be forthcoming.

Memories: Dragon Hall Christmas Markets



These were very memorable pre-Christmas occasions and I believe successful fund raisers. It was lovely to see the Hall being used for trading again. My usual role was to stand behind Master and Mistress Toppes who were welcoming the customers and collect the entrance fees: it was a requirement to dress up in a suitable medieval costume complete with uncomfortable headdress - we had quite a collection in those days. It was good to get a break and wander round the crowded stalls and enjoy traditional style refreshments in a marquee in the garden.



One year we had a kind of Christmas grotto where Father Christmas (he may have had another name) presided and I was persuaded to dress up as some sort of Elf to assist - at least I could wear trousers! My job was to manage the queue and to organise the bran tub gifts, which we'd previously wrapped and gender and age sorted. It was very popular and I remember mad dashes to the office to replenish supplies.

Mary Bradford



..... and your extra Christmas Puzzle: which one is the real Robert Toppes?



STOP PRESS: Topical News

An archive was recently discovered in the NRO of an interview with Robert Toppes re 'Norwexite': when asked his opinion, Mr Toppes said that he thought that anything that damaged his trade with Europe was foolish and irresponsible. 'Why would anyone do that?!', he said.

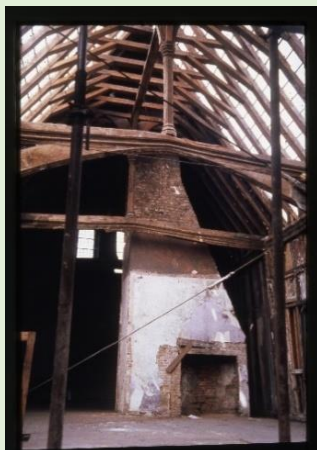
Quick Christmas Quiz Question + a little research

We think that this was a Christmas card issued by the Friends of the Trust : do you know what the joke is? And what important information about Dragon Hall does it refer to?

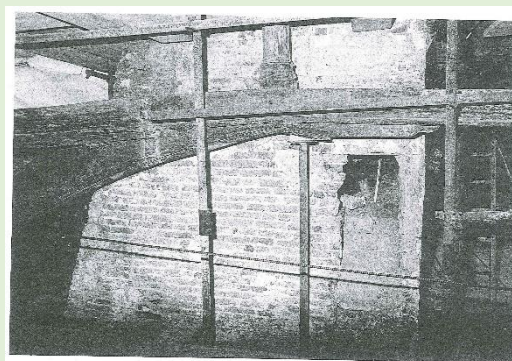


Answer: before this (1993?) there were three large chimney stacks in the hall. Two of them had been installed in the 16th century when Dragon Hall was converted into residential accommodation: one in the south hall and the other towards the north end. The third was a 19th century stack, located where the stairs up from the Old Barge Room emerge now. I remember being told that the Trust had great difficulty getting permission from the Historical Monuments Commission to remove the chimneys, as in those days there was a very fundamentalist belief that buildings should be left exactly as they were, including all the changes and additions that had been made to them over the centuries. Fortunately, I was told, the Trust managed to convince the HMC that the chimneys weren't safe – otherwise we wouldn't have the hall in its original state today – except for the windows of course.

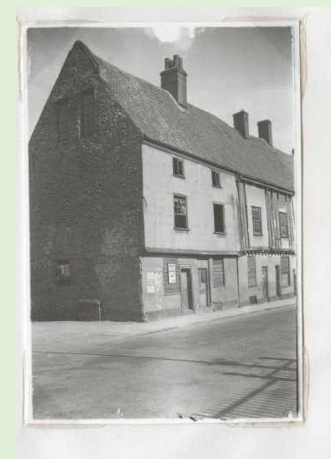
Richard Matthew



Chimney in the hall



Chimney in the attic



With three chimneys – 1940's?

RJM/HP/MB