

# the norton messenger

February 2026



## EDITORIAL

Thank you to Ben Blackman for the lovely picture of the church in the snow in early January.

If you have anything you would like to see published send it to the address below by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the previous month. Including any new article ideas you have.

Diana

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## VILLAGE EVENTS AND NOTICES

### NORTON VILLAGE HALL CLASSES

IP31 3LE



<b>MONDAY</b>	6.00pm - 6.45pm 7.00pm - 7.45pm	Paracise Jo's Fit4All
<b>TUESDAY</b>	9.30am - 10.30am	Serenity Yoga
	10.45am - 11.45am	Silver Swans Over-55s Ballet Class
	7.15pm - 9.15pm	Song Circle Ladies' Choir
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	6.30pm - 7.30pm	Zumba
<b>THURSDAY</b>	9.00am - 10.00am 7.00pm - 8.00pm	Pilates with Paula Rockfit with Bliss
	9.15am - 10.15am 10.45am - 11.45 am	Zumba Fitness with Yvonne



For further details please contact: [nortonvhbookings@gmail.com](mailto:nortonvhbookings@gmail.com)

LATEST NEWS + LATEST NEWS + LATEST NEWS + LATEST NEWS



**NORTON VILLAGE HALL IS NOW OPEN AFTER REFURBISHMENT!**

We're excited to announce that **NORTON VILLAGE HALL** has undergone a beautiful transformation and is now open for bookings!

#### What's New?

- Fully refurbished Hall with modern facilities
- Extended facilities with new Changing Rooms for Sports
- Spacious and versatile layout suitable for all events
- Enhanced accessibility for everyone
- Whether you're planning a Party, Meeting, Class or Community Gathering, our Hall is the perfect place for your next event

To Book or Enquire, contact us at [nortonvhbookings@gmail.com](mailto:nortonvhbookings@gmail.com)

Visit [NortonVillageHall.com](http://NortonVillageHall.com) to book your event, or to look for other events

Come and experience your newly refurbished Village Hall  
*It's your* community space - and it's better than ever!



And finally, don't forget that the new  
**Norton Village Coffee Shop**  
is now open for business  
so do pay it a visit!



## NORTON VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



# AGM

at:

The Village Hall, Norton IP31 3LE

on:

**Tuesday**  
**21st April 2026**  
at 7.30pm

An opportunity for you to learn more about your new Village Hall and put forward your views. Refreshments will be available

For further details please contact Anna Till at: [chair@nortonvillagehall.com](mailto:chair@nortonvillagehall.com) or 07881 784219



Looking after the health of you and your family is one of the most important investments you can make in your life.

#### Vaccinations

The severity of flu this winter has hit the news headlines. For some, it can be a serious and life-threatening illness.

To reduce the risk, we therefore urge those who are eligible to make sure they are vaccinated.

Adults are eligible for a free flu vaccine if aged 65 years or over; pregnant; living with certain long-term health conditions; a carer; living with someone with a weak immune system.

Additionally, children aged 2-16 years are offered a flu vaccine in the form of a quick and painless nasal spray. Importantly, this protects both the child and the risk of spreading to others.

The annual flu vaccination season runs until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2026. If you are eligible and have yet to be vaccinated, please contact your GP practice.

A Happy New Year and best wishes from Woolpit Health Centre



# Norton Salvation Army

## What's on at the Army in February?

Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup>	Breakfast Church (Enjoy coffee/tea/pastries in a relaxed Worship setting)	10.45am
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Worship	11.00am
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup>	Evening Praise	6.00pm
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Morning Worship	11.00am
<hr/>		
Wednesday 4 <sup>th</sup>	Friends Cafe (We are a dementia friendly group offering time out to include carers)	2.00pm - 4.00pm
Thursday 5 <sup>th</sup> /19 <sup>th</sup>	Choir Rehearsal	8.00pm – 9.30pm
Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup>	Band Rehearsal	8.00pm – 9.30pm
Thursdays	Cameo Lunches (3 Course Meal £6.00)	11.45am – 1.30pm
<hr/>		

**Please feel free to come & join in with us at any time: You would be very welcome**

Our Clothes Bank situated in the car park is available to you for all your unwanted clothes & shoes.  
Available 24/7. Please help us to help others.

**If you would like to make contact with Norton Salvation Army please e-mail:**

**[Norton@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:Norton@salvationarmy.org.uk) OR [Peter.Newson@salvationarmy.org.uk](mailto:Peter.Newson@salvationarmy.org.uk)**

**We will be pleased to help you where possible with any questions/queries**

A Christian Church and Registered Charity No: 214779, and in Scotland SC09359 The Salvation Army Territorial  
Headquarters, 101, Newington Causeway, London, SE1 6BN

## **VISIT PAKENHAM WATER MILL**

When was the last time you visited this real hidden bijoux of Suffolk? It's just 3 miles by road from Norton and it's the sole working survivor in Suffolk. The buildings are fairly modern but the history isn't.

The Romans *could* have used the water system as the large Roman settlement, possibly known as *Sitomagus*, was nearby just outside modern day Ixworth. Mention in the Domesday Book assures us of over a thousand years of milling on the current site. The Abbey held the mill until the dissolution in 1539, and a procession of wealthy landlords follow through succeeding centuries.



The nadir of the mill was 1974, to be precise, when business trading, at the time just for animal feed, ceased. It could have been the end, as for so many similar sites in Suffolk and nationwide, a victim to vandalism or demolition or housing development. But, thankfully, it wasn't and after renovation opened its doors again in 1981.

So, what of the mill in 2026? Well, in short it's still going strong. It survives thanks to a hardy band of between 50 and 60 volunteers who give their time freely to keep this unique example of Suffolk heritage alive. The mill is open on Thursday mornings throughout the year when milling takes place, producing the stone ground wholemeal flour. Visitors are very welcome. During the summer months, opening hours extend to Saturday and Sunday afternoons, as well as specific open and event days. What a great place to come along to, with extensive and most attractive grounds to roam free in, a shop to assuage retail pangs, a chance to take a guided tour to bring the mill alive and, naturally, fine refreshments of local origin served outside during fine weather. Groups are especially welcome.

So, residents of Norton, surely 2026 is *your* time for a(nother)visit? What an ideal way to entertain visitors or family looking for something to do. After all, you could walk there! Just come and find out as you will be made very welcome.

Full details of what's happening can be found at <https://pakenhamwatermill.org.uk/>

**ST. ANDREW'S CHURCH** (Part of the Benefice of Pakenham, Norton & Tostock, with Great Ashfield, Hunston & Stowlangtoft)

Rector: Revd Katherine Valentine Tel 01359 235095 Email: [kavalentine677@gmail.com](mailto:kavalentine677@gmail.com)

Website: [www.achurchnearlyou.com](http://www.achurchnearlyou.com) Benefice Church magazine [www.vcnews.org.uk](http://www.vcnews.org.uk)

**February 2026 Church Services**

Open daily for visitors and private prayer. St Andrew's Norton services are highlighted below.

1 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Candlemas</b>	<b>8am Holy Communion (BCP)</b> 10am Family@Church Candlemas	<b>Norton</b> Pakenham
8 <sup>th</sup>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday before Lent</b>	9.30am Holy Communion 9.30am Morning Worship 11am Family Communion	Tostock Great Ashfield Pakenham
15 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Sunday next before Lent</b>	9.30am Holy Communion (BCP) <b>9.30am Morning Worship</b> 11am Family Communion 6pm Evening prayer and praise	Pakenham <b>Norton</b> Great Ashfield Tostock
18 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Ash Wednesday</b>	10am Holy communion with imposition of ashes	Pakenham
22 <sup>nd</sup>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent</b>	9.30am TOAST 9.30am Holy Communion (BCP) <b>11am Family Communion</b> 11am Morning Worship	Great Ashfield Hunston <b>Norton</b> Tostock

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**LENT 2026 - SAVE THE DATES!**

Lent Bible Study - Wednesdays Feb 25th - March 25th at 3pm at St Mary's Pakenham.

All are welcome to come and use the 40 days of Lent to journey towards Easter as we seek to follow Jesus' example and draw closer to God in our daily lives.

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**TRIBUTE to Tony France, R.I.P.**

It is with great sadness that we report the passing away of Tony France at the end of November after a short illness, and his well-attended funeral took place just before Christmas.

Although Tony "retired" to Norton after a career in engineering, he was instrumental in setting up the W.E.N.T (Woolpit, Elmswell, Norton & Tostock) Community First Responder Group (a voluntary arm of the Ambulance Service) in 2007, with the excellent guiding hand of Dr West at the Woolpit Health Centre. Many people will remember Tony in this role, and he continued to lead the Group for ten years, with his energetic "can do" approach to life being both infectious and an inspiration. He also led a programme for the installation of Defibrillators in all local villages, the first one being at Elmswell's Co-op. Tony and his colleagues would have visited many village groups and local events to provide training in CPR (resuscitation) and information about the Responders.

Our thoughts and sincere condolences are extended to his wife, Jenny, and family who would like to thank everyone for their sympathetic words and numerous kind offers of help at this sad time.



Nick & Stella Chamberlin (former Treasurer & Secretary of the local CFR Group)



This is the first article I am writing for 2026, so may I begin by wishing everyone a very Happy New Year from all of us at Norton Primary School. We ended 2025 with many much-loved Christmas traditions, including carol services, nativities, and a delicious Christmas lunch enjoyed by all.

The Spring Term has begun positively, with pupils returning to school full of enthusiasm. I'm not entirely sure whether this excitement was due to the covering of snow or the joy of being back at school learning with friends! A new term always brings exciting topics, along with carefully planned visits and visitors to enrich learning.

In Star Class, the children will be learning about toys, discussing how to recognise old and new toys, and enjoying creating, making, and playing with their own. I have been particularly impressed with how confidently they are learning their sounds, which is now supporting them in blending sounds to read words.

In Year 1, the children's new geography topic is the Arctic. They will explore the Arctic Circle, learning about its climate, animals, and landscape, while also discovering its culture and different ways of life.

Year 2 have begun their topic on *The Great Fire of London*. They are learning to identify key London landmarks and will compare how London has changed from 1666 to the present day. To support this learning, History Off The Page—an interactive history workshop that brings the past to life through role play—will visit later this half term. Children will become apprentices on the streets of London and work together to stop the spreading fire. Following their topic on Stone Age Rocks, Year 3 are moving on to learn about the Ancient Egyptians. They will explore daily life, beliefs, and pharaohs, and in art will be studying hieroglyphs.

In Year 4, the children are continuing their learning about the Ancient Greeks. They will investigate the lasting impact of Greek civilisation, including the Greek alphabet and key historical figures. The children are especially looking forward to a planned Greek Day, where drama and hands-on activities will bring daily life, beliefs, and traditions vividly to life.

As historians, Year 5 will be studying the ancient Maya civilisation, learning about their customs, beliefs, and social structures. Meanwhile, Year 6 will be focusing on science, investigating evolution and inheritance, and how variation in inherited characteristics occurs within a species.

In Year 6 geography lessons, the children will also examine globalisation and how the modern world is increasingly interconnected. Learning will focus on global trade and communication, particularly within the food and fashion industries.

During the last term, our Junior Road Safety Officers (JRSO) invited all pupils to take part in a road safety poster competition. The winning designs were selected to be turned into lamppost bollards and displayed near the winning schools. I am delighted to share that Norton was one of the successful schools, and you should now be able to see the children's winning designs displayed on lampposts near the school.

Each half term, we are fortunate to enjoy a PE Enrichment Day. Last term, all children took part in a Musical Theatre session, and later this half term the focus will be breakdancing—we can't wait to see the moves!

Children's Mental Health Week takes place from 9th–15th February. This important week helps children learn how to care for their minds and bodies, understand their feelings, and stay happy and healthy. This year's theme, *This Is My Place*, focuses on belonging and feeling valued within the groups and places that matter to us. The children will take part in a range of activities throughout the week to explore this theme together.

Mrs Sparkes



# PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

## MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025

**PRESENT in the Chair:** Mrs. S. Hill

Mr. B. Aket, Prof. K. Jaggard, Mr. G. Millen, Mr. J. Morgan, Mr. G. Walton, Mrs. J. Rowland (Clerk)

LGA 1972 s12 para 40

County Councillor A. Mellen,

District Councillor H. Richardson,

**APOLOGIES:** Mr. J. Bolus, Mr. R. Lenko, Mr. N. Winstanley

The Council consented to accept the apology and reasons given.

District Councillor D. Bradbury.

1.	The Chair welcomed everyone	
2	Declarations of pecuniary and local non-pecuniary interests a) To receive declarations of pecuniary, non-pecuniary interest(s) and personal interests in items on the agenda and their nature inc. gifts of hospitality exceeding £25 - none b) To receive declarations of lobbying for planning matters on the agenda - none c)To receive requests for dispensations –none	
3.	<b>PUBLIC FORUM</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members of the public–to receive questions and matters of concern from those in attendance - none</li> <li>Members of the public – to receive comments submitted via email</li> </ul> <p>St Edmunds United Football Club, a newly set up club looking for a full-size pitch to hire, enquired about hiring the football pitch. Unfortunately, Norton’s pitches are 5 a-side or 7 a-side and the goals are not full size. This will be relayed to the Club.</p> <p>Parking in School Close – Complaint received about resident parking in the Ambulance bay creating a problem for turning, particularly for the school bus and ambulance. The Chair spoke to the resident who stated he had permission to park there from MSDC Housing Dept. Clarification will be sought from MSDC regarding parking agreement.</p>	
4	<b>REPORTS FOR INFORMATION</b>	
	Report from County Councillor Andy Mellen Cllr Mellen confirmed £1000 locality donation to the Village Hall. The rusted 30mph repeater sign has been put up temporarily and reported, and the missing 30mph sign is in the system to replace. He agreed to check the situation regarding the bus stop hatching.	
	Report from District Councillors Harry Richardson Mr. Aket enquired about the proposed Youth Council. Cllr Richardson confirmed a date and selection process has yet to be decided. It was felt a broad representation would be required selected from local schools. Cllr Richardson confirmed he has now spent all his locality budget and he will provide a list of who and where this has been allocated as an appendix to his monthly report.	
5.	<b>MINUTES</b>	
	5.1 To <b>RESOLVE</b> minutes of Council meeting held on <b>3<sup>rd</sup> November 2025</b> were a true and correct record. After amendment to the seconder of the 6 <sup>th</sup> October minutes. Prof. Jaggard proposed, Mr. Aket seconded, agreed by all.	
6.	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>	
	6.1 Bus stop hatching at crossroads - ongoing	
	6.2 UKPN update. The Clerk stated a new proposal was for the Village Hall and the Council to be jointly named on the lease as it would not be practicable for the Hall to surrender back part of the land. The agreement of the Village Hall committee had been sought and relayed to the solicitor and UKPN. A newly drawn up lease is awaited.	Clerk
	6.3 Thermal imaging cameras – notice placed in the Messenger was unreadable. The Clerk will put together a new leaflet for the Messenger and Facebook.	Clerk
	6.4 .Mr. Aket asked whether CAB would be willing to speak to the Council. The Clerk will request this when the donation cheque is forwarded.	Clerk

	<b>6.5 Village Archive material.</b> Mr. Burt stated he has several boxes with lever arch files of info, and photos. He will give agreement for the village to take ownership of the info but he would require access for his report to the Suffolk Local History Council. A locked cupboard could be located in the village hall. Mr. Burt will be asked to meet with village hall representatives. He would like to see a Norton History Group and will put an item in the Messenger to see if there is any interest. He stated if items are sent to The Hold in Ipswich they hold the rights and will not allow any copies to be made or reproduced.	Clerk
<b>7.</b>	<b>PLANNING</b>	
	<b>7.1 APPLICATION GRANTED - DC/25/00562</b> Land Fronting, Hawes Lane, Norton. Application for Outline Planning Permission (Access points to be considered, all other matters reserved) Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) - Erection of 1No self build dwelling and 4No build to rent dwellings including construction of electricity sub station.	
	<b>7.2 ADVERTISING CONSENT GRANTED DC/25/04346</b> Budgens At, Norton Service Station, Woolpit Road, Norton. Application for consent to display an Advertisement(s) - Retention of 3no. vinyl decals on freestanding ATM	
	<b>7.3 APPLICATION GRANTED SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS DC/25/04345</b> Budgens At, Norton Service Station, Woolpit Road, Norton. Full Planning Application - Installation of freestanding automated teller machine and bollards (retention of)	
	<b>7.4 APPLICATION GRANTED DC/25/04101</b> Arch Farm, Woolpit Road, Norton. Proposed new and replacement windows, PV panels and EV charging point to existing Cartlodge.	
	<b>7.5 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT ENQUIRY</b> Land West Of Suffolk House, Ixworth Road, Norton EN/25/00516 Nature of Problem: Alleged commencement of works on site prior to the completion of the access following grant of permission DC/24/04807. Investigation by Enforcement confirmed there had been a planning breach, but no further action would be taken on working times, but further investigation would be needed regarding lack of work on the entrance before commencement. Mrs. Hill asked about the requirement to provide a pedestrian crossing, for which there was no sign of action. Cllr Richardson stated some of the conditions were attached to the original appeal decision. There would appear to be difficulty regarding a full crossing so likely to be very limited. He will check the trigger point of the infrastructure agreement.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>FINANCIAL MATTERS</b>	
	8.1 To approve the accounts awaiting payment: Clerk's salary £624.00 LGA1972 s112 Clerk Expenses, MSDC Play area inspection, £116.90 Local Gov (Misc. Provisions) Act 1976 s 19 Gadd brothers, Play Area Gate, £840.00 Public Health Act 1875 s164 Messenger, £374.00 LGA1972 s112 Vertas, grounds maintenance, £407.23 Public Health Act 1875 s164 BT – vhall wifi £35.94 LGA 1972 s133 SWT – membership, £38.00 LGA1972 s112 HMRC £210.45 Cheque 522608 LGA1972 s112 CAB Stowmarket £100 cheque 522609 LGA 1972 s137 SCC – street light, unit 4 £1385.60 cheque 522610 Parish Councils Act 1957, s3: Highways Act 1980 s301 Santander Chq transfer to Lloyds £10,000.00 Cheque 522611 LGA 1972 s111	
	8.2 MS Oakes, £24,000 LGA 1972 s133 The Clerk requested permission to action payment. Councillors <b>AUTHORISED</b> payment when the invoice is received.	
	8.3 EAAA – donation request. The Council declined the request at this time.	
	8.4 Lighthouse Womans Aid, request for financial aid. The Council declined.	
	8.5 The Clerk had forwarded an up to date R&P with reconciliations of both accounts. Councillors <b>RESOLVED</b> to accept.	
	8.6 To receive Internal Control statement and report circulated following the meeting between the Clerk and Mr. Lenko. Councillors <b>RESOLVED</b> to accept.	
	8.7 Update on Council subscription to Gov.uk. The Clerk stated she had contacted Aubergine 262 to set up the web site with emails. One Teams meeting had been held and the process for compliance to Assertion 10 has now commenced. It is likely to take around 9 weeks before fully set up and active, and training is undertaken.	Clerk
	8.8 To consider Precept for 26-27. The Clerk had forwarded suggestion for precept, with the basic requirement needed for the year. She stated a decision is required at the January meeting in order for the request to reach MSDC by end of January 2026.	7

<b>9.</b>	<b>RE-ORGANISATION/DEVOLUTION</b>	
	9.1 Local Government Re-organisation – Government consultation on LGR in Suffolk circulated to Councillors with consultation on the proposals open for comment - noted	
<b>10</b>	<b>SPEEDWATCH</b>	
	10.1 Strategy to combat speeding – consultant led investigation – replies and quotes received by Mr. Winstanley circulated to Councillors. Mr. Aket expressed concern about the open-ended quotes and about spending money on a survey to present to SCC who would likely reject due to the cost of implementation. Prof. Jaggard mooted SCC may take notice of a professional survey suggesting speed reduction measures. This will be further discussed at the next meeting.	
	10.2 30mph between Norton and Stowlangtoft reply from Highways still awaited.	Clerk
<b>11</b>	<b>VILLAGE HALL</b>	
	11.1 Village Hall parking. Lorry and car continue to park in the car park all day, taking up several spaces. The Clerk confirmed she had given a letter to the lorry stating this was not a public car park, but for the use of village hall users, the school, preschool and users of the playing field. This will continue to be monitored. Mr. Aket wondered if there were any measures that could be put in place to stop misuse of parking.	Clerk
	11.2 Mr. Walton expressed his disappointment with the coffee shop. Prof. Jaggard stated the agreement to help the community had not been upheld, and rent had not been paid for 2 months. The matter is currently with the solicitor.	
<b>12</b>	<b>PLAY AREAS</b>	
	12.1 Play areas adjacent to Village Hall and Prospect Road. Both areas appear OK.	
	12.2 Mr. Walton stated the lock on the gate had disappeared when the new gate was installed. He will chase this up with James Gadd.	Mr. Walton
<b>13</b>	<b>NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN</b>	
	13.1 Update on survey. Neither Councillor was available for an update, however, it was noted there was a piece in the Messenger outlining the current position.	
<b>14</b>	<b>CORRESPONDENCE</b>	
	1. Clerks & Councils Direct -noted	
	1. SCC street lighting-Christmas period. The Council felt the street lighting should remain as it is.	Clerk
	14.3 NSIPs Bulletin - November 2025 – noted.	
<b>15</b>	<b>QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT MEETING.</b> - none	
<b>16</b>	To confirm the <b>date of next meeting 5<sup>th</sup> January 2025</b>	
<b>17</b>	There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.45	

## ELMSWELL GARDEN CLUB

Our meetings will resume on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2026 and kicking off our speakers for the year is Tim Fuller, co-founder of The Plantsman's Preference in South Lopham. Tim will be sharing his knowledge of ornamental grasses. Many people are unsure of what to do with grasses in the garden and they tend to end up in a bed on their own - not the best way to use them. This talk will aid the selection of good garden grasses and suggest ways to include them in the garden.

Our speakers programme for the first part of this year is:

March 17<sup>th</sup> – Caroline Holmes 'A Royal Country Estate – Sandringham'

April 21<sup>st</sup> – Chris Wiley 'Hellebores'

May 19<sup>th</sup> – Ian Bedford 'Insects, Six of the Best'

June 16<sup>th</sup> – Jim Paine 'Trees for all Seasons'

Meeting starts at 7.30pm in Wesley Chapel, School Road.

We are also planning a day trip over the summer to Beth Chatto's beautiful garden in Essex, more details to follow.

Whether you are an experienced home gardener or just starting out there is always something new to learn or ideas to take home to your own garden. Non-members are always welcome and you may make some new friends. There is a small fee for non-members of £5 for each meeting, but membership for the year is a bargain at just £20 for all ten meetings.

We look forward to welcoming you in February and growing another year of shared garden inspiration together.

Wendy

For Information contact [elmswellgadmin@btinternet.com](mailto:elmswellgadmin@btinternet.com) or myself on 07748 442951.

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## ELMSWELL HISTORY GROUP

**November** saw the return of local historian Barbara McElroy, with her talk on the so-called "Golden Age" of **Smuggling in Suffolk**, 1720-1830, notably due to the introduction of tariffs on Dutch and French products such as brandy, gin, lace and tea. Pubs such as Blythburgh's White Hart played a key role in these smuggling operations ranging from storing the contraband, passing on information to the smugglers and getting soldiers drunk so they were unfit to chase down the smugglers! The Hadleigh Gang was one of the largest and most notorious smuggling gangs which could number 200 strong. Barbara explained that, in order for the smugglers to evade capture and ultimately prison, they had to be aided and abetted by many members of the local community. This "Golden Age" came to an end when many tariffs were removed and official coastal patrols based on navy protocols were introduced during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Our **December's** talk/performance by actor Bryan Thurlow was the dramatic story of **Borley Rectory, England's Most Haunted House**. With just a very few props, Bryan brought this mid-century story to life about this imposing building on the Suffolk/Essex border with its various and, frankly, eccentric characters. It was 1927 when Reverend and Mrs Smith moved into the rectory and the first instances of a very modern haunting began. Shortly after moving in, Mrs Smith found a young woman's skull in a cupboard, and this discovery was said to have been the trigger for supernatural activity within the house. Shortly afterwards, a whole host of paranormal events were said to have occurred; strange lights appeared, unexplained footsteps moved within the house, and the ghostly apparition of a horse-drawn carriage was seen nearby. However, it was subsequently surmised that maybe such pranks were perpetrated by mischievous maids (amongst others!), exaggerated by the nervous disposition of fragile ladies, and encouraged by unscrupulous charlatans such as Harry Price and his spiritualist friends who tried to rid the rectory of its ghostly goings-on. Sadly, the building itself is no more, but that hasn't stopped local youngsters and other thrill-seekers and ghost-hunters from visiting the village to this day on the hunt for ghouls and all things ghostly! To calm our collective nerves, warming seasonal refreshments were served, which went down very well with our large appreciative audience.

Due to adverse wintry weather, our January meeting had to be cancelled but, fortunately, we managed to re-jig our programme and, therefore, those planned talks have merely been postponed to **12<sup>th</sup> February**. So, we again look forward to hearing three short talks on (1) Growing up on the **Ickworth Estate**, (2) General History of **Postcards** (with a selection of Elmswell postcards to view), and (3) Memories of 1950-60s **Woolpit**.



See you there then – **7.30pm** at the **Wesley Hall**, IP30 9FB – but, should there be any doubt as to whether this will go ahead for any reason, please contact us before setting out.

For further information about our History Group, please visit our website – [www.elmswell-history.org.uk](http://www.elmswell-history.org.uk) – or contact our Secretary, on 01359-242601

## DOWN OUR STREET

Following on from last month's article about 'The New Church Gates' which replaced the ones made by the Lambert Family, I was looking through some old postcards of Norton and noticed one titled 'Church Avenue, Norton'. On closer inspection, I could see some gates which existed in 1911, when the postcard was dated. I have coloured and enlarged the image. You may notice that the boundary of the graveyard, back then, was much closer to the church. Even today there is a noticeable rise in level along the original fence line. The small leaved limes which form the avenue were planted by my 2x Gt Grandfather when he was a churchwarden. That was in the days when Revd. Aldersey Dicken D.D. was rector.



AI colourised from a sepia card.



Enlargement of the old gates.

Norton, like many larger Suffolk villages, was a more or less self-sufficient community from the late 1700s to mid-1900s. The majority of people had manual jobs, trades or professions which were carried out within a couple of miles of their homes. As an example, in 1851, the first time a census gave rank, profession or occupations, I counted over 50 different professions and occupations. The most common work for men was that of an agricultural labourer, while women were mostly looking after the home.

**Other occupations for men in that year were:-** Barrister, Book binder, Boot/Shoemaker, Bricklayer, Butcher, Blacksmith, Butler, Carpenter, Carter/Carrier, Clerk, Coachman, Coalman, Dealer, Doctor, Draper, Farmer, Game keeper, Gardener, Glazier, Grocer, Groom, Harness maker, Huntsman, Lime burner, Maltster, Miller, Police officer, Publican, Rake maker, Rector, Sawyer, Shop keeper, Soldier, Tailor, Veterinary surgeon and Wheelwright.

**Women:-** Cook, Dairy maid, Dress maker, Glove maker, Governess, Housemaid, Laundress, Midwife, Nurse, School teacher and Straw bonnet maker.

There were also people living from interest on their own savings or rental income and quite a few elderly and unemployed people relying on the Parish Relief.

### Hay making and the use of wooden rakes up to about 1950.

Hay was essential as winter food for horses and other livestock. Commonly used plants for hay include mixtures of grasses such as ryegrass, timothy, fescue and sometimes included legumes, such as alfalfa and clovers. Hay cutting was traditionally done by scything during a dry period in June. The cut grass was turned daily for about four days to aid drying (normally removing 15% to 20% of the moisture). Once the grass had dried sufficiently, it was raked into rows (windrows), using wooden tined rakes. These windrows were then made into heaps ready for loading onto hay waggons. Hand rakes were once an essential piece of farm equipment and wherever there was suitable coppice wood, there would likely be a rake maker's yard. Between c.1930-1965 the harvest was greatly mechanised and hand rakes were only required in limited quantities.

## Henry Last, rakemaker of Norton.

Henry was born in 1814 and was brought up in Earl Stonham, where his father had been a rakemaker. He married and moved to Stanton Street, Norton, in the mid-1840s, where he continued his rake-making business. This was in the days before any kind of mechanization. By 1861 Henry and his family had moved to Heath Road in the area between Corell Cottage and Dog Corner. One of Henry's sons, William, worked with his father as a rake maker for a short time before getting married and moving to London and working as a jobbing carpenter. This left Henry working on his own till his death in 1873 and meant that Norton no longer had a rakemaker in the village.

Some stages in rake making:-



May I suggest  
watching one of  
the following  
YouTube short  
documentaries.

(Links should work  
from the e version on  
the website)

[YouTube](#) WoodlandsTV Make a Rake. This is a 6 minute film showing some traditional methods.

[YouTube](#) Crafting Magic: Handcrafted Tools from Wood! 17 or 20 minutes.

The photo opposite shows an ash wood, 17-tine rake for gathering harvested hay. It is new but made to a traditional 'split-handled' Suffolk design. Stamped on the head and handle is the following: 'AJAX -- Made by Suffolk Craftsmen'. It was made by Whelnetham Woodwork Ltd., Bury St. Edmunds, who also made scythe handles, forks, mauls, beetles, mallets and handles by traditional methods, in addition to rakes.



Whelnetham Woodwork Ltd.'s original woodworking factory was founded in 1725 but the earliest records are contained in a ledger of 1809. The raw materials for woodworking were always available from local woodlands.

The later factory was established in 1912 by John George & Sons Ltd, hardware manufacturers, then of Lackington St., London EC2. They originally leased coppice woods around Felsham Hall and subsequently purchased 300 acres of these in 1934. The factory was burnt down and rebuilt in 1939. Some years later the business was purchased by Ron Hack, a freelance journalist. By the early 1980s Whelnetham Woodwork Ltd. was run by one full-time worker, Noel Cullum. The wood was still obtained from the same source, which had become Bradfield Wood Nature Reserve.

The business closed in 1984 and the Rural History Centre has an extensive collection of its records. They show, for example, that rake output, which stood at 818 dozen (i.e. 9,816) in 1927, had dropped back to 463 dozen (5,556) in the years of agricultural depression in the early 1930s. Thereafter, production picked up again, especially with the coming of the Second World War, and peaked at 991 dozen (11,892) in 1950 before falling sharply again in succeeding years as the effects of wider use of hay-making machinery were felt.

**The photo below is colourised from a black and white original.** It was taken in Norton on one of the fields behind 'Watlings Farm' and may even be in the area of the Village Hall/ Playing Field/ Pre School.



If there is some aspect of Norton's history you would like me to write about, please contact me by email at [bg55599@hotmail.com](mailto:bg55599@hotmail.com) although I cannot promise that I can help, I will see what I can find. David.

**Going strong into 2026**

This year is a milestone one for us as we celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our link with Muids, in Normandy, France.

Those 40 years have seen our Association develop into something rather special, with several original members still involved, and some lifelong connections forged both between friends in Norton and surrounding areas, but also across the Channel with friends in Muids.



**40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

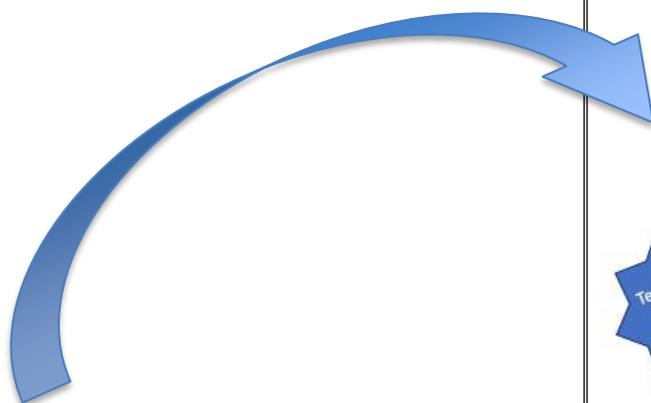
If you or your family have ever been members of the Association then please get in touch and ...

**\*\*SAVE THE DATE: 12<sup>th</sup> July 2026\*\***

**Invitations to our celebration will be sent shortly**

We would love you to share your memories from the last 40 years, so please do send any pictures or stories through to us using the contact details below!

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**Quiz Night**

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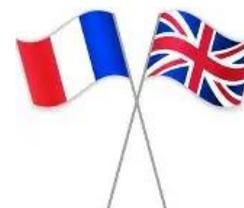
**Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2026**  
**@ Norton Village Hall**  
Doors open **7pm**, Quiz starts **7.30pm**  
Contact: [nortontwinning@gmail.com](mailto:nortontwinning@gmail.com)

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**Dates for your diary:**

- ❖ **21<sup>st</sup> March 2026:** Quiz Night (open to all)
- ❖ **23<sup>rd</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> May 2026:** Exchange visit to Muids (members only)
- ❖ **12<sup>th</sup> July:** 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration (invitation only)



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Norton and District Twinning Association

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Thanks to Dave Ling for this photo from the water meadows



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