

"A THOUSAND YEARS OF VILLAGE HISTORY"

A S H B Y

Suffolk

From the arrival of Aski the Saxon c. 425 AD to the present day



by

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with Ashby

A THOUSAND YEARS OF VILLAGE HISTORY

ASHBY, SUFFOLK

The present parish of Ashby, with a population of about 40, and containing just over 1,000 acres, lies near the centre of the Isle of Lothingland, 7 miles from Lowestoft, 6 miles from Great Yarmouth, in the farming hinterland. Its population has always been sparse since the parish has been predominantly agricultural, but its history reflects in many ways the changes in the countryside over the past 1,000 years, from early settlement by the Saxons, the rise of the feudal estate, and in 1587 an extension of the greater Somerleyton Estate under the Wentworth family.

On the Western boundary it touches the parish of Herringfleet and Herringfleet Hall Park, to the North the boundary runs through the centre of Fritton Decoy or Lake, with Belton Wood to the North East, on the East is the parish of Lound, and on the south the parish of Somerleyton, touching Somerleyton Hall Park.

PRE-HISTORY

Neolithic arrow-heads and other tools have been found on the rising land below Manor Farm, Ashby. Pre-historic man found the shores of Fritton Lake a congenial place to settle, being plentiful in trees, with good agricultural land and pasture, and with a large expanse of water in Fritton Decoy for fishing. The natural isolation of the site met the demands of fishing, hunting and in supplying timber.

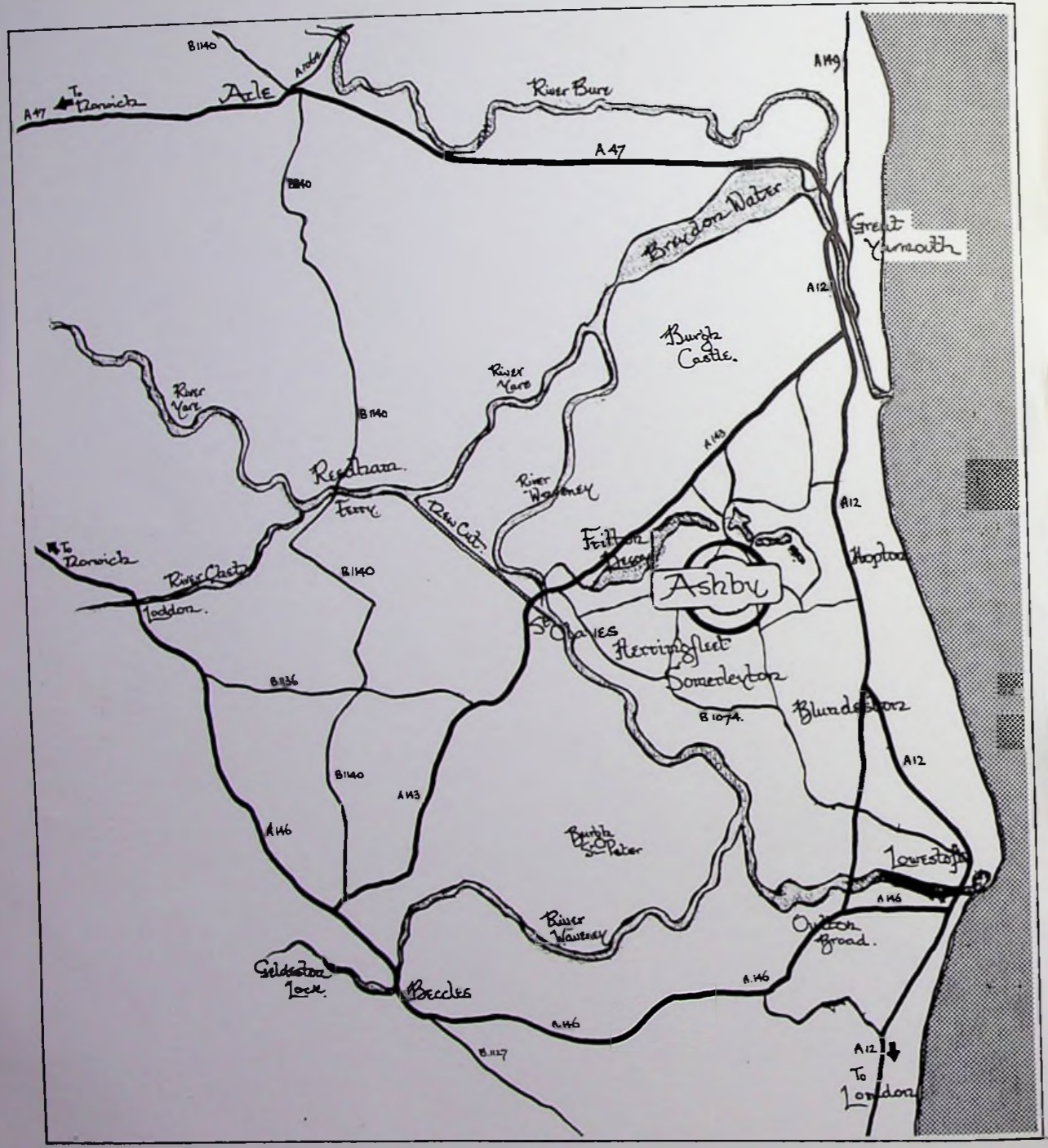
The Decoy itself has been said to be the result of extensive peat-digging in medieval times, the origin of many of our Broads in those times and perhaps earlier. But there are other considerations – the Decoy appears to be too deep in the centre for this to be the sole reason. It has been suggested that the depth was due to ‘scoring’ in the late Ice Age. The two-mile long expanse of water is served by no less than 4 cold springs, and the Decoy itself was part of a water-way linking the North Sea to the River Waveney, thus virtually cutting in half the Isle of Lothingland. Peat digging there probably was, but along the boggy land adjacent to the Decoy, rather than in the central Lake area.

The whole area was extensively occupied by pre-historic man – neolithic axes were found in 1902–4 AD 400 yards to the north-east of the western extremity of the Decoy, and five years later, further flint tools were found about 800 yards east-south-east of the same point. Coming into the Bronze Age, a bowl of that period was found in 1909 AD when workmen were cutting out the Dam 300 yards to the east of the eastern extremity of the Decoy; and in 1927 a Bronze hoard of some 27 tools were found at the Old Rectory, Somerleyton. Expert opinion of the then Dept. of British and Medieval Antiquities identified the hoard as dating c. 800 BC. Extensive occupation of the area by neolithic and Bronze Age man is also attested in the adjacent coastal area where, for instance, around Corton, flint arrow-heads, scrapers and a bronze slag piece have recently been found. By the Bronze Age it was not all hunting and fishing. Some of these finds indicate the earliest examples of textile culture, and the hollow sickle, ox-collars and ring bits of the Somerleyton find suggest a settled area. We know little about the crops grown here, but may hazard a guess that wheat, rye, oats and a six-rowed barley were grown. We know little about the kind of animals kept, but cattle enclosures with ditch and bank were a common feature of this era.

THE DARK AGES

So far, no Roman remains have been discovered but perhaps this is not surprising, as the Roman route lay to the north of Fritton Decoy. After the Roman period, the Anglian shores were periodically invaded, first by raiding parties, then by settlers, the Saxons, Vikings, and Danes, and the inlet from the coast through the Decoy-water-way to the river Waveney would provide an invitation to ‘come inside’.

Ashby, or Haskeby as it was once known, indicates that at some early date after the Roman withdrawal, a Saxon settlement was made there. This view is supported by R. Rainbird Clarke in his “East Anglia”, who puts the Ashby settlement c. 450 AD – a Saxon settlement rare for these parts. There was one at Gariannonum, nestling in the remains of the old Roman fort, another to



the North of Yarmouth; while most of the others along this stretch of coast were in the Ipswich area. By 500 AD there were extensive Saxon settlements from Schleswig-Holstein, N.W. Germany, the N. Frisian islands and possibly Denmark, but these stretched from the Wash through the Fens to Breckland.

THE ASHBY BURIAL BOAT

Further support for an early Saxon settlement also comes from the discovery of a Saxon burial ship of the chieftain type. Charles Green in his 'Sutton Hoo' gives a full description of the burial ship at Ashby and dates this with fair confidence to between c. 400-450 AD, in the period before the last traces of Roman influence had disappeared, though the custom of boat-burial being later rather militates against this early view. Buried deeply in Ashby Dell, $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the Decoy Shore, an ancient boat was discovered in 1830, so well preserved that a detailed accurate drawing of its peculiar construction was recorded by Mr. Keable, estate carpenter, also described as "agent and draughtsman to H. Mussenden Leathes of Herringfleet Hall". An abstract of this record by Keable's great-nephew, Kenneth Luck, was published in a local newspaper in 1927 – fortunately, for on Luck's death in 1933, his papers were burned by his landlady. Neither men were versed in the details of ancient boat construction, but we may trust their accounts for they were both master carpenters by training, though Luck thought it was a Viking ship and was probably wrong in designating the planking as of 'riven larch'. It is probable that larch was not available at this time, so it may have been constructed of another coniferous tree. An interesting feature was that no iron was used, all fastenings being either by treenails or lashings, and the boat was clenched not with iron rivets but with lashings. A similar method, Mr. Charles Green notes, was used in the Haslney (Norway) boat which was dated c. 200 AD and he draws interesting points from Luck's narrative which point to primitive features in the Ashby boat – suggesting Roman influence. Belton Fen, lying in the shelter of the Saxon Shore fort at Burgh Castle, has been suggested as the possible headquarters and dockyard of a detachment of the Roman fleet of the 4th century – it may be that this chieftain's boat of Ashby was built for an early Anglo-Saxon settler before the completed phase of the Roman withdrawal.

Above board, its length was 54 ft and along the keel 47 ft. Its width amidship was 8 ft, height amidship 6 ft. and its height bow to stern, rotted (but not much) above the silted mud, was approximately 9 ft. The keel, stem, and stern posts were of elm and straight. Wooden pins were used throughout for the fastenings. The keel, stem, and stern posts were rebated to take 'garboard' (i.e. adjoining) streak and side planking, and although rough, the workmanship was good. The boards along the side were of 'riven larch' (Luck) thinner on one edge, weathered and adzed or brought into form by some other tool. The planks were wide in the earlier style, each one having two cleats, and each cleat was slotted, with holes bored on either side of the slot. This slot took the timber to which every board in turn was lashed. There was wood pinning or lashing wherever any connection was necessary. No evidence of iron was discovered. The timbers were suitable crotches of trees, and where the canker was faulty the cleats were eased or packed to meet it. There were 7 'tonlocks' on either side, and 14 thwarts or seats, ingeniously fastened to the timbers and gun'al by the same method of pins and lashing, the rowlocks being of wedge shape hollowed to take the oar and grooved to take the lashing. There was no hole in either thwart to take a mast and no 'stepping' in the keel – presumably it was propelled by rowing only. In the crosspiece from the stem to the first seat was found a rounded timber, 9 inches in diameter, 4 ft. long, and as there appeared to be a hole right through it, it is supposed this was an adjustable, small, capstan.

THE MEDIEVAL PERIOD

Ashby is not mentioned in the Suffolk Domesday.

The first documented information comes from the time of Henry II (1154-1189 AD) with mention of lands held by Robert le Pene, Alice Smethe, and Osbert, and in the time of King John (1199-1216 AD) and Henry III (1216-1272 AD) by Henry Smethe, Alan de Rus, Henry and Margaret de Steyngat, Geoffrey Sibillie, Warrin Stubbelle, Geoffrey de Hil, Eldred Leman,

Ralph de la Dale, William le Neve, Robert del Bures, William le Rede, and Robert de Fretun (Fritton ?). Other interesting names from 1290 onwards are Edward Bee, Richard Crystmes, Thomas Bryd and William Sygoo.

Mention is made of the members of the Askeby family who held the Manor – Geoffrey (c.1210), John (c.1241) Jordan, and John. There is reference in 1270 to the grant of lands near 'Gunildes Mere' (Fritton Lake). Copinger, that exact recorder of Suffolk Manuscripts, also mentions a number of grants of lands by John de Askeby, son of Jordan de Askeby in the period 1270-1280 AD. There is an interesting record of a grant of land by Stephen, son of William de Askeby, clerk, to John, son of Robert de Manetorp, and Thomas his son, of land in Manthorpe c. 1280 AD. This area, which till the early 17th century lay S.E. of Somerleyton Hall, gave its name to Manthorpe Green, in Somerleyton. It has now disappeared from the map, and is only preserved in the name of Green Farm, Somerleyton.

In 1280 Geoffrey, son of John de Askeby, made grants of lands, a mill, in Ashby, Somerleyton, Belton, Lound and Leystoft, to John de Inglose, his nephew – a relationship which carries us over from the Askeby family into the Inglose family.

And so, in 1269, the Lord of the Manor was John de Askeby or Ashby, granting commons to Alice Bond. A few years later, his son Jeffrey received certain lands with the rights of commonage in all the commons of Ashby, a right extended to Jeffrey's heirs. In 1292, Jeffrey found himself at the centre of a dispute with a certain Robert over a fold-course erected at Ashby, which had been done without permission. The result was that Jeffrey was to be paid half-a-mark for which Robert retained his foldage.

By the time of Edward II (1307-1327 AD) the Manor of Ashby had passed to the Inglose family – originally of Golosa, near Loddon. The Inglose family (a corruption of Golosa) had anciently held lands under the Albiny family, Earls of Arundel. In 1209 William de Inglose was Lord of the Manor of Golosa, and was succeeded by Hervey, then by Martin his son c. 1250, then by Reginald his son by Deed sans dare. In 1275 Reginald's son, John, held not only Golosa but also Castle Rising. Although John de Askeby Knt was in 1290 described as 'Lord of the Manor of Ashby', by 1312 John de Inglose is presenting to the Church of Ashby in 1312, and by 1335 his son Robert is granting lands with free foldage in Ashby. This same Robert may be the one buried in St. Margaret's Church, Lowestoft, and dated 1365 but the date is inaccurate, as Joan his wife was a widow in 1361 AD and enjoying lands in Ashby at that time.

For some unknown reason – unless it be that the Inglose family, always great military men and great fighters, were involved in the baronial in-fighting during the latter years of Richard II and early years of Henry IV, there being a lull in the French Wars – in 1397 the capital messuage (i.e. Ashby Manor) was in the holding of a Nicholas Wychingham who in that year leased it to John Atte Grove with church lands. In 1400 it was held by Thomas Ashman, but in 1402 it was reported to be held by Anna, wife of Henry Inglose. Presumably Henry had married in the meantime, but was still tilting his lance in the battle field.

In 1414 Henry Inglose who held Ashby, took a libel action against Sir John Tiptoft in the court of the Earl Marshal. Tiptoft had retained Henry with 16 lances and several archers but he refused to pay him for his services. Henry, in true character, declared he was ready to prove his cause in the lists, by the help of God and St. George, by the law and customs of arms. Seven years later, Sir Henry was serving in the French Wars and was taken prisoner at the Battle of Beauge le Viel, in which battle the Duke of Clarence was killed when the English forces were defeated by the combined force of French and Scots under the Earl of Buchan. In 1427 Henry acted as proxy for Sir John Fastolf when Henry VI bestowed the Knight of the Garter on him. He died in 1451 AD after marrying Ann (second wife ?) the daughter and heiress of Robert Gyney of Haverland in Norfolk and through her inherited the Ashby Manor. By his will dated 20th June 1451, he devised his manors of Dilham and Loddon etc to Henry his son and heir, but it was his second son, Robert Inglose, who became lord of the Manor of Ashby to which church he presented in 1458 AD. His daughter, Catharine, married Richard Blundeville, and they both lived at Ashby.

The fortunes of the Inglose family were now coming to an end. In the time of Henry VIII,

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 c. 1510 AD, we find the Manor House leased by Elinor Jenny to Peter Nabbys. In 1515 AD Ralph Blomvyle and his wife Constantia of Ashby Manor sold out to Edward Jernegan who actually died 6th January 1515, so the sale was probably to his son. We find recorded, a "Capital Messuage, with 40 acres, 6 acres of meadow, 6 of pasture, 40 of briery, 8 shillings in rent and the advowson of the church". Edward's great-grandson John in 1575 was in possession of the "Fish-house at Ashby, two ponds, lying on the East of the Manor, and the whord called the 'old whord', all of the manor of Ashby", together with several waters in Ashby called Fritton Fen. In 1577 he leased to one Godfrey all his fowling rights on Fritton Fen, and also on the Commons. An average year produced 100 brace of teal, and two brace of mullards. In the following year he leased out certain premises in Ashby excepting hunting, hawking, fishing and fowling. The canons, rarely more than 6, from St. Olaves Priory, had freedom to fish in Fritton Decoy and to use the (two) fish ponds or stews. In 1378 AD they already held two messuages (houses with yards), 42 acres of land, 2 acres of meadow, 3 acres of marsh, which were occupied by Edmund de Castleton and others. In 1534 AD a Deed was drawn up for a proposed marriage between George Jernegan son of John Jernegan, son of Edward and Elizabeth the daughter of Sir John Spelman, with a settlement of lands. A year later, John Jernegan granted lands in Ashby to Sir Thomas Bedyngfeld Knt in connection with this marriage.

In 1587 John Wentworth of Darsham purchased the Manor of Ashby with 4 messuages, 3 gardens, 50 acres of land, 20 of meadow, 40 of pasture, 10 of wood, 200 of furze and heath, 10 of marsh, and 10 of alder, with free foldage in Ashby, the advowson of the church, and 40 shillings a year from rents.

It was about this time that great changes took place in the siting of the village – from remains thrown up by the plough, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the medieval village lay round the church, with the Green on the east. Tiles have come to light in the field south and east of the church. To the east of the Church there is a row of some 5 pits, heavily wooded now and with water in the bottom two. At the turn of this century fish were being caught in them and it was thought at one time that these were fish ponds – in addition to the Fish stews on the south shore of the Decoy. However, they are more likely to have been marl or clay pits, in medieval use for the building of the houses round the church. Later they filled with water, and maybe then, they were in use as fish ponds.

16th CENTURY ENCLOSURE AND DISPUTE

Wentworth was an 'enclosure lord' – presumably the medieval village did not disappear because of the Black Death, but through general decay and population removals. In medieval times, it would appear that the main cluster of houses was round the church, with the Manor House on the present site of Manor Farm. We are grateful to Mr. Sam Long who until he died in 1975 was for nearly 40 years tenant of Manor Farm, for bringing to our notice the unearthing of tiles on the east and south sides of the church by the plough. In the early years of Wentworth's management, this clustered site was cleared probably because the tenements were in a state of terminal decay, and Wentworth wished to farm further south from the Manor. At the turn of the 17th century tenements were built along the western side of the track from the Manor Farm to the church, on the hill, and there may have been single tenements lower down in the same field along Market Lane.

Beech Farm was also central to this area – already of considerable importance with some 60 acres of more and with farm buildings also on the other side of the lane leading to the church, on the spot now occupied by stout beeches. This lane leading to the church had its origin in the junction with Blocka Hall Road at a point almost opposite the present entrance to the Scout Camp Site. From that junction, it led across the field (the right of way is still marked) across Market Lane to a junction at right angles with the road from the Manor Farm to the Church, and thence leading into Snake Lane and on to Lound. With modern surfacing the traffic is confined to Market Lane, Blocka Hall Road and Border Lane.

From earliest times, Ashby held but few people. In 1327 AD there were only 10 families, wealthy enough to be taxed, and among these was Robert Inglose, lord of the Manor, who paid



Beech Farm

his dues to the Prior of St. Olaves in fish from Fritton Fen (or Decoy as it came to be known). The Manor house of Robert was probably on the site of the present Ashby Hall Farm (Manor Farm) perhaps in origin it was the site of Aski's settlement (unless it be by the church); there would have been a good view at all points of the compass. The present farm-house, in its southern section, would probably date from the years after John Wentworth bought the manor from Henry Jernegan in 1587 AD – the Wentworths bought Somerleyton in 1604 and were there till 1672 AD and were great builders, notably of the fine Jacobean Hall at Somerleyton which preceded the present Somerleyton Hall (1845).

The records show that in the years after 1587, John Wentworth demolished all the tenements clustered round the church in the (old) village of Ashby, and he enclosed some 40 acres, over which there was a court action later. He ploughed them, sowed and reaped, and bought out those with independent rights. In 1596, Wentworth was still buying lands at Ashby from Thomas Moore. In 1590, Wentworth had leased to Thomazen Cowper for 10 years, the Fish-house, 2 ponds and a whorde called the Old Whorde, all on the south shore, and the waters of the Decoy.

In 1634 AD, when Charles I was levying the tax of Ship-money without the consent of Parliament, there were only 8 houses in Ashby liable for tax and by 1674 AD the date of the Hearth Tax, there were only four houses liable for the tax. In 1619 Sir John Wentworth, son of the original John, held a Warrener's Lodge, a Warren of conies (rabbits) and one whorde or hold of fish.

It would appear then, that the lost village of Ashby suffered the fate of so many villages in East Anglia – during the great Enclosure at the end of Elizabeth I's reign c. 1600. There was great poverty, and if the village had not suffered already from the Black Death or similar plagues

of the 14th century, or from fire, or both, the arrival of the Wentworths sealed its dilapidated doom with the removal of the tenants and workers from the old decayed houses round the church to new tenements nearer the Manor Farm, in a much more accessible position.

In 1664 Thomas Garneys, the grand-nephew of the original John Wentworth, became Lord of the Manor, as Sir John had died in 1651 without issue, his wife Anna dying in 1672. In 1672 Sir Thomas Allin, the bold sea-captain, boat owner, terror of the Dutch, and admiral of Charles II, bought the Manor from Garneys. Allin, originally a Lowestoft man, willed it to his descendants, and through the female line to the Anguish family, thence by inheritance to Lord Osborne, who sold it to Samuel Morton Peto in 1844. In 1863 AD it was again sold (with the Somerleyton Estate) to Sir Francis Crossley, the great grand-father of the present Lord Somerleyton, Lord of the Manor and Patron of Ashby Church.

Although the lands of Ashby changed ownership in 1844 the actual lordship of the Manor did not – for in 1875 Richard Henry Reeves was described as Lord of the Manor of Ashby, and in 1909 it was in the hands of his trustees, and remained so till 1935. No Court Rolls are known to be extant for Ashby, but they may be attached to the extensive Somerleyton Court Rolls extant for the later Wentworth period and now in the Ipswich Record Office.

In 1640 there arose a controversy in the Exchequer Courts over the type of local court empowered to hear offences on the commons. William Heveningham claimed that offences and wrongs committed on the commons and wastes of the parishes of Somerleyton, Ashby, Blundeston, Flixton, Corton, Newton, and Belton, had always been subject to the courts of the Half-Hundred, i.e. the Leet-courts served by juries. Ashby Common had lately been enclosed by the Wentworths, though formerly of the commons of the Half-Hundred of Lothingland. Witnesses gave their depositions at the Falcon at Beccles on the 24th March 1640 before Henry North, Richard Catelyn, and Thomas Brooke, Gents, and again on the 31st August 1641 before Sir Philip Parker, Richard Catelyn and Thomas Brooke. John Hagon (Hacon ?) claimed that offences on Ashby commons were punishable at Gorleston Court. John Mapleston deposed that such offences were heard in the Leet Courts, of which there were four held in Shrove Week (i.e. the first week in Lent), the Sheriff's Court held twice a year at Lowestoft for the Half-Hundred, the Chieffer's Court held once a year, and another yearly Court, the Court of Ancient Demesne. He also pointed out that in a previous legal action, R. Jetter won against John Wentworth proving that Flixton Commons, next to Blundeston, were subject to the Hundred Courts.

Thomas Lambe deposed that Wentworth had enclosed the Ashby Common some 38 years before, i.e. c. 1603 AD, claiming that the commons, wastes, and soil of the various manors belonged to the lords of those manors, who had felled trees and cut sweepage, granting to tenants the rights of commonage. Bartholomew Speer thought that Wentworth had enclosed Ashby Commons some 40 years before, i.e. c. 1601 AD, some 40 acres on Ashby Warren, which he ploughed, sowed, and reaped 'and ever since quietly enjoyed', and that both the Wentworths, like John Jernegan before them, as lords of the manor, had fished and fowled in Ashby Water, i.e. Fritton Decoy. Others deposed that Wentworth had a warrener's lodge, a Fish-house, both of which Wentworth had recently built, a warren of conies, and a whord or hold for fish, and that offences committed on the commons had been punished in the manor court. Edward Hacon deposed that the Wentworths, as the Jernegans before them, had always been thought to be the owners of the Ashby Commons, the warren, wastes, waters and whords and had the rights of fishing and fowling which went with the purchase of the Manor in 1587 AD; that the Lords of the Half-Hundred and the four Leet-Courts never fished or fowled on Ashby Water.

Court rolls of Somerleyton were evidenced as far back as Edward I, as well as more recent presentments of offences in the manor courts confirming Wentworth's right of commons, the warren, fishing and fowling, and the waters and whorde. Further evidence came from old rental documents for the manor of Ashby which detailed the rents paid for the Fish-house and the warren in the time of Elizabeth I, and also stated that the Great Ashby Water was anciently the lord's turbary, in which several tenants had rights besides common rights – that "by continually digging, there became great and deep pits, which in process of time were filled with water; that those tenants who had turbary there before, continued to have piscary (fishing rights)

when it decayed into water. "That the Wentworths having purchased all the tenements, also were owners of the water, not of the soil only, also the warren, not being parts of the commons". In Somerleyton, there was a similar dispute over the fishing rights at Wicker Well.

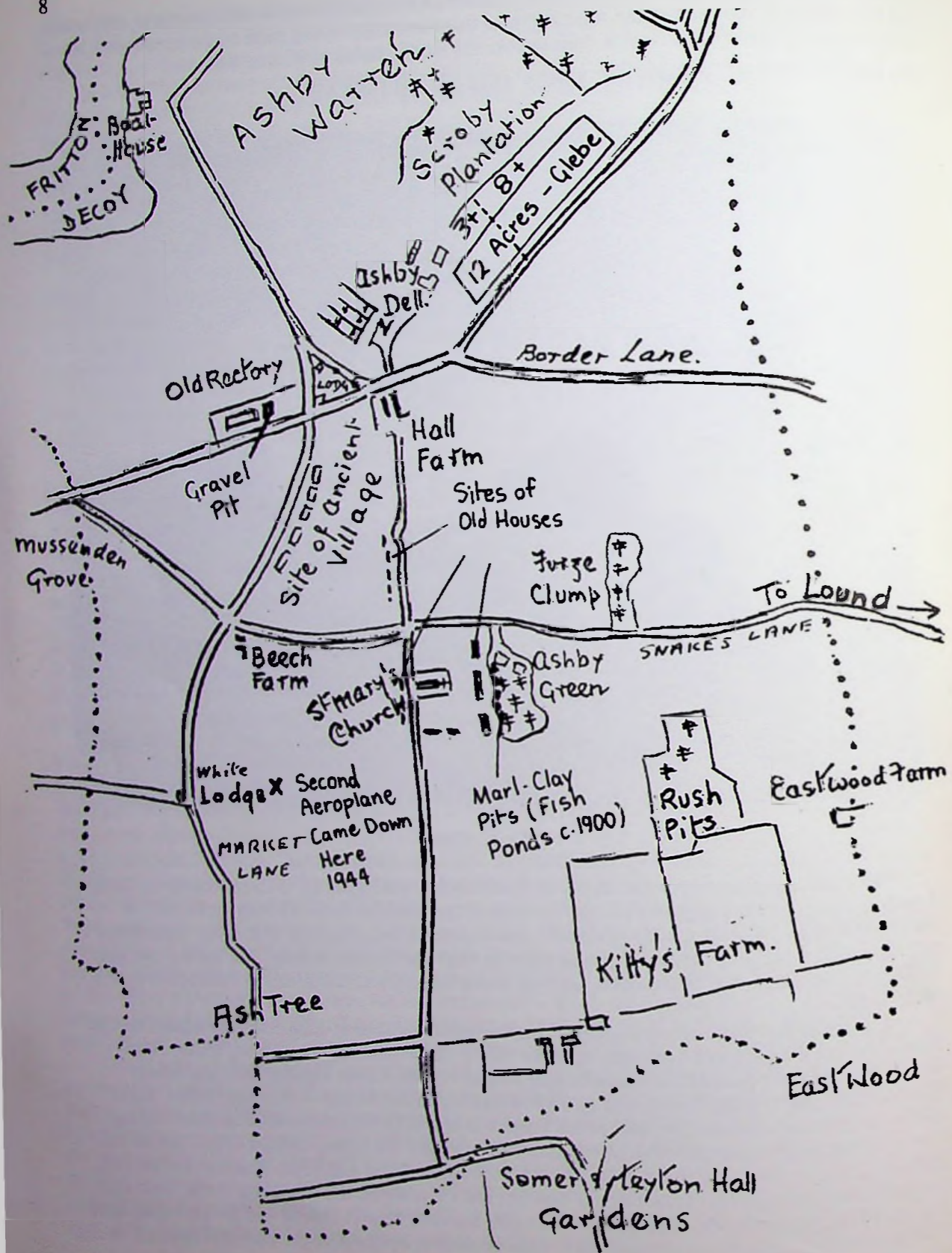
SURVEYS OF THE MANOR OF ASHBY 1615 AD and 1652 AD



Manor Farm

An interesting survey of the Manor of Somerleyton was begun in 1615 and based on Robert London's map of the previous year. By the time of the death of John Wentworth in 1651 it was found to be "almost wholly ruined", was expanded and corrected with many alterations (of tenants) in 1652 by John Martin and again in 1663 by Thomas Martin. The Survey and Map (1652) was divided into 18 precincts, and the parish of Ashby is contained in Precincts 9 (part), and 10-13.

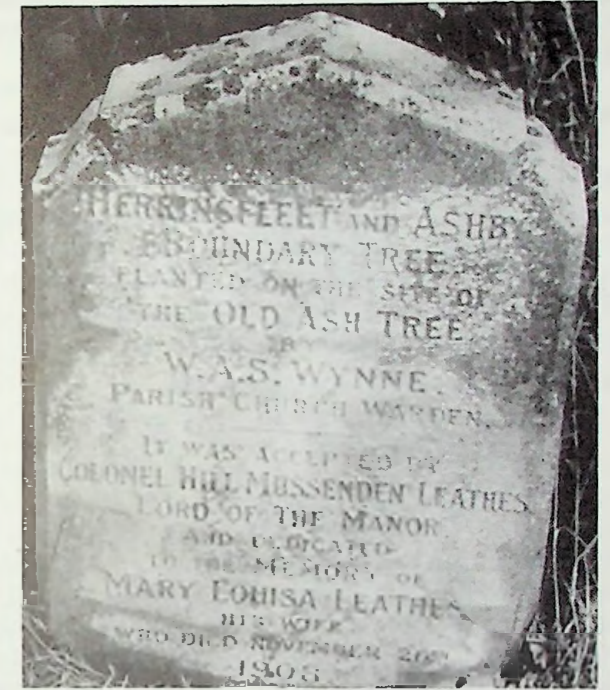
From the Rectory corner, Somerleyton, starting along Market Lane towards Ashby, on the right beyond the gardener's cottage, were the Ashby Closes, Ashby Long Close, Thirty Acre Piece, and almost opposite the White Lodge, Neaves Pightle, Grove Pightle, and then Beech Farm, occupied by John Davey, and also known as Tenement Moore – this had stables, barns, yards, garden and orchard. Beyond Beech Farm was arable to the corner. Behind this, looking towards Ashby Church, were the Lower Church Close, and the Upper Church Close, and to the right of these as you look towards the Church were Horse Close and Kilne Meadow. On the left from the Rectory Corner, Somerleyton, was Boyton's Pightle on the first bend in the road, and occupied by Roger Girling. Opposite on the right, between Neaves Pightle and Beech Farm, were five tenements, the remains of which have been unearthed by the plough. Tiles and smoked bricks,



unearthed, indicated that these were from the houses there. One of them was probably called "Dukmungers" with yard, orchard and hempland.



Ashby Boundary Tree & Stone



Ashby Boundary Stone

To the west of Boyton's Pightle were the Ashby Sheepwalks.

Along the track from Somerleyton Hall to Ashby Church there were first Powl's Close, then Thirlings Close, Foxburrow Close and Ashby Church set in Ashby Wood, with the Green and pits on the East. Behind these 'front-line' closes were Wicker Field (called later Rush Pits which only formed part of the Wicker Field), the Molehill Closes, and beyond that, Lound Close, Heath Pightle, and Gunton's Grove Pightle, extending further east to the Lound Road (Green Lane).

Looking up Snake Lane, towards Lound, there were on the left Home Close, with Elming Grove, Molehill Pightles with the Ashyard, Woodclose, and further along Snake Lane, still on the left, Hither Stony Land, Further Stony Land and behind them Great Peckers and Little Peckers - Peckers Lane was the road branching from Border Lane towards Browston.

Manor Hall Farm then called Hill Tenement "very well built and in very good repair" had a backhouse, malting house, barns, stables, yards, orchards, garden and hempland, all occupied by Nicholas Pope. This was probably the site mentioned at the turn of the 13th century as occupied by Geoffrey de Hil.

It would appear that the Rector of Ashby had "one pightle called Well Pightle, sometime the site of the parsonage of Ashby" and this site is marked on the 1652 map as in the corner of Little Pecker, so the site of the parsonage was on the right of Border Lane, on the last sharp bend about 1/2 mile along the road from Manor Hall Farm. The site was 1 acre 2 roods and 16 perches, and the present position is marked by a site about that size occupied by an old war-time hut, and a loading bay surrounded by scrub. There were at least two other houses along Border Lane. The Glebe, of 10 acres 1 rood and 10 perches, was on the left of the road leading to Browston, i.e. along Peckers Lane.

The 13th Precinct covers the part between Manor Hall Farm and Fritton Decoy - the large Warren and Sheepwalks with the Heath and Home Wood, and a large Bruery. Beyond Ashby Dell as it is now called, were Lordyke and Dewsmere. Between Lordyke and the "old crooked

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dyke" within the Warren stood the warrener's lodge, also called Dyke Lodge. At the eastern end of the Decoy, Manwade Bridge crossed the 'run' of water (a stream) linking the Decoy with the Lound Dam, and south of this bridge was Toms Wood, which was full of trees and part of the breuery. Priest Heath or Parsons Heath was also within the Breuery, on the south shore of the Decoy.

Principal tenants and holders were John Davey, Nicholas Pope, John Lambe, William Stafford, Widow Brice, John Ellis, with Lady Wentworth as the principal land owner.

The Fishhouse, with whordes and fishponds, was in the Warren at the Western end of the new Dyke, which was parallel to Fritton Decoy, with "small meare hamme" on the East. The whole area occupied 88 acres. The Fishhouse was not far from the Warrener's Lodge or Dyke Lodge, to the N.W. of it, and is marked on the 1652 map as standing on the shore of the Decoy at the junction of the New Dyke with the Decoy and almost opposite Fritton Hall on the opposite bank. Two or three houses were on the South shore at the Eastern end of the Decoy – in one of these, Miss Prettyman's grandfather was born.

THE FRITTON DECOY OR LAKE

For about 400 years Fritton Lake had decoys which were special areas for the catching of wild ducks, enticed from the central area of water into decoy pipes. These were covered curved channels, with a wide opening at the mouth, and becoming narrower inland. The whole decoy area was covered with a net stretched over hoops. The secret of capture lay in enticement of the ducks so far up the netting so that their retreat could be cut off. 'Frightening tactics' could always be employed by a man appearing at the open end, which would force the reluctant birds further into the decoy. The two methods of decoying or luring the ducks were called 'dogging' and 'feeding' or a mixture of both. At the east end of the Lake, there were still 8 such decoys in 1886 and between 1,000 and 2,000 would be considered a good season's catch in this part. At the west end of the Lake there were also decoys and up to 600 ducks have been caught there in one day.

In "dogging", a decoy dog, highly trained and obedient, is used to lead the ducks into the narrowing net in a kind of chase by the ducks. In feeding, tame ducks are used – this is a tricky business as it requires the decoy man to have expertise in knowing just how much grain to give the tame ducks to make the wild ones follow. If the tame ducks are too hungry they will rush up the pipe and leave the wild ones behind who will fail to follow; if they are not hungry they will not go up at all. If the wild ducks get too much grain, they will not follow the tame birds but



The Decoy

cluster round the food and stay. So the decoy man walks away from the birds along the side of the net to the tail of the pipe – from behind the screens he throws grain over the top of each screen in succession, not too much and not too little. The final position is reached when the ducks have been decoyed to the point of no-return, when their retreat can be made impossible.

THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY, ASHBY

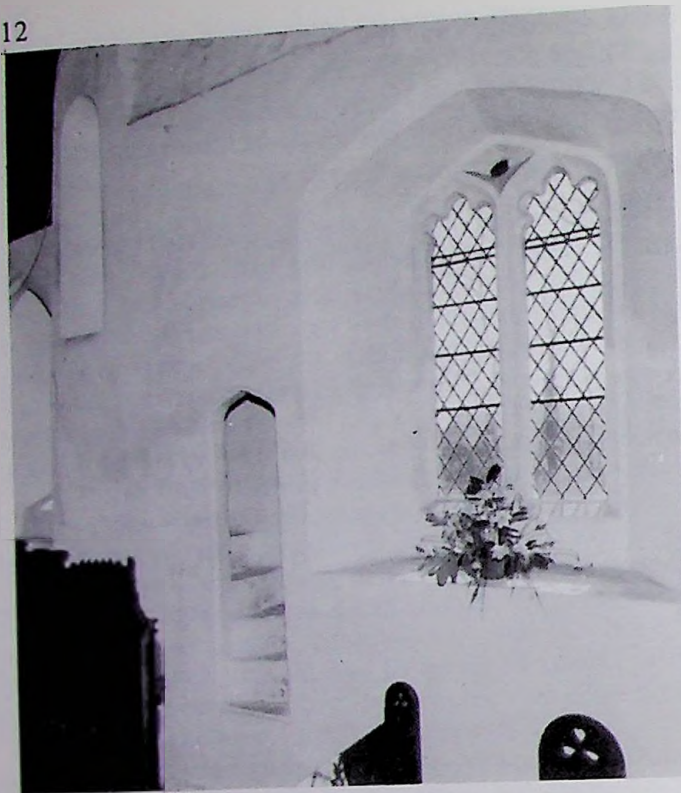
The church is impressive for its simple antiquity and draws an increasing number of visitors every year in spite of its isolated position in the middle of the fields. This 'barn church', with its nave having a very old single-framed roof and collar, goes back some three centuries. The roof has timbers which follow the shape of the branches from which they were cut, and is thatched. The nave beams are exposed beams underside and carrying the thatch, while the underside of the Chancel is boarded. The main right of way is through Manor Hall Farm, but there are three other routes, one from Beech Farm, originally a track for vehicles but now designated a footpath, another from Lound called Snake Lane, rough but useable by vehicles, and the fourth from Kitty's Farm and Somerleyton Hall. All four intersect just below the church, a medieval junction.

The first thing that will probably impress the visitor is the shape of the Tower – on a round base but for three-quarters of its height, octagonal in its exterior. The Tower is circular inside up to the Belfry sills. It is uncertain whether an original tower fell, or whether the 13th century just saw a change in the exterior construction, which is the more likely, since the inside of the Tower is circular up to the top. In the change of the exterior from round to octagonal, on the existing round base, quoins of early bricks were used. In the round base the early English vestry window was retained. The edges of the octagonal construction are set with continuous layers of interesting tiles, of early date. Belfry lancet windows 7 ft high and 3 ft wide were added, one for each face of the tower, and with a fan vaulted roof made in early 13th century bricks, with eight ribs. It is the only known vaulted roof on an East Anglian tower. This section may be three centuries later than the original octagonal construction.

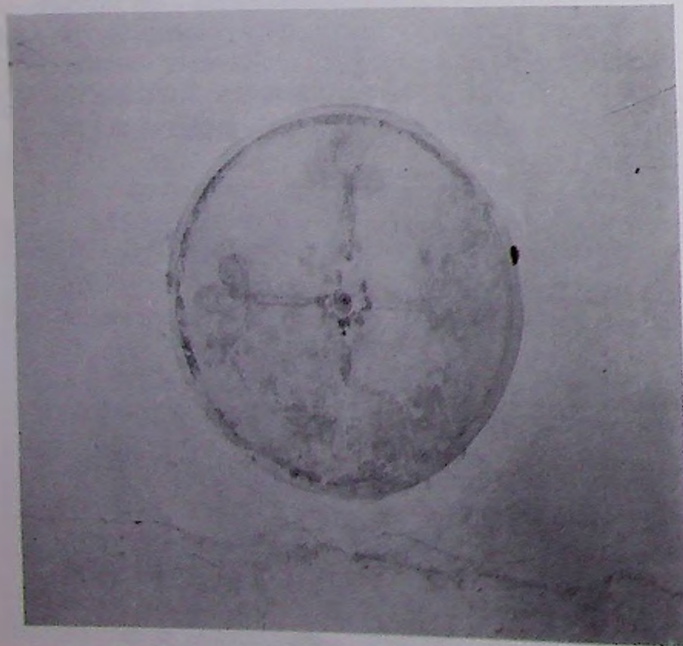
There are no fillets between the tower and the church and inside the east tower wall is circular over the tower arch, suggesting that both tower and nave were built at the same time, pre-Conquest, though expert opinion seems more or less unanimous that the nave is 13th century. In the south west corner of the nave is a large flint and a piece of sandstone – possibly indicating a Saxon quoin of flint and oddments. The upper doorway built or reframed in the 13th century – the great period of the Inglose family – contains 13th century bricks and is pointed. On the nave side, the doorway is pointed, with hood mould. There is no coursing in the flintwork outside, but there are again early bricks as there are at the base of the tower in the plinth, but these are later in date. The tower is about 50 ft high, with 2 ft thick and 2 ft high battlements at the corners only.

The thickness of the walls of the tower tapers from 2¾ ft at belfry height to just over 3 ft at the base. The external circle of the tower has a perfect tangent in the nave west wall. The upper doorway framed in the early 13th century with early bricks of that period is 6 ft by 2½ ft wide and 15 ft above the ground. The nave is 54 ft long and 14 ft wide, the Chancel 29 ft long and 16 ft wide, with a sanctuary area 12 ft from the east wall. The rood steps are to the south with the exterior wall filled in with flint and brick, to bring it into a straight line with the south wall, continuous for nave and chancel. This straightening of the wall at that point probably meant the removal of a 'bulge' at the point where the steps go up – or they had very small thin clergy in those days!

The inside walls of the Nave and chancel are all of plaster, dressed originally with limewash. The roof-line being all in one, the width of the Chancel is 2 ft greater than the Nave. The Chancel may be of 13th century date, with the Nave and round base of the tower pre-Conquest. There are no buttresses, nor porches north and south. There is part of a scratch dial on the left hand jamb of the south door, and two votive crosses, one on each jamb. There are three consecration crosses, two in the nave on opposite walls, and one in the north wall of the Chancel, all in central positions lengthwise. In the centre of the consecration crosses are incisions into the wall – points at which the rush lights were pushed in, to give light in the darker days.



Rood Steps



Consecration Cross

THE BELL

A medieval will states "1472 Thomas Kees bequeathed to the new bell if they can get it within 4 years" – this was recast in 1859 and inscribed "J. Warner and Sons, London". J.J. Raven in his "Church Bells of Suffolk" (1890) lists the Ashby Bell as having no inscription; the Returns of 1553 record "Great Bells ii" while Davis writing in 1829 said there was no bell!

Following extensive repairs to the Tower in 1924, widely supported by generous donations and numerous events and by a handsome donation from Lord Somerleyton, there followed in 1957 restoration work on the tower roof and bell chamber. By this time it was reported that the tower and belfry were leaking badly and were full of rotten and ancient timbers, so that it had become dangerous even to toll the bell. Under expert direction, but mainly through direct labour by Mr. W. Hudson and his assistants, Mr. Ivan Emmerson and Mr. Fred Butcher, mostly in their spare time, the rotten timbers were removed, but even in their decayed state still showed the marks of the handsaw in the oak felled probably in Ashby Wood some 700 years before. Messrs. Dawber and Townsley, the roofing experts, were called in to advise. The above workers laid a thin layer of concrete mixed with waterproof cement. This was covered with wire mesh reinforcement and a further 2 inches of waterproofed concrete applied. This was treated with compound, and a heavy gauge felt covering was cemented all over with a cold mastic.

The bell was dismantled and lowered to the first floor with pulleys fixed precariously to the only 'sound beam'. The old floor joists and the bell cradle were so

riddled with rot and woodworm as to be unsafe, so all was removed. A new floor was built. A steel cradle, welded in sections, and made to bolt to two 12 ft steel girders each weighing about 1½ cwt. was made in the Manor Farm workshops, again mostly in spare time. The steel girders were hoisted into the belfry and cemented in place diagonally across the tower, and the cradle bolted in position. Mr. Harry Wilson, estate foreman for three generations of the Crossley family, made a new woodstock for the bell, and after this had been fitted the bell was hoisted and re-hung.

ASHBY IN WARTIME

In a book written by Lt. Colonel J. Baker, B.A., entitled "Our Volunteer Army", there is a record of Thomas Moore of Ashby, a Suffolk Yeoman of 1597 and also of a Thomas Moore of 1623. Both were members of the Suffolk Yeomanry which later won honour at the Battle of Gibraltar in 1793 and were thereafter called the Loyal Suffolk Hussars. This suggests a long tradition of service to King and Country by Ashby people.

To the left of the gate as you enter the churchyard is the memorial stone to the 7 USAAF airmen who were killed nearby in the last war. The first five were of the 100th Bomb Group stationed at Thorpe Abbots, nicknamed the "Bloody Hundreds". A number of Flying Fortresses set off on the early morning of May 7th, 1944, for a raid on Berlin. One caught fire before it reached the east coast. Several dozen signal flares in cartridges stored in the top turret compartment, for some unknown reason, started to explode and set on fire the entire front of the plane. Though the top turret gunner tried to put out the flames, the cabin was filled with smoke. Moving to the forward hatch to make his escape he found it blocked by the body of a man whose parachute was outside the plane. Five of the crew escaped through the gun turret while the pilot kept the plane steady, but the remaining five, including the pilot and co-pilot, died in the crash and explosion nearby. Their names were:—

1st Lt. Ralph W. Wright

Lt. Jack W. Raper

Lt. Richard Curran

Lt. Carl A. Herrmann

The second two names:—

Lt. Russel P. Judd

F/P. Louis S. Davis

commemorate two men from the American 5th Emergency Squadron based at Halesworth. The second crash occurred on the 8th April 1945 when they collided in two USAAF P47 Thunderbolts over Fritton Lake, whilst either returning from an air-sea rescue mission or just practising aerial manoeuvres. One went into the Lake and parts were recovered later from the Lake in 1971 and were exhibited at Fritton Hall, the other crashed in the field opposite White Lodge, fragments being scattered over a wide area.

From the recovery from Fritton Lake, the port wing was presented to the USAAF Museum at Wright Patterson Airforce base, Ohio, where it is on exhibition.

During the 1940 invasion threat, it was reported that the expanse of Fritton Lake was sufficient for up to 70 troop carrying seaplanes to 'land' on the Lake. To prevent this, wire hawsers were fixed across the Lake at approximately 70 yard intervals. In 1942-4 the Lake was requisitioned for the testing of amphibious tanks (Valentines) and crew training. On the south side of the Lake was an underground hide-out in which troops were trained in harassment tactics in case the Germans landed in these parts.

In 1969 while on a midnight hike soon after their troop was formed, some Yarmouth Scouts came upon the USAAF Memorial and the next day the troop band went to Ashby and played the Last Post – a custom which these 5th St. Mary's Sea Scouts have kept up every Remembrance Sunday since, complete with Union Flag, the Scout Flag, and now the Stars and Stripes, subsequent to the recognition of their loyal gesture. The presentation of the Stars and Stripes was made possible in 1978 by Col. Mark R. Richards of the USA Air Force and chief of the community relations division of the Office of Information in Washington D.C. In March 1976 Col. Stephen B. Hinderliter of the 3rd Air Force HQ at Mildenhall visited the troop in St. Mary's Lane to prepare an article for future publication of this special ceremony by the Scouts in the USAAF glossy journal, "The Airman".



American Air Force Memorial

The top of the brick chimney stack on the north outside wall was removed in 1950, the stack itself being removed in 1975 and the thatch made good. In 1975 the church was connected to mains electricity, the old oil lamps being preserved, for general effect.

THE CHURCH INTERIOR

Descending by three steps and entering the church through the chamfered doorway with pointed arch, you will see a square font with faint arcading round the outside, of Norman character apparently of Purbeck marble, on a single shaft, with four supporting carved wooden pillars of the 15th century and on a raised plinth, though the design of the central column with four disengaged shafts is typical of the 13th century. Traces of holes at opposite corners of the bowl might suggest that at one time there was an hinged cover with padlock to prevent the superstitious use of the baptismal water. An injunction of Archbishop Edmund in 1236 required that all fonts be covered and locked.

Writing in the local press on October 1st, 1927, Mr. Gerald H. Lawson recorded that Drury in 1824 mentioned that the churchyard had about 8 memorial slabs and the Revd. J.W. Darby in 1832 mentions headstones to Jenner (2), Batchelor, Thorpe, Lee and the above Sherwood. In 1927 Lawson mentions 33 such stones but also laments the condition of the

To the right of the churchyard path is the Leggett memorial, the story of another tragedy:—

“James Leggett son of John and Hannah Leggett died 24th July 1834 aged 16.
I drove a team the horse was young
To manage him I tried,
A bramble cross'd my path, I fell,
The wheels they prest my side.
I then bid farewell to all my friends and fears
So now dear friends wipe away your streaming tears,
Great were my sufferings time I remained
But the Lord soon eas'd me of my pains.
So now farewell my tender parent dear
For we shall meet when Christ appear.
Weep not for me I pray
Because I died so young.
The fewer years, the fewer sins
For God's will must be done.”

On the outside south wall of the Church is a modern recutting of an old stone:—

“Sarah Sherwood ye wife of John Sherwood who lived together 36 years 8 months 2 weeks. She departed this life May ye 19th 1730 between 1 and 2 o'clock in ye morning in ye 66 year of her age.”

churchyard in July of that year — “a veritable wilderness, the grass and hemlock in some places being 4 ft. high; the memorial stones were all buried by this growth — if someone would undertake to keep this hallowed part in order it would be a very good thing, and the beech, elm, and oaks which surround the churchyard form a picturesque setting to it.” Mr. Lawson can rest in peace — this is now done — through the energy of Mr. Arthur Prettyman of Beech Farm and others like Mr. Bertie Butcher of the Lodge, so that not only is the churchyard clean-mowed, but extra trees including chestnut have been planted as part of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations and to fill the gaps caused through trees falling in the two severe gales in the early months of 1975 and 1977.

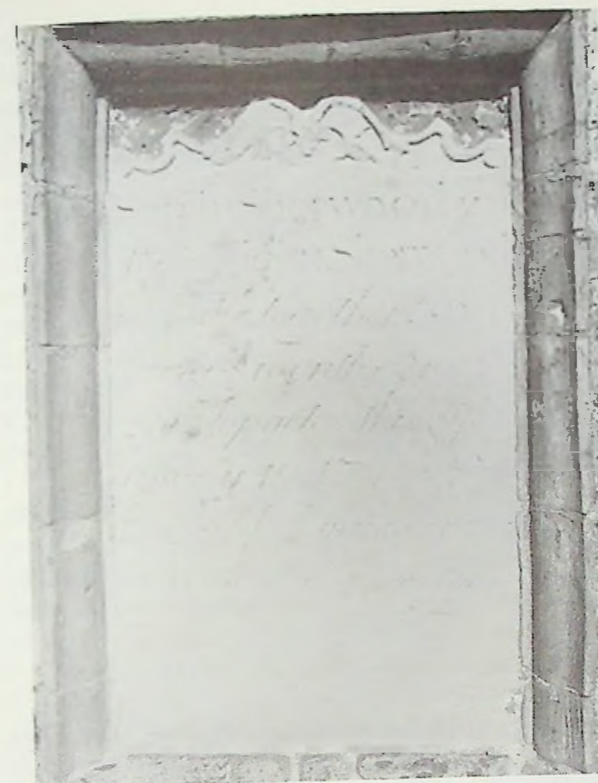
Inside the church on the north wall of the nave is the War Memorial, one of two submitted in 1920 — though Ashby has a small population, it made its proud contribution and sacrifice in the 3 men who gave their lives:—

“To
The Glory of God
and in
Grateful Memory of
The men of Ashby
who fell in the
Great War 1914-1918.
AD.

J.A. Boyce, Royal Naval Div.
Pte. A. Pearman, Royal Warwick Regt.
Pte. J. Pearman, 6th Suffolk Regt.
“Their names liveth for evermore”.

Opposite the entrance to the church and in the North Wall is a doorway, but now blocked up and used as a cupboard. This was sometimes called the “Devil's doorway” to allow the devil to escape after his exorcism at baptism, but more likely to allow for the re-entry of processions and to provide an entrance for the seignory of the parish. To your left, above the tower door, is the blocked-up pre-Reformation Sanctus bell window. At the elevation of the host at mass, the bellringer would pull the bell three times, one at the elevation and one each at the genuflections.

J.L. Clemence's “Lectures on the churches of Lowestoft and Lothingland” (1858-1860) contains a plan of Ashby



Sherwood Memorial



The Font



The Nave and Chancel, looking East

church with measurements. This plan shows seven slabs in the planum of the Chancel, two of them being the wedge shaped crusaders' slabs, of the 12th century with crosses raised on greses, now near the altar on either side of it. They were probably moved there during the 1880/3 period of restoration. Another slab, also of wedged shape, was at the entrance to the chancel through the screen. It is impossible to identify them, but we could bear in mind those two doughty fighters Henry and Robert Inglose. The pulpit is shown on the south side of the nave, this side of the easternmost window. In the nave there were shown two more wedged shape stones, and an oblong stone down the centre aisle. In 1865 the church was resealed and repaired with a new pulpit with ogee-headed panels, and a reading desk. Presumably this is the present pulpit on the north side at the chancel step. Six years previously in 1859 the tower and chancel were repaired, and a new east window inserted, the original 13th century east window up till then having been blocked in, at least in part, with masonry. Two of the windows in the Chancel are of the early English lancet type c. 1200 AD, while the others are debased examples of the perpendicular style.

In 1883 there was added the new oak reredos, lectern, oak choir stalls, and oak rails in the sacrarium or sanctuary. Suckling in his "Antiquities of Suffolk", writing c. 1848, refers to "the entire fabric bearing marks of apathy and neglect", but it appears that under Charles Hillyer (whose stone is in the middle of the car park) and Charles John Steward, this was put right with some energy. The chancel was rethatched in 1893. The nave was rethatched in 1929 in reed, and the cost was met by Savile, Lord Somerleyton.

At the north-east corner to the left of the altar is a stone shelf on an early English bracket – either a base for a statue (St. Mary ?) or for Exposition, or as a credence shelf for the bread and wine though it would appear to be a bit high for that, unless they had a giant server! In the south wall is a simple arched early English piscina with triform head and edging columns, to take away the unused water after the ablutions in the Eucharist. Beside the piscina is a dropped window sill sedilia (seat) for use by the celebrants and ministers during the Eucharist.

The 'Canterbury chair' in the sanctuary was given by Mrs. Gerald Halsey, wife of the rector of Somerleyton (1926-1946) in memory of her father Canon Arthur Fitzgerald Evans.

The seating in the nave is of simple (portable) benches with open backs, but there are only poppy heads on the heavy Victorian choir stalls.

MURALS

An entry in Keyser's "List of Buildings having mural decorations" (1883) has:—

"Ashby Church Suffolk

- i. Last Judgement
- ii. St. Catherine
- iii. St. William of Norwich
- iv. History of St. Wulstan.

All covered with a fresh coat of whitewash".

Early in 1973 Mrs. Eve Baker, one of the country's foremost conservators of wall paintings and currently working on various cathedrals, visited Ashby Church, subsequent to the Rector's request for such a visit to the General Synod's Council for Places of Worship. Her report was favourable towards the possibility of finding these murals and in due course a second visit will be made to plan a more detailed examination. There seems to have been little disturbance of the fabric of the church over the past five centuries, so we hope their survival is something waiting to be discovered. This is a job for the experts.

The **Last Judgement** was a popular subject for murals in the medieval period and they abound during the 15th century. The subject being Christ in Majesty, with an assembly of the nations, attendant angels and devils, waiting for the sentences, on humans!

St. Catherine of Alexandria was noble born, of exceptional learning and skilled in rhetoric; she was martyred in the early 4th century and from the 10th century was among the most widely venerated of women saints. As a Christian, while quite young, she protested to the Emperor against the proliferation of idols at Alexandria as part of the State religion. She was



The Piscina

confronted by 50 philosophers in public debate but she demolished their arguments and they were burned alive for failing to answer her. She refused to deny her faith or to marry any of the host of state officials who came to woo her, and she ended up in prison. In her cell she was fed by a dove. Later an attempt was made to break her on a spiked wheel (the Catherine wheel) but it fell to pieces and she was unhurt. There was a crop of converts and these were in due course beheaded. Finally she was beheaded too, after calling down blessings on all those who should remember her in the future. Her body was translated to Mt. Sinai where the great orthodox monastery was built and her shrine shown.

William of Norwich (1144 AD) – the mutilated body of this boy was found in a wood outside Norwich and five years later it was alleged that he was the victim of Jewish ritual murder. The authorities refused the story but the anti-Semitism of the people venerated him as a martyr. The story is similar to that of St. Hugh of Lincoln, who was 9 years old and found down a well. Scores of Jews were tortured and hanged on the charge of complicity in his crucifixion. There is a further similar story

on the Continent – St. Simon a child of 2½ at Trento in 1475. His cult was abolished in 1965.

St. Walstan of Bawburgh – near Norwich, a local saint. Born in the 10th century, he rejected his parents' wealth preferring poverty and simplicity from an early age. At the age of 12, after a vision, he left home and became a farm labourer at Taverham and remained there the rest of his life. Before he died, he gave instructions that his body should be placed in a cart and the oxen left unguided. They wandered south and arrived at Bawburgh where he was buried. His well there became a place of pilgrimage, and with the offerings from the pilgrims the present church was built in the 14th century and dedicated to St. Mary & St. Walstan, patron Saint of stockmen and farmworkers.

There is little evidence of any stained glass – just one small piece in the top of a nave window.

BISHOP REDMAN'S VISITATION

This diocesan visitation was held at Snape Church on the 9th November 1597 AD, and required presentments from every parish.

This recorded that at Ashby "Mr. William Melling, Rector, hath another benefice called Somerleyton (sic). He teacheth a publique school in Somerleyton". No further comment is made, on the condition of the church, the need for a surplice (in these Puritan days), tables of Commandments or Degrees of Marriage, or lack of a Prayer Book or Bible or box for the "almes" for the poor. There is no presentment of anyone for non-attendance at the parish church or communion, nor was there a lack of 'funt or beere'. There was not even a comment on the parson, that regular substitute for baiting – what a golden opportunity lost! Poor Mr. Yowle, Rector of Pakefield (Pakefield)! He was indeed the butt of a full reporting session. It was said by the churchwardens that "he is a fighter, brawler, and contentious". Apparently

a man of some spirit, if not venom, for he was said to carry out this brawling in the church at Pakefield with a Mr. Wincoppe, also a parson. At Somerleyton, there were shortcomings – they needed a 'surplesse', while Herringfleet really did complain that their poor parson (curate) was so poorly paid, the church wall in Herringfleet was decayed, and the people rarely if ever had sermons or homilies. Herringfleet also lacked a Table of Degrees of Marriage – and still does!

It would appear that everyone was satisfied with the way things went at Ashby and had no complaints either of the parson or the residents. Being out of the way, it probably avoided too stringent an inspection by Redman or his officers. The churchwardens were probably an easy-going pair and not too demanding!

The outcome of the Visitation was rather severe however on Mr. William Melling as Rector of Somerleyton – he had applied for a licence to continue the public school at Somerleyton but this was dismissed, the appeal falling on deaf ears. Bishop Redman was stiffening up discipline against extra-ministerial occupations eg. the parsons who farmed at Nacton and Boughton received a purple warning. The Rector of Glemham was rebuked for teaching a school in his rectory, while the incumbents of Cromer and Hardwick awaited Redman's harsh rebuke. The Vicar of Besthorpe and Rector of Gunton actually found themselves in court for teaching and running schools. Later, canon law permitted curates with a master's degree so to teach, but incumbents not so. Melling did however receive a licence to preach in 1604 – a bit late in the day, but perhaps a sop to his disappointment. If he had not been licensed before, Ashby had had a surfeit of homilies, those bastions of Puritan piety. The fact that he received such a licence to preach was probably the sequel to the policy of the new squire – John Wentworth (senior) who was bent on removing the homilies as a regular and severe diet.

MEDIEVAL NEGLECT

In the Norwich Consistory Court for the 8th July 1505 AD depositions by William Copuldyke, who had been Rector of Ashby since 1500, were made against William Beyham, formerly Rector of Ashby for 12 years from 1487, for default in repairs to the rectory of Ashby (then in Border Lane). Copuldyke's case was supported by Peter Nobes, resident of the parish for some 30 years and then over 60 years of age, and by Adam Brikmonger also resident of the parish for more than 30 years, and by William Nodge, a young man of 25 who though resident for less than 2 years had lived in Somerleyton for 12 years. Their depositions were supported by John Dewper, 46, who had lived in Ashby for 13 years or more, and stated that by the negligence and fault of Beyham, the end of the barn of the Rectory had fallen to the ground, and that what remained of the barn had been deliberately demolished and the materials removed to his Rectory at Lound. Not only had he failed to keep the chancel of the church in sufficient repair, but he had failed to repair the pigeon house and other houses belonging to the rectory. Beyham was declared guilty of neglect.

The Rectory was valued at £6 in the King's Book and at £16 in the period 1735-1757. It was augmented by Queen Anne's Bounty. The annual tithes income of the benefice in the 19th century was £208.

THE RECTORY

Happier days, however, came in 1869 when the new Rectory was built in white brick, on a site formerly occupied by two cottages on the right of the hill leading from the Lodge to Herringfleet Hall lodge. A magnificent house, it was well built and on an admirable site. In addition to the house and laid-out garden there was a stable, gig-house, and piggeries. The land of 2 acres 2 rood and 32 perches was purchased in 1868 from Sir Francis Crossley, squire of Somerleyton and Ashby, with £600 borrowed from Queen Anne's Bounty and repaid in 1898. The Rectory, built by the Revd. Charles Hillyer for £1,400, ceased to be a Rectory in 1872 on the consolidation of the two livings of Somerleyton and Ashby, the Revd. Charles John Steward having been Rector of Somerleyton since 1866. Presumably the consolidation was on the death of Charles Hillyer on March 9th 1872 at the early age of 44. His address was given as Ashby Rectory. Subsequent curates in the house were the Revd. Edmund Walters in 1875,

the Revd. Walter Goodliffe in 1885, the Revd. John Norris Dredge in 1896, but after 1898 there was no curate. The Rectory was sold in 1927, to Lord Somerleyton, and again in 1970.



Ashby Old Rectory

THE REGISTERS

These date from 1553, the spelling Askeby persisting till 1653 and Haskeby in 1726. The oldest register contains 38½ pages and was copied out for the period 1553 – 1760 by John Bellward who was rector 1757 – 1792. He was also rector of Burgh Castle (1753-92). Gillingwater says of him “his literary attainments merited and preserved the respect of the learned”. Bellward also served the curacy of Herringfleet.

The last ‘mark’ in the Marriage Register was made in 1899.

The Burial Register of 1813 contains a table of fees of that date; in brackets are the 1976 figures:—

Rector		Clerk’s fee	
Marriages:—			
Publishing banns	2-6d (£1-50)	Banns	2-0d (50p)
Service	5-0d (£8-00)		
By Licence	10-6d (£8-00)	By Licence	5-0d (£4-00)
Burials:—			
Service in Church	2-6d (£5-00)	Passing bell	1-0d
At the grave only	1-0d (£3-00)	Digging grave and attendance	5-0d
Head and Footstone	12-0d (£9-00)	Carrying bier	1-0d

Rector		Clerk’s fee	
Burials (continued):—			
Brick grave	10-6d		
For person who died outside the parish	£1-1-0d	For person who died outside the parish	14-0d
Churching:—	1-0d (nil)		6d (nil)
Duplicate of an entry in the Parish Register	2-6d (£1-25 at times of original entry: £2-50 at other times).		

Signed: E. Thurlow,

Rector of Ashby.

Today the Church Council also receives fees to help in the maintenance of the church and churchyard, and the Rector’s fees virtually go to the Church Commissioners as they are part of his minimum or standard stipend.

Under the entries for 1685, Mr. Thomas Bretton, Clerk, was drowned in Ashby Water 24th April and was buried at Ashby 26th April.

ASHBY PARISH MEETINGS

These began on the 28th November 1894, the first chairman being the Revd. Norris Dredge of Trinity College, Dublin, who occupied Ashby Old Rectory as curate to the Revd. C.J. Steward. Overseers were appointed in 1895. There has never been a parish council in Ashby. In the Parish Meeting Book there are gaps between 1924 and 1946, and between 1951 and 1973, with entries for 1933 and 1937 only. Under the 1974 reorganisation there is now a grouped Parish Council for Somerleyton and Ashby.

POPULATION

1801	42	
1811	39	Inhabited houses - 7; Families - 7; Houses building - None; Houses uninhabited - None; All employed in agriculture. Males - 24; Females - 15.
1841	53	
1851	50	White’s Gazetteer comments, “One farm house and a few scattered cottages: John Arman, farmer and grazier at Ashby Hall Farm”.
1861	70	
1871	95	In 1875 R.H. Reeve was Lord of the Manor. Lady Crossley the chief landowner.
1881	110	Thomas Coleby, farmer at Ashby Hall, surveyor, overseer, guardian.
1891	88	Mr. Thompson, farmer, Ashby Hall.
1901	89	Mr. John Teesdale, farmer, Ashby Hall.
1911	107	Mr. James Rolfe, farmer, Ashby Hall (1908-25).
1921	87	Chief Crops: wheat, barley, turnips. From 1925-31 Ashby Hall Farm was occupied by Mr. Thomas Lang, and after 1931 by Mr. & Mrs. Sam Long. Up to 1935 Richard Henry Reeve’s Trustees were empowered by his will to act as Lord of the Manor.
1971	49	

THE DELL

The houses in Ashby Dell were built by Sir Samuel Morton Peto of Somerleyton Hall in 1846 for the benefit of farmworkers on the Ashby Hall Farm. Over the years many families have lived in the Dell, each contributing in their own way to preserving and maintaining the lovely rural setting. They tended their pretty cottage gardens and their children played happily in a natural safe playground. They all helped with the upkeep of the Church as it was the people of the Dell who cleaned the Church, did what repairs they could to the fabric, tended the oil lamps and kept the gravestones and Churchyard tidy.



The Dell

Ashby Dell was also well known for the Donkey Close which was situated behind the Old Rectory. Here the donkeys were kept, to fetch and carry the washing from as far away as Lowestoft. Coppers were lit at 5 a.m., lines were full of washing and deliveries were made each day. Two cast iron coppers still remain in the wash houses of the Dell Cottages.

Up the steep little hill out of the Dell, is the Hall Farm occupied by Mr. & Mrs. Sam Long for forty years. For nearly thirty years Mr. Long was a hard working Churchwarden and Treasurer of the Church. He died in 1975. Along Market Lane, towards Somerleyton, is Beech Farm occupied by the Prettyman family for nearly two hundred years. The family were, and still are, staunch workers for the Church. The house was originally two cottages and is at least three hundred years old.

THE GLEBE

The gift of the Glebe to the benefice appears to date from the time of Robert de Inglose Knt. Lord of the Manor of Ashby, who made the gift of land to Robert de Mundford (1333-1354). The possession of glebe lands has a long history – before a Saxon thegn or a later Norman nobleman and landowner, could establish an ecclesiastical parish in sole cure he first had to provide a suitable house for the priest and an adequate freeholding or glebe to support him. Sometimes the parson farmed his own glebe. The Bishop would not consecrate the church or institute to the living till he was satisfied that adequate provision had been made.

In the case of Ashby, the Glebe was as follows:—

- i. 12 acres adjoining Silent Lane (or Peckers Lane, or Browston Lane as it is now sometimes called, or Upper Market Lane) were sold in 1906 to Sir Savile Brinton Crossley whose land abutted on the East, West, and South of the Glebe.
- ii. Just over 8 acres in the Tunstall Marshes – sold in 1968. Originally acquired in 1789, 3 rood 18 perches of it was sold in 1886 to the Great Eastern Railway Company for £169-13-11d.

Rectors

Galfridus de Inglose	1312
Robert de Aldeby	1327
John de Baldeswell	—
Robert de Mundford	1333
Petra Alley	1354
Simon de Bauburgh	1361
Stephen Halke de Weston	1390

John Holm	1394
Richard Brentingby	1394
William Keyn	1399
William Craneworth	1408
Richard Eleyne	1416
William Coe	—
Walter Barford	1429
William Smyth	1433
Galfridus Halle	1437
John Wellarsey	1458
John Coker	1465
John Raveningham	1467
William Beyham	1487
Radulphus Blomfield	1506
William Cokke	1510
William Copuldyke	1511
John Fale	1523
Hugo Haughworth	1524
Arthur Trythe	1534
Thomas Pydcoke	1536
Thomas Wytton	1547
William Melling	1553
John Brinsley A.M.	1632

(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1632-1644).

Ed. Barber 1644

(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1644-1661).

Edward Mihill 1661

(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1661-1689. Inducted by the Revd. William Bacon of Pakefield at Somerleyton, and died on the 21st Feb. 1689 at Somerleyton. Buried in Ashby Chancel 24th Feb. 1689. His wife Dorothy was buried 24th Nov. 1679 also at Ashby).

Christopher Earcherd M.A. 1690

(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1690-1706. Inducted 16th Sept. 1690, he was buried in Ashby Chancel 1st Dec. 1706).

Robert Baldwin A.M. 1707

(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1707-1729. Inducted by Thomas Skeet, Rector of Fritton, on the 25th April 1707).

Abraham Shewell A.M. 1726

(Inducted at Ashby 2nd Dec. 1726 by Robert Baldwin, Rector of Somerleyton. Licensed to Herringfleet 1718).

Patrons

John de Inglose
Robert de Inglose
Robert de Inglose
Robert de Inglose
John de Inglose
Joan, relict (widow) of above
Hugo Falstoffe (High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, 1390).

The Bishop by lapse

Thomas Edener Esq.

Henry de Inglose

Henry de Inglose

Henry de Inglose

Henry de Inglose

Henry de Inglose Knt.

Henry de Inglose Knt.

Henry de Inglose Knt.

Robert Inglose

Robert Inglose

Robert Inglose

Eleanor, relict of Will Jernegan

Henry Blomfield Esq.

The Bishop by lapse

(also Rector of Somerleyton in 1506)

Mary Jernegan. Relict.

Margery Jernegan. Relict.

John Jernegan

John Jernegan

John Jernegan

John Jernegan

John Wentworth Knt.

John Wentworth Knt.

Lady Anna Wentworth

(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1661-1689. Inducted by the Revd. William Bacon of Pakefield at Somerleyton, and died on the 21st Feb. 1689 at Somerleyton. Buried in Ashby Chancel 24th Feb. 1689. His wife Dorothy was buried 24th Nov. 1679 also at Ashby).

Lady Anne Wentworth

(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1690-1706. Inducted 16th Sept. 1690, he was buried in Ashby Chancel 1st Dec. 1706).

Sir Thomas Allin

(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1707-1729. Inducted by Thomas Skeet, Rector of Fritton, on the 25th April 1707).

Sir Thomas Allin

(Inducted at Ashby 2nd Dec. 1726 by Robert Baldwin, Rector of Somerleyton. Licensed to Herringfleet 1718).

Rectors		Patrons
John Bellward A.B.	1757	Sir Thomas Allin
Samuel Burrough M.A.	1793	The King on the lunacy of Sir Thomas Allin
George Anguish M.A.	1803	The King
Edward Missenden Love	1810	The King
(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1817-1866).		
Ed. Thurlow	1817	George Anguish, Clerk.
Charles Hillyer	1859	Charles Lucas Esq.
Charles John Steward	1872	Charles Lucas Esq.
Thory Gage Gardiner	1897	
Clement Willoughby Bean M.A.	1898	Sir Savile Brinton Crossley
(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1898-1926).		
Gerald Halsey M.A.	1926	Sir Savile Brinton Crossley
(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1926-46).		
Robert Feast M.A.	1946	Lord Somerleyton, 2nd Baron
(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1946-53).		
Bernard Bean B.A.	1953	Lord Somerleyton, 2nd Baron
(Also Rector of Somerleyton 1953-69).		
Dr. Edward C. Brooks	1969	Lord Somerleyton, 3rd Baron
(Rector of Elsing with Bylaugh 1952-57. Rector of St. Cuthbert's, Thetford, 1957-69, also Rural Dean of Thetford, 1958-68).		

The longest serving rector was William Melling, 1553-1631, 78 years! His first entry in the Old Register is the marriage of William More and Alice Scottow, 20th June 1553, his last the burial of Nicholas Thirling on May 3rd 1632. In the copy made by Bellward, the latter writes '*hactenus Gulielmus Mellinge in tabulas retulit*'. If Melling was the canonical age of 24 when instituted, he died 102 years of age, at least.

Norton Nicholls, minister, appears to be omitted from the above list. He appears in the register for 1783 and continues till c. 1801. Joseph Jenner was his churchwarden during the same period, and Nicholls signs the Returns year by year. He was Rector of Lound 1767 to 1810, and of him White in his "Suffolk", 1844, records "Herringfleet Hall. The pleasure grounds were designed by the late Revd. Norton Nicholls and contain a rich variety of thorns, hollies and flowering shrubs." Nicholls also landscaped the 90 acres of Blundeston Lodge (now the prison).

A leaf has been cut out of the Register at 1702.

Under the entry for 1760 there is reference to calling the banns 'till a marriage be bought'.

THE CHURCH RATE AND OVERSEERS' BOOK

This covered the clerk's wages, cleaning the church, repairs to the thatch, whitewashing the church walls, the laundry of the linen, wine and bread for the communion, catching moles, synodals, fetching water, visitation fees, fence repairs, clearing the snow, and limewash which cost 8/- in 1857 for the walls.

The Book starts in 1813, with a town stock in that year standing at £1-7-2½d and a total rate of £25-9-4 representing 13d in the £1 on £470, levied on James Jenner, Widow Coote, Thomas Morse, John Glasspoole, Anthony Merry, and Widow Barber. By 1854 the number had risen to 12. In 1814 the clerk's salary was £1 per annum, and there was a payment of £6-8-3 to the House of Industry for the half year to Michaelmas 1814. A bill for the whitewashing of the church walls -- a regular feature -- amounted to 12s 8d. The accounts were countersigned "seen and allowed by us till good cause be shewn to the contrary", Anthony Merry and Richard Lockwood.

The money raised by the parish rate in 1803 had been £24-8-6d at 1.10% in the £1.

The Book contains the relief of the poor, the costs of jury lists and militia lists, and deliverances to Beccles and Lowestoft.

In 1815 for the journey to Lowestoft, the constable's fee was 14-6d and for the journey to Beccles with a list of persons liable to serve in the militia 6s-0d.

In July 1816, there was a charge of 5s-0d for the journey to Lowestoft to apprehend Thomas Meek for not performing the order of Bastardy, with a further 5s-0d for the constable's journey and 2/- for the actual warrant.

By 1821 the town stock stood at £8-5-8¼d. Attendance at Beccles with a militia list was charged at 8s-6d.

In 1823 the cost of a man working on the path and churchyard for a day was 1s.-6d. The county rate stood at £1-7-9d.

In 1827 for the journey to Lowestoft with the jury list the charge was 8s-6d.

In March 1832 there was paid to the overseers of Pakefield for the relief of George Knight 6s-0d and in July 1833 the overseers paid Mr. Glasspoole, overseer, for his customary journey to the House of Relief (Oulton) 8s-6d, and in June 1836 Mr. Bachelder, overseer, was paid 2s-0d to apply for the relief of Mr. & Mrs. Hood at the House.

By Easter 1840 the churchwarden was out of pocket by £1-19-5d and was repaid.

On Dec. 20th 1840, 1s-0d was paid for "Prayers for the Queen" followed by 1s-6d for "Prayers for Prince Albert" in February 1841 and again in Dec. 1841 (1s-6d) and on February 1st 1s-6d. A new bier cost 13s-0d. In October 1841 1s-6d was paid for a "Prayer for a Bountiful Harvest".

In 1859 there was paid for three men and horses to cart soil 15s-0d, the catching of 6 moles 1s-6d and for 15 loads of gravel for the path £1-17-6d.

THE PARISH GRAVEL PIT -- was situated just below the Rectory.

THE OLDEST TERRIER (an inventory of church goods and glebe lands) is from 1790 and is preserved in the notes on Ashby, contained within a document in the Ipswich Record Office.

This refers to 12 acres of glebe - with Silent Lane on the east - and a further 9½ acres of marshland in Tunstall parish, purchased with Queen Anne's Bounty. Reference is also made to the Elizabethan chalice (1567 Norwich), a small pewter plate, a green carpet for the communion table, with a fine linen cloth and napkin for the same, a green pulpit cloth and cushion, a surplice of Holland, a Book of Common Prayer, and a large Bible of the last translation. The Terrier is signed by John Bellward as Rector, Joseph Jenner, churchwarden, and James Jenner, principal inhabitant.

CHURCH PLATE (not in the church)

- 1 Elizabethan silver chalice engraved "For the Towne of Asbe". Norwich. 1567. 8½ ozs. (The Norwich assay was for the period 1564 to 1702. Of the 700 pieces of silver of this period, 500 were of church silver).
- 1 ornamented silver chalice c. 1883, 5¾ ozs.
- 1 silver paten with central cross inscribed. 1¾ ozs.
- 1 small plated chalice with cross on base. 2 ozs.

TITHE APPORTIONMENT

Dated 15th February 1839, the result of a meeting at Manor Farm (occupied by John Slipper) on the 16th April 1838. The Revd. Edward Thurlow, Rector, was in possession of all the great tithes and the small tithes. Annual sum of all the tithes on lands other than rectorial lands was £208. This was the total income of the benefice apart from the glebe, the tithe of which stood at £3. Total acreage of the parish is given as 1,101 acres with 1,053 subject to tithes, exclusive of the glebe. 643 acres were arable, 326 meadow, pasture, and warren, 84 of woodland and water. There was no common land. 8s-0d was payable on 25 acres within the Somerleyton Hall Park, which lay in the parish of Ashby, in the ownership of the Revd. George Anguish, squire, and in the occupation of Robert Flatman. There were 11 acres of public roads and highways.

The surveyor was Richard Barnes of Lowestoft who also did the Herringfleet and Somerleyton Tithe Apportionments.

The principal crops were wheat (18% - 7s-0¼d a bushell), barley (32% - 3s-11½d a bushell)

and oats (50% – 2s-9d a bushell).

There were 8 acres of Donkey pasture, 20 acres of Little Nova Scotia, and 30 of Great Nova Scotia (both arable), a small piece called Bleach and Table Pasture, 10 of rush pits (arable) and 17 of Mole Hills (arable) and 14 acres of Stone Hills (arable), 5 of Grotto Wood (arable), a further 8 of Rush Pits (arable), Lilly's Grove, and 20 acres of New Found (arable).

The landowners are given as the Revd. George Anguish with 828 acres (in the occupation of John Slipper, Robert Flatman the Elder, Robert Flatman the Younger, John Creighton, Widow Leggett, John Mallett, John Harris, John Jarmey, and John Holt), John Francis Leathes of Herringfleet Hall (in the occupation of John Bexfield, James Alcock and Mark Colby), George Thurkell (in the occupation of George Thurkell the Younger) and the Revd. Edward Thurlow (in the occupation of John Rudrum). Total 1098 acres with 11 acres of roads.

There was apparently no statutory enclosure for Ashby, as there was for Somerleyton in 1803 and Herringfleet in 1813. Tate's Handlist of Suffolk Enclosure Awards lists no enclosure for Ashby.

EDUCATION

With its small population, there is no record of any school in Ashby. The Report on Education in Lothingland 1839 records that the children of this parish were educated at Lound School, recently built, while later some went to the Rector's Room school, to Somerleyton School on the green and to Herringfleet School. The children now go to Somerleyton which serves the catchment area of the four parishes, Somerleyton, Ashby, Herringfleet and Fritton, though the latter is in Norfolk.

EARLY WILLS for the period 1458 to 1641

Thomas Mariet

Alice Buckmonger – her husband, William, had held "Bukmonger's" with 32 acres in 1458-1464. In 1485 "Bukmonger's" was held by Giles Brewys, and was leased to John Jernegan.

Thomas Moore of Ashby, Suffolk, yeoman. 1597.

Avis Sanctuarye (?) 1551.

Thomas Ellis, yeoman, 1623.

John Pope, husbandman, 1641.

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